

Outstanding academic provision in the pandemic maintains College success

Brampton students rose above the challenges of the pandemic and lockdown learning conditions in 2020 to secure superb A level results and much-coveted university places in highly impressive numbers.

69.8% of students gained A*/A grades and 91.0% gained A* - B grades, while 77% of students gained access to their first choice university course. Once again the College demonstrated its ability to help students re-taking A levels in the hope of getting in for Medicine and Dentistry to see their dreams come true - an extraordinary sixteen students in all last year, with two others gaining places for even more competitive places for Veterinary Medicine. Two students gained entry to Oxford, and one to Cambridge, while nine others went

to UCL or the LSE. Of other Russell Group universities, Bristol (ten students) and Leeds (eight) were the most popular, followed closely by King's College London, Nottingham, Birmingham and Manchester.

Brampton's focus on individual student needs is at the heart of this success - a combination of small classes, expert A level teaching and exam preparation, individualised wellbeing and pastoral care, together with expert university advice. These features have seen Brampton come top of the league tables for A level results for two decades and consistently in the top 2% of schools in the whole country in the Department for Education's A level Progress Score, which measures how much progress students have made from GCSE to A level. ■

Individual help vital to top degree course admission

Principal Bernard Canetti believes Brampton students' proud record of achievement in gaining admission to the most competitive university courses depends on the energy and experience of its staff.

"What counts", he says, "are the hours devoted to helping each student find the best courses for them, helping to craft the personal statement, the provision of really supportive references, and the preparation for entrance exams and interviews". Students at the college (and their parents) are introduced to the challenging project of university application in January of their first year, with talks from visiting university admissions tutors and their own dedicated Careers Staff, Sarah McWatters and Bina Mervana. Vice Principal John Wilson oversees the whole UCAS operation and trains Oxbridge applicants in the rigours of that particular process (see article on p2). A series of informative degree course talks through the spring and summer terms, including a day of careers workshops in

early May, culminates in an intensive UCAS week in late June where university staff and a panel of former Brampton students help those applying to crystallise their ideas and make the first drafts of the challenging personal statement. This year the college welcomed back students from degree courses ranging from Medicine, Politics and French to Biomedical Science, Computer Science and Theology. Topics for discussion included the way studying for A levels differs from a degree course, the importance of looking for work experience or apprenticeships, tips for managing your finances as a student and other ways to prepare for your first year at university. ■



The former students' panel at the 2021 UCAS workshops

Upping your game for Medicine

My name is Sydney and I am a first-year medical student at Anglia Ruskin University. I joined Brampton College between 2019-2020 to re-sit my Biology, Maths and Chemistry A levels the following summer, after receiving BCC at another college. I am over the moon that I have achieved A*A*A, respectively, and I am studying what I love.

Studying at Brampton was intense - I knew I really had to step up my game if I didn't want to fall behind. Because the year was so well structured across the subjects, it can be very intense but not overwhelming. What I found fascinating was how extremely passionate the teachers are about their subjects and wanting us to succeed. The small-sized and interactive classes made the sessions take on a very personalised approach in which everyone's weak areas were addressed. Very early on in the year, I learnt through one-to-one tutorials that I had to change the way I study the A level material and focus on practising high-yield questions. The weekly tests made this so much easier because not only did they "force" me to revise material, but they also helped me develop my exam technique.



Usually, applying to university can be a stressful period when really important decisions are made. I was extremely fortunate to have an exceptionally supportive careers team and UCAS personal tutor to help me throughout this time. I have the highest gratitude to my amazing teachers Imran and David, Ramsay and Mark, Julian and Richard, and also to Jim Donaldson and Bagher.

Since leaving Brampton, I have embarked on the long journey of medical school and I'm enjoying every bit of it - more than I ever expected. My time at Brampton helped me realise that anything is possible if you put your mind to it and give it your all! ■

By Sydney Barnes

Learning to learn – in unusual times



In another year of intermittent lockdowns and cancelled exams, the Learning Support team has been kept busier than ever supporting students with unique challenges and uncertainties.

Whilst we may think of Learning Support traditionally as help for students struggling academically, with reading, writing or study skills, this area of education has broadened significantly in recent years to encompass social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). At Brampton College, students have access to a range of professionals, all of whom have direct experience in the field of SEMH, in particular, Counselling, and informal consultations with our Educational Psychologist have provided a safe space for students to discuss their concerns and get to the root of any anxiety.

Students have been extremely positive about the support they have received this year and it is clear that the input and guidance received is highly valued. Although it is common for young people to be hesitant about asking for help as this would be an indicator that they are not fully independent, this

is quite the opposite. Young people who are open to asking for guidance, no matter how small the problem, are often better able to develop resilience and self-awareness about their own learning and responses to the challenges they face. I would always encourage any student here to ask for help, regardless of if they have an SEN diagnosis or not, as we can all benefit from talking things through with someone when things get difficult or problems arise.

My favourite tips this year for maintaining and improving well-being while studying include spending more time in nature (also known as 'Forest Bathing' or 'Shinrin-yoku'), the simple act of being outside around plants, trees, and wilderness for those who can find it. Secondly, considering a reduction in phone/media use, although this is no doubt more challenging! Young people who are able to set boundaries for their use of social media see the benefits almost instantly. Finally, advice on study schedules; so many students that I work with have ambitious ideas of revising for an unrealistic number of hours per day, or needing to cover absolutely everything in detail. Realistic and honest planning can relieve a lot of stress and anxiety; it's important to schedule proper breaks, exercise, leisure time, and build study time around this in chunks rather than set hours. Based on these principles, the work that we have done with individual students this year regarding organising their time has been extremely well received!

Waiting for results this summer may be an uncomfortable period of tolerating yet more uncertainty for our students; additional advice and guidance on coping during this time can be found in: Charlie Waller - Mental Health & Coronavirus - Cancelled Exams: <https://charliewaller.org/information/coronavirus-mental-health/cancelled-exams> ■

By Claire Morley, Head of Learning Support

Early applicants: Oxbridge and Medical Forums 2021

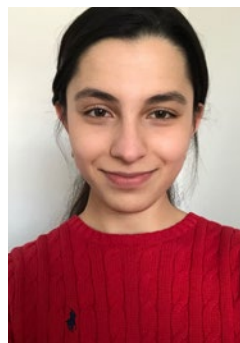
The medical forums this year were particularly vibrant and fun to deliver, as a big group of often very vocal students were finalising personal statements and just beginning to focus on the scary possibility of interviews.

Early sessions focused on building knowledge and understanding of medicine as a career: in both group and individual work, students researched and shared ideas on key scientific issues. Constant updates on the 'R' number, vaccinations and infection rates in relation to covid-19 meant we always had something to discuss! Later, we looked closely at the founding principles of the NHS and the four pillars of medical ethics. Once UCAS applications were in, the forums turned to interview preparation - 'building confidence,' 'presenting yourself' and 'telling your story.' We also did some specific training for interviews on screen as this is the way all medical school interviews were conducted this year.

Meanwhile, the AS Oxbridge forum encouraged prospective applicants to explore their chosen subjects in a different way, challenging them to take opposing views to those they normally hold and to be able to tell interviewers: 'the one thing you have to understand about my subject is...'. Necessarily,

preparation for Oxbridge entry is much more bespoke and individualised, but it has been fun to share ideas in this way with students applying for Law, Economics, Theology, Fine Art and other subjects. This forum is my favourite part of the week as I get to spend time with ambitious and inspiring young people from across the whole college. It's a reminder of the great work that Brampton does in encouraging students to reach for the top. ■

By John Wilson, Vice Principal



Aspiring doctor, Zarlashta Mangal, is writing a blog about medical issues.

Motivational atmosphere at Brampton crucial to achieving personal goals

Eve Jacob re-sat A level Economics and took an intensive one-year course in Politics A level, gaining top grades, and has gone on to study these subjects at Leeds University.

Brampton College definitely lives up to its outstanding reputation. After not achieving the grades needed in one of my subjects, Brampton were very reassuring in the care and dedication they would put into helping me to improve my grades and better myself in my subject. The staff were always on hand and are amazing at teaching and making sure you understand the actual content. Weekly tests served to assess what I was under achieving in and teachers consistently gave critical advice in helping to better curate work and giving greater insight as to where I went wrong. Brampton really helped motivate me to revise and the atmosphere itself of hard-working teachers and students aided my mindset to focus on working hard.

Currently, I am at the University of Leeds, and I am studying Economics and Politics. I am also a part of the Politics Society in Leeds, where I usually find myself debating with people. Due to Corona, I have been unable to fully experience the university, but places like York and the many other beautiful spots in West Yorkshire lend themselves to making the university experience a fun time, whether it is hiking to see the sunsets or taking trip to the llama farms, it's wonderful here.

I would really like to thank Brampton for the wonderful memories and experiences I had there and truly hope to reconnect with it soon. They really did a spectacular job at helping me achieve my goals and were extremely helpful in the process. ■



Image: Eve Jacob

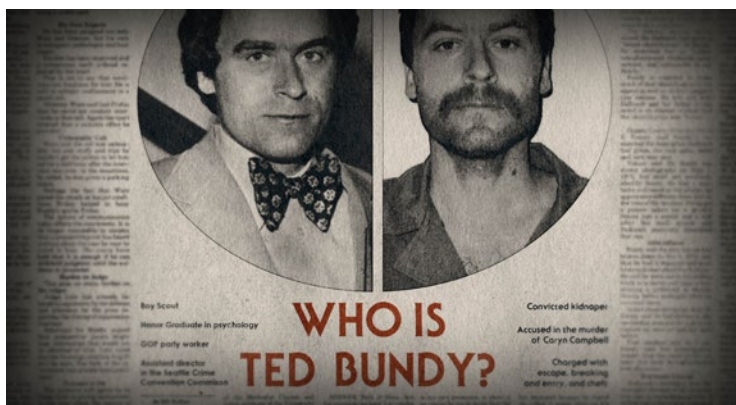
EPQ – a real taste of university study

One of the most interesting options for students after GCSE is to add an Extended Project Qualification to their A level choices.

Most examples of the EPQ consist of a research essay on a topic of interest to the student that does not overlap in content with their A levels, but it can also be a creative product or artefact. Past examples at Brampton have included essays on the role of the English archers at the Battle of Crecy, a study of snake venoms, and the contribution of hedge funds to the 2008 “credit crunch”. Universities like it because it’s the closest that A level students come to real research. It’s a great thing to talk about at university interviews and many universities will lower their required grades if an applicant is taking an EPQ. But it’s certainly no picnic – it’s a long and demanding process involving careful planning, extensive research, detailed record-keeping and probing reflection on the process of research, as well as the final production of an essay or artefact itself –

but it is extremely worthwhile and something of which to be proud.

This year’s topics were once again broad in range and individually unique. Asha Persaud created a media documentary on the serial killer Ted Bundy. Lily Neil created a set of short stories exploring cultural differences around the theme of the body, whilst Tabitha Schroder-Smith wrote on the possible causes of differences in men’s and women’s use of language. Isabella Millett addressed the question, “How severe is the threat of antibiotic resistance?” and Gabriel Balouka Myers presented a dissertation on advancement in electrochemical cells, enzymatic biofuel cells and their potential



Serial killer Ted Bundy was the subject of Asha Persaud’s EPQ

application for implantable power generation for medical devices.

The students’ presentations were fascinating, and their fluent and confident answers to questions from the staff audience showed the depth to which they had all immersed themselves in their topics. The educational value of the EPQ was very evident: future Brampton students take note! ■

Subject Focus: Computing

If you’re the kind of student who likes problem-solving and logical challenges, or takes satisfaction from making and acting on detailed plans, you may be thinking of taking Maths or Physics at A level.

If so, have a think too about Computing. The work involved in this A level is immensely satisfying; the Cambridge International (CIE) A level course at Brampton is set up in a very user-friendly way; and if you take the subject on to degree level, your career prospects will expand enormously: today, of course, there is hardly an area of life not touched upon by computers, from all manner of household and business applications to micro-chips in cows.

The course at Brampton is taught by Imran Khan, a highly experienced Head of Department and A level coursework moderator for OCR, who holds degrees in both Software Engineering and in Mathematics & Physics, alongside many industry-recognised professional qualifications. Students have enjoyed fantastic A level results, with almost half of candidates

in the last four years gaining A* or A grades. A special feature of the CIE course is that it allows you to split your examinations between two AS level exams taken at the end of the first year and two A2 level modules taken at the end of the second year. This arrangement takes some of the pressure off students taking other A levels examined entirely at the end of the second year. You’ll be taught in a dedicated networked computer suite but also be able to make a lot of use of your own mobile device, connected to the wireless network here, so there’s a seamless transition between working at home and in college.

Abstract thinking, problem-solving, and mathematical reasoning are central to the course. Gaining practical experience of computer programming (using Python, a programming language), you will also learn about databases, operating systems, networks control systems and computer architecture, as well as about the social and economic consequences that come with our reliance on technology. Why not come and talk to us about the course? ■

Beyond the classroom

It was gratifying to see many extracurricular activities thriving despite everything this year. Inter alia, the Student Council ran successfully both online and in person, under the aegis of Josh, Rahul and Ben, making important contributions to the College’s approach to coping with pandemic measures in the building as well as promoting fundraising and Green initiatives.



Brampton students are supporting WWF’s effort to save the African Elephant

The World Wildlife Fund was the College’s chosen charity, specifically with the aim of raising funds to save the African elephant. Green initiatives targeted the commissioning of a carbon footprint analysis, cutting down on the use of paper in the College, and new green waste bins. Young Enterprise saw Brampton’s team of budding entrepreneurs - Ari, Jonah, Emily and Eliana - building up their financial resources by selling Christmas boxes and tote bags before finally hitting pay dirt with their hosting of online Inspire Talks from successful young university students. (They’re not retiring to Mar-a-Lago just yet, however).

Our footballing fraternity has revelled in the top facilities five minutes away at Middlesex University. In the absence of competitive fixtures this year, Tuesday night practice games regularly drew 20 players. The Sociological Discussion group attracted students keen to discuss a variety of issues in the autumn term, before debating the effects of lockdown on mental health more recently. ■



Innokentii Grigorev studied Computer Science, Photography and Mathematics at Brampton, achieving grades of A* A* A. He has gone on to study Computer Science with Intelligent Systems at King’s College London. “I moved to the UK two years ago”, he tells us, “and, as an international student in a new country, I found Brampton extremely supportive in helping me get used to a new studying environment. I really enjoyed doing Computer Science: It is always awesome when you can discuss topics beyond the curriculum level with your teacher and get useful advice on every question you ask. Thank you, Imran!”

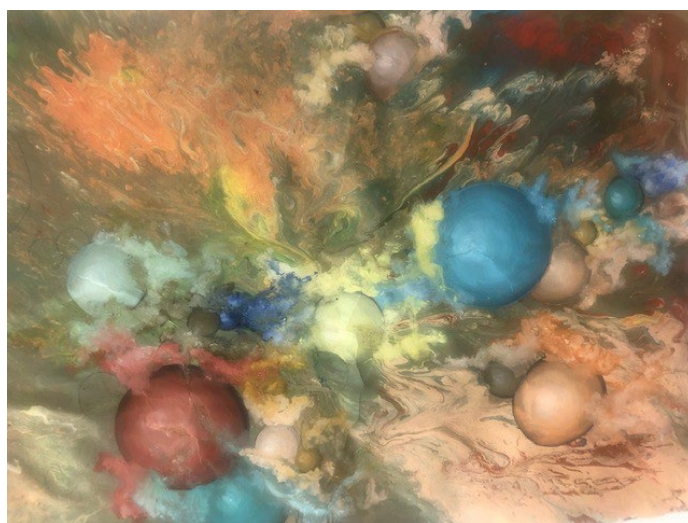
A beautiful array of artwork at our students' annual art exhibition

This year's Art and Photography students held their end of year exhibition in June, presenting the work they've been making over the course of the year. It was great to see the work outside the art room and properly displayed. It's a really good opportunity for students to see the fruits of their labour on the walls and say goodbye before they leave for university.

It was exciting to finally see Lola Wendon's sculptures which she was making at home throughout lockdown. Whilst we were working remotely, Lola transformed her bedroom into a sculpture studio, rolling back the carpet so she could build the figures using steel rods, bags of plaster and resin. The outcomes were exceptional.

Tali Jobanputra's photography project was orientated around her love of baking. She finally got her recipe book printed which she had been diligently compiling over several months. Her food photography was excellent, and the accompanying recipes as good. Her shortbread with pistachio and rose petal is an absolute triumph.

Lockdown meant that, for many, working on their projects became much more difficult, but Ben Arkus made the most of the trying circumstances, presenting a series of eerily empty images of London sites such as Wembley Stadium and busy underground stations that would normally be packed with people. ■



Artwork by Muskaan Iqbal

A warm welcome — and some fond farewells

The college is delighted to welcome some very talented new members of staff in September.

Resham Vadodaria Gehani

Resham Vadodaria Gehani is joining our Economics and Business Department. Born and brought up in Uganda, Resham has a passion for development economics, and has a Master's from King's College London in Emerging Economies and International Development. Resham also holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Economics from the University of Warwick and a degree in Finance, Accounting and Management from the University of Nottingham. Resham spent three years at a Uganda-based healthcare / pharmaceutical business, experiencing roles in finance, marketing and operations. Coming from an entrepreneurial Indian family, Resham is keen to encourage student enterprise, and ran several Enterprise Competitions in her previous post. For her, the highlight of teaching is being able to create a dynamic learning environment whilst enriching her pupils with a global perspective and knowledge from industry experience. Outside the classroom, Resham is fond of yoga, swimming and Bollywood dancing. ■



Chandan Shah

Chandan Shah joins Brampton College after returning from a post as Head of Chemistry at North London Collegiate School, Dubai. She was born in the UK but spent her formative years in Nairobi, Kenya, while her family are originally from Gujarat: as a result Chandan is fascinated by different cultures and loves to travel. She graduated from The University of Nottingham with a BSc. (Hons) in Chemistry before taking a PGCE at the Institute of Education. Chandan's educational philosophy is to help each individual to flourish academically and pastorally. Over the last 11 years, she has refined her teaching and learning strategies to fulfil this vision. In her spare time, Chandan enjoys spending time with her two young nephews, cooking and swimming. ■



This year the college also says a very fond farewell to **Jim Donaldson** (pictured), a hugely influential figure in Brampton's history. Jim, one of the founding fathers of the College back in 1989, was Vice Principal and Head of Chemistry for many years before leaving for a very successful post in Malaysia in 2004. He returned to us in 2018. Like one or two others, he even taught the parents of some of today's Brampton students. Jim has been a teacher and colleague of exceptional empathy and understanding, driven to promote student wellbeing as well as academic success. An example to others, he is someone who always put individual student interests first and supported them to the hilt. Good luck in all your future endeavours, Jim. You will be much missed.

We are also sad to say goodbye to **Graham Cook**, whose ten years of teaching Economics and Business here have been decorated by both academic success and warm relations with the students. Graham is retiring from teaching to devote more time to nurturing of a different kind - in his successful gardening business! We're very sad to say goodbye this year to the hugely and deservedly popular maths teacher, **Tressan Anastasiou**. She's been such a brightening presence in the college and a fantastic team player. Enjoy your free time next year, Tressan! Alas, too, **Angela Murphy**, expert Spanish teacher, is retiring this year. Anyone who has worked with Angela knows how deeply she thought about the progress of her students and how thoroughly she set

about building their confidence and skills. We wish her happiness in the years to come. ■

