Premier's VCE Awards 2011

Top All-Round VCE High Achievers

Marc Bonaventura
Xavier College

Marc’s VCE study load included Latin and Mathematical Methods (CAS) in 2009, followed by English, Classical Greek, Classical Studies, Specialist Mathematics and Chemistry in 2010. He is now undertaking a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne, with plans for a possible future career as a barrister or solicitor.

Marc says developing good study habits early in your school life prepares you well for VCE. ‘By working hard, doing all the homework and ensuring that you understand all the concepts from Years 9 to 11, you will make Year 12 much more bearable.’

When he is not studying, Mark loves playing sport, especially tennis and soccer, and is a keen reader of historical novels.

Miranda Gaze
Methodist Ladies’ College

Miranda is currently studying a Bachelor of Arts with a Diploma in Languages (French) at the University of Melbourne. She is also passionate about history and hopes to complete a double major in History and International Studies and Politics.

She hasn’t decided on her final career just yet but wants to ‘continue doing something that I’m passionate about and that inspires me!’

Miranda says the best way to succeed is by studying subjects you really enjoy, which for her were Psychology in Year 11 and History: Revolutions, French, English, Mathematical Methods and Biology in Year 12.

She says her parents were also critical to her during VCE. “Never underestimate the power of having someone to talk to about your difficulties!”

Vivien Dunn
The Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School

After studying Psychology, English Language, French, Mathematical Methods, Drama and Biology during VCE, Vivien is now enjoying a new learning environment at the University of Melbourne where she is completing both a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Languages.

As well as choosing subjects that she was interested in, Vivien attributes much of her success to her teachers. ‘Many of the teachers that I had at school were really inspiring, especially the ones that were passionate about their subjects.’

While looking back fondly on her VCE years, Vivien says one of the best part of VCE was: ‘the final 10 seconds of my final exam; everyone was just watching the clock waiting for the moment of freedom.’

Nupur Goyal
The Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School/Victorian School of Languages

Studying a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at Monash University is the next step in Nupur’s ambition to ‘become a dedicated and devoted doctor who is able to make a difference.’

To get to this point, Nupur completed studies in Chemistry, Physics, English Language, LOTE: Hindi, Accounting, Mathematical Methods and Specialist Mathematics; while unwinding with a spot of Bollywood or Latin Dancing.

Nupur also credits those close to her during VCE with helping her succeed. ‘I was most inspired by my teachers and my friends’, she says. ‘These people may not be famous or prominent figures in the world, but they influenced me much more than any Einstein or Newton ever could.’
Dean Hayden
*Bialik College*

Dean believes it was a combination of his passion for his studies and the passion of his teachers that helped him achieve his outstanding VCE results.

Dean’s VCE subjects were English, Chemistry, Biology, Religion and Society, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics and UMEP Mathematics; and he is now participating in an overseas youth development program before he returns to pursue a Bachelor of Biomedicine.

Outside of study Dean is passionate about social action and the environment and is keenly involved in youth groups. He also loves playing the saxophone and drinking good coffee.

A comfortable study environment is critical to VCE success according to Dean. ‘A nice pair of ugg boots, warm tracksuit pants, a pack of Arnott’s, a nice cuppa and good lighting make a world of difference.’

Victoria Huang
*Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School*

Victoria is undertaking a hectic post VCE workload following two of her passions – medicine and music, by studying a Bachelor of Biomedicine and a Diploma in Music at the University of Melbourne.

This follows a subject load of English, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Music Performance: Solo and Chinese Second Language during VCE.

Victoria also finds time to enjoy netball, athletics and badminton, as well as baking desserts and making hand-made birthday cards.

Victoria says she balances everything by ‘Learning to utilise my time efficiently, prioritising, and possessing a reasonable amount of self-control, especially when there’s a new book you desperately want to read or you’re itching to check Facebook.’

Sarah Holper
*Kilvington Grammar School*

During VCE Sarah studied English, French, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematical Methods CAS and Further Mathematics and is now at Monash University studying a Bachelor of Medicine/Surgery.

Sarah has embraced her new study environment and is keenly interested in learning more about current scientific advances. She believes learning is life-long, and hopes to one day work as a doctor overseas where she can interact with a diverse range of people and broaden her perspectives and understanding.

Sarah says keeping checklists was her strategy for coping with the pressures of VCE. ‘Seeing the ticks accumulate will remind you of how much you’ve already achieved rather than just focusing on how much is still to come.’

Paul Khoo
*Melbourne High School*

A highlight of Paul’s final VCE year was representing Australia and winning a silver medal in the International Biology Olympiad, in Changwon, South Korea.

Paul studied Biology, Chemistry, English, Physics, Mathematical Methods and Specialist Mathematics and is now at Monash University undertaking a Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery. Upon graduation, he hopes to spend a few years in medical practice, before doing research, possibly in the fields of biochemistry, cardiology or neuroscience.

Paul proudly dedicates all his achievements to his father. ‘He passed away just a few weeks before the VCE results were released, and it is only now that I can fully appreciate how vital he was to my successes during the year,’ Paul says.
Bryan Ladowsky
*The King David School*

Bryan is currently exploring his fascination with different cultures and their languages on a five-month program touring around Israel, including political seminars and visits to heritage sites in both Poland and Prague.

During VCE Bryan studied English, Physics, Chemistry, Further Mathematics, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, and Spanish and, when he returns in 2012, he will be studying a Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Law at Monash University, with plans to pursue post-graduate study in science.

‘One of my long-term ambitions is to contribute to the scientific world in some way through research,’ he says. ‘I would like to leave my mark in history and better the education of others to facilitate more scientific breakthroughs.’

Aimee Liu
*Mckinnon Secondary College*

During her VCE studies, Aimee fondly remembers weekly motivational speeches from her principal that emphasised the importance of the three Ds: desire, dedication and determination.

Aimee’s recognition as a Top All-Round VCE High Achiever demonstrates that she clearly listened to that advice while undertaking a study load comprising English, Mathematical Methods, Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Specialist Mathematics.

Her advice for future VCE students is to enjoy the learning experience and to ‘establish a good connection with teachers; they are not only your teachers, but friends and mentors as well.’

Aimee is now studying Biomedicine at the University of Melbourne, to be followed by a postgraduate degree in dentistry and an eventual career in that field.

Jia Hui Lee
*Ivanhoe Girls’ Grammar School*

Jia Hui is studying a Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery at Monash University and while she is yet to define her exact career path she is committed to ‘improving the quality of life of people so they may have the chance to lead more fulfilled lives.’

She balanced her studies in Chinese 2nd language, English, Specialist Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics and University Mathematics by enjoying her passion for music and participating in the orchestra, choir, and percussion ensembles at school.

Jia Hui found inspiration during VCE from her teachers and parents. ‘I believe that everyone needs someone to be inspired by, someone who you can look up to and who motivates you to strive to do your very best.’

Joshua Monester
*Bialik College*

‘Stay in touch with your friends and family. Life isn’t supposed to stop during VCE, but it can if you let it do so.’ This is Josh’s advice for success during VCE, which for him involved making sure he had every Saturday night off studying to catch up with friends.

Joshua’s school studies included English, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, Religion and Society, Chemistry and Further Mathematics, and he is now at Monash University studying Medicine.

His ultimate goal is to become a doctor but he also loves to pursue his artistic endeavours, ranging from photography to philosophy. ‘For me, the arts have always been fascinating, a way of looking at the world which is completely different to the scientific mindset of the medicine course.’
**Nishani Nithianandan**
*The Mac.Robertson Girls’ High School*

Nishani says the secret to success during VCE is to allocate time for the things you love. ‘This will give you something to look forward to and ensure that you are performing at your best during your study time,’ she says.

For Nishani, this meant participating in public-speaking competitions as well as playing the piano or classical Indian violin when she wasn’t undertaking her study in her chosen VCE subjects; Biology, Mathematical Methods, English, Specialist Mathematics, Chemistry and Accounting.

She also believes credit should go to teachers, schools and students’ families in supporting VCE students. ‘I certainly feel that I am indebted to everyone who supported me and have no doubt that I could not have succeeded without their continued encouragement and assistance.’

**Sam Scott**
*Melbourne Grammar School*

Sam is studying Engineering and Science at Monash University and hopes to one day mix his interest in these areas with his passion for social justice, by one day working in a developing country.

During VCE Sam studied Chemistry, Physics, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, French, English and Literature and he says his strong results came by finding a balance between the study and relaxation.

‘I think the best piece of advice I can give is to get involved with other things both within the school and within the community.’

For Sam, this meant doing a range of extracurricular activities, including theatre, debating and music, which he says helped make Year 12 ‘the best year of my life so far.’

**Vinay Sastry**
*Melbourne High School*

This year Vinay has started his Biomedicine degree at the University of Melbourne, which he plans to follow with postgraduate medicine before one day becoming a doctor. Along the way he hopes to spend some time travelling around the world.

Organisation is critical for success in VCE according to Vinay, who carefully planned and prioritised his tasks while completing English, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Business Management.

Vinay played tennis to unwind when he needed to take a break from study. ‘Some leisure time is important to complement your study routine so you don’t “burn out”,’ he says.

**Brandon Spina**
*Centre for Adult Education*

Brandon's keen interest in biology and medical affairs has led him to study Biomedicine at the University of Melbourne. Renowned cancer surgeon Professor Chris O'Brien is Brandon's role model and has played a role influencing him. ‘He is a huge inspiration to me and I found, his fighting spirit and caring nature very motivating.’

Brandon's VCE subjects were English, English Language, Mathematical Methods, Further Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology.

He believes it's important for VCE students to take a break and avoid ‘overstudying as it can become unproductive’. He recommends watching something funny, because for him ‘laughter really was the best medicine to overcome some of the worst days.’
Ashwin Sharma
Umakantha Sarma
Melbourne High School

With ambitions to enter medicine and become a doctor, Ashwin is taking a well-earned year off after an intensive VCE workload that included studying Accounting, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics and English.

Ashwin says friends are critical during VCE and success is a team effort. ‘My friends and I would regularly discuss our work and try learning new topics,’ he says. ‘We also had a friendly sense of competition, which motivated us and made our studies fun.’

His advice for future VCE students is to pick subjects you enjoy and to participate in a range of fun activities to keep you motivated at school.

Rengan Vijayakumar
Yarra Valley Grammar School

Rengan is currently studying Medicine at the University of New South Wales and hopes to one day contribute to the community in a meaningful and lasting manner as a doctor, researcher or lecturer in the medical field.

During VCE Rengan studied Chemistry, Biology, Health and Human Development, Specialist Mathematics, Mathematical Methods and English, and believes it was by truly enjoying the process of learning that he achieved his success. He strives to adhere to the motto ‘don’t chase success: chase the qualities of success and success will follow.’

He acknowledges the time and effort of his family and the staff at Yarra Valley Grammar School as critical to his success during VCE.

Nelson Wang
The Geelong College

While undertaking a hectic study load of English, Mathematical Methods, Further Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Media and Music Group Performance, it was a visit from a member of Médecins Sans Frontières that helped inspire Nelson to study medicine.

‘While I am not sure whether or not this is where I want to end up, the idea that one could let go of all geographical and cultural boundaries to go out and help people in a real, hands-on way was definitely inspiring.’

Nelson says that while academics are important, you also need to have balance in your life. ‘Definitely work hard, but don’t forget to have fun while you do it, you only get to complete Year 12 once.’

He found his balance during VCE by playing tennis as well as through his passion for music, playing both drums and guitar.

Farzana Zaman
Presbyterian Ladies’ College

Farzana puts her VCE success down to three key factors – the support of her parents, the advice of her teachers and, importantly, her own self-motivation. ‘I embarked on VCE with a clear goal in mind, and the vision of actually attaining it drove me to constantly strive for my best.’

Her subjects during VCE were English, French, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics and Melbourne University Enhancement Mathematics.

Farzana is now in the next stage of pursuing her childhood dream of becoming a doctor as she undertakes a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at Monash University.

She warmly remembers Year 12 as one of the best years of her life and urges future students to do the same: ‘Make the most of it; enjoy the study, have fun with your friends and cherish your last year of school,’ she says.