



# PAST STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

*An inquisitive heart*



*Pictured with The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP - Minister for Education and Minister for Women*

**With six perfect study scores of 50 across five subjects and a median ATAR of 75.5 the success of the entire VCE Class of 2021 is something to celebrate. Our students demonstrated yet again the academic rigour provided by a Sacred Heart Girls' College education.**

**Two students were the recipients of Premier's VCE Study Awards, an honour given to the very top performers in individual subjects: Aurora Lahur for English (Class of 2021), and Claire Duckett (Year 12) for Health and Human Development.**

**Below Aurora, our Proxime Accessit (ATAR 99.8) talks about her experience at SHGC and provides tips for VCE success.**

## **How did you decide which VCE subjects you would study?**

Despite choosing a subject combination (Biology, Chemistry, English, Mathematical Methods, Physics, Specialist Mathematics) notorious for its difficulty and prevalence among students whose parents wish to strategically maximise their future success, I genuinely enjoyed science and maths which led to me choosing them as VCE subjects.

I also knew I wanted to go into STEM at university, so I chose my subjects accordingly and ensured I satisfied the entry requirements for my course preferences. My top piece of advice, however, is to play to your strengths and interests irrespective of the expectations of teachers, parents, or siblings. It is by no means necessary to follow what other high-achieving students are studying, under the assumption that this will guarantee you do well. Though clichéd, it's much better to do what you enjoy.

## **What do you think helped you to give your best to your VCE studies?**

Perseverance and consistent efforts throughout the year. It's true when people say that hard work beats talent every time – this is especially the case for VCE. At the end of the day, you don't have to be what your peers deem the "smartest" person in the class; whilst natural aptitude helps, putting in a deliberate, conscious effort to learn and improve will set you up for success. Being lucky enough to have very supportive and devoted teachers, open-minded and kind parents, and access to a host of resources undeniably helped as well.

*"...deliberate, conscious effort to learn and improve will set you up for success."*

## **What did you enjoy/do you enjoy outside of school/studying?**

I had way too many hobbies outside of school that I wanted to pursue. I watched a lot of films and TV shows, played music, did freelance writing and art, did a bit of gaming, and followed my interest in astronomy. It's crucially important to maintain doing the things you enjoy even throughout VCE. Additionally, I exercised multiple times a week and went for regular runs, which were extremely beneficial – I'd even go as far as to say that this was the number one thing besides actual study that culminated in my academic success.

### Tips for maintaining a balance between studying and the rest of your life:

Time-management is everything. Before the start of the term, plan out a rough schedule detailing the times you plan on studying, for example, once you get home from school, or after dinner. Once you receive your SAC schedule, write down all the dates in advance and work backwards to determine how early you'd need to start preparing for them. Start studying the content earlier than the rest of your class, such that during the year you'll consistently be ahead; in this way, you'll hopefully have quite a lot of time for doing non-school-related activities without feeling guilty for not doing work.

*"...focus on fostering an intrinsic motivation..."*

### What advice would you give to parents who have a child completing VCE?

Don't be a "tiger parent" and force your child to study non-stop or pursue a particular career path at the expense of their sanity and interests. While academics are important, an exorbitant emphasis on grades has detrimental effects and often results in students performing poorer than if this weren't the case. Instead, nurture your child's aspirations and focus on fostering an intrinsic motivation that will compel them to want to do well and view their education in a positive light.

### What advice would you give to VCE teachers?

The best teachers I had in VCE were friendly, approachable, and selflessly dedicated to ensuring we reached our goals. If you can make the classroom environment a place students feel safe and welcomed enough in to discuss ideas and ask questions without fear of judgement, you're doing well. In my experience, my favourite classes were slightly informal yet conducive to personal and academic growth. It's also important to instil a sense of self-belief in your students and to push them beyond themselves.

### What advice would you give to students currently completing their VCE?

Stop obsessing about the number of marks you can afford to lose on tomorrow's SAC to guarantee a study score above 40. Forget about the technicalities of how the ATAR is calculated, and don't try to estimate your ranking based on the test scores of your classmates sitting around you. This is a sure-fire way to make yourself unnecessarily anxious. While this is easier said than done, focus on the subject content itself. Focus on how you can most effectively learn and revise the concepts. And of course, focus only on your progress. An important yet often neglected piece of advice: the only person you should be comparing yourself to is the person you were yesterday. Additionally, ask questions – as many questions as humanly possible.

### How would you describe the academic culture of Sacred Heart Girls' College?

Disciplined but gentle, and with a healthy degree of competition. Students are encouraged to strive for better, while being supported in terms of their wellbeing.

### What do you enjoy/value about being part of the Sacred Heart Girls' College community?

The support from some amazing teachers who genuinely cared about our learning and wellbeing. Without them, I doubt I'd have done as well or enjoyed my time at school as much. I also value the strong friendships formed during my time there – they made school vastly more enjoyable and were probably the main reason I didn't descend into complete mental instability.

### What course are you studying now?/What plans do you have for the future?

I'm studying a Bachelor of Science Advanced – Research (Honours) at Monash University, majoring in Physics and Astrophysics. This is basically a science degree with enrichment programs and mentoring opportunities for students who want to pursue a research career. In the future, I'm aiming to become a physicist or astrophysicist, so this course is well suited for me. I'm also interested in potentially doing something in tech and entrepreneurship, as well as continuing to perform and compose music.