



sense

HEAD STUDENTS

2018 - 19



WELCOME

CHERYL GIOVANNONI
CEO, GDST

Dear Student

Welcome to the Sixth Form. And welcome, too, to your GDST Sixth Form.

These are the best two years of your education. A chance to delve deeply into subjects that inspire you, alongside fellow sixth formers who also love those subjects. A chance to explore new opportunities beyond the seminar room. And a chance for you to lead and inspire others in your turn.

When you join a GDST sixth form, you join a family of students beyond your own school. Individuals, like you, who are united by a common bond: our unique GDST family.

I firmly believe that a GDST sixth form offers outstanding opportunities that you won't get anywhere else.

We believe that 'if you can see it, you can be it', so the students in GDST sixth forms take on leadership roles within their school communities. You become role models for younger pupils. You also have many opportunities to meet other GDST sixth formers, be it at the Young Leaders' Conference, the Oxbridge conference or at other inspiring events.

No other sixth form will set you up better for university and the world of work. The GDST's unique CareerStart programme provides vital life skills to help you succeed. We have relationships with a handful of select employers who host insight days, as well as access to many other interesting organisations who will help you understand the range and complexity of their businesses as you work out your next steps.

Perhaps the most important benefit of a GDST sixth form is the lifelong friendships you will make.

A couple of years ago we did a student survey. One of the questions we asked was, 'what will you remember when you leave school?'

By far the most mentioned words were 'friends' and 'friendship'.

The people you share your sixth form journey with will become your friends and support network throughout your life.

And you won't just have the support of your friends. You will have access to almost 70,000 members of the GDST alumnae network doing all sorts of jobs and from all walks of life – and their support will prove invaluable at different phases of your professional life.

We often speak about the power of the GDST network. I believe we are at our most powerful when we instinctively understand that 'I don't shine if you don't shine': celebrating each other's successes and helping each other to be our best, most awesome selves. Putting 'shine theory' into action every day.

That's something I champion at the GDST. I believe that, when we all work together and collaborate, we all rise.

Each and every one of you has the chance to reshape the world for the better. To be purposeful and purpose-led. To lead and innovate in a world that needs your contribution more than ever.

We will all be rooting for you as you take the next steps on your exciting journey, offering you every scrap of support you need. I have no doubt at all that you will make us very proud. You'll be the names we see in tomorrow's media. 100% the future.

With my best wishes,
Cheryl Giovannoni



“When you join a GDST sixth form, you join a family of students beyond your own school”

CONTENTS

O brave new world	6
Winning entry: Laurie Magnus Poetry Prize	9
Reflections on my time at a GDST sixth form	10
Great teaching, great learning	13
Getting a head start: building a CV, and a network	16
GDST Alumnae Network	19
Thinking like a scientist	20
Winning entry: GDST Creative Writing Prize	24
The school's support system	25
Cross-school collaborations	26
Navigating digital resources	28
Extended Project Qualification	31
Higher Education: making smart decisions	34
My sixth form	38
The joy of not having a plan	41
Winning entry: Somerville and Gurney Award	42
GDST prizes and scholarships	44
GDST family: our schools and academies	47

'O BRAVE NEW WORLD':

DISCOVERING THE EXCITEMENT OF YOUR GDST SIXTH FORM

Nick Hayward is Head of Sixth Form at the Royal High School, Bath

There was, apparently, a certain moment in the very early history of the universe when everything suddenly expanded extremely rapidly. It happened a few quintillionths of a second after the Big Bang and is known as inflation. Of course, everything was already expanding pretty fast, but when inflation happened, that expansion accelerated and the universe went into overdrive.

I'm no physics teacher, but that image of rapid growth has always struck me as a satisfying analogy for what should happen in a sixth form. You should feel a burst of creative energy, a sudden expansion of your intellectual horizons. Your mind should feel as if it's palpably getting bigger. After all, this is the period when you have emerged from what's sometimes been called the dark tunnel of GCSEs and can finally indulge in the luxury of specialisation. Having selected a small number of subjects which interest you sufficiently that you wish to devote two years of your life to studying them in depth, you emerge, blinking, into the sunlit uplands. It's an exciting landscape to explore.

It's also the period of your life when you are starting to think about those 'macro' questions that will preoccupy you for the rest of your life: Where do you stand politically? What do you care about? What most excites you about being alive at the start of the 21st century? How do you feel about religion? Or technology? What challenges exist in the wider world that require solutions? In short, you're starting to find your footing in the world, to navigate the crucial issues.

It's all terribly exciting. And beyond the sixth form lie the exciting opportunities of university or vocational options such as apprenticeships, and

beyond those the vistas of adult life and the wider world of work shimmer on the horizon like the Emerald City in *The Wizard of Oz*.

That, at least, is the theory.

The reality can feel somewhat different. While doing some research for this article, I asked my son what three words would sum up his experience of the sixth form in his (non-GDST) school. He threw me a baleful look and with grim irony, offered "depression, despair, disillusionment?" Okay, having reached the end of Year 13 he was up to his eyes in revision for his final exams and was having to reread the whole of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Monday. Even so, when faced with the pressures

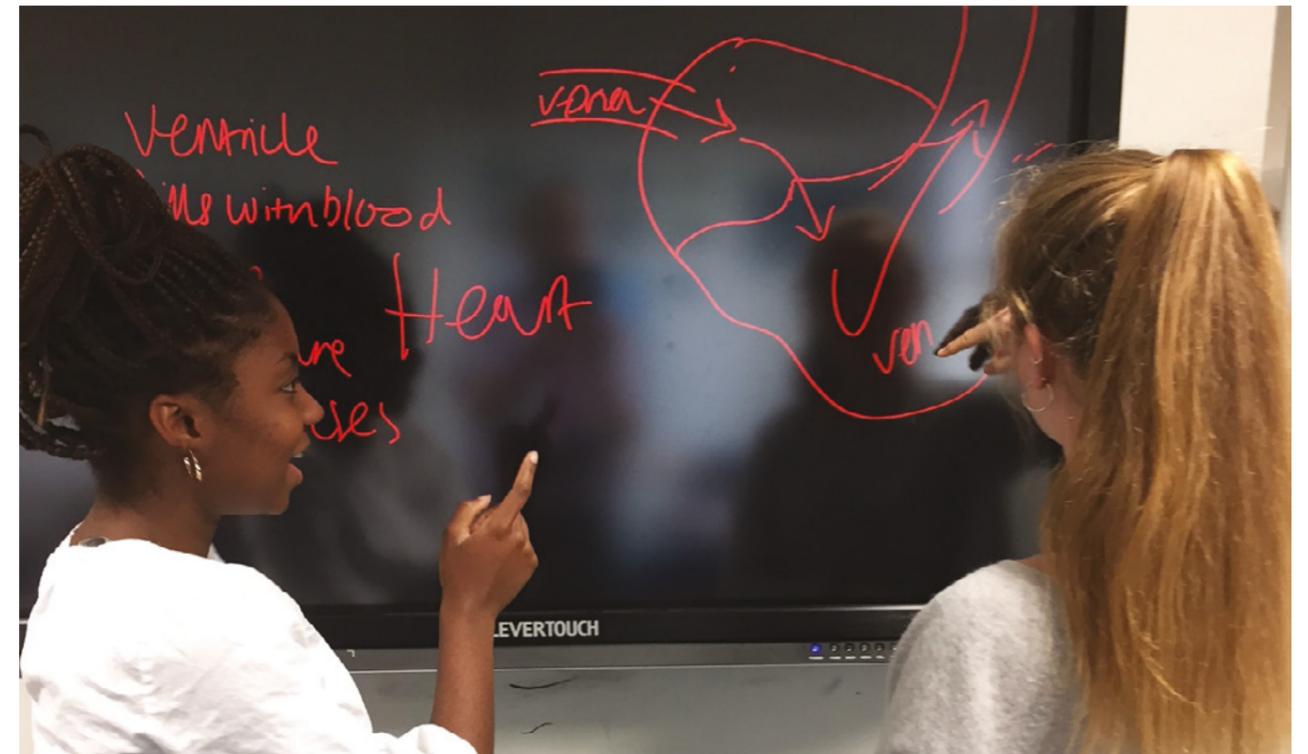
"You should feel a burst of creative energy, a sudden expansion of your intellectual horizons. Your mind should feel as if it's palpably getting bigger"

of an overloaded assessment system and the umpteen different Assessment Objectives that go with it, it can feel like there is a mismatch between the theoretical joy of what a sixth form should offer and the more down-to-earth, onerous reality.

It's true that the pressure of terminal exams and assessments can take some of the gloss off studying A levels. At a recent GDST Heads of Sixth Conference, we were offered some statistics on how the sheer weight of assessments has increased over recent years, with a typical student

taking 24½ hours of GCSE assessments in 2016 with the assessment-load of those same subjects increasing to 33 hours in 2019. At A level, a similar pattern exists, with a student taking three subjects in 2016 facing nine hours of terminal exams while a student taking those same subjects in 2019 will face something like 16 hours of exams. Students are being assessed more intensively and for longer than ever before.

Of course, any good sixth form will offer a wide range of support systems to help students with



the pressures of exams. You will have subject staff offering coaching and revision sessions, tutors to guide and encourage you. You will be offered tips and advice as to how to press the right buttons and how to wring every last mark from the pen of the world-weary examiner who's marking your script.

But there is a bigger picture too, and to approach it we do need to ask a few of those bigger questions. What is a sixth form? What is it for? Is it a physical place, a common room, a set of classrooms? Is it a combination of subjects you study for two years and which with hard work and a little luck will enable you to get where you want to be when you leave? Or is it something a bit more ambitious – a state of mind, a way of thinking, a style of enquiry? Something which fosters questioning and curiosity?

These questions may sound a bit too philosophical. But consider this: when I recently took over as Head of Sixth, I asked the girls in Years 12 and 13 what they valued most about the sixth form at the Royal High School. Izzy's response was typical:

"I enjoy the sense of freedom that the teachers give you. There is a lot more trust between students and teachers. You get treated as more of an equal, which I think prepares you for the real world where you aren't always going to be at the bottom of the pile."

Ellie in Year 13 responded:

"I really like the way that it is a more relaxed environment and that you have to be independent."

For these girls, there is a style of learning in

the sixth form which differs from that of the main school. Independence, trust and freedom were identified as key markers that make the ethos of the sixth form distinctive.

And of course they're right. Everyone remembers the difference of being in the sixth form. Let's start with the basics. On a sartorial level, you're free from the shackles of school uniform and can express that long-thwarted desire to show your individuality through what you wear. (You never forget your first sixth form outfit. Mine, much to the merriment of my friends, was a suit in a peculiar shade of yellowish-green. I loved it at the time.) Then there's the style of lessons which emphasise shared enquiry rather than the top-down teaching that sometimes dominates at GCSE. Even the configuration of desks in a sixth form teaching space is different from the seating patterns of the GCSE classroom and is more likely to prioritise discussion and debate.

In short, there is a kind of sixth form alchemy that weaves a subtle magic and puts an emphasis on independence of mind and the excitement of individual discovery. Remember that even more than in earlier years what happens in the classroom is the tip of an iceberg: the onus will be on you to 'read round' the subject, to use the resources that are available to deepen your knowledge of your subject and your mastery of the skills needed to do well in it. Research shows that students who achieve higher grades tend to put in on average 30 hours of independent study outside lessons each week. To do that, they use their study periods effectively.

Research also indicates that students who achieve top grades tend to draw on more sources of support than those who achieve less well. The latter may talk to their close friends to check what they should be doing; the former will be accessing the expertise of teachers, the school librarian, the school's online resources, even their parents, to enrich their understanding.

If this sounds challenging and difficult, one way of thinking about it is through a concept called the growth mindset – a theoretical framework developed in the US a couple of decades back. Put simply, it stresses that ability is not something static and unchangeable, poured into you when you were born, like ink tipped into a bottle. Instead, research shows that ability is malleable, dynamic and interactive. The famous instance is the '10 000 hours' concept. Spend 10 000 hours at something and however weak you were when you started, you'll be pretty wonderful when you finish. Search online and you will find an example of someone who started playing table-tennis from scratch and who by sheer dint of regular practice ended up competing at national level. I've taught many girls whose English essays have jumped up in quality in the last three months of the course simply because they were submitting them regularly and attending closely to feedback. The growth mindset concept is useful because it works.

There is more to being in the sixth form than writing effective essays, unlikely as that sounds. As I've said, being in the sixth form is a holistic experience, a period of personal growth in all sorts of ways. Sixth forms should be exciting places regardless of the exams that lie in wait at the end of the journey. I want to offer four specific pieces of advice which I would recommend to enhance your sixth form experience:

- Fight against categorisation. Just because you are studying arts subjects doesn't mean you shouldn't read the science articles at the back of the *New Scientist*. Just because you're studying 'double-maths-physics' doesn't mean you shouldn't read the latest Haruki Murakami novel or have a poetry anthology by your bed to dip into. Learning is polyvalent – it sticks to all sorts of things, zooms off into all sorts of different crevices. Curiosity follows its own laws. Don't be pigeonholed. The most able students allow interests to spill over subject boundaries.
- Embrace the chance to do some in-depth research, taking advantage of either the EPQ, the IB's Extended Essay, or your own school's

home-grown equivalent. At my school we run the International Baccalaureate alongside A Levels. A compulsory element within the IB is the Extended Essay, a 4 000 word essay on a topic of your choice. A level students are encouraged to do the EPQ, which gives them the chance to write a 5 000 word essay on a topic of their choice (or design an 'artefact' and write a shorter essay). It gives you the opportunity to develop research skills, hone a passion and generally discover what interests you most. We've had EPQs on the history of bullfighting, the stigma of HIV in certain African countries, the American poet Walt Whitman and Japanese kabuki dancing. Universities value them highly and it's no coincidence that in a recent analysis of our Oxbridge offers we found that girls who'd received offers often had completed an EPQ in a subject closely related to their degree course.

- Say 'yes' to the opportunities offered by the sixth form. Whenever there's a speaker or an event, resist the impulse to go home to double-down on all the work you have to do. Go along to the event. Sign up to the volunteering opportunity. Get involved. It's always worth it.
- Develop your general knowledge. This is one of my bugbears, so bear with me on this. In our post-truth, intellectually atomised society, general knowledge - that is, the knowledge it could once be assumed a reasonably educated person should know - has become a casualty and fallen by the wayside. Yet it's all part of becoming a rounded, well-informed person and has other intellectual dividends, allowing you to make inroads into other areas of knowledge. So if you don't know what the capital of Switzerland is, or the name of the Queen's father, or what a rook is, or why Horatio Nelson has his own column, or how old the universe is give or take a couple of billion years, well, now's the time to find out. Set up a termly general knowledge quiz in your sixth form.

The key thing is that your sixth form has the potential to be the most exciting place you have yet encountered. It's a confluence of different ideas and activities and everything you undertake will flow into and add to your experience. A sixth form is more than the sum of its parts. You're already a fascinating person, of that I have absolutely no doubt. But with a sprinkle of the conscientiousness, creativity and questioning intrinsic to life in the sixth form, you'll be even more so.

WINNING ENTRY LAURIE MAGNUS POETRY PRIZE, 2018

Imogen McHugh, Norwich High School

1918 Homecoming

They left as boys and came back in bits.
Shell shaken and shot through, reduced to gun powder.
Trains full of them, flooding the streets. Men and ghosts grey skinned,
And searching for nothing.

They didn't belong in the mud, they didn't belong on the streets.
Rubble from their broken bones littered every surface,
Carefully swept up by history's caretaker.
Don't speak and it never happened.

Some of them were silent. Some of them spoke.
Muttering the names of the boys who died in their arms.
Boys with names and mothers and brothers and blue eyes.
Face first in the mud with weeds for lips.

The men who walked into the mist and were touched by angels,
Never to return to the land of the living.
We don't forget them. With tearful eyes we speak,
A multitude of names, scrawled on a wall somewhere.

A 1918 homecoming, those boys with their handfuls of grief.
They had something to return to.
They had families - homes - They were loved.
But those winter days were bittersweet -

For the boys who had no homecoming.
No grief. Nothing but an endless silence.

REFLECTIONS ON MY TIME AT A GDST SIXTH FORM

BELLA SANKEY

Bella Sankey left Brighton & Hove High School in 2001, with three A grades at A level. She studied law at the University of Cambridge and graduated in 2004 with a 2:1. Bella moved to the School of Oriental & African Studies in London where she studied for a Masters in Law, specialising in Human Rights Law and Public International Law. She was called to the Bar in 2008.

After undertaking several graduate roles and internships, Bella joined Liberty (the human rights organisation, not the shop with the very nice curtains) in their Policy Department. Promoted to Policy Director in 2009, she stayed for eight years, campaigning for human rights causes and leading their policy development, advocacy and lobbying work, before joining Reprieve as Deputy Director, overseeing their human rights advocacy work, in 2017. Reprieve works to halt the death penalty worldwide and fight secret prisons and assassinations.

My name is Bella Sankey and I am an 'Old Girl' with deeply fond memories of my school. I have been reflecting on what the sixth form offered and gave me; not only me, but my best friends as well. There are nine of us who met at Brighton & Hove High School and became the very best of friends in the sixth form. Thirteen university degrees, eight children and eight weddings later, we remain the closest of friends today.

We all have very different careers – scientist, civil servant, academic, tech strategist, banker, doggy day care business owner, doctor, art teacher. But we all retain a core of GDST within us. And I think this school, in particular the sixth form, helped nurture crucial skills, qualities and a sense of women's empowerment that helped sustain us through life's inevitable challenges. It also obviously gave us each other and the incredible and nurturing support network that is a second family to me.

When I joined the school I was bright but a bit of a tearaway. I knuckled down in Year 10, did well in my GCSEs and then stayed on for sixth form. I

don't remember it being a particularly conscious decision to stay for sixth form. I was happy at school and doing well and my friends were staying. I do remember the lure of the local sixth form college; boys were much debated and discussed by my year group.

Looking back, I think I benefitted enormously from a smaller, closely knit, feminist sixth form education, both in terms of the quality of the teaching and the all-round learning experience. So what in particular was special and why is it important?

IT MADE THE TRANSITION EASIER

I remember the academic transition from Year 11 to the sixth form being more of a jump than I expected. There is a way you learn at a younger age and a structure that comes with GCSE work and exam revision that is then pulled away at sixth form. And there is definitely an adjustment in terms of what is expected of you.

I distinctly remember feeling comforted and eased by the fact that I was surrounded by familiar faces. Teachers knew me, my work and my abilities, and were available to guide me through this process. I felt held and supported.

Bella asked her old school friends for their reflections on what the sixth form gave them.

These were their contributions:

"Enduring friendship and a flock of bridesmaids"

"A sense of family and strong women achieving their goals. Unbreakable bonds. And bridesmaids"

"Strong friendships – the sisterhood"

"Laughs for a lifetime as well as shoulders to cry on and ears to talk about Love Island"

"Closeness with teachers; they genuinely care about each individual student"

"Confidence and ambition, but in a way that wasn't about showing off"

"A belief that we could achieve whatever we wanted. You would expect most schools to give you that, but I really don't think they do"

"The freedom of going to sixth form in PJs"



GREAT TEACHING, GREAT LEARNING:

SECRETS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Dr Kevin Stannard is Director of Innovation & Learning at the GDST.
Follow him @KevinStannard1

SMALL CLASS SIZES

The number of students in my English, history and economics classes was small, which was fortunate because we were based in the smallest classrooms you've ever seen. (Happily, I see these have since been upgraded).

But that aside, I cannot overstate how valuable that was to me. Those small and intimate classes were like a powerful engine to my development and learning. They gave a unique opportunity for tailored, high quality teaching. They allowed me to develop through and with others – including class debates where everyone participated and felt respected.

This allowed us to explore ideas freely. I remember some history and English classes in particular where it felt that we were effectively able to lead the class, exploring issues we wanted to, having stimulating debates, challenging different narratives, and getting an all-round political and civic education at the same time.

I saw my old English teacher at a function recently and she reminded me that after the US election in 2000 I stayed up all night and the following morning we spent our lesson exploring the implications of a Bush presidency...

THRIVING IN THE BEST POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENT FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE

There is a lot of excitement and transition to come. Whether it's university, entering the workplace, travelling, moving out of home, moving in with friends, getting partners, starting families of your own: life offers no end of opportunity. These formal transitions will come sooner than you think, and I would say that taking the time to nurture yourself is a blessing.

PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

I think my school got it really right in terms of preparing us for adulthood. Being in the sixth form

felt totally different to being in the senior school. The teachers treated us like the almost-adults we were, and it felt like a huge shift in our role, identity and responsibilities.

There were also a huge number of opportunities available - Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh, a World Challenge Expedition, arts and crafts, fashion shows, social events, the lot. And in it all our individuality and our passions and interests were nurtured. We were guided and promoted into adulthood on the best possible platform.

LAST BUT BY NO MEANS LEAST - ALL GIRLS

This is a big thing. Of all the things that make GDST sixth forms unique, this is the one I have reflected on and felt the impact of, I think most of all.

When I was attending my school, I was under the impression that my mother's generation had done all that was needed to level the playing field and ensure that I and my girl friends had a fair crack of the whip. How wrong I was.

I am not someone who has suffered discrimination enormously or badly or been hurt or mistreated because of my gender. But I have, both at university and in the worlds of politics, law and media that I work in, experienced much misogyny and daily micro-aggressions.

What I now see is that the assemblies, the endless activities, the ethos, the tutoring and care and nurturing that was poured into me in the sixth form, at my most formative years as a young woman, has acted as a shield and a guide as I have sought to make my way in the world. It is something I have treasured and gone back to again and again whenever I have faced obstacles, lost faith or felt my self-esteem and confidence crumbling. It has allowed me to draw strength and direction. And the sisterhood that is my rich inheritance of this school is the physical manifestation of that solidarity.

You have probably already been told, by almost every one of your teachers, that A levels are different, that it is a big step up, and that it will require a lot more self-direction. No more spoon-feeding. Now it's all up to you.

Having survived the ordeal by fire that is GCSE, with its series of siloed subjects and its battery of high-stakes tests, you have emerged intact. More than that, having gained good grades across the whole range of subjects, you have earned the right to specialise in those subjects that really interest and excite you. GCSE was industrial strength, one-size-fits-all and off the shelf. A level can be tailored to you as an individual, in terms of the subjects you choose, but also in how you approach them.

GCSE and A level serve very different purposes, so it's understandable that they should feel very different. Your sixth form classes will be smaller for a start, and while that might mean more individual attention, the nature of the work will mean that you are expected to bring more to the party.

The differences became clear when we asked GDST students what they felt made for great teaching. You might remember the online survey – we conducted it in the summer term of 2016, and received almost 12,000 responses. A total of 1,769 Year 12 and 13 took part – that's more than half of all GDST sixth form students.

There were some patterns in the responses regardless of students' ages. The most

favoured attributes of a great teacher are that they are approachable and show respect, and that they have a passion for what they are teaching, combined with an ability to explain. Precisely how they do this is secondary in most students' minds. In making comparative judgements, students displayed a clear and sophisticated set of priorities. For example, being dedicated is more important than being organised, but explaining things clearly is even more important than being dedicated.

A great teacher is perceived as being creative, approachable and calm, patient, polite and positive. Other characteristics are evident, as far as students are concerned, in behaviours towards them and their classmates. These include responses such as, 'doesn't rush me', 'treats me as an individual', 'allows independence', and 'gives advice'.

Students in 10 and 11 on the whole took an instrumentalist view, reflecting the impending onset of GCSE exams: they appreciated teachers who keep close to the syllabus; give good notes; provide good resources; understand the pressures that students are under. Students rate teachers who allow questions, control the class, mark work, structure lessons well and give good notes.

In fact, students in Years 10 and 11 were five times more likely than other ages to refer to aspects of direct teacher instruction, such as giving good notes. They were a third less likely to refer to teachers encouraging independence, creativity or freedom.

Characteristics more likely to be mentioned by a sixth form student than any other Key Stage:

- Cares
- Communicates well
- Engages the class
- Enthusiastic
- Good rapport with students
- Inspiring
- Motivates students
- Supports
- Treats students as individuals
- Approachable
- Dedicated
- Encouraging
- Happy
- Loves subject
- Not patronising



Once over the GCSE hurdle, responses among sixth formers became more expansive, and tended to reflect the fact that students have chosen their subjects for advanced study: they most appreciate teachers who know the subject really well; have genuine passion for the subject; enjoy sharing their subject; and inspire students.

Sixth formers like teachers who challenge them, communicate well, engage, enthuse, give freedom, have a good rapport, are relatable, help you achieve, are inspiring, interesting, encouraging, supportive and can motivate students. They value teachers who treat students as individuals. They also value teachers who know their subject and their students. Also highly rated among the 'personal' qualities are approachable, dedicated, friendly, professional and reliable. 'Toolbox' qualities feature relatively strongly: particularly efficient, gives useful feedback, interactive, marks work, varies lessons, plans, punctual, structures lessons well. Interestingly, qualities not considered so vital include doesn't pressure you, firm, fair, nice, polite, controls class, doesn't set too much work, and pace of lessons.

An 'interactive' lesson becomes more important to students as they progress through school. Among sixth formers, relatively frequent mention is made of the chance to express views, discuss



and debate: "I enjoy Government and Politics because watching my classmates debate is such a bloodsport."

GDST students increasingly recognise the value of skills such as leadership, teamwork and communication. Appreciation of 'soft' skills increases significantly through the stages, and in the sixth form students mention soft skills more than either learning skills or 'fun', as important things that they'll remember from school.

All of which points to a very different relationship that develops between teachers and students in the two years of A level study. Teachers will give you no less support, but that support will be focused on helping you to become a great learner, not just a great test-taker.

Our survey was aimed at students. But when we ask teachers what they think makes great learners at A level, they always point to a love of the subject and an appetite to find out more; an ability to set goals and organise time effectively in and out of the classroom; a willingness to speak up and ask (as well as answer) questions. These mirror some of the qualities students see in great teachers, and this reinforces the idea that great learning in the sixth form involves a relationship of trust; a genuine and productive partnership.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER FROM SCHOOL?

[I will remember] ... my connection with my subject teachers and how they see me as more than a student. They give you confidence and that is all you can ask for. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time and am very upset to be leaving. It is a school I would always give positive feedback on and believe it is a school that cares for each individual person who comes here.

Year 13

Sixth form on the whole has been a great experience - small classes, more discussion and more communication between teachers and students.

Year 13

I've had some inspiring teachers. I'll remember the ones who taught me lots about academic things AND life! Teachers that care are important. I'll definitely remember the community feel, fun spirit and traditions.

Year 13

Lessons I will remember the most are lessons that are fun but still focus on the topic area. Lessons that are well organised have also taught me that a vast amount of work can be done if you put your mind to it.

Year 13

[I have] ... memories of having fun lessons and the staff who make each day enjoyable and worth going to school.

Year 13

[I will remember] ... skills such as time management, leadership and teamwork. These skills can be applied to various aspects of life and are things which will continue to be useful throughout university and our career.

Year 12

[I will remember] ... Revising! It's helpful to know in which ways you learn information best. This will help with later stages of education like sixth form and university.

Year 11

I think the positive attitude towards learning that the school encourages will be extremely useful in the future, as I will constantly be enthusiastic and motivated about learning.

Year 12

I am grateful for the power of the self-confidence that is actively cultivated within the GDST environment; this will help me aim high and overcome limits in whatever I do. School has also given me a love of learning; I will remain

passionate about continually gaining knowledge and developing new skills, and this gives me the flexibility that I will need in the workplace.

Year 12

[I will remember] ... the techniques we're taught for coping with workload, learning, and organisation. The ability and need to stay resilient and not give up when things don't go perfectly, and how to develop so that the same things don't set you back time and again.

Year 12

[I will remember that] ... I can achieve anything I want to as long as I work hard, am resilient and challenge myself. This has been a powerful message through school and it will stay with me and help me throughout life.

Year 12



The following two quotes from students approaching the end of their GDST education nicely summarise what a student might come to expect and hope for from their teacher:

[I will remember] ... Inspirational teachers (which I am lucky to have multiple of). The sort of teachers that you have a close relationship with, due to having the same passion for a subject and a mutual respect for each other, which has to be earned on both sides. Teachers that can have a laugh with students, but at the same time earn pupils respect as this results in good classroom control, BEFORE you need to discipline anyone! I will especially remember my maths lessons from A levels because this was the lesson that I laughed the most in, concentrated most in, learnt the most in, and looked forward to the most.

Year 12

Since joining the sixth form I have taken on many responsibilities, and become more organised and level headed. I've also affirmed that I love learning, and that I thrive when presented with challenges; something that I can take into university and the workplace. School has given me the confidence to believe I can do anything I set my mind to, and to set my aspirations high.

Year 13

GETTING A HEAD START: BUILDING A CV, AND A NETWORK



Karen Kimura is the GDST's Learning and Development Manager. She runs pupil events across the Trust, and leads on careers support for schools, running the CareerStart programme and the programmes of Insight days. Follow her @GDSTskills

The next two years will undoubtedly be extremely busy! You will of course be expanding your academic knowledge of your chosen subjects, but you will also be starting to build your knowledge about potential career paths. In the same way as you research and evaluate topics within your studies, you will also be researching and evaluating potential career paths. It is a very exciting time.

You will have plenty of support with both aspects of your sixth form life. From a careers perspective, you will have chance to attend many professional events – such as careers fairs and employer-hosted days. Last year, the GDST organised Career Insight Days with organisations such as Rolls-Royce, Barclays, PwC, and architects Broadway Malyan. It's a chance for you to 'try before you buy'. You wouldn't buy a new pair of jeans without trying them on (or at the very least being able to send them back to ASOS!) so you can use networking events to try a potential career for size. These events will be your chance to test the validity of the old cliché, 'It's not what you know, but who you know'. Which raises the question of networking. What is it all about?

The idea of having to work the room can be a terrifying prospect for both young and old. On the surface, it can seem that these kind of events only work for super-confident, go-getter types. If this isn't you, then it might seem like a nightmare to be thrust into a room and told to talk to strangers. But I would like to let you into a secret; the people who get the most out of these events are often those who are interested, rather than interesting. Everyone loves to share their story, and give advice, so with the right approach, you can get a lot out of a networking event – without necessarily having to shout from the rooftops about your own successes.

Of course, first impressions matter. Can you introduce yourself clearly and succinctly? Do you have a good handshake? We know from personal experience how quickly we form an opinion of others based on body language, dress code and demeanour. Standing confidently, making eye contact and of course smiling will help you to ensure others have a positive first impression of you.

In return for your interest and curiosity, you will have chance to hear about a sector or a specific company and to find out information that isn't easily accessible online or in recruitment brochures. However, it can be difficult to know which questions to ask when you don't know what you don't know. A good place to start would be with open questions such as, 'tell me about your company'; 'what do you like about your role?' and 'what was the recruitment process like?' This first-hand advice will be invaluable to you as you seek to join the job market.

According to research by High Fliers Research, 31% of this year's graduate jobs will go to applicants who have already had work experience with the organisation to which they apply. Networking can be a first opportunity to get your foot in the door of an organisation that interests you, to give you the chance to be one of this group who secure sought-after positions with leading companies - often a year ahead of their peers.



Part of your careers research also requires you to keep an open mind. I often hear students say things like, "I don't do maths so I don't want to work in an investment bank." But what about roles in HR, marketing, IT, events? We might not realise it, but when we start to research career options we are also heavily influenced by the people around us. According to research by GTI Media, more than half (54%) of students say that their parents tried to exert influence over their choice of course or career. In this case, help them to help you. Make sure everyone has up to date information about current labour market conditions, in order to make good choices.

This open-minded approach might mean signing up for events with organisations you don't know very much about. Last year, one GDST student attended an event with construction and property consultancy Gardiner & Theobald simply to keep her friend company. She found to her surprise that she was well suited to project management, secured a work experience placement and is now studying the subject at university. And what's the worst that can

happen? You ask questions, look around and think 'this isn't for me'. That doesn't seem so bad. In just one day you have been able to find out you aren't suitable for a career path you might have followed for much longer.

During your time in sixth form, we will prepare you to have confidence in the recruitment process. The GDST CareerStart programme offers workshops in areas such as interview skills, networking and presenting to help you show your best side. Knowledge is also key. Heads of Careers in schools are experts in the recruitment process that companies use to find the best candidates. There are often multiple steps – including online tests, one way video interviews, group assessment activities and presentations – before you get to a traditional interview.

It might not seem like it at the time, but this should be a two-way process. Are your personal values and goals reflected by the organisation? If reward is important to you, is this a well-paid sector? If you want to have influence in decision-making and on the development of others in the team, is there room for progression? If work

“The sixth form is the perfect time to gather examples and anecdotes to prove your skills to future employers who often work on the basis that past behaviour is an indicator of future performance”



life balance is key, is this an organisation where you can leave at 5 o'clock on the dot?

Through attending careers-related events, you will understand more of what is important to you – and boost your CV. You will be adding skills employers tell you are relevant, alongside your own examples and evidence demonstrating your personal experience in these areas. For example, many employers tell us they are looking for problem solving skills. Can you demonstrate this through something that happened during your Duke of Edinburgh expedition? Alternatively, can you show excellent communication skills through your voluntary work as a 'Big Sister', supporting younger students? The sixth form is the perfect time to gather examples and anecdotes to prove your skills to future employers who often work on the basis that past behaviour is an indicator of future performance.

Of course, some people might argue that the CV's days are numbered. They might be right. More and more employers are using alternative methods to source their next employee. Therefore, it is essential that students set up a profile on professional networking sites such as LinkedIn. One aspect of LinkedIn is to mirror the role of a traditional CV – gathering example of your experience such as education, volunteering, or work experience. A second key element is building your network. People who will help you to fulfil your career goals – and vice versa. It is therefore important to keep in touch with people who you meet along the way.

One simple rule applies to creating either a traditional CV or a LinkedIn profile. Please make sure you include GDST as part of your school name. Our alumnae tell us that when they are recruiting for roles at various levels in their organisation, it makes them happy to see a fellow GDST girl. Of course, not everyone will know the locations of all 25 schools in our family, so make it easy for them. There are almost 70,000 active members of our network, and you never know, one of them might one day be looking at your profile!

So what are you waiting for? Make sure you follow @GDSTskills on Twitter and read emails from your Head of Sixth/Head of Careers with the latest information. Show your #GDSTspirit to have the confidence to attend as many careers events as possible, talk to people you haven't met before, and put yourself in an excellent position to find a career – or careers - you will love.

'WE CAN HELP YOU':

GDST ALUMNAE NETWORK

Jackie Ashe is the GDST's Alumnae Relations Manager, a role which is all about keeping people connected – whether face-to-face through events, networking groups and mentoring, or virtually, through the alumnae magazine, short films, social media, e-campaigns and competitions.

Follow the network @GDSTAlumnae

To paraphrase one of the lines from our recently released film, now that you're in the sixth form, the GDST alumnae network is here to help you. But what is it, exactly? How can it help? And how do you access it?

In a nutshell, the alumnae network is a community of almost 70,000 women who have come through the GDST's schools and are now out in the world, but still very much part of the GDST family. That's an important word, family, because it means that wherever you are in your life, you'll have a support network unlike any other. And that means 70,000 women who can help you do what you dream of doing and help you become who you want to be.

So what can it do for you, now?

While you're still at school, there are a number of ways you can use the network. Our alumnae can answer questions about an industry you're interested in, or any queries you might have about study and university choices. They can give you a taste of their working world with an Insight Day or they can step into the role of mentor for you.

New connections and conversations

How they can come to your help is changing, however. Whereas in the past you might have emailed the GDST in order to get careers or university advice, we're now moving this onto a digital platform.

We met with the GDST-wide Sixth Form Council to find out what kind of support would be the most valuable to students. They told us that their ideal would be to pick up their phones, ask a question about anything they needed to know (work or study related) and find an alumna at the end of it with the right expertise to help. Then we met Rungway.

Rungway does exactly this. It's a mentoring app which allows us to create our own user group –

populated solely by GDST alumnae and sixth formers. You ask the question, wherever and whenever it occurs to you, and an alumna with the right profile will see it (and hopefully answer it!). A bit like carrying the GDST alumnae network in your pocket.

We're trialling this at the moment and, if all the feedback is good, we'll be rolling it out across all schools as quickly as we can.

Life after school

Once you get to university, you'll find GDST Facebook groups to make you feel at home, and after that, once you're out in the world of work, you can dive back into mentoring – learning from women more experienced than you, or sharing your wisdom with others as your career and expertise develop.

You can also take advantage of one of our networking groups. We currently have three up and running – the Law Group, the City Group and our newest, GDST Entrepreneurs. And we've got plans for more. Because GDST girls go into so many different professions: there is no limit to what GDST girls do.

You'll have lots of opportunities to stay in touch directly with your school, with reunions and get-togethers happening all the time. Where the

GDST network comes in is for those moments when you want to reach into a bigger beyond - a bigger knowledge pool, with more contacts. It's still your family.

So, here are the key points about the GDST alumnae network. We use the phrase 'GDST Girl for Life' and that's how we think about the network – it's there for you for life. From the moment you arrive in the sixth form, through the rest of your studies, your working life, and forever. You can tap into it by registering through the GDST's website, joining our Facebook (facebook.com/GDSTalumnae) and LinkedIn groups (GDST Alumnae Network), following us on Twitter (@GDSTAlumnae), or simply by emailing us at info@gdstalumnae.net. We really hope you will get in touch.



SAKTHY SELVAKUMARAN

Sakthy Selvakumaran was a student at Sheffield Girls' School. She is a Chartered Civil Engineer who has worked across different countries and cultures in design, contracting and international development roles. She has also worked in research and development roles developing new solutions and technologies to change the way infrastructure is designed, constructed and maintained.

She is currently undertaking PhD research at the University of Cambridge, working on applying radar satellite imagery technology to reduce the vulnerability of infrastructure within the urban environment.

Sakthy was named on the 'Forbes 30 Under 30' Europe List, and has recently been appointed to the Young Professionals Panel of the National Infrastructure Commission, which provides expert advice to the government on the pressing infrastructure challenges facing the UK.

HOW A LEVEL HELPED TO DEVELOP ONE SCIENTIST'S VIEW OF THE WORLD

If you have started reading this article hoping to work out whether you have what it takes to be a scientist, there is good news! Everyone starts their lives born as scientists. Science, at its essence, is about looking at the world around us and asking questions. We all naturally do this as children, and somewhere along the way we somehow build up the perception that excelling in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) comes purely from learning and recalling facts. It does not.

Reflecting back on my time at school, I think that it is a shame that some people missed the opportunities to make the most of this period of life. Not everyone at school sees the relevance of maths and science. Many people sit and think, 'I'm never going to need to do this in the future'. You can sit through a lesson on forces and think 'this is not important to me', but once you realise that understanding forces helps an engineer turn a sketch on paper into tens of storeys worth of skyscraper, or hundreds of tonnes worth of bridge, you see how this one lesson brings concepts into the real world. And once you get that, you can start taking advantage of sixth form education and get a head start in shaping a career.

Even the subjects you think seem less important, a waste of time, or that you don't see the point of, can have a bigger impact than you can imagine. I look back at what I was studying at senior school and sixth form and now realise this: maths and physics have enabled me to design

and construct numerous transport systems being built around the world. But learning Spanish has helped me support dozens of villages in the Andes getting a source of energy, through being able to communicate with the local population. My art skills contributed to the design of bridges and sculptures that impact and contribute to the aesthetic of communities, as well as how people interact with public spaces. Biology supported the development of wastewater treatment systems in rural villages. Geography helped me to work with space agencies to understand how earth observation data from satellites can monitor structures and the ground on which they stand. These are all things I used my GCSEs and A Levels for within the first few years of graduating. Nothing you're studying is a waste of time. Thinking like a scientist will help you make the most of these opportunities now, and set you up for exciting opportunities in the future.

I went into engineering and science because I wanted to work on things that make an impact, and make the world a better place. It has led me all over the world and I have worked on problems from tunnelling hundreds of metres beneath the earth's surface to tasking satellites orbiting high in outer space.

Despite the exciting and varied opportunities available, there is a problem with current perceptions of science and engineering. Ideas of what a 'typical scientist' looks like and what daily working life is like are not what most people, especially most girls at school, think of. The key point I always tell people thinking about these careers is never assume a 'typical' image or routine. The people,

pathways, working environments and projects are so diverse that there is something for almost everyone. Working locally or overseas; working in a lab, in the field, in an office, on a site, at home, or on a boat ... the natural habitat for a scientist varies, and the day to day life varies too.

Keep an open mind and explore different options and career paths. Whilst you explore and enquire, I have suggested three tips on how to think like a scientist, and how to make the most of your A level years to open up some exciting opportunities.

"Everyone starts their lives born as scientists"

THINKING LIKE A SCIENTIST

Science is about discoveries and understanding principles, but all this stems from curiosity. How do things work? What challenges are we facing? What if we tried doing this, or this?

Tip 1: Be curious. Scientists and engineers are inquisitive people, who use established frameworks and methods to get answers to some curious and interesting theories. We spend our careers asking questions about the world around us, wondering why things are the way they are, and how they can be improved. We generate hypotheses, test these hypotheses and update our collective understanding with the results of our tests and analysis. Everyone who has studied a science subject at school knows that this is the classic method for an experiment.

Thinking like a scientist requires each of us to adopt a more inquisitive (and sometimes sceptical) stance when evaluating information placed in front of us. Think critically about the evidence behind what is being claimed in advertising. Evaluate the effectiveness of how we carry out certain practices. We can use a questioning approach to help us make better quality decisions.

At A level there is a limited amount of time to cover a range of topics. But there is a whole world around you, with more and more ways to get access to information. Read articles in magazines, go to exhibitions, watch talks and shows online about topics that interest you (looking at a few different sources to evaluate whether you're getting the full and accurate picture!). Ask people around you who work in STEM careers about what they do and what they're working on – you'll find most

scientists and engineers are really excited to talk about their own projects and research topics with anyone who may also share their interest!

Tip 2: Use your creativity. You will have the opportunity to deal with solutions to society's most pressing challenges, from finding new energy sources to creating driverless and electric cars, from dealing with microchips to medical technology. You'll need to use your creativity to come up with solutions to complex problems, and you'll be able to use both concrete knowledge and your own thoughts and views when coming up with a successful or original design or development. The sheer variety of work, and the fact that it is based on new ideas and technology, means that no two days at work are ever the same. Throughout both your studies and later in your working career, you will be faced with problems which will require your imagination as well as your logical analytical skills.

Tip 3: Communication is crucial. How we communicate with each other, how we communicate our work to others in science, and how we communicate to the public is vital to ensuring that our work has real-life impact. Scientists cannot work in silos and expect to improve the world. We work as a global team, checking and challenging the basis of each others' work. All of us are on a



quest for new knowledge and new solutions to problems, so it also is important to share what we work on, for others to build upon.

Even if you come up with the most exciting discovery, you won't get other people to realise how great it is unless you can clearly explain it to them – especially to non-scientists. Scientists are crucial for helping to shape new government policies, and their work will be used by others to form public opinion on a topic. For many, knowledge about the world is influenced by personal beliefs. As scientists we need to build bridges across disciplinary and political divides. We think critically and imaginatively about the world and try to understand different viewpoints – this is why everyone really should think like a scientist, even if they don't end up studying science! A level gives you more chances to practise communicating than simply giving a

presentation in class on your science project. You can write articles for school newsletters. You can take part in a poetry reading or a drama production to get comfortable speaking to an audience. Outside school there are lots of competitions in essay-writing and

science communication to pitch your thoughts and ideas at.

The world is changing. And at faster and faster rates. The political climate is tense. Global warming is showing some serious effects that will threaten the world around us. There are so many issues to tackle. This all sounds scary, but this is a real opportunity for

you. As people, we are not just blood and bones; we share a desire to matter and to be valued. You can find a career to work on some of these challenges and on work that you feel makes a difference. There are plenty of current issues and opportunities in the world: find out what drives you and think like a scientist to make your ideas happen.

“Read articles in magazines, go to exhibitions, watch talks and shows online about topics that interest you”

WINNING ENTRY
GDST CREATIVE WRITING PRIZE, 2018

Julia Wardley-Kershaw, Northampton High School

The Night's Conquest

Attack of the dusk as the orange glow sky sets the sand floor burning, a fair skin hue with the bite of a flame, searing and swarming in the invisible breeze. Brawling with the darkness of the onset of night. The bell rings. A sterile clang of metal to signify your fight has begun for no matter how you run you were chased by the clock and the darkness drew close. Closer than your breath. Deeper than your heartbeat, thumping against your ribs. Denser than the fog enveloping your thoughts. You were soon against the guardrails, clinging the bars, which linger with a metallic scent reminiscent of the taste of blood, on your hands. A swoop of the arm, a flick of the wrist would veil the air with the crimson cape, if only you move, and the beast would pass, like all things. Strapped to your side by your own labyrinth of memory, your arms do not move and once again you are running. Your golden braiding, the badge of honour they bedecked you with is faded now, its sparkling embers of glory muddied with dirty age and it hangs heavy, dragging you into the bloodied sand. And still the bull charges.

Relentless.

Flat on your back, embracing the ground, the world is above. Oppressive as you try to sink through the sand, the swathing darkness merging, no longer sure where the beast ends and the sky begins. The weight of threatening muscle disappearing against the endless heaviness of night, and all that is lost in the dark. Reason to be scared. Rippling and pulsing, the breathing blackness.

Once the sun stretched and branched, filling the ring with softness and warmth. In those halcyon days of youth and vigour. You were taller then, weren't you? Stronger? Faster than the beast. What happened? Flying, time like a bird but not you. Floating, in the abyss of memory not like the butterfly you were. Floundering, with what you have become. Shadow, obscuring the stars, of what you used to be, as the beast approaches.

Fear in your eyes is the only glimmer of life as you shiver, hot flushed, drenched with sweat. Breath quickens. Breath of both. Peril thicker than a scream can describe, deafening silence. Spearing the night, the sun tries to save you, embers creeping through the archways and crawling across the sand. The darkness retreats and alone you question the motives of the light. Every night it lets you go this far. Every night it condemns you to terror. Every morning a new dawn abandons you with last night's fate.

The crowds come during the day, excitement, happiness, bubbling and babbling. An audience for agony, so you see it. Hurt that is deeper now, perpetuating pain, throbbing worse than the beast could ever inflict. They bandaged you, didn't they? Bondage that extinguished your ambition. They said they had never seen worse but you have, in the recesses of mind, you lead yourself to worse. They said you are alive yet you only exist there physically, all else a shell, smarting with the fall of power, the diminishing pride. Weakness. Overcoming your own.

Every night you cower from the bull, a reminder of your former self. Defeat did not kill your body; you allowed it to destroy your spirit. The night comes, looming, prowling, snapping at your heels.

For once you must fight.

The invisible fight. One night the bull will kill you so you have to fight. One day your doubt will kill you so you have to fight. The invisible fight. Your toughest yet. Fight not with valour, for glory or with regret. Fight with the ambition to free yourself.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE:
THE SCHOOL'S SUPPORT SYSTEM

Erin Skelton is Head of Sixth Form at Nottingham Girls' High School.

Sixth form is the stepping stone to your future. Whether you want to be a surgeon, a poet, or an international sportswoman, you will be encouraged; false-starts and failures will be learned from, and your successes will be celebrated. Students leave our sixth forms as confident, resilient and well-balanced individuals who are excellently equipped to take their place in the world.

A key aspect of helping you to realise your goals is the flexible and bespoke approach of our student support system. We ensure that, as a sixth former at a GDST school, you get the individual attention, support and guidance you need, both academic and pastoral.

GDST sixth forms provide an atmosphere of challenge and innovation, yet are also highly supportive and caring environments. Students might be studying new subjects and have new teachers but within an environment where they are confident and at ease as learners and as role models. Staff ensure that you are supported and listened to, and that no challenge is too large to be overcome.

The focus at Years 10 and 11 were your large number of GCSEs, and a great deal of the teaching will have been directed at those exams, which understandably loomed very large. In the sixth form, exams still matter of course, but the exams are very different, and the teaching will reflect that. You'll need to develop more independent ways of working, but you won't be thrown in at the deep end. There are numerous and varied forms of support; library resources, higher education advice, study skills programmes are all available to you, whilst Heads of Sixth Form and your subject teachers are there to provide 'scaffolding' to support your learning, as and when you need it.

Our schools ensure a seamless transition into sixth form through a tailored programme which includes mentoring on A level choices, career guidance and exciting social events which equip you for sixth form life as soon as you start in Year 12. If you've joined the sixth form from another school, we'll help you settle in quickly and soon feel at home through our tutorial and pastoral support system.

Indeed, GDST sixth forms have the needs and the



“You will be encouraged; false-starts and failures will be learned from, and your successes will be celebrated”

wishes of students at their very heart. We work hard alongside you to accommodate your interests and needs, for example in managing your workload and nurturing your extra-curricular interests. Knowing you as individuals, we are able to provide you with all the support you need and will help you mould your sixth form experience to suit exactly the future you aspire to.

In sixth form, you have the exciting and perhaps, at times, daunting task of deciding what you would like to do when you finish school. Careers guidance is an integral part of the sixth form experience and we will do all we can to support you through the decision making process. Your careers advisor and the GDST alumnae network will work tirelessly to help you arrange meaningful work experience and connect you with alumnae who have similar interests. In addition to this, the GDST provides a comprehensive CareerStart programme and specific opportunities for those aspiring to Oxbridge, and/or to study medicine.

So, welcome to the start of your GDST sixth form, the best two years of your educational experience and the springboard to a bright future.

E PLURIBUS UNUM: CROSS-SCHOOL COLLABORATIONS

By joining a GDST school sixth form, you get access to the best of two worlds - the advantages of small-group teaching in sixth forms where you are known and can receive tailored guidance and support; and learning opportunities that bring you into contact with girls from other schools who are studying the same subjects.



Young Leaders conference

Early in the autumn term, Year 13 students who are members of their schools' prefect teams all come together for a weekend in Bath, working in cross-school teams on a real-life charity project. Along the way, inspirational advice comes first-hand from well-known leadership figures who act as mentors. Each team has to put together a plan to raise awareness and funds for their charity. Two years ago, the campaign designed by the winning team was actually taken up by the charity in a nationwide campaign.



GDST Oxbridge Conference

Every July, prospective applicants to Oxford and Cambridge join a residential weekend at an Oxbridge college (next year it will be St Anne's, Oxford) to find out more about the selection process and to get an experience of teaching and learning at the two universities. Sessions on how to prepare for the application are mixed with in-depth subject seminars.

Getting sixth form off to an Inspiring start

Across the country, September 2018 sees three inaugural 'GDST Inspire' conferences, bringing together new Year 12 students from GDST school clusters:

Inspire East: Cambridge University, Churchill College (Northampton, Norwich, Blackheath, Bromley)

Inspire West: Exeter University, Falmouth campus (Royal High, Howell's)

Inspire South: Royal Institution, London (Streatham & Clapham, Sydenham, Sutton, Croydon, Brighton & Hove, Portsmouth)

The northern consortium of GDST schools and academies (Nottingham, Sheffield, Newcastle, Birkenhead, Belvedere) is planning a conference for later in the year.

School collaborations

At a subject level, there are opportunities to come together with students from other GDST schools. Examples include essay prizes, study days and workshops, conferences, magazines, language festivals, joint field trips and expeditions.

Our Trust Consultant Teacher for mathematics, Rachel Burton, runs a Microsoft Teams site on which students can have a go at the kinds of questions posed in university entry tests. Many schools work in partnership with one or two others on particular projects, such as mock Oxbridge interviews.



Oxford and Wimbledon launched their OWLS project (Oxford and Wimbledon Leading Scholarship) last year. This is a collaborative academic examination and writing initiative between the sixth form scholarship and exhibition holders from the two schools. Students' work is published in the OWLS Quarterly Journal.

Inspiring Females

Three years ago, Norwich High School launched "Inspiring Females: Imagine IF..." to put inspiration, aspiration and dreams, firmly on the school agenda. The programme, which is also open to schools in the local area, has sought to instil confidence and value creativity in its overt themes for discussion, but also in the DNA of school events which require girls to develop networking habits. Women from all areas and walks of life are invited to speak about the two ingredients for success: dreams and plans. IF has spread across the GDST, and at the 2018 GDST Summer Conference, a panel discussion brought together girls from Norwich, Sydenham and Nottingham to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing young women in today's world.

We also hold a 'Day of Dance' event at Pineapple Studios. In addition to this, at sixth form there is now an U18 netball residential weekend in Devon; GDST students compete in netball and other activities as well as enjoy the spa facilities over the course of the three days.

Aside from representing your school, sixth form students may be nominated for trials for one of the GDST Select teams. We have a GDST Select cricket XI which recently played an invitational match against the MCC. Next summer the fixture will be a 20:20 format, breaking boundaries by wearing coloured kit and playing with a pink ball.

The first squad for the new GDST Select netball VII has been selected and will take part in a touring weekend during the coming academic year.



Forthcoming fixtures

12 September

Northern Rally (Regional Festival of Sport)
@ Northampton High School

2 October

Senior hockey @ Northampton High School

2-4 November

Netball tournament (residential)
@ Okehampton, Devonshire

8 November

Senior swimming @ Oxford High School

7 March

Senior netball, Senior gymnastics, Cross country
@ Bromley High School

TBC April

Cricket vs Ladies MCC
@ Hampstead Cricket Club

10 June

Athletics, Dance @ University of Bath

26 June

Tennis @ Northwood College

TBC June

Golf rally @ TBC

CROSSING THE ROAD WITHOUT THE LOLLIPOP LADY: NAVIGATING DIGITAL RESOURCES IN THE SIXTH FORM



Amy Icke is the GDST's Online Learning and Innovation Manager. Follow her @digitalGDST

Digital tools and resources are likely to play a much larger role in your learning during sixth form than previously. With a greater emphasis on independent learning, further possibilities for self-paced study and more time to explore your subjects, using digital resources successfully will form part of your learning toolkit.

However, the ever-increasing volume of online information and rises in phenomena such as fake news, means it is especially important to think critically about what you find, especially if you are going to use it for study or work purposes. This article outlines how to make the most of digital resources and some of the essential skills you'll pick up along the way which will prepare you for life beyond the school gates.

STOP, LOOK, LISTEN ... AND THINK

Online research forms part of sixth form study for almost all subjects and you'll already be used to using online sources to support your learning. When researching online, remember to evaluate what you're looking at critically; in many ways it's like playing detective, piecing together clues to build up the full information picture and then

making a judgement about whether it's suitable for your needs. There are lots of ways you can evaluate information, but here we'll look at the Stop, look, listen and think method.

BUILDING YOUR OWN INFORMATION HIGHWAY

So we've looked at how you can research effectively online; another important aspect of your digital sixth form life is how to make the most of your digital tools. Below are five top tips to get you started.

1. Cast your net widely

When you are researching online, you might think that you're just searching websites, but digital content is so much richer than that. Think creatively about the sources that are available to you; podcasts, documentaries, journal articles, digitised newspapers and social media could all be explored. If you've missed some great content on TV or Radio and want to catch up with it online, visit the GDST media library at video.gdst.net. Content can be added by teachers and always stays on the system, so no more expiring after 30 days!

2. Challenge your status quo

It's quick and easy to always fall back on a Google search when you're researching online, and it's often a great place to start. But there are hundreds of other search engines out there and it's worth exploring a few of these. When you're researching for a piece of academic work, why not try Google Scholar? This provides a simple way to search across a range of scholarly literature, from a range of sources such as journals, articles, universities and other web sites.



3. Grow your online library

With so much information out there, the challenge is often not how to find information but rather how to keep track of it. Building your own online collection of resources, using a Firefly blog or web-based bookmarking tools, means that your resources are easy to find, well organised and can be searched efficiently. Some of the hard work may well have been done for you: for example, have your teachers already collated a set of resources to use? And of course, one of the great benefits of a digital library is that it can be shared, meaning you can create class or topic based libraries which everyone can add to and benefit from.

4. Get active

Social learning, the process of learning alongside others and commenting and discussing ideas, is a really great way to help deepen your understanding of a topic and face-to-face opportunities can be supplemented with online discussions and forums. These might be set up by your teachers on Firefly or you might choose to start your own discussion forum as a class. Just remember to be careful about what information you're sharing online and to be respectful at all times of the views of others.

5. Citing it right

Referencing and citing sources is not always the most exciting part of research but it is an essential part of the process; and remember, information that appears online remains subject to strict copyright restrictions. Correct referencing allows you to acknowledge the contribution that other authors have made to your work, it informs your readers of where to

“One of the great aspects of sixth form study is having more freedom over how you learn”

look for further information, and it demonstrates the depth and breadth of your own reading on a subject. So, at the end of your piece of work, include a bibliography and if you quote directly from someone else, acknowledge this. It is also worth remembering many online submission tools have plagiarism-detection software built into them which checks for

similarities with webpages and other students' work. For a fun but insightful look at plagiarism you might like to watch the author John Green's video, 'Places I've never been' which is available on YouTube.

6. Going off-road

One of the great aspects of sixth form study is having more freedom over how you learn, and the independence to explore subjects in

STOP Once you've found some information, stop and reflect on whether it meets your needs. For example, if you're looking for information on population in South America and you've found what looks to be an informative and reliable source but it covers geological aspects of the country, there's little point in going further. So right at the start make sure your information needs and focus are clear so you gather relevant information.

LOOK Now it's time to interrogate the information you've got in front of you. This is when your detective skills need to come to the fore as you piece together what sort of information you're looking at. You might consider questions such as, how is the

information presented, is it dated and if so, is the information still timely and applicable?

LISTEN Then listen to the voice of the information you've found. Ask questions about its objectivity, its bias and its provenance. You could do some additional research around the author of the piece to see if they're well known in their field or known for offering a controversial take on a topic.

THINK And once you've built up the full picture, finally think about other sources which verify or disprove what you've found. This is a really helpful way of ensuring that what you read online is credible and accurate.

“The ever-increasing volume of online information and rises in phenomena such as fake news, means it is especially important to think critically about what you find”

more depth. This might be as part of your A level course or through qualifications such as the EPQ. In recent years, there has been a huge growth in the availability of (free) online courses known as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) which are available via platforms such as FutureLearn and Coursera. Courses can vary in length from a fortnight to six weeks and the time commitment of each course will also vary from around one to four hours a week. Taking a MOOC can be a great way of broadening your subject knowledge, for example if you're interested in taking psychology at university but you're not studying it at A level. For more information about MOOCs visit the FutureLearn and Coursera websites.

MAKING IT ACROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE

Just as you learned to cross the road by following a tried and tested formula and applying your judgement skills to each individual circumstance, so the same approach can be applied to navigating online study tools. By implementing search strategies and through critical evaluation of materials, the research you carry out will be robust, interesting and insightful, not only enhancing your A level study, but also enabling you to build up a bank of transferrable skills which can be applied to higher education or the world of work.

FOLLOW-UP

- Practise using the Stop, look, listen and think approach to researching online.
- Visit the Open University and University of Manchester websites and search for study skills to find lots of additional material on using digital resources in your research.
- Consider setting up a social learning group for one of your subjects.

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Mark Fuller teaches History at Sheffield Girls' School and is Trust Consultant Teacher for Sixth Form.

In this article, Mark looks at the Extended Project Qualification as an opportunity to delve more deeply into a chosen topic. In some schools, the EPQ is replaced by an alternative that provides much the same kind of challenge and opportunity: for example the IB Diploma's Extended Essay, or the Independent Research Report in Cambridge Pre-U.

Looking to gain a qualification that offers flexibility and choice? With the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) you choose the topic, what you study, the sources you want to look at and how you present your findings. It helps develop the kinds of skills that will be of real importance whatever you go on to study at university.

WHAT IS THE EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION AND WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

The EPQ was introduced about ten years ago. Its aim was to link A levels with the skills you need at university, to create a qualification where students can study independently and produce their own research investigation.

There are two main routes for the EPQ. One involves carrying out a research project of 5,000 words on a topic of your choice. The only restriction is that it must not overlap too closely with your other A level studies.

The other is to create an artefact, which can be anything ranging from a short story, a fashion item, a film, an art work, robots or websites, together with a 1,500-word report detailing the process of putting the artefact together.

As well as the final report, you will also give a short presentation about your project. Everyone at some time in the future will have to give a presentation to an audience, whether at university or in future careers, and this is a great skill to practice and perfect.

Completing an EPQ is a great opportunity to develop a portfolio of skills and sets you the challenge of working out how to present your research.

It also requires you to complete a production log - an ongoing record of the process of putting the project together, which gives you the chance to explain the reasons why you made any changes to the project. Each student is allocated a supervisor who will act as a sounding board allowing you to share your ideas and hopefully offer advice.

Alongside your research is a taught skills course, run by your school, to equip you with the sorts of skills you need to complete the EPQ.

SO WHAT DO I GAIN FROM IT?

The EPQ is worth half an A level (28 UCAS points) and can be used directly for university application.

Increasingly, universities like Leeds, Sheffield, Bath and Royal Holloway are lowering their conditional offers for applicants who have achieved a B or above in their EPQ. Some students have also found the EPQ really useful if they don't



CASE STUDIES:

Clara took her A levels at Sheffield Girls' School last year:

"I knew I was going to apply for veterinary medicine at university so I decided to do my EPQ on the digestible energy of horse feed and investigate the impact of different types of feed on a horse's nutrition.

I carried out a series of experiments looking at different types of feed, to identify which were the best feeds. I was fortunate to be supported in my research by a major animal feed provider, Dodson Horrell.

The EPQ went really well and was actually submitted for the Teen Tech competition where I won a prize for the best research project in a sixth form. I was also able to present my findings at Buckingham Palace, which was really exciting.

It was also useful for my university applications, and helped me get an offer from Edinburgh University to study veterinary medicine.

I really feel that the EPQ allowed me to develop lots of skills, especially balancing lots of work and being able to work independently, and my A* certainly helped when applying for such a competitive course."

Yasmin is a Year 13 student at Sheffield Girls' School, and began her EPQ last year:

"After much thought I decided that I was going to produce an artefact project not

really related to my A level studies, but of real personal interest.

I decided that I was going to design a textbook for Key Stage 2 pupils that would teach them the basics of Mandarin.

This involved me having to teach myself the basics of Mandarin, and then investigate what makes a really effective languages textbook for KS2 students.

I looked at the psychology behind learning and linguistics and then, perhaps the biggest challenge, how to produce my own cartoon characters and produce a professional looking textbook, which at the same time was really fun for pupils to use.

I have really enjoyed this and have learnt so many new skills.

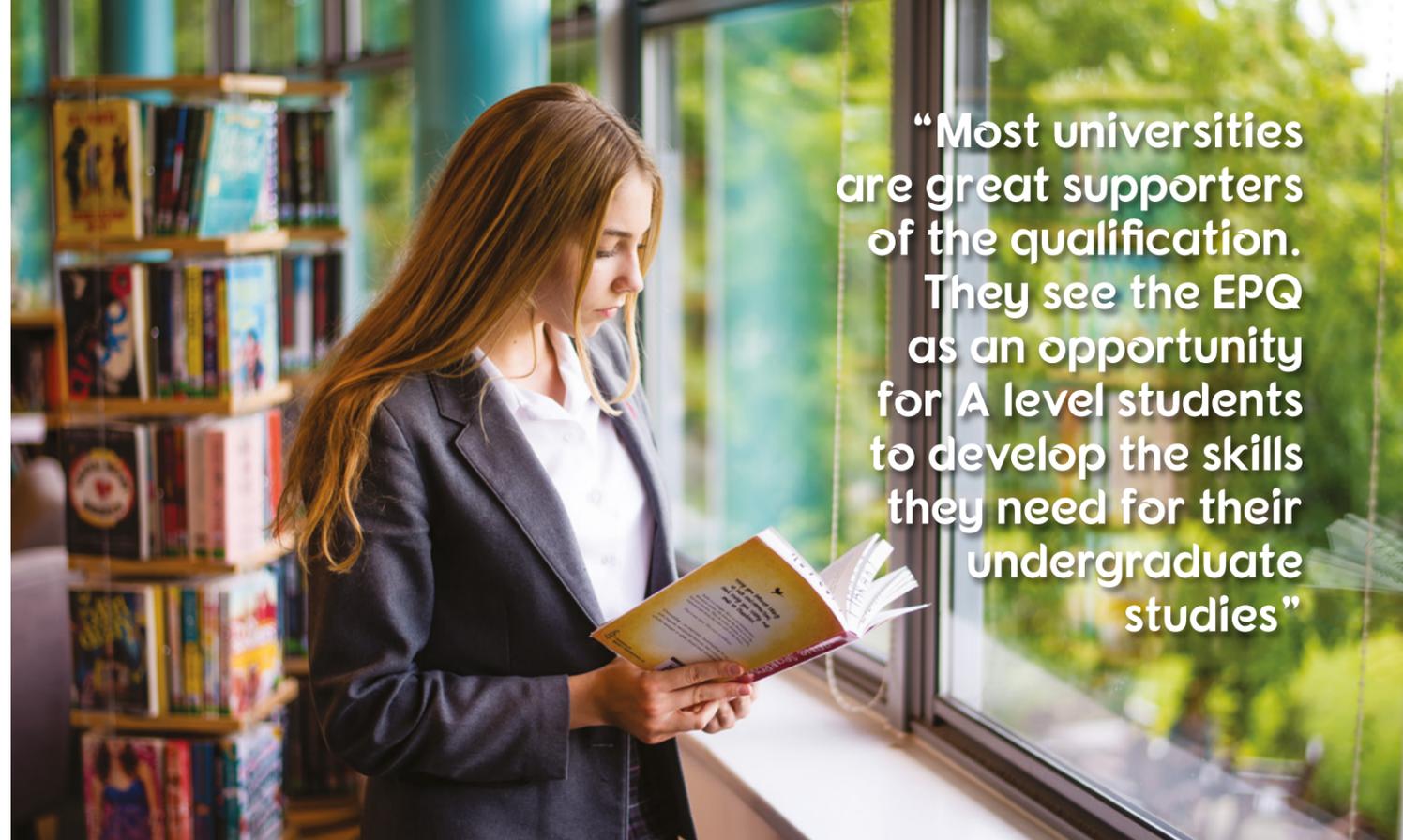
I feel really proud of what I have achieved so far. The next big test for me is trying the book out on KS2 pupils and gathering their feedback about how effective it is."

Jacque graduated from university this year:

"I found that when I went to university I had an instant advantage over students who had not done the EPQ, because I already had skills such as footnoting and referencing.

Doing the EPQ was really beneficial as well as being fun and rewarding."

"Completing an EPQ is a great opportunity to develop a portfolio of skills and sets you the challenge of working out how to present your research"



"Most universities are great supporters of the qualification. They see the EPQ as an opportunity for A level students to develop the skills they need for their undergraduate studies"

quite get the grades they need and have to go into Clearing.

Most universities are great supporters of the qualification. They see the EPQ as an opportunity for A level students to develop the skills they need for their undergraduate studies such as independent study, critical research skills, time management, academic referencing, presentation skills, running experiments and extended writing.

It also gives you the opportunity to develop real expertise in your particular research area, which can be incredibly useful at university interviews.

These sorts of skills can also be called on for other A level subjects and can have a significant impact on your performance during the course of your studies.

Given that most students choose to do three A level subjects, the EPQ allows you to broaden your academic interests at A level or pursue artistic or musical interests from earlier stages in your school life.

But most importantly, the EPQ gives you the chance to study something that you feel really passionate about.

WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

The EPQ is a really exciting opportunity for you to study in depth a topic that you love, and might not otherwise have the chance to explore.

Along the way you can pick up some really useful skills which will help you in your A levels and provide an excellent preparation for your university studies and beyond.

You can let your imagination run riot and explore many different avenues.

FURTHER READING:

Southampton University runs a free online course via FutureLearn which is an introduction to the EPQ and is a really useful guide: www.futurelearn.com/courses/research-project

Bath University also provides a FutureLearn introductory course:

www.futurelearn.com/courses/epq-success

AQA publish several helpful introductions to the EPQ:

www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/projects/project-qualifications/EPQ-7993/why-choose

HIGHER EDUCATION: MAKING THE RIGHT DECISIONS AND MAXIMISING YOUR CHANCE OF SUCCESS



Carole Hall is Head of Careers at Sheffield Girls' School and Trust Consultant on Progression to Higher Education.

You may not be aware of this but, due to a demographic dip, students your age are in short supply at the moment. This means that there has never been a better time to aim high. The competition between universities to fill places has also given rise to an increasing number of 'unconditional' offers, with 18% of all 18-year-old applicants receiving at least one of these for 2018 entry.

This is all very reassuring. However, the number of students dropping out of university has just risen for the third consecutive year. Starting university and realising that you've made the wrong decision can be demoralising and expensive. This makes it all the more important that you research all the options thoroughly so you can make carefully considered course choices that match your interests and abilities at institutions where you will thrive. It is also crucial that you use your time in sixth form to build your academic and personal skills. You will then have an excellent chance of making a successful application to the universities of your choice.

Making Choices

During Year 12 your Head of Sixth Form and Head of Careers will make sure you are given all the information, advice and guidance you need to

start exploring options for the next step. Some of this may involve opting in to lunchtime talks and careers evenings or responding to emails. It's really important that you take advantage of everything you are offered - you never know where that nugget of information that is the key to unlocking your future will come from. As a student at a GDST school you also have access to the GDST Alumnae Network which comprises almost 70,000 former students who are very willing to share their university and career experiences with you. With so many former pupils offering to help, you can seek advice on anything from applying to Oxbridge to becoming an entrepreneur. This is an invaluable resource and you should definitely use it.

When to Apply

If all the help and support you get in Year 12 leads to you making an informed and realistic decision about where and what you want to study, you will be in an excellent position early in Year 13 to complete your online application to universities through UCAS.

If you are keen to learn more about this now, everything you need to know can be found on the UCAS website. This includes a search tool that shows you where you can study particular courses, and links through to university websites which are always the most up-to-date source of information for everything you need to know about the university itself, course content and entry requirements. You can apply for up to five courses and universities.

There are some deadlines next year that you need to be aware of:

October 15th is the deadline for applying to Oxford or Cambridge (you are not allowed to apply to both); and for medicine; dentistry or veterinary science. Your school will have its own deadline to make sure your application is completed to a very high standard well in advance.

15th January is the deadline for the vast majority of other courses.

Planning a gap year may be the best way forward for undecided students but it is definitely worth remembering that there will also be courses available through UCAS Extra and thousands of excellent courses available through Clearing once you receive your A level results.

If you are very sure about the course you want to study and have visited and chosen your preferred universities, my advice would be to apply early. This will give universities the chance to consider your application before the main rush and they may well make you an immediate offer. For some courses, I have known students who applied by October half term and received all five offers during the holidays.

If you receive an 'unconditional offer' from a university you love you should definitely celebrate but it's extremely important that you don't take your foot off the gas. Your A level results will be on your CV forever and are a sign of your commitment to working hard and doing the best you can in everything you undertake. It is important to remember that many graduate employers require specific A level grades as well as a good pass in your degree.

Top Tip: I sometimes see students who are certain about some of the courses they want to apply to, often their aspirational choices, but find it hard to select courses that would be a good back-up plan. A strategy I advise is to send off an application with your favourite courses on before October half term and then, following further research, add in additional choices ideally before 15th January.

Completing your UCAS Application

Your school will help you register on UCAS Apply. Most of the application asks for factual information about you and the exams you are taking/have already completed. The bit that takes all the work is the Personal Statement. This is your chance to market yourself to the universities you have chosen in no more than 4,000 characters (including spaces). This is less than one side of A4 so it's an exercise in being clear, concise and relevant to the degree subject you want to be considered for.

When you have completed all your sections of the form and paid the £24 administration fee,



“It's really important that you take advantage of everything you are offered - you never know where that nugget of information that is the key to unlocking your future will come from”

the school will add a reference and forward your application to UCAS. Some of you may have admissions tests and interviews to prepare for but others can get back to focusing on their studies while they wait for decisions to register on UCAS Track. If you haven't applied to courses that require interviews and have made your application before January 15th you should get all your responses back by the end of March.

Making Final Decisions

UCAS Track will tell you the date by which you must reply to your offers. From the offers you receive, you need to choose two, one Firm (your first choice) and one Insurance (your back up plan). Most students are required to make these decisions by early May. This gives you plenty of time to examine the courses you have been offered in more detail by scrutinising university websites, taking advice from school staff, contacting GDST alumnae and attending offer holder days.

Your time at university will be life changing

SEVEN STEPS TO SUCCESS:

Work Consistently

You are probably already fed up with people telling you that A levels are much harder than GCSEs but A levels are much harder than GCSEs. To get the best grades you are capable of you will need to focus from Day One. You will have many more excellent degree courses available to you if your school feels able to predict high A level grades on your UCAS application. Always attending lessons, checking back through work to make sure you understand it, asking if you don't, doing homework on time and revising properly for all tests/mock exams will help you to achieve your full potential.

Get Involved in Extra-Curricular Activities

Everyone applying to the same universities as you will have been predicted the required A level grades, so it is the other things you do that will help you stand out from the crowd. Hobbies, interests and positions of responsibility are all important but can take up a lot of time. Achieving good A level grades should always be your priority so choose a few activities that help you to develop important skills such as leadership and teamwork. Volunteering/work placements are crucial for vocational courses but, again, you need to balance these with the time you need to study effectively. Keeping a reflective diary will help you to relate your wider activities to the degree you are applying for in your personal statement and at interview.

Undertake Super-Curricular Activities

These are the things you do to demonstrate that your interest in your chosen subject goes significantly beyond your A level studies. These activities are seen as essential by the universities that consistently top the league tables, including Oxford and Cambridge. You should aim to do several of the following: wider reading (the Very Short Introduction to... series is a great starting point); free online courses (e.g. FutureLearn); taster lectures/masterclasses at your local universities or the universities you want to apply to (check their websites for details); academic competitions; read a quality newspaper or periodical; listen to Radio 4 podcasts. Taking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is an ideal way to show that you are able to undertake detailed research on a subject you feel passionate about. Many universities are now making a reduced grade offer to students who get a high grade for their EPQ and your research can also provide you with a talking point at interview. Taking an EPQ also provides invaluable UCAS points for those of you who will be applying to universities that use these.

Know Yourself

Choosing the right courses involves a great deal of self-awareness. What do you love studying? What is your learning style? Would you prefer a course that will give you specific skills for a particular career? Do you want to spend time abroad or in industry? Would you be happy studying a long way from home? Would you prefer a Degree Apprenticeship where you are training for a specific career and your employer is paying your university fees? You are planning for your future so, while it is important to seek advice from careers advisers, teachers, family and friends, ultimately you need to make decisions that are right for you. Admissions tutors will want to know your personal reasons for wanting to study their course.

Research Your Options

You may have already decided what you want to do after A levels or have no idea at all. There are thousands of courses to choose from at well over a hundred institutions. Researching properly takes time. It is important to check specific GCSE and A level subject and grade requirements for courses that interest you so you don't risk getting a straight rejection. Your school will advise you on the many sources of information available but it is crucial to visit the universities you are seriously considering. Open days are mainly from May to October. Check dates on university websites or on www.opendays.com. Weekend dates tend to fill up at popular universities so book these well in advance so you don't miss too much school. If you can't visit before applying, scrutinise the university's website for virtual tours and podcasts made by current students.

Spread the Risk

Anyone can have a bad day in exams so visit universities that would make a good back up plan if you don't quite achieve the grades you are aiming for. Research universities that might make you an Unconditional Offer or would make you a reduced offer if you get a high grade for your EPQ.

Be Flexible

If things don't go to plan, take advice and be prepared to consider alternative routes. You are currently a rare commodity so there will be excellent places available in Clearing at universities that are really keen to have you.

so it is absolutely crucial that you undertake very thorough research before making your final choices. Your Insurance choice should be a university that you would be very happy to go to that has made you a lower offer than your Firm choice. Sometimes there are difficult decisions to be made so you should definitely seek advice.

How Important is Your Personal Statement?

Some universities pay a great deal of attention to personal statements; others don't look at them at all and base their offers entirely on GCSE results and predicted A level grades. Amongst your five choices, there will be at least one that sees the Personal Statement as a crucial part of the application. They tend to be scrutinised much more closely for particularly competitive courses, vocational courses or on A level results day if you narrowly miss your offer grades. It is worth taking the time to write an excellent Personal Statement which you can also use as the basis for applications to internships and graduate jobs.

You can choose to structure your personal statement however you like, but most students start

with their main motivation for wanting to study a particular course and then back this up with reasons why they will make an excellent student. These reasons should include what you have learned from A levels; any wider reading/exploration linked to the subject you are applying to; relevant work experience (for vocational courses this will take up much more of the statement) and extra-curricular activities that have helped you to develop relevant skills and personal qualities. You may want to end with a brief paragraph about your particular academic/career goals.

How to Impress a University Admissions Tutor

Admissions tutors have a difficult job. For popular courses (Oxbridge and Medicine are obviously included here) many more students apply than there are places. Make it easier for them by ensuring that all the information on your UCAS application is recorded clearly using accurate spelling and grammar. You need to showcase your ability and enthusiasm and put yourself across as someone who will be 'interesting to teach'.





MY SIXTH FORM

BETHANY REEVES

Bethany Reeves is an alumna of Putney High School. She was awarded an organ scholarship to read music at Brasenose College, Oxford, and is now in her second year of study.

At Putney, Bethany was captain of a number of sports teams and in the sixth form became Deputy Head Girl, House Music Captain and Senior Tennis Captain. She plays a similarly active role in the community at Oxford, playing in various musical ensembles and representing the Oxford University Tennis Club and college netball team.

Bethany plays eleven instruments, with grade 8 distinction in six of these, and holds an ATCL piano recital diploma. She is a keen composer and has had her work performed by the Royal Opera House Orchestra and at the BAFTA awards. Bethany also regularly performs at the Edinburgh Fringe.

Having been to a GDST school since the age of five, when I started sixth form at Putney High School I expected it to be the same as all the other years I had spent at Putney High. I'd had an amazing time up to Year 11, but sixth form opened up even more opportunities, bringing with it a significantly more mature and independent style of learning.

The biggest difference that I experienced between Year 11 and sixth form was that lessons became more like university seminars, with each student contributing their own ideas and the lessons becoming more discussion-based. Along with this came a more friendly relationship with my teachers, in which I felt as if we were in a reciprocal learning relationship, rather than one in which they tell me things and I purely listen. Of course, the shift from studying ten to three subjects was also a significant difference, but I quickly grew to love the fact that I could learn about my three favourite subjects in a lot more depth, and dedicate much more time to each one than I was able to at GCSE.

With music as my primary focus of study in sixth form, I really made use of the wealth of extra-curricular activities that were on offer. More than 30 extra-curricular groups for music alone ran each week; I was part of two orchestras, two choirs, an a cappella group, and two chamber ensembles. Aside from music, I played in the tennis and netball teams and got involved with teaching younger students who were struggling with certain subjects.



In addition to taking part in these clubs, I was also Deputy Head Girl, House Music Captain and a Sports Prefect. A high level of commitment was required for these activities, so I was careful to organise my time, in order to get the most out of my A level studies whilst still broadening my experience through clubs and positions of responsibility.

I think the extra-curricular side of sixth form is hugely important to the whole sixth form experience as it helps you to develop skills beyond the academic realm, as well as being a really enjoyable way to relax and make friends from other year groups.

Alongside extra-curricular activities, sixth form also offered a number of super-curricular activities such as "Hot Topic" sessions; a programme of talks which took discussion of subject-related topics beyond the A level syllabus. These sessions were designed to prepare us for university interviews and, moreover, for university education. I found them so helpful and they contributed hugely to our desire to look deeper into our chosen university subject.

For me, I knew I wanted to study music at university from a very young age, but lots of my friends at school were unsure about what they wanted to go on to do after sixth form. The teachers were all really helpful with this and were always willing to have a chat about possible university options, as well as the option of attending

art colleges, going straight into employment or apprenticeships, or taking a gap year.

When it came to applying to universities, we were lucky enough to get plenty of guidance in terms of both the application and interview

processes. The seminar-style lessons, numerous mock interviews and UCAS advice sessions all helped to support us through the application process, meaning when I got to the stage of staying in Oxford for a few days for my interviews, I felt really well prepared. Rather than dreading the interviews, I was looking forward to them!

I enjoyed my whole sixth form experience so much, and am extremely grateful for where it has got me. I am so thankful to all the inspiring teachers who always made time for us to make sure we

were having the best time possible - both in terms of our academic studies and our general welfare and happiness.

I made such great friends at Putney High, as well as developing really good relationships with my teachers, and it provided a very smooth transition from Year 11 to university. I am really happy here at Oxford and am enjoying getting stuck into all the extra-curricular things the university has on offer, as well as spending time learning about the thing I love the most. I do really miss sixth form though and sometimes wish that I could just click my fingers and go back!

"I think the extra-curricular side of sixth form is hugely important to the whole sixth form experience as it helps you to develop skills beyond the academic realm, as well as being a really enjoyable way to relax and make friends from other year groups"

THE JOY OF NOT HAVING A PLAN

Issie Rughani is a former Head Girl of Sheffield Girls' School. She graduated from Durham University with a first-class degree in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, and has since explored a variety of roles in the charity and education sectors. She is currently Education Initiatives Officer at the GDST; a position which focuses on enhancing the student experience and developing the added-value of the GDST network. Do get in touch with Issie at I.Rughani@wes.gdst.net

"What would you like to do when you're older?" is a question with which I've always struggled.

I expected the answer would dawn on me at some stage, and placed a lot of hope on the then-obligatory year 10 career profiling tests. An emphatic diagnosis of 'fish farmer' was generated (the complex algorithm sadly overlooking my dislike of both fish and farms) and I realised that this was neither a question that could be easily answered, nor one that others could answer for me.

You may have already figured out exactly what you would like to do. You may have a strong sense of direction, or a real passion for a field. If that is you - fantastic! But if you are unsure of the shape of your future after sixth form, take heart, because not having a plan need not be daunting and, in fact, it opens up an exciting world of possibility.

As the end of sixth form approached, I felt as though I was in a conspicuous minority. An outlier, who for some reason, didn't know what she'd like to do next. I thought I would go to university to buy myself some more time to come up with a plan. University came and went, and it was only at the point of entering the working world that I realised I was not alone. It turned out that most people did not have a grand plan!

This was a revelation. I had always assumed that people got to jobs they enjoyed by following a clear and long-term plan they had created to get them there. But for many, as it turns out, a career path only appears as such when viewed with hindsight.

Often we don't know what the next step is, but the trick is to carry on putting one foot in front of the other, following your interests and learning from living. Life is long, there is so much to experience, and you will learn more about yourself through each

experience that you have. Having to find your way and carve a career path that looks more like a responsive zig-zag than a pre-determined linear route is no bad thing. Allowing yourself to change direction as opportunities arise will lead to a richer and more fulfilled life.

For the many of us who aren't sure of our plan, I would advise that you be guided by what you love; what you most enjoy and are most interested by. If this isn't clear to you, take some time to introspect. Be open-minded, challenge yourself and experience things in a strategic way. Remember that ruling things out is just as valuable as ruling things in.

I still don't know what I would like to do when I am older, but I now know not to be phased by that. Whilst I don't have a strict plan, I do have ambition, drive and a GDST education which, as I hope you find too, provides the self-belief and courage to explore my interests and trust my instincts. With this, an interesting and fulfilling future awaits.

"...a career path only appears as such when viewed with hindsight"



WINNING ENTRY SOMERVILLE AND GURNEY AWARD, 2018

Philippa Terry, Streatham & Clapham High School

This essay-writing competition was judged by Vicky Tuck, a member of GDST Council; formerly Director General of The International School of Geneva, and Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College.

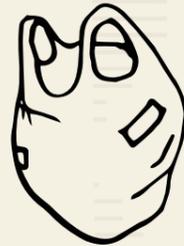
Past societies may be judged very harshly by our own standards. What aspects of twenty-first century society are likely to dismay future generations?

There are many things that our generation look back at in history and despair of. The high levels of racism, sexism and homophobia for example. The abuse of children during the industrial revolution, the refusal to give women the right to vote, the widespread acceptance of slavery are all parts of our history that our generation, for the most part, condemns. However, as the world has developed morally from these times in history, the world will also develop morally from our time, and as a result of this future generations are likely to judge us on certain aspects of our society. Despite how much our society has developed and improved in recent times, there are still aspects that will be the subject of dismay, such as; the West's reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis, our reaction to environmental issues, as well as the rise of vegetarianism and veganism in our society which indicates that people in the future will see this generation's treatment of animals as utterly unacceptable. It is important for this generation to be aware of how it may be perceived in the future, as this consideration has the potential to incite people to better this generation, as this consideration will make this society more aware of its impact.

On the issue of immigration and refugees, future generations are likely to dismay at how the West chose to react to the situation. Many people, in this day and age, are rightly horrified by the holocaust. This disgusting incident is an intolerable stain on the history, not only of Germany and

those allied to them in the Second World War, but also on the history of every country who refused to open their doors to the persecuted Jews. Condemning these Jews to this life of danger and death is looked back on with much condemnation, especially as the decision not to grant the Jews aid is seen by many as being motivated by racial and religious hatred. Upon an examination of current affairs, however, the United Kingdom and the United States do not fare much better in terms of moral scrutiny.

The Syrian refugee crisis is one of the largest humanitarian crises that our generation is likely to face, and yet the West's reaction has been palpably lacklustre. Motivated by racism and xenophobia, there has been a backlash against the introduction of refugees into the country. Nigel Farage, the then leader of UKIP, was widely condemned for his poster that stressed that Britain was at breaking point as a result of European immigrants, on which a picture was used of Syrian refugees. This action shows not only a lack of humanity and an open disdain for both facts and racial minorities, but also shows this generation's willingness to lump together all of those whom we perceive as different due to their race and nationality, and portray them as greedy and parasitic. Though UKIP are of course a minority, and are even now losing more popularity, the fact that such opinions garnered national interest and following is reflective of this generation's ability not only to harbour racist beliefs, but their willingness to turn their backs on a large scale humanitarian crisis. Donald Trump's proposed 'Muslim Ban', which would have banned Muslims from entering and living in the US, also garnered much popular support. Not only does this reflect extreme and disgusting xenophobia, the ramifications of such a ban for Syrian refugees would have been devastating. The willingness of Trump's supporters to condemn

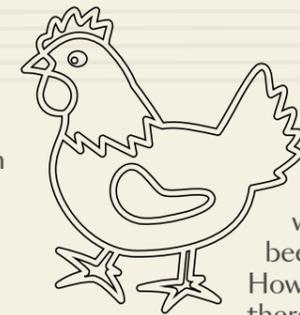


the Syrians will be looked back on with dismay and shame. The Syrian refugee crisis, and the reaction of the West to it, will anger future generations for years to come.

The laziness of our generation in terms of solving environmental issues will also cause shame and dismay for the future generations who will have to deal with the consequences of our actions. With a sharp population increase, as well as an increase in technology, there has been a resulting rise in environmental problems. Record numbers of species are becoming endangered and extinct, global warming threatens to flood many places in the world, and marine life is increasingly finding that the greatest threat to its continued existence is the plastic that ends up in the oceans as a result of human waste. Our generation will be defined by our willingness to allow this issue to be an issue for future generations, who will have to struggle with famine, floods and an increasingly inhospitable planet as a result of our actions. Donald Trump pulling out of the Paris Climate Change agreement, as well as the assertion that global warming is not real by many leading right-wing politicians, is indicative of our generation's unwillingness to combat this growing threat. This, in combination with the general populace's half-hearted recycling and lack of engagement with the issues, is what future generations will curse us for.

However, there has also been an increasing trend of engagement with this issue. A recent initiative, 4Ocean, who pledge to remove a pound of plastic from the ocean with every bracelet bought, has amassed a massive amount of popularity, removing hundreds of thousands of pounds of plastic from the ocean as a result of the large amount of bracelets bought. There has been increasing engagement with the issue at large, with children being taught about global warming in schools, and therefore many being inspired to act to prevent the situation from worsening. Therefore, whilst examining our generation's current reaction to environmental issues does lead to the conclusion that future generations will be dismayed, the surge of engagement in the issue that has been seen in recent years could indicate that our generation as a whole could adjust its attitude to environmental issues, and give future generations less cause for dismay.

Another potential cause for dismay could be our society's taste for meat. People have hunted and eaten meat for centuries. The Romans are known to have eaten guinea pigs,



and Henry VIII's large feasts of fowl and meat are legendary. Our society is no exception, especially in the West, where meats such as pork, chicken and beef are commonplace on our shelves. However, with the growing population and therefore the growing demand for meat, farming methods have changed since Henry VIII enjoyed his feasts. Factory farming is an animal rights issue that future generations will undoubtedly dismay at. Animals are kept in cramped, confined spaces with limited light. Chickens are injected with growth hormones so that larger chicken breasts can be bought and sold - the weight of this added growth causing the chickens to have difficulty standing upright. Animals frequently live in squalor, in unclean and unsafe conditions, scared and in much too close proximity to each other. The facts of factory farming, when considered with the growing trend of vegetarianism and veganism in Western society today, combine to suggest that future generations will dismay at our treatment of the animals in our care.

In fact, the increasing amount of vegetarians and vegans suggests that soon it will be much less socially acceptable to eat meat. Due to the fact that there are increasingly available substitutes for meat, humans are more and more able to live a balanced and healthy lifestyle without meat, providing they have no existing health problems and can afford to purchase the more expensive substitutes. As a result of this, the excessive consumption of meat products in our society is increasingly seen as an issue by many in our society. Therefore, it is likely that future generations will dismay not only at the fact that we ate meat, but also that we treated animals in our care so cruelly.

In conclusion, it would not be right to pretend that our generation will not be condemned by the ones that come after it, as we can see that in our world today we judge the people of the past based on our own, arguably higher, moral standards. Our generation is characterised in many ways by selfishness and prejudice, and to pretend that future generations will not be aware of this is an undeserved form of self-congratulation. Though our generation has come on in leaps and bounds in terms of reducing discrimination and prejudice, these issues are not fully resolved, and as such future generations will condemn us for that. The newer moral issues that have become more prevalent and better known in this generation, however, such as global warming and factory farming, are issues that unless we reform our stance, will be wholeheartedly condemned by future generations.

GDST Prizes and Scholarships

Sixth formers from across the GDST are eligible to enter for a range of awards, in the form of competition prizes, scholarships and travel grants. Do talk to your Head of Sixth Form to find out more details.

The Helen Fraser GDST Young Musician of the Year is a biennial competition for talented vocalists and instrumentalists from across the GDST. The award is named in recognition of the former Chief Executive of the GDST, Helen Fraser, who retired from the Trust in August 2016. If you would like more information, please speak to your Head of Music. Details are sent to schools in September and the event takes place in February at a GDST school or academy.

The Pearson and Silver Awards are offered to pupils in GDST schools to help towards the cost of attending meetings, courses or carrying out projects with a classical content, for example summer schools in Classical Greek or Latin. Criteria for the award include academic excellence in classical subjects, commitment to study a classical subject at university, contribution to school life, financial need, and determination to overcome practical difficulties in studying classics at school, where these are encountered.

This year, the theme for the **GDST Creative Writing Prize** was 'courage', and the entries were judged by Harriet Goodwin, an alumna of Bromley High School. Harriet is the author of several novels for 8-12 year-olds, including *The Boy Who Fell Down Exit 43*. Winners in each age category receive an Amazon gift voucher.

The GDST Minerva Prize is awarded for all-round achievement. The first prize is worth £500. Application details are sent to schools in January and the winners are announced in May of each year.

The Laurie Magnus Poetry Prize was this year judged by poet and Putney High School alumna Julia Rawlinson.

If you are planning to take a gap year or planning to travel in the summer before your university course begins, you are invited to apply for a **GDST Travel Scholarship**. Application details are sent to schools in October and the winners are announced in February.

The Somerville and Gurney Awards are given for exceptional essay-writing ability on a range of subjects. Students sit a two-and-a-quarter hour general essay exam paper. The first prize is £500, the second £300 and the third £200. Honourable mentions are also recognised. Application details are sent to schools in March and the winners are announced in September of each year.

The terms of the **Johnston Memorial Scholarship** reflect a commitment to ensuring that the Trust's schools remain accessible to students from a range of circumstances. The winning student is awarded up to £3,000 over two years. The award winner is also offered the opportunity to complete a week's work experience with the Legal department at the GDST Trust Office in London.



The Lorna Cocking Scholarship is awarded annually and is intended to help provide financial support for students during the next stage of their education. The scholarship is tenable for three years and has an annual value of £1,000. The funding is intended to assist students during the next stage of their education. Application details are sent to schools in January and the winners are announced in May of each year.

of the higher education experience remains accessible to Trust students from a range of circumstances. The funding is intended to help students benefit from the broader range of university experience – travel, societies, and other wider intellectual pursuits. Application details are sent to schools in January and the winners are announced in May of each year.

The Frederica Lord University Scholarship is tenable for three years, has an annual value of £1,000, and is intended to support the holder in pursuing a recognised course of academic study (at one of the universities as specified by the founder), and in making the most of university life and contributing to it. The terms of the Scholarship reflect the commitment of the benefactor to ensuring that the full benefit

Nomura Scholarships are offered by a leading financial services group and investment bank with worldwide reach. Nomura offers top GDST students the opportunity to win a scholarship and secure a place on its highly competitive two-week Immersion programme during their first year of university studies. Schools are sent full details in December with the winner being announced in June of each year.

...And the winner is

Helen Fraser GDST Young Musician of the Year

Charlotte Clapperton, Young Vocalist Croydon High School
 Miriam Kenedy, Young Musician Blackheath High School

GDST Creative Writing Prize

Julia Wardley-Kershaw Northampton High School

Laurie Magnus Poetry Prize

Imogen McHugh Norwich High School for Girls

Somerville and Gurney Award

Philippa Terry Streatham & Clapham High School

Pearson and Silver Award

Celia Westwood Dunkley Brighton & Hove High School
 Bonnie Steel Brighton & Hove High School
 Flora Norton Norwich High School for Girls
 Laya Suraparaju Norwich High School for Girls
 Iphigeneia Vintzileos Nottingham Girls' High School
 Elizabeth Byles Portsmouth High School
 Rosie Kent Putney High School
 Hannah Patrick Sheffield Girls' School
 Katrina Dionisio South Hampstead High School
 Lauren-Nicole Kung South Hampstead High School
 Phoebe McDade Wimbledon High School

GDST Minerva Prize

Mia McLachlan Birkenhead High School Academy
 Anna Eason Sheffield Girls' School

GDST Travel Scholarship

Ellen Bridson Birkenhead High School Academy
 Carmen Hartman Bromley High School
 Katherine Jenkins Howell's School, Llandaff
 Marcus Graham Howell's School, Llandaff
 Olivia Foster Northampton High School
 Jodie Clare Northampton High School
 Jessica Potter Norwich High School for Girls
 Anna Zakonyi Oxford High School
 Jemima Becker Oxford High School
 Anna Eason Sheffield Girls' School
 Madeleine Harland Shrewsbury High School
 Chantelle Lee South Hampstead High School
 Talya Sher South Hampstead High School
 Olivia Tabai South Hampstead High School
 Lauren Hare Sydenham High School
 Macy Guimaraes Streatham & Clapham High School



Johnston Memorial Scholarship

Anastasia Zakharova
 The Royal High School, Bath

Elin Short
 Howell's School, Llandaff

Lorna Cocking Scholarship

Madalina Stremtan
 Croydon High School

Frederica Lord University Scholarship

Ayesha Sehgal
 Notting Hill & Ealing High School

THE GDST FAMILY: OUR SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES

1. Blackheath High School
2. Bromley High School
3. Croydon High School
4. Kensington Prep School
5. Northwood College for Girls
6. Notting Hill & Ealing High School
7. Putney High School
8. South Hampstead High School
9. Streatham & Clapham High School
10. Sutton High School
11. Sydenham High School
12. Wimbledon High School
13. The Belvedere Academy
14. Birkenhead High School Academy
15. Brighton & Hove High School
16. Howell's School, Llandaff
17. Newcastle High School for Girls
18. Northampton High School
19. Norwich High School for Girls
20. Nottingham Girls' High School
21. Oxford High School
22. Portsmouth High School
23. The Royal High School, Bath
24. Sheffield High School for Girls
25. Shrewsbury High School



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