

JULIA SCHUMANN

My Story



I completed my VCE at Box Hill TAFE, wasn't a genius, and I was determined not to give up my competitive ballroom dancing or part time job, but still wanted to do well. I wanted big scores and with focus and determination, I managed to achieve everything I had hoped to.

During Year 10, I completed Units 3 and 4 Legal Studies, and achieved a perfect score of 50. The following year, I took on Units 3 and 4 Psychology and got a 49. When I was in Year 12, I undertook Business Management, 49, English, 42, Further Maths, 39 (I am not a maths person) and German, where I got a 37 which scales to a 45. Giving me an ATAR of 99.3.

I want to take this opportunity today to say to everyone here that it's possible to get a great score even if you don't go to a top school. Even if you're not a genius. Even if you want to or have to juggle multiple afterschool commitments. And here's how.

I found the key to be preparation. I aimed to do 2 hrs of study everyday throughout the November and December before Year 12, and 4 hrs throughout January. I read all my English books twice, taught myself most of unit 3 Business and covered the first few chapters of maths before school started. The entire year I never went to a class not having already learned and memorised what was being taught, and remained weeks ahead of everyone else. This means that if there was a difficult concept being covered in class, I had already gone over it twice or three times. At school, I would then pick it up quickly, or at least know what questions to ask, where the rest of the kids would struggle and even fall behind. If a concept was easy, when hearing it in class I was revising and consolidating the material. This system equates to beating others again and again in SACs, and meant in some subjects, I never dropped a SAC mark.

In regards to exam preparation I started it in February. Every concept I would do VCAA questions as soon as I could. There's a direct correlation between how many papers you do and your exam results, so start them straight away. I can't even estimate how many papers I did, but I probably destroyed a forest with all the paper I used. This is why my exam prep was not special or stressful, it was just what I'd been doing from the start.

In regards to English, these would be my top tips. Read the text response book at least 6 or 7 times, there's no time in the year where you aren't reading that book. Once you finish, start again. This way you don't have to learn quotes, you

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know the book so well you can quote the whole thing. From about March, I aimed to write 3 essays per week, one of each style. If you do this kind of preparation, you will succeed.

I was able to continue dancing and working throughout Year 12 because I studied smart, not hard. I never rewrote notes, copied things silently or highlighted. These methods are not utilising your time, as you remember so little of what you've copied, especially in an hour or week's time. So if you don't use these common methods to learn, what do you do? To memorize I would always get creative. Sometimes I'd shut myself in a room and teach an imaginary 'class' a concept or definition, trying to break it down for them, using my own words to explain something. If I got sick of that I'd follow my little brother around and explain something 'at' him, poor kid he hated it. To remember definitions I'd draw images or diagrams, use acrostics, make a song on the guitar with the lyrics being the definition, interpretive dance...you name it, I'd use it to memorise. The trick is to get creative and get into it. Doing this, I could remember something in 10 minutes which would stick in my head because it was memorable. The more effort I put into remembering, and the crazier the method, the easier I'd recall it in an exam.

Another component of studying efficiently is constant revision. Use all the time you have to revise, I did it every day. I did it on the train on the way to school, in the car to my mum's. When I watched TV, I'd put it on mute in the ads and revise. I also took over our house, and had notes on the back of the bathroom doors, the back of the cabinet where I brushed my teeth, the pantry door...literally everywhere.

The ultimate way I found to study smartly was to go to every single TSFX lecture there was. The notes they give you means you avoid wasting time writing out notes, and you can skip to memorising what's in their notes. You hear concepts at TSFX which either means you'll pick it up quicker if you haven't heard it already, or revise and consolidate if you've learned it already. This resulted in achieving successful SACs marks time and time again.

The teachers at TSFX are there to help students understand what is needed to achieve a score in the 99s. Attending their programs is well worth it. I was a bit of a lecture junkie, and went to every lecture from every company. Trust me when I say TSFX was the best by far. I am positive that I wouldn't have gotten in the 99s without them.

So I'll take you through a regular day in my Year 12 life just to show you how I was able to have balance in my life.

I aimed to do 4-5 hours of study everyday on top of classes, and this 4-5 hrs consisted of either homework, prac exams or revision. I found I never had to really increase this because I did it from January. So I would wake up early and do 2 hours every morning. On the train on the way to school I would always do something, usually revision of some sort. I'd have my first class, and then an hour for lunch. I made a decision at the beginning of the year that I'd rename my lunch hour 'stop complaining and write an English essay' hour, so I did that while eating lunch. I'd have another class, study more on the train home, have a break and maybe do another hour. Working this efficiently meant that by 6pm every night I was free to go for a run, see friends, ballroom dance or work.

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We all have those friends who quit everything to 'study', but are really just watching My Kitchen Rules all night. Don't be one of those people. It's possible to do it all.

So I want to leave you with a thought which helped me throughout the year, which is a quote from Aristotle:

'You are what you repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.'

I wish everyone all the best and I'm sure you'll all get great scores!!!