

HSC Student Profile: Olivia

Question 1

Please state your name.

Olivia

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).

Yes, Mathematics.

Question 4

At which school did you complete Year 12?

SCEGGS Darlinghurst

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>Chemistry</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>English Adv</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>English ext 1</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>E4</i>
<i>Maths ext 1</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>E4</i>
<i>Maths ext 2</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>E4</i>
<i>Physics</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Latin</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>6</i>

Question 6

What was your final ATAR?

99.95

Question 7

Which tertiary course did you enrol into?

Arts/Medicine at University of Sydney – BA (Adv) (Hons)/MBBS

Question 8

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

I'm at Sydney Uni and loving it.



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?

It's hard to say – I didn't have a strict routine and my study times would vary a lot. On average, probably around 2-3 hours on weeknights, but in reality, mostly there were days when I did half an hour and days when I did five. Most of this 'study' was set homework. I often did no work on Friday nights and only a few hours on Saturday, then usually a lot on Sunday.

Question 10

What was your typical weekday routine?

I got up at 6am every day, had a good breakfast and took the train into school (travel time was about an hour). I was still a tad overcommitted in year 12 so left school any time between 3 and 7, mostly around 5pm. At home I worked fairly consistently, usually watched an hour of TV and tried to get to bed before 10pm.

Question 11

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

Mostly at home – I had my own study for the year and it was fairly quiet. Due to the slightly busy nature of life I also became pretty good at doing work on the train and during free periods or breaks at school.

Question 12

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

I tend to study in large chunks – so in the earlier holidays I'd do around eight hours every second day and have the other days off (the two weeks off in October were a different story, though – see Q21). All the other things I wanted to do during the holidays fit nicely into my free days. I tried to start early in the day so I could have a decent break for lunch and chill out with my family after dinner.

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.

Absolutely – I loved year 12 and my extracurricular involvement was a huge part of that. Among other things, in my week there were a couple of hours of choir, a couple of school band rehearsals, a few hours volunteering with the incredible charity RMHC, regular prefect meetings and events, extra ensemble rehearsals I helped out with, weekly dance classes, a regular shift teaching swimming at my local pool and a whole lot of one-off events throughout the year.

Question 14

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

I didn't give myself any other option – I wanted to keep up my involvement in other activities, and I wanted to do well, so I just had to make sure everything fit in. I think the determination to make it work was the key to my juggling abilities.

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).

I definitely wrote notes for Latin and my sciences – the writing process was when I took in the most information. I mostly used class notes and the textbooks, and went online to find other resources when I wanted to know more. For English it was more about practice, and really trying to understand the texts in depth, and my teachers' help was particularly invaluable here. As for Maths, you learn by doing, so that's what I did – ridiculous amounts of practice papers.

Question 16

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

The most important element of my study actually happened before this – I always ensured I understood everything I was taught the first time around, which meant that come exam time, I just had to revise the details of things of which I already had a fairly good grasp. And after that it was all about practising. Leading up to exams I did an extra hour of work most nights, and did a fair bit more than usual on Fridays and Saturdays.

Question 17

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

The same as usual, but in particularly crazy assessment times my TV hour was usually replaced with extra study time and I'd work harder during my free periods.

Question 18

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

Mostly - I took a few breaks here and there when I really needed the time but tried not to get into the habit of making excuses. During actual exam periods I did have time off from my other commitments though, because it was really important for me to stay calm and get some rest.

Question 19

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

I firmly believe that wherever possible it's best not to learn things 'off by heart' or 'word-for-word', because it's an understanding of the content that's going to help you the most in the long run. So my most important study strategy was ensuring that I understood everything I'd been taught, which came from re-reading notes and textbooks, and summarising my own notes.

Question 20

When did you start preparing for your TRIAL exams?

As I've mentioned, I believe every lesson and every piece of homework forms a vital part of exam preparation, but I started doing past papers and extra revision in the last few weeks of term 2 and over the mid year holidays.

Question 21

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

I kept working fairly consistently in terms of keeping up with all the revision assigned by my teachers, but for me the time after the trials was about enjoying my last few weeks of school so I didn't do excessive amounts of extra study until term finished. In the October 'break' I had a couple of days off right at the start and then did 6-8 hours pretty much every day. In terms of taking time off, if there was something else I wanted to do, or my family wanted to go out for dinner or something, I'd just do it and work my study around it. It's important to work hard but also to intersperse it with things that keep you happy and grounded.

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 don't think any of us could look back and say our preparation was perfect, and of course every extra hour would have made some difference, but I'm happy how things turned out.

Question 23

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

Absolutely.

Question 24

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

Definitely.

Question 25

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

I think so.

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?

Not really – I'm a strong advocate for all the clichés: it's important to stay calm, make sure you get a good night's sleep, have a good breakfast, stay away from people who'll stress you out, and try to walk in with composed positivity and confidence.

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

Question 1

Which subject does this report relate to?

Physics

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 think it's dangerous to expect such things, but I was definitely hoping for it.

Question 3

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

Probably Medical Physics because it was so heavily content-based, but I also found this topic the most interesting so didn't mind having to spend extra time on it.

Question 4

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

I spent 2-3 hours every 2-3 days on homework, then when there were assessments looming Physics would be a priority and I'd do an hour or two (or three) each night and on the weekend devote a whole day to the subject.

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).

My teacher was excellent – really knowledgeable and selflessly devoted to our learning. I'm also a big fan of reading the textbook to pull together the different aspects of my understanding.

Question 6

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

I've never had any tutoring.

Question 7

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

I went to one of the TSFX sessions (three lectures) in January – unlike most others there I hadn't done the Space topic yet so for me it provided a good overview of some topics we hadn't started in school yet. Personally I found this quite useful as a general introduction to the course to gain a grounded initial understanding before delving into the specifics in class.

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?

Yes (I don't think this question is particularly applicable to me)

Question 9

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

My teacher, unquestionably.

Question 10

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

I think I spent less time planning it and talking about it and just got on with it. There's so much emphasis on teaching study skills/techniques in schools these days that, while it's really useful for some, I think a lot of students feel pressured to work in certain ways. By year 12 I knew what did and didn't work for me so I just put my head down and did it.

Question 11

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

Only that of an exceptional school and great teachers, and I know I'm far from unique in this.

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'm really proud of the fact that they are only 5 marks apart – it's so important to treat all your subjects as equally important and focus on doing as well as you possibly can across the HSC as a whole. Always analyse very carefully where your attention is needed most – remember, the more room there is for improvement, the more valuable your study efforts will be.

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?

Definitely, I'd say it took me around 60 hour's total.

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?

15-20

Question 16

Which exam papers did you work through?

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

Past HSC papers, my school's trials, the Catholic and Independent trials and some from other schools.

Question 17

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

For the last 8 or so I tried to do each paper in one sitting and time how long it took me so I could see how I'd go under real 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?

I split my study into relatively equal proportions for each subject, so during term this was a few hours every few days and in the holidays I spent a solid day or half-day on each at a time. I found the two exams fairly similar in difficulty, but I felt more prepared for the HSC having already sat the trial.

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?

Obviously there were questions that I hadn't seen before but I was confident that I'd covered the content needed to tackle them.

Question 20

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

Yes.

Question 21

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

Yes.

Question 22

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

No – I just did the best I could.

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?

I think I went too quickly from revising notes to doing practice papers, so for the HSC I made sure to solidify my knowledge first.

Question 24

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

My notes, my textbook, my teacher, and past papers.

Question 25

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

You have to understand the content – being able to regurgitate information will only get you so far, and it's harder to get stuck on a tricky question if you understand the concept behind it. For me this meant spending a lot of time reading, writing and summarising notes before testing my understanding by practising questions, but it's really important that you work out what's going to help you learn it – that's what matters.

General Advice

Question 1

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

Probably fitting everything in and getting it all done as well as I wanted. It helped that I was dedicated to everything I did and it mattered to me that I put my all into things that I cared about. And I walk ridiculously quickly – a huge help when you're cramming a lot into your day!

Question 2

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

I'd try harder to stay calm, not to get caught up in the competitiveness, and to be nicer to my family and pull my weight at home more. It's important to realise how valuable your friends and family are and to treat them accordingly.

Question 3

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

Something my sister told me during the year – that if in year 12 I worked just like I always had, I'd do as well as I always had, and if I worked harder, I'd do better. Caught up in the often-overwhelming whirlwind of the HSC, this was a reassuringly simple, useful reality check.

Question 4

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

...a personal masseur?

Question 5

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

Think of it as distinct from the HSC, and Year 12 can be one of the best years of your life – don't forget to enjoy it.

Additional Comments

Stay healthy – sleep and meals are non-negotiable.