

HSC Student Profile: Vanessa

Question 1

Please state your name.

Vanessa

Question 2

Which year did you complete your HSC?

2009

Question 3

Did you study any Year 12 HSC subjects (accelerated) in Year 11?
If yes, please list the subject(s).

No

Question 4

At which school did you complete Year 12?

James Ruse Agricultural High School

Question 5

What scores did you obtain for each of your Year 12 studies?

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Assessment Mark</i>	<i>Examination Mark</i>	<i>HSC Mark</i>	<i>Performance Band</i>
<i>Mathematics Extension Two</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>E4</i>
<i>Mathematics Extension One</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>E4</i>
<i>Advanced English</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Physics</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Chemistry</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>6</i>

Question 6

What was your final ATAR?

99.90

Question 7

Which tertiary course did you enrol into?

Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery

Question 8

Which university/tertiary institution are you enrolled in/planning to attend?

UNSW



The following questions relate to a typical week where there were no major examinations forthcoming:

Question 9

How many hours did you dedicate to study (outside school) across a typical week?

In a typical week I dedicated approximately 20 hours a week to external study. Weekdays were normally allocated 2 hours a night while weekends were allocated 5 each. However, depending on my extracurricular activities and any homework I received, these hours would vary from day to day and week to week. I did not specify certain days which I would take off rather, when I felt I had completed a satisfactory level of work for the week; I would randomly reward myself with a night 'off'.

Question 10

What was your typical weekday routine?

My typical weekday routine involved waking up at 8:00am. Following breakfast I would be driven to school which took approximately 10 minutes and often arrived around 8:50am. School normally finished at 3:10pm however by doing 10 units I often finished around an hour earlier once or twice a week. Getting home involved taking a bus and a little walking and I would arrive home at about 3:30pm if I headed home straight away. Upon arriving home I would allow myself a snack and relax time until 4:30-5:00 and following this I would shower. I would start studying at around 5:30-6:00 until 7:00-7:30 when I would have dinner. After dinner I would work for around another hour until 9:30-10:00 and which point I would watch some TV or do something relaxing for a while and then sleep at 10:30pm.

Question 11

Where did you engage in the bulk of your study on a day to day basis?
(eg. bedroom, school library etc).

Almost all of my studying was conducted either in my study room or dining room table. I found myself unable to concentrate well in libraries and did not see a need to go to them often anyways.

Question 12

How many hours did you dedicate to study across school holidays?

School holidays were the best time to review any material that was confusing or difficult to grasp from earlier assessments as well as start reading into material to be covered in the next term. I would typically allocate the first week as the relax week covering very little work but in the second week I tried to complete 4-5 hours a day but allowed the weekends to remain free.

Question 13

Did you engage in any extra curricular activities across Year 12? If yes, please indicate the activities and how much time was dedicated to each activity.

During Year 12 I was involved in various activities both within school and outside of it. Within school I assisted in chairing the Amnesty and Interact clubs which hosted charity based events. Each would often require only a few hours a week and most of the planning could be completed within school time thus it was only in the lead up to events that I had to allocate external time to converse with charities and other involved individuals. Outside of school I undertook swimming once a week which was approximately 2 hours on a Sunday. I also played regular tennis competitions (3-4 hours) but stopped this in early Year 12 due to lack of available time. Additionally I did volunteer for some charities during Year 12 including Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal and Starlight however they were only one-off several hour shifts.

Question 14

How did you balance/organise your study with other commitments like work or sport or family?

To balance commitments and study I typically tried to keep in mind any tasks I needed to complete and had a rough expectation of when I wanted each task to reach a certain stage. I tried to avoid cancelling commitments to make time for study rather I felt I should plan study around any events or activities I had on. Luckily I found the balance came naturally and if I was unable to complete a certain section of a set task when I wanted to it be completed I would have to sacrifice some of my relax time.

The following questions relate to a typical week where there were major examinations forthcoming:

Question 15

How did you approach the task of preparing for the exam? (For example, would you start the process by writing notes? If so, which resources did you use to compile materials etc).

My preparation for exams varied between subjects by typically I would write my own set of notes by combining resources from various locations including school, the internet and others' notes.

For the sciences my note making was fairly syllabus based where I would write a dot point at the top of a page and write notes for that point only beneath it. However for mathematics I did not write notes rather gaining a deep understanding then attempting a variety of questions is required.

Following my note making I would 'read through' my notes and complete any pass papers I had.

Question 16

How many hours did you dedicate to study (outside of school) in the weeks leading up to the exams?

When exams were approaching I would attempt to have all notes I needed to be completed a week or two ahead.

During this time I studied 2-3 hours a weeknight and 5-6 hours a weekend to get it completed on time. Time off during this period depended on how much of the notes I had completed however again I did not specifically allocate a day 'off'.

The next week or two was my pass-paper and note-reading week. I would try to complete 2-3 pass papers a night each from a different subject however I did find I was often quite rushed for time nearer to exams as pass papers are quite time consuming. During this period I would a similar amount of hours.

Question 17

What was your typical day to day routine when studying for the exams?

If it was a school day it would vary very little from my normal school day except I did try to cut down on TV and relax time.

Question 18

Did you continue your extracurricular activities in the weeks leading up to the exams?

Yes all regular activities were carried out as usual.

Question 19

Which technique(s) did you use to learn materials "off by heart"? (eg. writing notes, re-writing, reading texts etc).

To learn things 'off by heart' I read and re-read my note. I never really re-wrote my notes as I found this to be quite tiring and a waste of time. I did sometimes say things out loud like formulas or keep some scrap paper beside me to scribble them on. I also tried to, especially for the sciences, look at a dot point and try to say out loud what it refers to and what notes I had for it before I look at the sheets but typically I didn't learn my notes well enough to say it word for word.

Question 20

When did you start preparing for your TRIAL exams?

I began studying for the trials during the 3rd term holidays. This gave me about 4-5 weeks before the exams however this was a very stressful time as I had underestimated how much I had to do in terms of pass papers and reviewing things I had learnt since Term 4 Year 11.

Question 21

How much study did you engage in between the TRIALS and the final HSC exams?

This was actually a less stressful time period than that before the trials. I found myself engaging in somewhat less studying and this was partly due to the fact I believed I had learnt all the content for the trials and I was satisfied with the trial results. I think this period of time is crucial for 'fixing' any issues that became apparent from the trial results

Question 22

Do you feel that you invested enough time into study between the Trials and the final HSC exams?
Would you have benefited from additional study across this period?

I am happy with how I used the time between the trials and the HSC. Although additional study may have been minimally useful my aim was to reduce stress and feel confident for the HSC and I believe less study allowed this.

Question 23

Did your Year 12 peers at school invest in significant study in the lead up to the TRIALS?

I found that a lot of my peers studied a lot harder leading up to the trials and time became an issue for everyone. It became apparent some people had not maintained a somewhat regular study pattern therefore struggled to learn all the material in time but overall the study was significant but not excessive.

Question 24

Did your Year 12 peers at school invest in significant study between the TRIALS and the final HSC exams?

I felt, like me, most people studied less during this period than that before the trials but I think this varied depending on the results they received for the trials. Those who were happy with their results were more relaxed and studied less while those who wanted to improve saw it as their 'last' opportunity.

Question 25

Were the TRIAL exams an accurate reflection of the difficulty and style of questions encountered in the final HSC exams?

I think my school trials generally reflected the HSC difficulty and style well. However I found the mathematics exam questions were not as difficult.

Question 26

Did you suffer from anxiety attacks or mind blocks in any of your exams? What did you do to alleviate or get through these situations?

I do not recall anxiety attacks or mind blocks but at moments of stress during exams I would stop, take deep breaths and drink water.

Questions Relating to the Subject You Have Been Asked to Write About

Question 1

Which subject does this report relate to?

Advanced English

Question 2

Based on your results and performance throughout the year, were you confident that you would obtain a Band 6 result? If not, what Band or overall mark were you anticipating/hoping to receive?

I was somewhat confident in getting a Band 6 but English had always been my weakest subject so I expected a low Band 6.

Question 3

Which section/topic of the syllabus did you find most challenging?

Paper 2 (essay writing) section was the most difficult for me particularly module A and B.

Question 4

How much time did you spend preparing/working on school assessments?

For English I spent around 4-5 hours to get a first draft of an essay and would typically perform 3-4 rounds of editing before I felt it was 'ready' for admission.

Question 5

What was the best source of help/information for your assessments? (Text book, teacher, friends, lectures, tutorial programs, private tutors, internet, own research etc).

In completing assessments, a combination of teacher input, tutor input, friend input and personal research was really needed. However I found the sources differed greatly in their opinions and feedback and often I would request assistance from all sources but later reconsider them before selecting what I believed to be relevant and what wasn't.

Question 6

Did you regularly use a private tutor in this subject? If so, did you find this assistance beneficial?

Yeah I did have a private tutor for English and I found it quite useful as teachers are often unable to give detailed and specific feedback.

Question 7

Did you attend a tuition college/tutorial classes/lectures to assist in this subject? Did you find this assistance beneficial?

No I did not attend any colleges, classes or lectures.

Question 8

If applicable, do you feel that you would have obtained the same score if you did not use tutors/coaches/lectures/tuition programs?

No I believe I would have achieved a lower score without the help of my tutor. I found that with my tutor's help I was able to expand the scope of my written work a lot greater and sometimes just having someone edit your work is really useful.

Question 9

What was your best source of help across the year (teacher, tutor, lecture program etc)?

It varied depending on the module and task but often I found it was either my teacher or tutor.

Question 10

Did you do anything differently study wise in comparison to your peers at school?

No, I found in studying for English most people utilised a similar manner

Question 11

Do you feel that you had an advantage over other students in this subject? If so, what was this advantage?

No, I do not believe I had any advantage over others in the subject.

Question 12

Compare the subjects for which you obtained your lowest and highest HSC Marks/Bands.

Detail what you did differently between the two subjects and if applicable, provide your opinion on why you obtained such different scores.

I received my lowest mark in English and my highest in Extension Two Mathematics. The differences in the marks may be attributed to a natural dislike of English but, additionally, I do believe a different studying pattern between the subjects also contributed.

For English I would often spent a large amount of time 2-3 weeks prior to an assessment to write practice essays however I recognised that between these periods I completed little regular study for English. This was due to my dislike for English but also the fact I believed there was 'nothing' that could be studied. I believe the lack of regular external study of the texts contributed to this relatively lower score.

Mathematics, on the other hand, was a subject I always viewed as difficult and since I was doing four units of I felt it was only 'fair' that I allocated more time for it. As a consequence I found most of my external study time was spent on mathematics. This regular and abundant study in mathematics may have contributed to the better marks.

Question 13

As part of your HSC/TRIAL exam preparation for this subject, did you spend time writing up a comprehensive set of notes from which to learn? If yes, how many hours do you believe you invested into this task?

For each module of I wrote up a summary and base essay which was mainly constructed from notes and comments I had acquired. Each set was completed throughout the year rather than before the trial/HSC and approximately took 6-7 each.

Question 14

Did you purchase/acquire quality notes to assist in your examination preparation? If yes, did you find this acquisition beneficial? Why/why/not?

No

Question 15

How many examination papers did you work through as part of your exam preparation?

This issue with English was the lack of pass exam papers available due to the recently altered syllabus. I had only 2-3 complete papers to try as well as a list of accumulated practice essay questions but this was far less than the resources I had to prepare for other subjects.

Question 16

Which exam papers did you work through?

(List the names of the entities/organisations that produced the exam papers).

CSSA

Hornsby Girls'

North Sydney Girls'

Question 17

Did you work through any exam papers under exam conditions? If yes, how many?

Yes I did 2 of the 3 under exam conditions.

Question 18

How much time was invested into preparing for the TRIAL examination?

How much time was invested into preparing for the final HSC examination?

Which examination did you find more difficult and why?

In preparing for the trial approximately 1-2 hours were spent per day in the week before and likewise for the HSC I found the HSC harder as the school trial had more predictable questions varied very little from the pass assessment questions and the rubric.

Question 19

Had you previously covered all the questions/concepts that appeared in the exams or did the exam paper contain materials that you had never seen before? If so, did this make you panic in the exams?

I felt I had covered all the concepts that arose in the HSC exam quite well at school and in my studying.

Question 20

Did you complete every question in the TRIAL exam? If no, please estimate how much of the paper you did address.

I completed the entire paper

Question 21

Did you complete every question in the final HSC exam? If no, please estimate how much of the paper you did address.

I completed the entire paper

Question 22

Did you use any special exam techniques when working through the actual exams?

I aimed to divide time evenly between all section thus my technique was to stop after each 40 minutes and begin the next task regardless of whether or not I had finished and come back at the end if time permitted

Question 23

If applicable, what mistakes did you make when preparing for the TRIAL exams?

Did you do anything differently when preparing for the final HSC examinations?

In the trials I think I had a tendency to sway away from the set focus a little and I tried to improve on this in the HSC by making obvious addressed to the essay question. Also I was ill prepared for different text types in the trial and tried to improve in the HSC but they did not come up.

Question 24

Which resources did you find most helpful when preparing for the exams?

I found the marker's comment very useful in improving my technique.

Question 25

What advice would you provide to those students aiming for a Band 6 in this subject?

For English you need to ensure you understand both your set text and rubric quite well. Try to incorporate and advice you receive after assessment task to improve your notes and you must address the set question.

General Advice**Question 1**

What was the most difficult aspect of completing your HSC studies and how did you overcome this?

The HSC requires you to study throughout the year and staying motivated can be difficult. To overcome this I allowed myself regular breaks, continued doing things I enjoy as a reward and reminded myself of my goal and what I wanted to achieve.

Question 2

If you had your time over again, would you do anything differently across Year 11 and/or 12?
Why/Why Not?

I would not do anything differently because I am happy with how everything turned out

Question 3

Is there anything that you wish you had known about before entering the HSC?

No

Question 4

Are there any resources/services/products that would have assisted you in your studies had they been available?

Not that I can think of

Question 5

If you had one piece of advice to give future students, what would it be?

The HSC is not as scary as it seems. If you study regularly and incorporate any comments or advice you receive along the way you can do well. Also if you don't understand something do not leave it for later but rather ask for help and sort it out as soon you or else it might build up and when you reach the final exams you will feel overwhelmed.

Additional Comments

Just before the HSC the board of studies sets up a hotline which I have heard is useful