

Success of lockdown provision caps Brampton's 19th year at the top

It's no longer news when Brampton College comes ahead of the competition among London's independent sixth form colleges.

As the table opposite shows, the College's average score per A level entry in 2019 was comfortably above any other similar institution in the capital. This year, Brampton has continued to provide first-class education all the way through the coronavirus lockdown through comprehensive online classes and provision of resources (see Claire Morley's article on the College's support for students during this period on p.2). Brampton's A level results give the overwhelming majority of its students a great chance of gaining entry into a university degree course of their choosing. Behind the figures, there lie many wonderful individual stories of students who have come to the College wanting to improve but in need of more individual attention to bring that out of them. That's reflected in the fact that Brampton College is in the top 2% of all schools and colleges in the country for Progress Score

(Added Value), the government's measure of how much improvement students make between GCSE and A level. Younger students enrolled on Brampton's one-year GCSE programme also get a head start in trying to improve: over 60% of our GCSE entries gained grades of 9 to 7, compared with a 21% national average.

Students who come to Brampton might simply need to be in a place where everyone really wants to do well. They may need the intense academic focus of the exam practice and tutorials Brampton offers in order to achieve a dream of getting into a Medicine degree, as 21 students have done over the last two years; they might need more encouragement and pastoral support, or expert advice on subject choice and learning techniques - crucial to building confidence and success. In the pages that follow, students and teachers explain in detail from their own experience how this improvement happens. We hope you enjoy reading about it. ■

Department for Education Performance Table for independent sixth form colleges

The table below shows the average point score per examination entry in 2019
50 = A grade, 40 = B, 30 = C

BRAMPTON COLLEGE	43.03
B GRADE	
ASHBOURNE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL	39.11
MPW (LONDON)	39.02
COLLINGHAM (LONDON)	36.77
DLD COLLEGE	36.48
CAMBRIDGE TUTORS COLLEGE	35.63
FINE ARTS COLLEGE	34.26
CHELSEA INDEPENDENT COLLEGE	34.08
ENGLAND AVERAGE	34.01
DAVID GAME COLLEGE	32.98
CATS COLLEGE LONDON	32.18
WENTWORTH TUTORIAL COLLEGE	31.79
C GRADE	
ACORN HOUSE COLLEGE	25.6
REGENT COLLEGE	18.91

Re-taking A level is no bar to Medicine at Brampton

Medicine and Dentistry have always been among the most competitive degree courses. A strong set of GCSEs, top A level grades, excellent work and voluntary experience and a carefully composed UCAS application are all must-haves.

After a very successful set of such applications in 2018, when 12 students gained entry onto Medicine degrees, Brampton students repeated this feat in 2019, with 10 students in for Medicine and 4 for Dentistry - a fantastic tribute to the efforts of Brampton's teachers and careers staff as well as to the students. Even more interesting is the fact that half of these successful students were re-taking A levels. It is a pernicious myth that students re-taking A levels cannot achieve places on these highly competitive degree programmes - Brampton has been helping students to do this for nearly thirty years, through its specialised academic and careers support. It's true of Law and other prestigious courses on the other side of the curriculum too. The figures speak for themselves: if students with disappointing A level grades still cherish the thought of going to do courses like this at university, they should continue to nurture that dream. ■

Jonathan Mamorsky, who achieved AAA, and is going on to read Dentistry at Bristol University, with Jim Donaldson



Learning Support and the lockdown

More than ever, young people face challenges with mental health, now exacerbated by Covid-19 and the concerns over the continuity of their education. The recent impact of lockdown and the cancellation of exams has left many students with a feeling of uncertainty and lack of motivation to keep going. Here at Brampton College, support for students in all aspects of their life has continued, utilising remote learning tools such as Zoom and Google Classroom to ensure no-one needs to feel isolated.

At the start of the year, the support team expanded with the introduction of a Head of Learning Support (HoLS) a new role in the college. Bola McCarthy joined as acting HoLS, before Claire Morley took on the role permanently in January. Bola's wealth of experience working with adolescents allowed more students to access one-to-one help and guidance when needed, further enhancing an already very successful personalised level of student-teacher interaction. Support at Brampton College continues to be holistic, and covers every aspect of need through a highly experienced team of professionals including an Educational Psychologist, Adolescent Psychotherapist and Counsellor. Support here is more than just about improving academically; the importance of also having someone to go to when things become difficult or overwhelming cannot be underestimated.

Consequently, during lockdown, it has been a top priority to continue to provide the same level of

individual support to our students. For many, the cancellation of exams has been both a blessing and a curse. For those who experience high levels of stress and anxiety around exams, it has been a huge relief, but for others this has been replaced with other anxieties of uncertainty, what to do with the time, and trepidation about the future. Communication with specialist staff continued remotely through Zoom, phone calls and emails, and Claire hosted a Google Classroom open for all students to join, interact and ask questions. Regular tips for well-being, responsible social media use and studying at home were key themes, and this online space helped to raise awareness that everyone was in the same situation. Many students valued having their regular sessions continued online, as even without exams to revise for, the sense of routine and being held accountable to be on time for something was surprisingly welcomed and working in this way has been a learning curve for everyone!

The importance of well-being and mental health is embedded in the ethos and culture at Brampton College, with the college recently making a sizable donation to four mental health charities, including Young Minds. You can read more about their work on the website and we hope to work more closely with Young Minds in future to promote the awareness of mental health among young people (<https://youngminds.org.uk>). ■

By Claire Morley

The Sociological Discussion Club

The Sociological Discussion Club came into existence in 2018. The A-level Sociology syllabus is by its very nature relevant to societal developments, and lively debate has always been an integral part of sociology lessons. Yet since 2016 or so, current affairs have become such that we indeed live in 'interesting times', as the Chinese curse goes, and this was reflected in my classroom. The core idea underlying the SDC was that it would be a 'sociology lesson without teacher nagging' – a lunchtime club for spirited dialogue about the issues of the day, including, over the course of the first year, postmodern culture, the impact of feminism, the second amendment, the Kavanaugh inquiry, the gender pay gap and unconscious bias. I was absolutely delighted to see the level of student interest across all subject options, and the quality of the arguments exchanged.

In 2020, three truly remarkable external speakers shared their expertise with us. One was Naomi Ebanks, a London-based Sociology graduate and anti-knife campaigner, who related her grassroots expertise on the causes of, and potential solutions to, youth violence in a highly accessible way. In February, Dr Yaron Brook, an American writer, entrepreneur and podcaster, delivered a riveting talk on the Age of Reason, and explained how the philosophical underpinnings of the Enlightenment generated the unprecedented freedoms and prosperity we take for granted today. We were extremely fortunate to host one of the few speakers who could rival Dr Brook's presentation just prior to the lockdown. Robert Amsterdam is a Canadian-born, Washington-based international lawyer with an extraordinary career. He is barred from entering six countries as a result of fighting numerous high-profile human rights cases, often against corrupt governments, and his talk combined his vast legal expertise with captivating descriptions of courtroom procedures and the immense personal risk he frequently faced.

It has been a great year for the SDC, and given recent political and cultural events, it would appear that we won't run out of topics for discussion anytime soon. ■

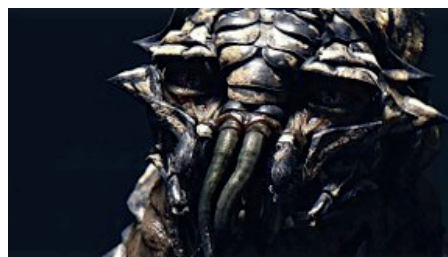
By Nicole Kypher

New A Level Subject: Film Studies

Brampton College is delighted to introduce Film Studies A level to add to the breadth of subjects on offer next year. Whilst the course is new for the College, it is a return to an old favourite for Dave Dowson, whose expertise in teaching English is well known to Brampton students. Dave has a Masters in Film Studies and taught the subject for seven years before coming to Brampton. Students will also have access to high quality equipment and industry standard software to enhance their experience of the course.

We don't want students to be fooled into thinking that this is an easy option, however. There is so much more to Film Studies than simply watching films, and students should expect to be constantly challenged by the course. It will explore a range of different kinds of cinema, from silent film of the 1920s to modern productions, across a range of different artistic styles, movements, genres and methods of production and distribution. The course encourages discussion on what meaning films create, how they represent people and societies, and personal responses to experimental and mainstream texts.

Film Studies is also highly respected by universities as an essay-based and critical subject with an extensive crossover with literary theory. It has also been an academic discipline within universities for over 50 years and is regarded as an academic subject in its own right. Oxford and Cambridge are now offering Masters and PhD courses in Film Studies and Screen Arts. Russell Group universities accept Film



District 9, in the new Film Studies A level

Studies as an appropriate A level qualification when prospective students apply to study a humanities or arts related discipline.

The subject is also very attractive to a range of employers – perhaps more so than ever with the exponential amount of content now produced on a daily basis. Career paths for students of Film may include practical avenues such as film-making, directing, producing and editing but a qualification in Film Studies also allows you to move into more theoretical pathways such as film criticism, journalism, teaching and education. However, it should be noted that the practical element (contained in the first year only) is a small proportion of the course (30%) in comparison to the written element, assessed through two exams (35% each).

This is a really exciting development for the college and we are sure to see a lot of interest in the course. Take a look at the subject page on our website for further information. ■

By Dave Dowson

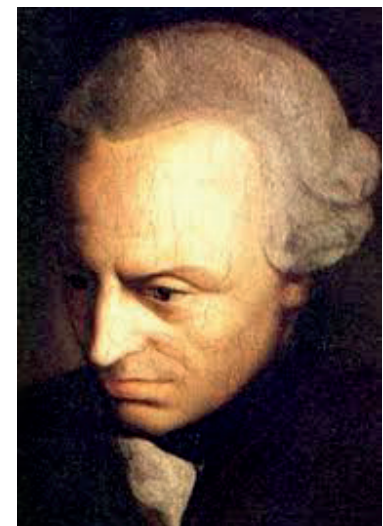


Image: Immanuel Kant, giant of the Age of Reason.

Duro Adebayo

Duro achieved an A in Mathematics on re-take and an A in Religious Studies after only a year. He's now at Bristol, studying Philosophy and Politics.*

Most importantly, Brampton was an enjoyable environment; everyone was in good spirits throughout my time there and the teachers were always enthusiastic. Everyone was extremely focused, but at the same time, it was not a high pressure environment. This allowed me to work hard all year round without losing motivation.

Teachers made it explicitly clear that they were there to help you and actively encouraged students to come to them with additional questions or problem areas.

The small class sizes allow students to work on their priority areas instead of going through topics that we were comfortable with already.

The weekly testing and fortnightly reports ensure that your progress is tracked very accurately, and you cannot be illusioned as to how you are doing. It is hard to just coast through the year. It also means that by the time you come to revise for public exams you have done a wide range of past paper questions.

The college really encourages you to learn from your classmates as well as individually. The number of free classrooms alongside the hall and the library gave me the opportunity to learn in both ways and I found the approach extremely rewarding.

As well as academics, I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to play football once a week through the college. Although I was only there for a year it meant I was able to bond with my peers and I keep in contact with many of them to this day.



Currently, I am at the University of Bristol doing Philosophy and Politics and play for the University football team there. Thanks to Brampton, I have found some of my modules easier than my peers as I had already covered some of the content. ■

Simone Baskir

*Simone achieved A*s in all four of her A levels and has gone on to read Mathematics and Statistical Science at UCL.*

I studied four subjects at Brampton: Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Economics, and Geography. Here are the three fundamental lessons from the elusive fifth 'subject': the route through the other four.



Lesson #1: Nature vs. Nurture.

Much debate exists surrounding the role of 'nature' in determining success, but 'nurture' shapes the journey to it. My 'nature' has always been academic, hard-working, and motivated; the niche Brampton experience provided 'nurture' – an environment with an ethos aligned to my own. Removing clutter from traditional education, one can find the optimal route to achieve one's personal goals. The inviting atmosphere created by small classes and dedicated teachers provides individual attention and tailored feedback. Brampton's combination of guided and independent learning helped craft the recipe to my A-Level success: A*A*A*A* and a Distinction for the Advanced Extension Award in Mathematics.

Lesson #2: Embrace change and challenge convention.

Progress requires change by definition. Aversion to such change is unhelpful albeit, perhaps at times, comforting. I recall my surprise at how quickly I settled in and welcomed my new adventure. I swiftly adapted to my new timetable and teachers, and built meaningful friendships. Teachers encouraged me to thoughtfully question content. Most notably, I left college everyday beaming with a smile and a funny story to share over dinner.

Lesson #3: Muscle memory.

Prior to Brampton, I had reservations towards weekly tests, but once they began, I grasped their full value. Whilst regularly preparing for them, I built a strong archive of revision notes, consolidating my knowledge, exam technique, and time management. The familiarity I developed with past papers enabled my confidence to blossom and I discovered how to cope under pressure.

After two pivotal and transformative years at Brampton, I embarked upon a degree in Mathematics and Statistical Science at UCL and continue to put these lessons into practice as I endeavour to solve more problems. ■

Chava Cohen

*Chava studied English Literature, Psychology and Sociology at Brampton, achieving A*A*A* grades and is now reading Law with Criminology at the University of Birmingham.*



I found that the teaching and social environment at Brampton really helped me gain confidence in my academic ability as well as my desire to work harder and consistently. The teacher support and the quality of teaching I received was brilliant, and I really felt seen by all my teachers and that help with any piece of work was easily accessible. I especially found that the weekly tests and personal tutor sessions really allowed me to understand my progress, and this positively reinforced my desire to revise and recap all my work, whilst pinpointing the exact areas I needed to work on, which I was able to discuss with my personal tutor (who was also one of my favourite teachers!)

I met some of my best friends at Brampton and I have even gone to university with one of them! I am currently studying Law with Criminology at the University of Birmingham, and I am loving my time there (although Law is a bit harder than I anticipated...) ■

Saul Austin

Saul achieved an A in Economics on re-take and an A in Politics in only a year. He is now at Bristol University studying Economics and Econometrics.*

Arriving at Brampton College after my initial A Levels results was never my plan – for many, the idea of retaking their final year in school is not something they would anticipate. But, when I look back at it, it's something I am grateful for the opportunity to have done. My time at Brampton far exceeded my expectations – I went in believing that it would be a year devoted to studying and devoid of joy, and I'm happy to say I was wrong. Everyone who comes to Brampton remembers the first time they walked into

the main hall and saw their year group. There was something comforting in knowing that everyone in that room was experiencing the same thing, albeit for a wide variety of reasons. I, like many, was there because I was dissatisfied with my grades and believed that I could go to a better university than was being offered, and I was right. Throughout that year the cohort of A-Level retakes worked hard, and thanks to the phenomenal standard of teaching available at Brampton, were able to leave with much greater grades than when they arrived. It cannot be stressed how useful it is to have teachers on hand who are so happy to spend extra time going through your work with you, and to be able to plan so many different exam scenarios leaves you feeling like nothing can surprise you in exams anymore.

I look back on that year, and I'm glad that I went to Brampton. I am now studying Economics and Econometrics at the University of Bristol, and while current circumstances have derailed my initial summer plans of returning to the US to work as a summer camp counselor again, I have managed to fill my time with learning new skills, in particular learning both coding and music production. ■



A fond farewell...

If you try to get to college early to do an hour or so's work before lessons begin, you will see a little white Fiat parked at the end of Lodge Road. And if you stay late at college to finish your marking watching those around you gradually disappear, so you think you must be the last person left in college, when you eventually leave the building, the little white car will still be there: it's a symbol of its indefatigable owner - Vice Principal, **Sarah Sephton**, and her untiring

dedication to the cause. Next year, alas, the little white car will no longer be there, but perched outside another very fortunate school, because Sarah, very sadly, is leaving us for science labs new.

Sarah's influence has been felt especially in the extraordinary success of our aspiring medics and dentists. Very few sixth forms in the country will have sent so many students to read these ferociously competitive degree subjects - a success founded on Sarah's deep reserves of belief and commitment to the potential of the individual student. She is an unmistakeably genuine person: no nervous sixteen-

year old, uncomfortable in their interview attire, with hopeful parents looking on, could fail to be reassured by her warmth and sincerity of purpose, and Sarah's judgement in helping new students onto the right academic programmes has been unerring. Students have naturally turned to her for advice, encouragement, sometimes a shoulder to cry on, and as well as the medics and dentists, there are one or two more wayward students who have had reason to be grateful for her firm guidance too. So - thank you so much, Sarah: we wish you all the very best in your future career. ■

This year a great career in tutorial college history comes to an end: **Martyn Crucefix**, teacher, poet, critic and translator, is moving on. Responsible for establishing the English Department on its present sturdy foundations back in 2002, he raised English to its proper place as the college's leading arts subject. Martyn was the best teacher many of his students ever had, drawing out the highest grades his students could have hoped for, and teaching them to think and have the confidence to articulate their own responses that is crucial to students' development. He's even taught many of them to love poetry: if you go to one of Martyn's poetry readings today, you'll meet Brampton students from both the recent and the distant past. Martyn promoted students' own writing as well as expanding their cultural horizons through

readings, drama workshops, and theatre trips. Work of the Week, (WoW!), a showcase for essays that Martyn instituted before most of the present cohort were born, is still inspiring English students. As the study of English at A level changed, Martyn's provision of high quality, comprehensive resources for every set text was immensely useful to Brampton students. He developed the skills and knowledge of colleagues, and as a wise pastoral counsellor, Martyn helped countless students negotiate the difficulties of adolescence. Now, no doubt, he will have more time for his own poetry, but we do hope to lure him back for the occasional guest-star workshop.

We also say a fond farewell to **Paul Conyers**, teacher of Physics and Computing, who leaves us after seven

sterling years of service. Paul's infectious curiosity as well as his diligence and graciousness made him an admirable model for his students and an outstanding colleague. We wish you the very best, Paul. **Richard Tunnadine** is retiring for a very well-deserved rest. Highly experienced at senior management level before coming to Brampton's Biology Department, Richard's good humour, deep understanding of young people, and unflappable demeanour have been of huge value to the college. We wish him the very best in his retirement. And a fond farewell, too, to Ros Dobson, a really valuable addition to the English Department this year, who leaves us to take up an expanded role at her other school. ■

AND A WARM WELCOME TO...

New Vice Principal, John Wilson

We are delighted to announce the appointment of John Wilson as our new Vice Principal for Science and Mathematics. A highly experienced school leader, John was most recently Co-Head of a Central London school and before that Principal of a West London sixth form college. John graduated from the University of Oxford in 2000 with a degree in Biological Sciences, has a PGCE from the University of Cambridge and holds

the National Professional Qualification for Headship from the Institute of Education at University College London. John has taught and worked in sixth form colleges and schools in London for over 20 years, specialising as a teacher in A level Biology. He is also vastly experienced in supporting students through the university application process, having devised and overseen numerous programmes for students applying for competitive degrees such as Oxbridge and Medical School. He is an experienced lay member of admissions panels for medical school entry at UCL and other leading universities. John loves to run and keep fit and has completed a number of marathons

and half-marathons. He has two young children, who keep him rather busy, but when he has time, he likes to play and listen to music and to read. John is also a long-suffering supporter of his home-town football club, Middlesbrough FC. ■



Jo Young

Jo Young has been teaching English for over a decade, in schools across north London. She is passionate about literature and enjoys communicating a love of words to students at all levels. Jo studied English Language and Literature at Leeds University, gained her



PGCE at the University of London, and holds a Masters in Education, with an applied linguistics specialism. Aside from being committed to teaching and to her young family, Jo is also an aspiring writer, currently working towards a second Masters in creative writing.

Lindsay Jacobs

Lindsay Jacobs (BSc, PGCE, MA) has experience of teaching Chemistry in a variety of schools in London and the South East. She has had various leadership roles in previous schools including Assistant Director of Sixth form and Head of KS5

Science, giving her extensive knowledge of the examination and UCAS processes. She is married with three children and in her spare time she runs a parent and toddler group, helps in a youth group, sings in a choir and enjoys writing and blogging.

