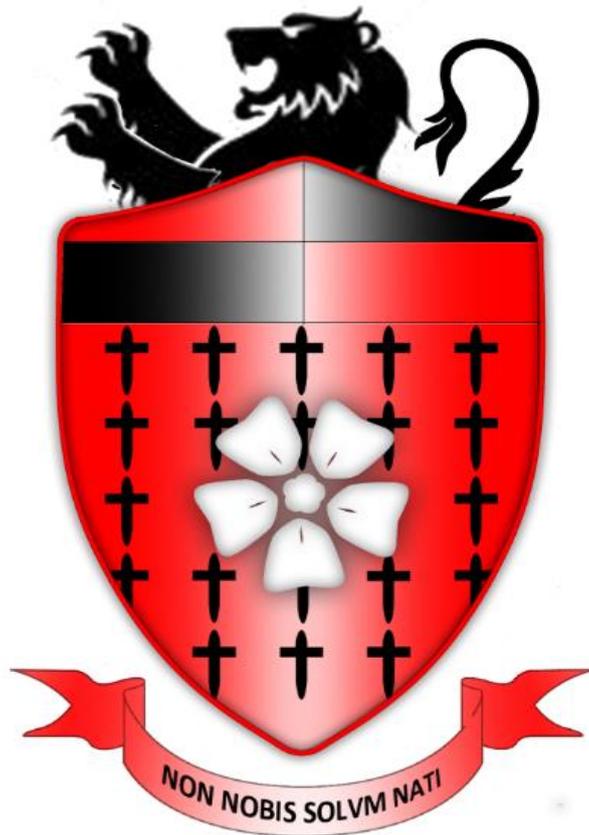


# Hornsea School & Language College



## Early Entry Policy

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## Early Entry Policy

### **Introduction**

Since the 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2013 only a student's first entry to a GCSE examination counts in their school's performance table. Any previous concerns that schools were seeking to improve their positions through 'gaming' and 'cheating' have largely been eradicated. There are still numerous situations, however, where early entry is the right course of action for the young person involved. This brief policy records the position of HSLC and provides a statement of intent.

### **Background**

For too many years at the start of the new century HSLC outcomes meandered around the ordinary, broadly in line with national data. Had the phrase 'coasting school' existed back then it would have fitted us well. The locally referred to 'East Riding Malaise' was in full evidence encapsulated by a shrug of the shoulders accompanying phrases such as 'that's good enough'. Well it wasn't, isn't and never will be. Strategic, carefully considered and planned use of early entry has been central to the improvement journey that has gathered pace since 2007 and sees our academic, largely GCSE based, performance consistently above national average, and often significantly above national. Early entry underpinned a cultural change in our school as students started to believe they could achieve well academically. We coined the phrase 'can do' culture and featured on local BBC programmes around DfE performance data releases.

### **The Journey**

In 2004 the A\*-C cohort figure in mathematics stood at 36%. Students in Set 2 did not achieve at least a grade C whilst it was unheard of for students below Set 4 to achieve one.

In November of Y11, the Set 4 class of 32 students (2006 cohort) sat their GCSE mathematics exam. They were ready. 22 achieved grade B and 10 grade C from the Intermediate tier of entry (which no longer exists!). Levels of progress weren't measured back then but two students who attained a grade B chose to enter the higher tier paper in the summer both attaining a grade B again. The cohort A\*-C figure in 2006 rose to 53%.

A really high percentage of parents, some 'hard to reach', attended the presentation ceremony where 'statements of results' were presented by the then Head and Chair of Governors. The feel good factor was palpable and early entry was born.

Since this time early entry has been used strategically in a huge number of ways to include; supporting dual/triple languages as part of our specialism; enabling students to be rewarded for their significant work in subjects they studied at KS3 but did not wish to continue to do at KS4 (e.g. ICT, Performing Arts); to enable students to further enlarge their CVs by taking additional subjects; to recognise the work of students self studying with teacher tutored support (often in Humanity related subjects); to provide students with 'supervised study time' in Y11 as we prepared them for life post 16 and post 18; to enable highly gifted students to progress to AS or A2 during Y11 and not be constrained by their "age".

We never imposed a one size fits all philosophy and entries changed from year to year to reflect ability profiles of our learners. We have never sought league table position through inappropriate 'fixes' (in discriminate use of early entry, multiple entry, BTECs) instead holding to our belief that we are morally obligated to support our students learning, encouraging them to be the best they can be.

### **Reflection**

Ofsted's March 2013 usage and impact report entitled "Schools' use of early entry to GCSE examinations" makes interesting reading as do the extracts from Ofsted School Inspection reports (appended to this policy and provided by ASCL).

Heart is taken from the following two quotes which summarise our approach and its impact on outcomes, morale and culture:

“Some schools have used early entry intelligently and effectively as part of their wider work to raise standards.”

“Some schools with high levels of early entry do achieve good success in terms of attainment and value-added. This is because they take a carefully considered approach and then use the early examination results to plan how best to raise students’ grades in subsequent entries.”

### **Objectives (based on report page 6)**

We will:

- Continue to keep under review early entry to GCSE examinations
- Ensure our approach meets the needs of all students seeking the highest possible attainment at GCSE to support life-long learning and career aspirations
- Be mindful of the danger of early entry limiting achievement and subsequent progression
- Ensure that post early entry time is used gainfully.

### **Where are we post the Secretary of State’s September 29<sup>th</sup> 2013 statement?**

Our School Governing Body holds school leaders to account for the effective use of early entry. The Full Governing Body meeting, October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, devoted a considerable time to reviewing the content of Mr Gove’s pronouncement. There was unanimous and minuted agreement that:

- Students who are ready, having worked towards this examination series for two years, should still be entered
- Our moral duty is to our students not to seeking a league table position
- Our moral duty is to support our students achieve the highest result they can in any assessment they undertake, even if this means having to resit an exam to achieve this.

This philosophy has been maintained up to and including the 2017-18 academic year.

### Early Entry and PiXL Schools Report (September 2013)

The Ofsted reports of all PiXL Schools inspected in the last 12 months were downloaded, anonymised, combined and searched.

This report is based on all comments relating to the search term 'early entry' in Ofsted reports of PiXL schools over the last year as at 7/9/13.

#### **Summary**

Out of 40 comments that contained the term 'early entry', 37 (93%) commented positively about the impact of early entry on the attainment and progress of groups of students.

Many comments explicitly state there is no negative impact on any ability group as a result of the 'appropriate use of early entry'.

In the vast majority of cases the comments are about the positive impact on motivation, progress and attainment of groups of students.

#### **All Comments**

1. Students are offered the option of early entry into GCSE examinations and more able students achieve well as a result.
2. Results from appropriate early entry of English and mathematics indicate that the school will this year gain its highest ever results in these subjects. This reflects outstanding progress.
3. Entry to GCSE in mathematics does not limit students' attainment and the students can improve their grades later.
4. The quality of the curriculum, coupled with a policy of early entry to mathematics examinations, is not fully effective in meeting the needs of more-able students in particular.
5. Students can only stick with their early entry grade if they have made at least expected progress in relation to their starting points.
6. Senior leaders have now reviewed the use of early entry for GCSE examinations so that these are used much less frequently, particularly for the more able, in order to ensure that students reach the highest grades. Expectations of what these students can achieve have also been raised, with more challenging targets set for them.
7. The school's early entry policy for mathematics has been highly effective in securing strong progress for all students, particularly those of higher ability.
8. The school has recently revised its policy on early entry in English to give priority to English language to ensure that the least able students have the best chance to achieve their target grade. In mathematics, careful consideration is given to which sets take their examination early and which courses they follow. Early entry does not limit the potential of the most able students as careful consideration is given to individual students' circumstances.
9. Early entry in GCSE mathematics is successful because considerably more students make expected progress than average. As a result of the school's 'Good to great' programme which supports students to reach the top grades, increasing numbers achieve A\* and A grades.

10. Early entry in mathematics and science has improved students' achievements and has enabled them to begin AS level study in Year 11.
11. Students were entered early for mathematics for the first time this year and the results show a significant improvement in their attainment and progress. However, students are not allowed to drop the subject if their examination grade is lower than the school's target for them. Students also take IGCSE English early and this is having a similar effect.
12. The school has recently revised its policy on early entry in English to give priority to English language. This ensures that all students, including the least able, have the best chance to achieve their target grade.
13. In mathematics the published results from early entry are favourable, with 55% of students already gaining an A\* to C grade. The school ensures that this does not limit the potential of the most able students by ensuring all of them continue to study mathematics or statistics until the end of Year 11.
14. The academy makes use of early entry for GCSE in mathematics. Students are encouraged to resit the examination if they do not achieve their target grades. The academy's evidence indicates that students' motivation is enhanced through gaining an 'early taste of success.' Academy leaders are monitoring the impact of this policy closely. Students who gain the highest grades on early entry proceed to take an additional mathematics qualification.
15. Early entry to GCSE examinations is used sparingly and to good effect. No students achieve less well than they should because they are entered for examinations before they are ready for them.
16. Early entry mathematics does not limit the achievement of higher attaining students because they have opportunities to re-sit examinations if they do not achieve their target grades.
17. In English and mathematics, students' progress compares favourably with that of students nationally. The academy operates an early entry policy in mathematics to allow students extra time for English at GCSE; there is some evidence that this may constrain progress from middle-attaining groups in mathematics.
18. Early entry examinations in mathematics are taken by students at the end of Year 10. This policy has resulted in raised levels of confidence due to early successes and high attainment by the end of Year 11.
19. The school's policy for early entry ensures that all students exceed their targets with appropriate courses, such as GCSE further mathematics, offered to those students who complete early.
20. The policy for early entry to GCSE has changed considerably over recent years. Its widespread use to prop up low confidence and demonstrate what is possible to younger students has ceased, and it is now used sparingly and appropriately and in ways that ensure that GCSE grades reflect the potential of students, including the most able.
21. Early entry for GCSE mathematics has a positive impact on students' attainment. All students continue with the mathematics education even if they achieve a GCSE A\* early; they are taught AS mathematics.
22. The academy has an early entry policy for GCSE examinations that is used appropriately in the students' best interests and does not limit their potential. Students are only entered for examinations when they are confident of meeting their personal target grades.

23. The early entry examination is used effectively to motivate students by enabling them to achieve success at an early stage. Care is taken to make sure that students achieve the grades expected of them through carefully increasing support for them to study effectively.
24. The academy's approach to early entry exams in English and mathematics prevented students who gained a C grade from fulfilling their potential and gaining higher grades. Current leaders have responded positively to these shortcomings and have changed the Key Stage 4 curriculum in these subjects to increase students' attainment and progress.
25. There is no inappropriate early entry of students in GCSE examinations.
26. The rapidly increasing rates of progress are confirmed by school projections. These are based upon early entry and tracking information on students' progress.
27. Early entry for GCSE has proved a successful option for able students in mathematics. While a proportion of students benefited from early entry for English GCSE, entry for the most able was delayed to increase their chances of achieving high grades in English Language and English Literature.
28. Early-entry in GCSE mathematics is used successfully because an above average proportion of students make expected progress or better although the proportion of students attaining the top grades is still below average.
29. Data and results from early entry mathematics support the college's confidence that GCSE results will be above average in 2013.
30. Early entry to GCSE examinations has not been fully effective in improving students' achievement. A significant number do not achieve the grades expected of them and they are often not stretched to attain the higher grades.
31. Early entry for all students in the GCSE examinations in English and mathematics has proved to be successful in raising achievement. Students' levels of engagement improve and teachers provide targeted support for students who retake the examinations in the summer term.
32. Early entry for some students helps them better prepare for the June examination.
33. Early entry for GCSE mathematics is to be introduced in 2013. This will be targeted at students likely to gain in confidence from securing a grade C early, with guided re-sits to secure higher target grades as necessary.
34. The school enters a small minority of its students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. These are mainly those with irregular attendance for whom the school wants to maximise their chances of gaining some accreditation. All students continue to study mathematics until the end of Year 11 and there is no evidence that any fail to achieve their potential grades as a result of the early-entry policy.
35. The school enters some students early for GCSE mathematics. Those who gain A or A\* grades embark on preparation for advanced level mathematics. Others continue with mathematics to improve their grades further. Students are not disadvantaged, therefore, by the early entry policy.
36. The school has worked hard over the last year to improve the performance of more-able students by grouping and teaching students in a way that is highly tailored to their needs. More-able pupils make outstanding progress, particularly in mathematics. The school has

recently changed its policy for early entry to GCSE so that the potential of the most able is not limited.

37. In November 2011, the school entered a small number of students early for GCSE mathematics. These students had joined the school part way through Key Stage 4 and early entry ensured that they achieved at least a pass grade. This year the school has extended this policy and all students in Year 11 were entered early with the exception of the most-able. However, it is too soon to determine whether this policy will have a positive impact on students' achievement in this subject.
38. The school does not typically make use of early entry for students for GCSE, and therefore this is not a factor in limiting students' achievement. The school's early entry policy for GCSE English language has supported improvements in standards.
39. Early entry for GCSE mathematics is used very thoughtfully to develop students' confidence in their ability to achieve the highest grades possible. Students believe that this increase in confidence also helps them to achieve well in other subjects.
40. There is a targeted early-entry policy in mathematics, with entry points determined by students' readiness to achieve their target grade.