

MICAH WONG

My Story



Hello everyone.

My name is Micah Wong.

I went to the TSFX programs and lectures. I studied ahead, revised heavily and just generally did the best I could for my VCE. I studied quite nerdy subjects, maths after scaling being my highest scores, chem, physics, English, French, and Chinese.

I guess that's the crux of it – be as efficient and clear minded as you can in your academic life – and the points, marks and grades will inevitably come your way – whether as well as you hoped, slightly worse or better – who knows?

The first thing you've got to bring to the forefront of your attention is how short Year 12 is. Basically, the teacher goes all out to teach all the material, goes over it thoroughly to make sure you get all the tricks – then you've got several weeks to prepare. In those weeks, however, you've got to do at least 15 practice exams, make note of what you got wrong and perhaps make a summary of what you found difficult (and do these questions again).

I was pretty shocked when I planned it out on my calendar, and I wish I realised maybe a bit sooner it's important to really master the material as you go along, and then retain that edge as you get into your practice exams.

Most of the year would be taken up by the 6 or so SACs you do for each subject, that's maybe what, around 30 SACs awaiting you this year. Each SAC does admittedly seem massive, especially as it's all a ranking game. So on average you'll be preparing for one almost every week...That's why pre-reading is so important, so you're prepared when it comes to exam questions.

The whole idea is getting in touch with the material yourself and highlighting the parts which you're not really sure about. Personally, that's what I tried, and it's good for the long run to know what you might need to be revising later. When a teacher is preoccupied with the course, it's of course easy for them to adopt the drone, and they go on and on. But I found if I had pre skim read that part, then I got the general idea a lot better, and could thus flesh out the ideas, and would listen attentively for the bits I didn't understand.

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TSFX takes it a step further in that they get teachers from great schools to sit down and tediously go through it all and demonstrate it to you. Then (the information) can consolidate in your mind, and you understand it even deeper the next time the teacher asks, perhaps even being able to clarify points for your classmates.

Teachers generally tailor the SACs to be as close in style to the VCAA exams as they can, so that the SACs are like small aspects of the exam put together. Thus in preparing for a SAC, treat it like you plan to prepare for the exam, the only real difference being the scope of your study.

SACs took up pretty much all of the year, and the bulk of studying for one was during the previous week, particularly the previous weekend, where I could concentrate my studies to one subject. I learned in doing VCE; never underestimate your weekends, or the amount of study you can get done then. For each SAC, I would do at least 4 practice ones, and correct them, in addition to making a summary of all the concepts I found difficult. The day before the SAC, I would skim over mistakes and go for an early night, never later than 10.

Some people can cram study late the night before, but if you feel you know the material, then where you miss marks is probably from careless errors, misreading the question or not working efficiently enough to check at the end, all of which can be improved by an extra hour or so of sleep.

I did a lot of math and sciences, and so the hardest part of my exams was reading the extended response questions accurately, especially to not misinterpret anything or get fussed over the tricky way they can pose questions.

In Year 11, I had basically the whole year for one subject and it wasn't too stressful completing at least 10 practice exams prior to the real one. Then you realise you're doing 5 subjects, wanting to do 15 practice papers in each of them. Hang on, that's 75 practice papers in 2, 3 weeks, between 10 to 15 days. I quote these figures so you realise how pressing time is when it comes to exams, but it is relatively stress free if you prepare, and devote most of your time to doing and correcting several practice papers a day.

The first time I sat a paper seriously, I felt nervous and shaky, and while I could with a will get over it, it comes surging back when you get a question you're not sure how to do ... and that panic makes it easier for me to make mistakes. That's why I found past exams so very useful, once you get going, you meet unfamiliar questions and train your problem solving skills, so that when you see a problem you don't think you can do, you just think "I've done this before", and can do the question without getting into a fluster. Doing at least 10 papers also exposes you to almost all basic types of questions that can be asked, so you can picture what the real exam would be like.

When the school course finished, I found I had maybe several weeks till examinations commenced, and with that amount of time, I think it is important that you are beyond studying the entire course again, and can get straight to trial running and testing yourself on the difficult parts.

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For me, that's where I found TSFX really helped me save my time. They provide awesomely decent study notes for you, and go through it so you can be reassured you've covered it – with watch out points and things to take note of. The ten week course they offer is great for revision, as they can be counted on to not miss parts of the course you might have been tempted to skip. Also, from the start, they give you VCAA styled questions, so by the end of the year, you'll be able to do many short questions in your sleep.

To study without really feeling like your studying or changing it up is what helped me through a lot of it. So instead of sitting down and hoping to absorb the text in front of you, TSFX lecturers present it with talking, pointing and interactive note-taking, though you shouldn't copy them word for word. You can add to this as I did by making flashcards, and pull them out whenever you have a spare moment, or try and recite things as you're going for a walk.

Organisation is what helped me feel most prepared, though sticking to a checklist was the hardest thing to do all year and I failed often, but in other aspects, keeping all SACs, practice SACs, cheat sheets and summaries of what I found difficult in clear folders, I could always review what I'd studied and retain that edge. So yeah, the main point is quite ironic; you're basically reaching the end of your quiet and measured school life. It's quite an industrial atmosphere you find in Year 12, and not like school as you know it. So yes, congrats on getting a head start, but as they say, the turtle overtakes the hare if you stop now. I guess there are plenty of incentives to do well and (TSFX is) a great tutoring company to help you, but it's you guys who are sitting the exams in several hundred days time, so I hope you stay committed and active in your study... for just one more year, or 3 more terms really.

You know, my friends and people coming out of school year after year say the same thing, that they could've worked harder. Yes, I think everyone could have, but really, nobody achieves perfection. So finally, it's not all the fancy plans and timetables and extra tuition material you get, it's what you do, one step at a time, each step a little faster and more confident.

All the best, and thanks.

Micah