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Dear Parent/Carer

BTEC – how to do brilliantly

Your child is studying BTEC courses at Thomas Tallis. BTEC courses are terrific and our students do superbly at them but BTEC assessment requirements can trip students up. We are writing to you to explain what the risks are so that you can support your son or daughter in avoiding them.

Risk 1: Failing the BTEC Exam

Almost every BTEC subject now has at least one formal exam every year. **One** retake opportunity is available. When this depends on when the first exam is taken. If a student fails the first exam and then fails the retake, they will fail the whole BTEC qualification.

We do not want our students to be in this position! We will therefore teach them effectively towards the exam each year, show them how to revise for examinations, and arrange suitable revision sessions. However, we **cannot revise for your child**: each BTEC student must be sure to put the right amount of time into exam preparation before each formal exam. Your support with this is vital.

Risk 2: Plagiarism and copying work

BTEC courses are partially assessed through the submission of coursework. When writing coursework some students can be tempted to copy or plagiarise the words, ideas and work of others without acknowledgement. However it occurs, in whole or in part, deliberately or inadvertently, academic plagiarism is not acceptable at Tallis.

We are very clear with students from the beginning that they **must not copy work**. In addition, BTEC students sign a declaration as each piece of coursework is submitted that all the work submitted for the assignment is their own, so they are reminded each time.

Tallis has a 'two strikes and you're out' policy about single instances of plagiarism and in more serious cases we will immediately permanently exclude students. We will do this mid-year if we have to.

We have explained this to your child. Please reinforce our policy about plagiarism to them so that there can be no confusion about it.

Risk 3: Meeting BTEC Deadlines

We are required by the exam board, Pearson, to treat coursework submissions as public examinations. This means that once set submission dates cannot be changed for individuals. If a public exam is missed

by a student, **the student automatically fails it**. This can mean that the student will fail the whole BTEC course immediately and have to leave Tallis straight away.

It is therefore especially important that your child meets all deadlines for their BTEC work, and that you contact us immediately a problem arises.

Further details of BTEC assessment arrangements are below:

- We will explicitly teach your child how to do the assessment. Your child may be given a mock assessment so they are better prepared for the 'live' assignments that follow. We can give feedback on this preparatory work.
- Before each 'live' assignment students will be issued with a checklist to ensure that they have a very good understanding of the requirements for a Pass, Merit, Distinction grade.
- The deadline for the 'live' assignment will be clarified with students when each assignment is issued. We will let you know about each deadline well in advance, usually by posting it to each student's 'Tracking Sheet'.
- During the 'live' assessment tasks the teacher can only give general guidance about the task. They are not permitted to give detailed guidance to students or to confirm if tasks have been 'passed' or not. This means that students need to ask questions or clarify before the 'live' assessment starts.
- After the assignment is completed, the teacher can indicate which criteria have been achieved and which have not, with reasons for the decision. The teacher cannot provide other guidance as to how to achieve a higher grade e.g. a Merit or Distinction grade.
- Only ONE attempt is allowed per assignment. Exceptionally, the Course Leader for that course may permit a second attempt. This second attempt can only be made **if the deadline for the first attempt has been kept to**.
- Deadlines **must be met**. If they are not met, then the student is **immediately at risk of failing the entire qualification**. If there is a specific reason why a deadline cannot be met then the students **must** discuss this with the Course Leader for that subject **before the deadline is reached**. The Course Leader can authorise an extension, but this needs to be recorded formally and must be for a good reason which can be supported with evidence e.g. serious illness, family bereavement.
- If a student falls seriously behind without good evidence of why this is so, we will regard this as persistent defiance of our expectation that all students meet course deadlines. Please take note that we have a Disciplinary Flowchart about defiant conduct and students who are persistently defiant will be asked to leave, if necessary by Permanent Exclusion.
- Our Disciplinary Flowcharts are available for you to look at on the tallispost16.com website.

How to keep track of your child's deadlines and whether they are up to date with work

We are moving towards every BTEC subject having a 'Tracking Sheet', kept online, which keeps track of work handed in, whether it has passed, and so on. Your child should be able to share details of their 'Tracking Sheet' with you so that you can see where they are up to. Work and deadlines are also posted to 'Insight', our online homework diary, which you have access to.

Course Leaders for each BTEC programme

Please contact the course leaders if you have more specific questions you want to ask.

Art & Design: Ms Braden – gbraden@thomastallis.org.uk

Business: Mr Henderson – shenderson@thomastallis.org.uk
ICT: Ms Thompson – xthompson@thomastallis.org.uk
Health & Social Care: Ms Goodrum – kgoodrum@thomastallis.org.uk
Media: Mr MacDonnell – jmacdonnell@thomastallis.org.uk
Music: Ms Gould – cgould@thomastallis.org.uk
Sport: Mr Springall – jspringall@thomastallis.org.uk

Yours faithfully,

S Henderson

Mr. S. Henderson
BTEC Quality Nominee



Mr. J. Bradshaw
Assistant Headteacher: Head of Sixth Form