**Tips for success in VCE -** Aaliyah Zaph

In 2022, I completed Year 12 and was DUX of Mordialloc College, receiving an ATAR of 99.45 and a perfect score of 50 in Health. Year 12 is a big year, but I hope some of my tips might give you an idea of how to tackle it!

1. Choose subjects that you actually love!

VCAA scales each VCE subject up or down so there is consistent level of achievement across the board, meaning students doing different subjects can be fairly ranked. However - don’t fall into the trap of choosing subjects based on scaling. Phrases like “think of the scaling” or “don’t worry, the scaling will save me” are tossed around a lot, but at the end of the day scaling doesn’t have a huge impact if you’re scoring well. And your more likely to score well in subjects you like!

I completed six VCE subjects and every single one of them scaled down (except for Revolutions, which scaled from 45 to 45.83 - which isn’t a drastic increase that was going to “save me” as some would say!). Safe to say, I think I’m proof that doing subjects that scale down isn’t going to prevent you from achieving a high score.

2. Maintain a work - life balance.

This phrase is also thrown around a lot, but the idea is not to surround yourself with solely school work! I was working a part time job 10-15 hours a week and decided not to decrease during exams because working a shift served as a good break from study. Make sure to set boundaries with your work place (for example, don’t be working until 11pm the day before a SAC). Also, hanging out with friends is not a crime! That being said…

3. Actually do work!

Despite the comforting idea of this “work life balance,” it’s important to actually set aside time to study. I liked to study in the morning, do an activity like work, see friends or play netball, and then do a little lighter study at 7-9pm.

I think it’s best to prioritise productivity over number of hours. It’s nice to brag about studying for 6 hours non stop, but if you don’t actually remember or learn anything then it’s a bit useless. Instead, decide on a task and work on finishing that. I used to say for example, “I’m going to study these health terms until I remember them,” and work on that whether it took 10 minutes or half an hour.

4. Do practice questions!

People tend to avoid the best way to study - practice exams / questions / essays - because it requires a greater mental effort. Rewriting your notes in vibrant colours is fun, but at the end of the day your exam is not a drawing competition (unless you’re in VCD of course!).

My method was to attempt exam questions, and then self mark. Self marking was great because it forced me to confront my mistakes. For questions I found challenging, and ones marked holistically (like 8-10 markers), I would star them and send or show them to my teacher. A combination of self marking and getting feedback from teachers is the way to go!

If I didn’t achieve full marks on a question, I would reattempt it. This is a crucial step people often forget or avoid. I completed Psychology 3/4 early in Year 11, and clearly remember regretting not doing this during my exam when I came across a question I remembered getting wrong. I simply could not recall the correct answer and was so annoyed with myself!

5. Use your teachers

When I completed Psychology and Media early in Year 11, I didn’t grasp the importance of using your teachers until the very end of the year right around exams. In Year 12 more adamantly than in other years, your teachers are keen for you to succeed and maximise your score. They are always more than happy to provide you with more practice exams or even sit down one on one with you. Don’t wait until the end of the year - if you are having trouble with something, sort it out then and there so you don’t have to worry about it later on. During my study periods, I went to my health teacher’s office for feedback and resources so often that the rest of the office came to expect me there!

Lastly, in Year 12 this idea of “studying throughout the year” and “constantly revising content” is preached. I tried to do this, but ultimately gave up because I was overwhelmed trying to learn current content and study for upcoming SACs. My advice would be to firstly try doing this and see if it works for you … and then if it doesn’t, use your mid year holidays (so July) to go over all of Unit 3. I did this and it saved me! For History, this involved writing a good copy of my Unit 3 notes and memorising historians quotes. For English, this involved writing a couple of text response essays and creating a refined quote bank. Just keeping these ideas and concepts alive in your mind will save you having to totally relearn them later on.

Best of luck to all of Year 12s with their study this year!