

The faces of the SACE in 2020

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The Class of 2020 have triumphed in the face of adversity to complete their SACE.

In a year like no other, the 15,119 SACE students who have today completed their SACE have successfully stared down the challenges of COVID-19 to continue the learning.

Learning remotely for two months due to COVID-19 has not stopped David Olijnyk from succeeding in his SACE.

The 18-year-old spent a long time away from the Australian Science and Mathematics School compared to his Year 12 peers, to protect his two family members who have an autoimmune disorder.

David credits his good study routine as well as the support from his friends and family for keeping him on track. David studied Stage 2 subjects in Chemistry, Specialist Mathematics, and Physics, as well as a university preparation course at Flinders University.

"When I first heard about COVID there was a sense that this was going to drift by and I really focused on Year 12," David said.

"But when it came I realised the seriousness of it, the decision to learn from home was taken out of my hands. I have two members of my family who are autoimmune so there was no question that I would stay at school.

"I think COVID surprised me how much I could power through and I was able not to worry about what was going on in the world and stay on track with the tasks at hand. It's supported my capacity to go against the odds and persevere."

Meenakshi Pramod Nair did not let COVID-19 dampen her spirits during the final year of SACE.

The 17-year-old Head Prefect at Roma Mitchell Secondary School and her peers had to adjust to online learning, as well as the cancellation of several Year 12 events.

But Meenakshi has shown resilience throughout her SACE studies in 2020, keeping her mental health and wellbeing, and that of her 'classmates', in focus.

Meenakshi studied Stage 2 subjects in Biology, Chemistry, General Mathematics, English Literary Studies, and the Research Project. She also completed a Certificate III in Business.

"COVID-19 has immensely altered the course of my senior year, leading to several events being cancelled or delayed," Meenakshi said.

"However, thanks to the efforts of all my teachers and staff at school, the impact that COVID-19 has had on my SACE completion has not been as severe.

"The social side of school was hard for a period of time because I couldn't physically see my friends. But I was very determined, and had a positive attitude throughout these times.

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“COVID-19 has affected our lives extensively over the past few months but it will not dampen my spirits. I couldn't have made it this year without my family, friends and teachers who have not let this pandemic waiver their support and encouragement.”

Meet the students

Jessica Bottcher, 18, of Roma Mitchell Secondary College

Jessica was unable to attend school throughout the whole of Year 11 because of a serious illness – but overcame the combined challenges of her illness and COVID-19 to complete her SACE this year. She credits the support of her friends and teachers throughout her journey.

Tonya Frank, 17, of Mark Oliphant College

Tonya has shown absolute resilience and determination to fulfil her lifelong dream of completing Year 12, but doing this while pregnant. Through her hard work, she has created a bright future for herself and baby daughter Violet.

David Olijnyk, 18, of Australian Science and Mathematics School

David spent two months in isolation to protect family members with high-risk medical conditions from the coronavirus. He adopted a classroom routine at home to keep up with his studies, including maintaining his participation in a Flinders University engineering course and winning the Engineering Design Challenge of 2020 with his team-mates.

Meenakshi Nair, 17, of Roma Mitchell Secondary College

Meenakshi used her leadership role as a prefect at her school to focus on mental health and the importance of connection to lift the spirits of her fellow school mates, while events – many of which are rites of passage in Year 12 - were being cancelled around her. She will take these unique experiences, her leadership skills, and the power of belonging into her studies in STEM next year.

Saalik Kalaniya, 18, of IQRA College

While finding the adjustment to online study at first difficult, Saalik credits his teachers for helping him to push through and discover there are different ways to learn. He says that COVID has taught him that life is never going to be simple.

Blayne O'Loughlin, 17, of Roma Mitchell Secondary College

As a member of the South Australian Aboriginal Secondary Training Academy, Blayne has spent this year juggling study while pursuing his dream to be an AFL footballer at the elite level. But getting his SACE was important because he says it will set him up for lifelong learning. He will go into next year with an apprenticeship in civil construction while pursuing his love of footy.

Oscar Puz, 18, of Roma Mitchell Secondary College

Oscar also had a leadership role at school, supporting his classmates through the loss of many events throughout the year. But on the academic side, he found a passion for PE, discovering it was more than just about mainstream sports, but about biomechanics and nutrition. He says he's found his pathway forward out of COVID-19.

Giovanni Elias, 18, of Rostrevor College

Giovanni achieved Merits in Biology, English, General Mathematics, Psychology, and the Research Project.

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Paras Stefanopoulos, 18, of St Michael’s College

Paras achieved Merits in Chemistry, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, Physics, and the Research Project.

Martina Theodorakakos, 18, of Walford Anglican School for Girls

Martina achieved Merits in English Literary Studies, Economics, Geography, Modern History, and the Research Project.

Shreyans Sinhal, 18, of St Peter’s College

Shreyans achieved Merits in Nutrition, Research Project, Chemistry, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, and Physics.

Oliver Kleinig, 17, of St Peter’s College

Oliver achieved Merits in Chemistry, English, Legal Studies, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, and the Research Project.

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