

Interview with Brooke HSC podcast.MP3

HSC Hacks

Interviewer: [00:00:01]

Hi, I'm Sharon McIlwee, the Youth Librarian at Inner West Council Libraries. Today we're here at Marrickville Library to talk about surviving the HSC. This year on the council website, we've had a presentation from UAC which details all you need to know about HSC Marks, ATARS and applying for educational access schemes for if you've experienced disadvantage during the COVID 19 crisis, and that can be in terms of access to Internet or technology or in terms of financial hardship. So please check out our UAC presentation online. But today we'd like to talk about some other aspects of HSC. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Brooke Teahan: [00:00:38]

Yes, I am Brooke Teahan. I am a second-year journalism student at UTS. I tutor in English and Maths predominantly. And I did quite well in my HSC.

Interviewer: [00:00:49]

Yes, very well. Very high performing student. We're very lucky to have you here. Thanks for coming Brooke. So, I'm just going to ask you a few questions today to support some of the students who might be going through some different challenges this year. What do you think some of the challenges are that students might be facing right now?

Brooke Teahan: [00:01:11]

So many, too many to even talk about. But I think, you know, even as a uni student myself, I've noticed a supreme lack of motivation. It's like, what's the point? Even just being overwhelmed with assignments that are usually a breeze and even talking to the students that I'm tutoring right now- it's difficult and we should all acknowledge that. And we might not be doing as well as we would hope. Right. But I think the key is, is finding the silver linings to this situation, you know? Yes. It's not ideal. It's difficult to learn when you can't talk to your teachers directly or be motivated by your peers. But I do think that this is an opportunity to learn skills that do set you up for life. Being able to work off your own bat is always a beneficial thing, a positive thing. But there are also techniques to

make it a little bit easier. So, I think the major issue that I've heard from my students is finding a good workspace. You know, if you have siblings, if you have your parents working from home, it is chaotic and it's not ideal to be working in the space that you sleep in. So, I think number one key, it's super obvious, get your phone away from you. It's so tempting to look at your Snapchat or your tick tock or all of those types of things. But they are not good for you. Right? That doesn't mean you have to look yourself in an empty box with a padded cell. It's that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying the key that I've found is setting actual reasonable goals and working towards them. So, if you say, okay, I'm going to do an hour of work, and then I'm going to do half an hour of playing animal crossing, which is what everyone's playing right now. That's cool.

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And like also, you know, you don't have to be feeling great either. If you feel bad, acknowledge it. Feel it. Talk to somebody. It's entirely normal when things change to feel that way.

Interviewer: [00:03:04]

Thanks, Brooke. That's excellent. What's your advice specifically for senior students?

Brooke Teehan: [00:03:10]

Well, I'll start off with assessments because they plague your entire existence! Right now, things are definitely uncertain with how the HSC will go. At this point, I think it will still be an exam. But for the assessments, while you're still in your normal year 12 studies, I would say one of the keys that worked for me was finding the fun. They don't have to be a painful teeth pulling task.

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So, if you have an English essay and you really, really hate Shakespeare, don't say, oh, I'm just going to let this assignment beat me, beat it. If you're a competitive person, say, okay, this is my opportunity to rant and rave about why I hate this piece. You're allowed to do that. Every essay is an argument, treat it as such, and that applies for all of your subjects. If you don't like it, don't let it crush you. Take pride in your work and it makes them way more fun. Also, I know you can't meet up with your friends, but do a zoom call, talk to them, you know, have a session where you just complain, complain, complain and find solutions together because collaborating will help.

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Two heads are better than one. It's a classic for a reason. I mean, in terms of the actual work, essays can be overwhelming, particularly without the support networks usually available. Break them down as much as you possibly can for English, because that is what I teach a lot. I tell students, you know, get the structure that your school does, whether that is PETAL, PEAL, TEEL, SEAL there's loads of them, and put in your quotes, put in your analysis, make it into a checklist rather than this huge 1000, 2000 word thing.

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I say it's too much if you do it like that and take breaks! Right. Also, Google it. I have so many students now asked me a question like, I don't know the PEAL technique, but Google it. That's all we have Google for. It is your best friend. And similarly, YouTube is great. I was having to reload the math curriculum because I forgot it because I'm human. And I looked up a YouTube video about it, learnt it, and it was better explained than my teachers could. You know, hopefully you have good teachers, but you never know. YouTube's a great resource and ask questions. The teachers aren't going to be as available as normal. But as much as you can ask questions, your friends, your teachers, even teachers that aren't your teachers, if you like and respect them, communicate with them. Or your parents, it's just any bouncing board you have will help solidify information into your brain.

Interviewer: [00:05:39]

Yeah, that's really good. I do remember the PEAL technique; the PEAL technique is big in our house right now! Yes. So, what about study tips? Have you got any good study tips?

BrookeTeahan: [00:05:52]

I do. I would say it's not really about the hours. I think there's this kind of perception of you have to be sitting there for hours and hours and hours cramming to be a good student. That is not the truth. My parents, while I was doing my HSC use to say, were

concerned I wasn't doing enough. But the thing is, it's about being consistent and about being efficient.

So, if you want to do the bare minimum and let's hope you don't. But if you want to, all you have to do first is pay attention to every class you go into, go in, engaged and actually pay attention. So instead of going with 70 percent and talking to your friends and going on Facebook, be present. You will learn without any study. That's just how school works. A lot of people waste time, so you use the time! Treat it like work. It's only one year. Get it done. If it is the goals you want, you know, to go to University or TAFE or whatever, make it! Basically, HSC is about giving yourself options. So that's a good motivator even when you think it's not worth anything. Remind yourself of that. Similarly, again, as I've said earlier, set goals and rewards. It doesn't have to be painful and have positive outlets. It's like they say it all the time, but get outside of your space, ideally. Get out of the room where you study and ideally get away from the screens. But if you really love videogames, play some videogames. If you really love making music on your computer, do that. But just get yourself outside to refresh, to recalibrate and come back in. Similarly, I do want to talk about results quickly. They can make or break you.

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They can make you feel terrible. They can make you feel amazing. They aren't you. And that's super important to remember. It's good you care if you get upset about results. Honestly, in Year 12, I got one result and I'm crying, and I'm upset. And the teacher was like, stop it! But it's like I care. I've worked really hard. But it's about accepting it. Feeling what you want to feel about it. Learning from it and then move on. You have to, you know, it's water under the bridge. Right? That's to say it's like water off the duck's back. Yeah. Get it off. You need to continue on. And one of my teachers said something I'll never forget. She said until your HSC you keep on learning every assessment you get you can improve upon. Don't just throw away the feedback they give you. Look at it! See if you can actually self-analyse what you've done and improve. Look at your friend's essays that have done really well. This will help you so much because I know so many people that get crippled by their fear of bad results and you want to stop trying when you're not doing well. And that's really sad. But I think there are ways to cope with it and to succeed despite it.

Interviewer: [00:08:38]

Yeah. That's right. And I think it's good what you mentioned about feedback. It's really important to seek that feedback in the first place. And also, when you're talking about, you know, the whole mental health aspect of it. Yeah. Get outside, get your exercise. Walk the dog. If you don't have a dog, walk yourself. Yeah. Reset your mind. That really rings true for my teenage son. Well, you just have to, you know, once they're out and about they're quite happy to go back and do some studies and somehow just need a circuit breaker. Absolutely. For those things. So, Brooke, is there anything else you'd like to add today?

Brooke Teahan: [00:09:15]

I would just say that these are really uncertain times. I do I do feel sorry for students right now because usually the HSC you've been working for 13 years towards this one goal. And it was so certain, you know, yeah, it was doomsday coming, but also like you knew it was happening and then you'd be done. That's been taken away from you a bit. And your 12 is also really fun. But I hope that you will still make the most of it, get what you want out of it and just like flourish next year and get into the degree if you need is what you want to do.

Interviewer: [00:09:50]

Absolutely. And I'll just want to remind everybody out there that we've got some amazing resources and databases available to everybody. And we also have our click and click service up and running at the library so you can access all the usual resources that you that you would when the library's open. So, yeah. On behalf of all of us at the library and Brooke, good luck with your exams. Look out for our HSC online lecture series over the next few months, which we're going to be releasing every few weeks. Yeah. Thanks so much, Brooke. And good luck everybody.