

VCE Student Profile: Monique McLellan

Question 1

Please state your name.

Monique

Question 2

Which year did you complete your VCE?

2009

Question 3

Did you study any Unit 3/4 subjects in Year 11? If yes, please list the subject(s).

In year eleven, I studied History of Revolutions.

Question 4

At which school did you complete Year 12?

The Mac Robertson Girls High School

Question 5

What scores did you obtain for each of your Unit 3/4 studies? Please indicate both the raw scores and scaled scores.

Subject	Raw Score	Scaled Score
History of Revolutions	37	38.24
Literature	50	50
French	44	51.63
English Language	40	42.09
UMEP French	H1	5.5 increment (high)
Drama	37	35.82

Question 6

What was your final ATAR?

My ATAR score was 98.95

Question 7

Which tertiary course did you enrol into?

I enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Modern Languages (Arabic).

Question 8

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

The University of Melbourne



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?

I would study two hours a night, on most weeknights. If something came up, or if I felt myself approaching the abyss, I took a night off. On the weekend, I studied about four hours a day. During the revision period, I studied between six and eight hours a day. I had priorities. English Literature was my passion, and had the lion's share of my attention. Then French, both courses, and then drama. Anything that remained caught the scraps—I still studied them, but not nearly as consistently.

Question 10

What was your typical weekday routine?

My routine was simple and very constant. That helped to keep me calm. I woke at six every morning, left the house to catch the train at ten past seven, arrived at Flinders street at ten to eight, and walked for twenty minutes up to Albert Park Lake. Class started at eight thirty. I either attended school until three fifteen, or had the afternoon off to go to University, where I finished at six forty five on Tuesdays and five forty five on Thursdays. I went home, had a break until an early dinner at six-or-so o'clock. I went for another walk, about forty five minutes, had a shower, and got to work at seven thirty. I was finished by nine thirty; I watched some TV and went to bed around ten thirty.

Question 11

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

I did the bulk of my study in one library or another. There are fewer distractions. Also, at home, I studied in the living room, way from the computer.

Question 12

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

During the holidays, I took until the first Wednesday as a break. Then I worked three to four hours a day. Except for the last holidays, heading into summer, when I worked five to seven hours a day.

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.

I took part in the University of Melbourne Extension Programme during year twelve, but I had quit both my job and my third language to focus on class.

Question 14

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

I didn't play sport, and my family are all busy, which means we kept similar hours. We live in the same house— one can't avoid them, really. I just made sure to talk to my sisters every evening.

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).

Every exam depends. I would begin two weeks before assessment. For English Language or French, I would write notes. I might write them out in another language to be sure I'm not parroting. I would memorise some, and be sure I was very familiar with useful quotes. For literature and drama, I would practice—essays, or lines. This would take me two to three hours each week day, longer on the weekend. It's important not to burn yourself down, though. You need to keep your best work for the actual assessment. My only materials would be paper, a pen, maybe props and a mirror/captive audience for drama.

Question 16

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

I would study six to eight hours a day leading up to the final exams. I only had one mid-year, so it was less during the winter.

Question 17

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

While studying for exams, I got up at eight, and was at the library by ten. I worked until one. I had lunch until half past the hour. I worked until three. I went home and had a break until after dinner. I did any work which required a computer in the evening.

Question 18

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

No. I was a hermit. But I made sure to keep up with my sisters, who tethered me to life.

Question 19

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

I am good at learning things off by heart—between literature and drama, I found it easy. I read it a few times, I recited it, wrote it done, fixed my mistakes, repeated, and half an hour later the soliloquy was done.

Question 20

If applicable, when did you start preparing for your Unit 3 exams?
When did you start preparing for your Unit 4 exams?

I started to prepare for my final exams—the only, I believe, pertinent here—in the term three holidays.

Question 21

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?

I kept a few sure quotes handy for essay-based assessment, so if my brain froze I could just trot them out. I would go for a quote, or go on the next question until I had it together. In drama, there's a whole set of sleights to gather up yours threads—improvise, stop and remember where you are going instead of thinking where you're coming from, repeat your lead-in, or just go on the next scene.

Question 22

Did you throw yourself back into study after the mid-year exams, or did you take a significant study break?

I had only one mid-year, so the mid year exams did not interrupt my studying. I studied before, is studied after, there was no breathing space between.

Question 23

Did you study across the Term 2 school holidays? If yes, what did you spend the bulk of your time doing?

Yes, and I spent the bulk of my time doing extra reading, finishing set tasks and refining relevant areas—for instance, essay writing or short answers.

Question 24

If you did not study across the Term 2 school holidays, do you believe that your workload and stress levels would have been reduced if you did engage in some study?

Studying over the holidays was largely an effort to deepen my understanding. It didn't do that much to lighten my load, really.

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

Question 1

Which subject does this report relate to?

Literature.

Question 2

What sort of marks did you get in this subject across the year? (Please detail the marks you obtained for each SAC and exam).

In my first sac I received 39/40. In my second, 37/40. In my third, 60/60. In my fourth, 40/40, in my exam, I guess, perfect marks.

Question 3

Based on your results and performance throughout the year, were you confident that you would obtain a perfect Study Score? If not, what Scaled Score were you anticipating/hoping to receive?

I was expecting to get over 45, but no one anticipates a perfect score. There's too much chance and fortune involved, I still think.

Question 4

Which section/topic from Unit 3 and 4 did you find most challenging?

I found essay structure sometimes to try me—my content was good, but in the first two essays I sometimes struggled to set things up sensibly.

Question 5

How much time did you spend preparing/working on SACs?

All of your study should go to your SACs—a good month.

Question 6

What was the best source of help/information for the SACS? (Text book, teacher, friends, lectures, tutorial programs, private tutors, internet, own research etc).

My best source of information was my teacher and my text. It is also wise to read widely—seek out academic work on the subject (books, peer reviewed journals, secure sites), and construct your own point of view. You don't have to agree with the orthodox position, and, within a certain framework, integrity will be rewarded.

Question 7

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

I had no tutors.

Question 8

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

I had no tutors, but I found that work for one French subject assisted me in the other, and versa vice. I imagine it's the same principle. However, I found the end-of-semester seminars held to resume the unit utterly useless.

Question 9

If applicable, do you feel that you would have obtained the same score if you did not use tutors/coaches/lectures/tuition programs?

I didn't have any tutors in any case, but I did procure help from friends, family and teachers. I doubt I could have managed everything alone.

Question 10

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

My teachers were the most help. It is really important to let them know you, know where you are, what you think and how they can respond.

Question 11

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

I think I studied less than some, but with clearer purposes. I never just sat at a desk so I could say I'd done an hour's work. I had an objective, and when it was done I could do what I preferred.

Question 12

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

Literature had always been my talent. I had a lot of background, and a lot of love, to put into my work.

Question 13

Compare the subjects for which you obtained your lowest and highest Subject Study Scores.

Detail what you did differently between the two subjects and if applicable, provide your opinion on why you obtained such different scores.

I obtained my lowest study score in drama. I obtained my highest raw score in literature. French was marked up, and frankly ought not to count. Honestly, drama and literature were comparable in effort. I just lacked natural aptitude in the theatre. I'm a writer, not a thespian. I'm going to write about English Language versus English literature instead. In Literature, I slaved for hours. I gave my Eng.Lang notes the occasional glance. I consistently achieved wonderful marks where I worked hardest, in the subject I most adored. English Language, an unfortunate stop-gap solution, languished in the B+ area. When I really knuckled down for the exam, and applied myself, I redeemed myself. There be the lesson. As in drama, sometimes you just can't do what I required to get top marks, but the year is not just about the ATAR score. There's much more to education than that.

Question 14

As part of your 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?

I spent twelve to sixteen good hours getting all my notes together for English Language. Literature is different—I would have spent thirty hours on it, easily, but maybe four on my notes.

Question 15

Did you purchase/acquire quality notes to assist in your examination preparation? If yes, did you find this acquisition beneficial? Why/why/not?

I purchased no notes. They are often touted as 'short cuts'. There's no such thing, and I don't find them helpful. They make you feel better, but they hardly help your scores. Complexity is rewarded in humanities, and there is no complexity in such abbreviated texts.

Question 16

How many examination papers did you work through as part of your exam preparation?

For literature, I worked through at least eight full practice exams, to time. For English Language, two. As ones said, I had priorities, and they dictated my time.

Question 17

Which exam papers did you work through?

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

In literature, I asked for topics from my teacher of chose passages at random. In other subjects, practice exams were provided at school.

Question 18

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

Answered above.

Question 19

If applicable, how much time was invested into preparing for the Unit 3 examination?

How much time was invested into preparing for the Unit 4 examination?

Which examination did you find more difficult and why?

My major exams were all at the end of the year. They took two months out of my life, between three and eight hours a day as previously specified. Units 3 and 4 were assessed together.

Question 20

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?

I had covered all of the information in the exams. That didn't get me a perfect mark in many, and it didn't really calm me down, but it's some proof of effort.

Question 21

If applicable, did you complete every question in the Unit 3 exam? If no, please estimate how much of the paper you did address.

It is wise to answer every question on the exam, even if unsure. Thus, you have some chance. I answered everything, every exam, if somewhat briefly in some cases. If I ran out of time, I dedicated more time to more important questions.

Question 22

If applicable, did you complete every question in the Unit 4 exam? If no, please estimate how much of the paper you did address.

As above.

Question 23

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

I used no special technique. I might have prayed.

Question 24

If applicable, what mistakes did you make when preparing for the Unit 3 exams?

Did you do anything differently when preparing for the Unit 4 examinations?

I should have been a little more consistent in my exam preparation. I lost out in later exams, like drama, because I had left it until I was too tired.

Question 25

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

I found my notes, texts I had found during the year, the course text, and my teachers, most useful in exam preparation.

Question 26

What advice would you provide to those students aiming for a 50 in this subject?

I would advise would-be 50s to practise literature. Practice. Read the text five times. Read the critical works, old and new. Use your own head, and don't accept anyone else's interpretation just because it involves the word 'paradox' and received a passing grade.

General Advice

Question 1

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

The most difficult aspect of year twelve was loneliness. It is isolating, so it important to hold to those closest.

Question 2

If you had your time over again, would you do anything differently across Year 11 and/or 12?

Why/Why Not?

I would probably calm down if I were to repeat VCE. It doesn't matter so much, whether you get 95 or 98. Also, I'd manage my studies more fairly. However, literature would still come first.

Question 3

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

N/A

Question 4

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

As far as resources go, may I recommend large academic libraries like the Baillieu, at Melbourne University? There are without rival in terms of specific academic study.

Question 5

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

Calm down, and acquaint yourself with the biggest library you can find. The internet is the black forest—fun, perhaps, but not a great environment for critical thought. Work with hard, reviewed texts, and always keep your teacher up to date with the ideas you encounter.