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GREENE'S  
COLLEGE  
OXFORD

## Rise to the Challenge

90.9% of Greene's A level retakes  
improve by at least two grades.



[www.greenesoxford.com](http://www.greenesoxford.com)

Discuss your retake:

✉ [enquiries@greenes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@greenes.org.uk)

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# Reframing retakes – a new path to success



A personal view by Senior Tutor, Matthew Uffindell

As Senior Tutor at Greene's, and previously as a Director at d'Overbroeck's in Oxford, I have many impressions of tutoring, and most are very favourable. Of course, not all are success stories, but for many I can proudly say I have changed lives (at least, that is what I am told). However, one group of students, especially at A level, consistently stands out as being the most exciting and rewarding – the group retaking examinations. Perhaps it shouldn't be like this. The label 'retake' has too many negative connotations – but actually students retaking are often more greedy for success, more motivated and grateful to have been given another chance to succeed, than any I have known.

## Should you retake?

Even if you are in a position where you *can* retake, it doesn't mean that you *should* retake. It may not be for you; but there is no disgrace if you need to try again. Whether or not to retake should be central to your

strategy for further education – and not simply a question of pride or bloody-mindedness. Of course you will need to retake if you have definitely decided on a university or career that requires a certain set of results. However, if you really have not performed well – for example, in Mathematics or Physics – ask yourself if you are studying the right subjects.

If you do think about retaking or even changing your subject, taking nine months to do so is far from catastrophic; there is great value in a gap year. If you decide to go back to school to retake, you will obviously be subject to the usual restrictions of timetable. However, perhaps the time has come to leave school: you are now free to make a choice as to where and how you study. And perhaps now is the time to rethink your gap year. Let the retake be part of your plans (although my advice is usually to retake as soon as possible in the year).

Whatever you do, ask for advice. There is plenty of good advice available: impartial, practical – and free. You don't have to pay for good advice, but you should make sure you choose a reputable person or organisation – and remember that while your reasons for failing the first time may be painful, you are not the first person to be caught out. You have been given an opportunity to create another future for yourself!

Before you make a final decision, here are some thoughts, questions (and answers), which may help you:

Is there still a place available at your preferred university? Answer: contact the admissions' department – you may be lucky.

Do you think you can improve your grades? Answer: you need to be honest about how hard you worked.

Is it worth asking for a remark? Answer: be careful: your grade can go down as well as up. Obtain a copy of your examination scripts though. What you *actually* wrote, rather than what you *thought* you wrote, might be a revelation!

Do you still want to pursue your previously chosen course? Answer: your preferences may well have changed since you applied to university. Now is a good opportunity to change direction.

Is there an alternative course or university which you can access through clearing? Answer: the obvious danger here is choosing second best. Taking a gap year, improving your grades, earning some money, and planning some travel may be more beneficial for you.

Few of us are able to travel in a straight line in our lives, to follow the path that leads directly to success. The American writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, wisely declared that one should never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat, and I would avow that one should not even speak about 'defeat' or 'failure'. It must be time to 're-frame' the concept of retaking. We need to see retaking as a new path to success.

And perhaps, it is also time to finish with an admission: I failed my A levels miserably. Yet eventually I found my way through to a successful university and tutoring career. So, I would urge anyone reading this, not to be down-hearted by what might seem a setback. I promise you, it's only temporary, and you may learn a lot more in your retake year than any amount of first-time 'success' might have given you – a new path that is yours. It certainly worked for me.



## A letter to parents from Carmen Dare, Principal at Greene's College Oxford



Dear Parents,

Are you wondering why your son or daughter did not achieve the grades that were predicted? Perhaps they were bored at school? Insufficiently challenged, or unprepared and too late with their revision? Too many unrecognised gaps in their knowledge? They just didn't 'gel' with their teacher, or perhaps even chose the wrong subject? There may be many reasons, and although their morale may be low, I can offer positive news, which after many years of experience of advising parents and students in this position, I would like to share with you.

At Greene's our educational philosophy is based on a simple assumption: if students' courses are individually designed to suit their unique qualities and needs, they are much more likely to succeed. We have a similar approach to anyone deciding to retake examinations. With exactly the right amount of support and guidance, our retake results prove (and our students consistently testify) that our approach is extremely effective in achieving the best outcomes. More importantly, tutors are carefully hand-picked so that students breathe new life into their learning. As our 2021 Independent Schools' Inspectorate report states: "Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are skilful in developing students' confidence, analytical and independent learning skills. External examination results are excellent."

We blend small group and individual tutorials (with immediate written feedback) with one-to-one weekly Personal Tutoring sessions to ensure all students have personalised guidance. Our wider curriculum includes regular Leadership sessions to prepare students for their future careers, alongside a wide variety of student-led societies.

Greene's is not an 'examination factory'. Choice, opportunity and change make a 'retake' year at Greene's a life-time experience. Students can fulfil their travel dreams, study online, work part-time, visit our sister college in Portugal – indeed, truly prepare themselves to make the best of university.

Thank you for considering Greene's as your college. I'm confident you will appreciate the warm welcome you receive, and the positive and realistic plans we can devise together for the next year, when you visit our college. I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

*Carmen Dare*

Principal, Greene's College Oxford



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# Lucia tells how Greene’s helped her achieve success

**Lucia, Greene’s College Oxford alumna**

BATTLING THROUGH a very challenging time of my life and short-term academic deadlines. I quickly realised that my current education wasn’t working for me or getting the results I was ambitious to achieve.

I came across Greene’s College Oxford. They could offer flexible education designed to accommodate my schedule, which was a solution that worked really well for me academically. My in-person tutorials were a definite highlight, but sometimes I needed a more convenient option, and Greene’s was always willing to accommodate.

Their distance learning education model meant I could attend my

doctor’s appointments in Estoril, Portugal. I did not have to worry about missing my online Economics, Biology and Geography A level tutorials with my Oxford-based tutors.

I would like to thank my tutors and in particular my Personal Tutor from Greene’s, who motivated, inspired, and kept me on track - even when I suddenly decided to apply to university with a UCAS deadline of just one week!

Greene’s helped me achieve academic success by getting the results to enable me to enrol in the best university of Economics and Business in Portugal. And helped guide me academically through a difficult period of my life.’



Lucia, Greene’s College Oxford alumna

## We would love to hear from you!

We welcome enquiries from prospective students and parents, and the chance to discuss, with our Principal or Registrar, how Greene’s College Oxford can help you plan the path towards your own university and career choices.



You can contact us at [enquiries@greenes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@greenes.org.uk) or alternatively please call +44 (0)1865 66 44 00

## Learning without boundaries - two colleges, one vision

The expansion of Greene’s College in Oxford, to Estoril in Portugal, means that students now have the unique opportunity to study for their A levels both in Oxford’s beautiful city centre and in Estoril, a buzzing seaside town near Cascais, on the Portuguese Riviera.

Estoril was an exciting addition to Oxford, where Greene’s, founded under the name Edward Greene’s Tutorial Establishment, has been situated for well over 50 years.

Daniel Ramalho, Deputy Principal of Greene’s in Estoril, commented, “If they wish, students can spend part of their time in Oxford and part in Estoril, experiencing very different cultures (and weather!), and without a break in their studies.”



Greene’s students studying in Estoril, Portugal.

### Greene’s exceeds expectations, reports ISI

A RECENT testament to Greene’s, Oxford’s oldest tutorial college, was the glowing report received from the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), Educational Oversight Inspection.

The inspectors’ summary of findings stated that “The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education” and that “Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are skilful in developing students’ confidence, analytical and independent learning skills.”

College Principal Mrs. Carmen Dare said, “I am thrilled with the results of our latest ISI inspection, which is testimony to the ability and enthusiasm of all our staff, tutors and students.”

See college’s website for full report.



### Examination results - An exceptional year

2021 MARKED another exceptional year for Greene’s A level students, whose examination results have thrilled everyone, with 80% achieving A or A\* grades. This heralds a bright future for students who can progress to their first-choice university.

## FREE EVENTS

### Making your results count

22nd August at 4.30 pm  
30th August at 2.00 pm  
[www.greenesoxford.com/events](http://www.greenesoxford.com/events)

We would like to invite you to a free webinar on ‘Making your results count’. During the webinar hosted by three of the U.K.’s leading educational experts, we will help you think about what happens if your results are not as good or as bad as you expected.







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