

17 September 2012

Year 11

Dear

Your last school year is about to begin. For most of you it will be the most challenging year of your life so far, and therefore, if you take up the challenge, it will be the most rewarding.

The most obvious challenge you will face is the HSC. You must help each other. The HSC will help you get you into the career path you want to follow, and even more importantly the habits of work you establish this year will be the major foundation for your professional life. The self discipline that you will acquire this year is more valuable than immediate marks that will result from that self discipline. Strong self discipline and self control will help you immensely to live up to your work and family responsibilities in the years to come.

Throughout the year, you will need to keep focused on this examination. **Each night you will need to do, at the very minimum, three hours work.** To be the best student you can be, you cannot be finding ways to cut corners. It doesn't make sense to leave work to the last minute... the message you give yourself is that you would rather do anything than work hard. You cannot afford that message this year.

But it is not simply enough to go through the motions. **You must be absolutely determined to master your work.** If this means you must do fifteen extra hours on a particular weekend to get on top of a Maths topic, then that's life. Do it. If you need to improve your essay writing, don't sit there wondering how... tackle the problem with determination. Do three extra practice essays weekly until you know how. This is not just a nice idea. To be able to master whatever we attempt is an important professional skill that we all need in life.

In professional life we will not be measured by whether we have put in the time. Only our *actual* performance is what counts. You will not keep a job which you cannot do. If you do not *master* the skills in a particular occupation, you will not be employable in that occupation.

You will do most of your learning in the classroom. You cannot afford to be off task in classes. No heads down, no grouping up the back of classes, no self generated distractions, no moving tables. Everything you do must enhance the learning atmosphere in the classroom. Do not allow yourself to distract others.

Get full value out of your study periods. Keep yourself accountable. Clock up a full 50 minutes of study in study periods. Beware of building any negative habits of time-wasting when you are in the library or at a desk. Enjoy your recess and lunch and work hard whenever you are sitting at a desk.

Use the minutes. **Ten minutes wasted each day this year adds up to a full week of study lost.** Think about it.

To score excellent marks you will need to:

- 1 nail every assessment task;
- 2 master the examinable material... **know what to expect on the exam papers** by familiarising yourself with last year's paper and the sample/specimen papers.

Realise that about $\frac{3}{4}$ of your final HSC marks will come from exams, therefore you have to be ready for both assessment tasks and exams.

The HSC is an adult responsibility... it will affect your adult life, so approach it with a professional attitude. I don't want you logging onto the results in December 2013 and feeling miserable because you didn't do your best. If you groove lazy habits into your character this year, they will trip you up in future years.

A man who does his best will always find that doors open to him... employers are much more interested in reliable professionals than in top ATARs with chaotic work habits and poor people skills. Some rocket scientists and computer geniuses can be absolutely unemployable.

Despite all the HSC hype, the most important challenge is to grow through this year into a man of quality. A man who has given his very best never has any reason to be ashamed. I don't expect anyone to score 100%, but I do expect everyone to give 100% day after day for the next twelve months. Commit yourself and then make some hard decisions... limit your social life. Keep parties to the holidays.

As always let us turn past mistakes into opportunities to grow. There are so many bearpits for young adults. Have the humility to admit mistakes and learn from them, and have the humility to listen to what friends, parents and teachers are saying to you. Above all, have the humility to listen to the whisper of your conscience in the days and years ahead.

Remember too, in Term 4, you will be electing School Captain and Vice Captain. Pick a classmate who has sincerity, the courage to do what is right, and who gives good example. He must be a hard worker. Your choices will affect your class in the coming year. Choose wisely.

You should have discovered by now that your teachers are dedicated to doing all they can to help you in the coming year. Look for their help and keep your part of the deal. If you do so this will be your best year yet!

Now hit your straps!

Yours sincerely

Andrew Mullins
Headmaster