

Good morning staff, students, graduates and special guests of the De La Salle Community. It is an honour and privilege to speak on behalf of the graduating class of 2023, a tribute to the years of hard work, resilience and personal development. Our class lived through a pandemic, overseas conflict and economic uncertainties, all while trying to make the most of our highschool experience. Through such adversities our class still managed to prosper and accomplish great successes. I congratulate each graduate on their tenacity and the outstanding academic achievements that define this graduating class.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who played a key role in bringing me to this moment. A heartfelt thank you to my incredible mother and sister, whose unwavering support, kindness, and strength have been the bedrock on which my achievements stand. Without you, none of this would have been possible. Thank you to all the high achievers here today who provided me with new insights and ideas I would have not seen myself, and pushed me to do my best. Also, I would like to acknowledge the teachers for the time and effort each of you dedicate to this school. From providing constructive feedback to constant reassurance, thank you to those teachers who believed in me and made it possible for me to stand here.

One thing I have learnt is that self-motivation is a significant and mandatory drive to accomplish your goals. It's about discovering what truly inspires you and using this inspiration as a catalyst for success. Whether it's the promise of indulging in one episode of your favourite show or the desire to make your parents proud after years of hardship, find that intrinsic motivation. In my case, I held onto the belief that HSC is a singular opportunity – you get one shot, and one shot only. This belief lingered in the back of my mind every time I opened a textbook and sat down to study, which served as a catalyst to avoid procrastination and distractions, helping me to stay focused. Once you have found self-motivation other people will see that spark, believe in you and want to help you. Teachers will see that spark and want to help you through marking drafts and multiple-choice questions more regularly, while classmates will be more interested in collaborating on last-minute note exchanges, practise short answers, and exam predictions.

Remember, mistakes are stepping stones towards growth. Embrace them, learn from them, and let them propel you forward. As the great Winston Churchill once said, "...failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts." Each time you submit an essay draft or any question and you make a mistake, use this as an opportunity to discover gaps in your knowledge and learn from it. Personally, in my journey, for mathematics, I found it helpful to keep a mistakes book in which I would rewrite any difficult textbook, past Trial or HSC questions in. Then, as the HSC approached, I reviewed each difficulty, re-attempted each question until I got it correct and completed similar examples.

Each mistake you make now is one less mistake to be made in the HSC. So, it is key to find out what study methods work best for you. For me, it was important to take regular digital study notes in the term and any gaps, which may have been due to time focused on individual assessments, were filled in each holiday break. From this, prior to Trials and the HSC, I placed these into an online flashcards system called 'Anki' using spaced repetition to regularly review this. From english quotes and analysis' to business explanations to religion quotes and examples, use this to solidify your content. And then, as exams approach, using this memorised content to attempt Trial and HSC papers will ensure you can access those top marks. Whether you adopt my strategy or choose to create mind maps or teach a family member, make sure you implement some form of Active Recall.

I want to stress that your past academic results and ranks from Year 11 do not have to define that of Year 12. Once you hit rock bottom, the only way to go is up. Focus on trying your best, working hard, and staying committed to the journey, and I guarantee you it will pay off. You can do this by staying organised, well disciplined and fighting the urge to procrastinate. Specifically, I used Google Calendar to plan my weeks with study, social events, work etc helping me to realise when I needed to complete study and not procrastinate to enjoy the times I went out. Keep in mind, the more you do inside of school, the less you have to do outside. Strive to do this to attain the best ranks amid Year 12, then focus on striving for the best marks in the HSC.

Also, it is important to make sure your study pattern and subject choices align with your strengths and passions. If you do not enjoy science do not study Biology as you will not choose medicine at university. Likewise, if you want a break from your strong essay-based writing subjects like Business Studies, make sure you are studying a subject which acts as a creative outlet and may be your passion, such as DNT. Keep a balance between these strengths and passions.

Also, if you need a prerequisite for a certain course, but feel it is not your strongest, like me partaking in Mathematics Advanced, do not be afraid to maintain a 12 unit study load. My personal experience is, although I received no study periods, I had greater flexibility as I always knew my weakest subject would not count towards my ATAR but still provided that opportunity to select among universities who required these prerequisites. As I had a blend of strengths and passions it was manageable.

Amidst the academic hustle, prioritise mental health. Year 12 is an arduous marathon, and there will be moments when throwing in the towel seems tempting. Lean on your support systems, reach out to counsellors, and don't abandon extracurricular commitments – they're the glue that keeps you connected.

In closing, Year 12s, focus on what you can control – hard work and dedication as I mentioned rather than being fixated on the final ATAR. The value of that ATAR will fade as time passes. The awards all fellow graduates receive today, that seemed priceless, will only continue to collect dust as the years pass. But the lessons learned about self-motivation, study methods, strengths and collaborative abilities will endure and be invaluable to your life's journey. Enjoy the journey, not just the reward. And remember each and every one of you are incredibly capable of achieving your HSC goals. Do something today that your future self will be grateful for.

And to my fellow graduates, as we turn the page to a new chapter, I wish you all the best of luck. Congratulations, Class of 2023!

Thank you.