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# **BSSS Student News Semester 2 2023**



# What is VET?

VET stands for Vocational Education and Training. In plain language, this means “learning and training for work”. If a student does a course with VET competencies included, these can be counted towards a certificate showing industry-standard skills that are recognised anywhere a student goes in Australia. A Senior Secondary Certificate is also recognised everywhere in Australia.

VET is an important part of the ACT Senior Secondary System, and many students will complete VET competencies as part of classes, even if they don't receive a full certificate. A competency is a set of skills in a area, like workplace safety, first aid, or a very specific set of skills like “produce cakes” or “style hair”. You will show the person assessing you that you can do those skills to a good standard, and they will receive the competency. When you have enough competencies in a specific combination, you can be awarded a Certificate.

## E Units

Starting from 2024, E Units (External VET Credit Units) are available when you want to do a VET subject that isn't offered as part of a BSSS course. This might be done through your school. Some schools have the right approvals, the right teachers, and the right special equipment for the training (e.g., a school that is set up to teach hair-dressing).

Most E Units are done with external providers. This involves learning the skills somewhere like CIT. This is often in conjunction with an apprenticeship, but it doesn't have to be; for example, some students do E Units at places like the Academy for Interactive Entertainment, where they are learning game programming.

## ASbAs

An ASbA [is when you do an apprenticeship at the same time as attending school](#). ASbA stands for “Australian School-based Apprenticeship.” A stu-








dent will usually drop a subject, and attend school several days of the week, and the ASbA on the other days. An apprenticeship is where you work and learn skills for the job from experts on the job. There is always a study component, too, which is done at a Registered Training Organisation like CIT. You are paid for an ASbA, and you can often continue on at that employer after graduating.

## Take care of yourself!

Sometimes ASbAs done through part time work can be awesome, and are exactly what is needed. A student should talk with their parents/carers and Careers Advisor before signing on to an apprenticeship through a part-time job, particularly if it's in an industry that you don't want to work in as an adult. You also might want to look up the prospective employer.

It is exceptionally rare for a student to be permitted to sign up for two ASbAs at the same time, so if a student is planning on an ASbA in a different industry, they should consult their Careers Advisor or ASbA Coordinator before signing up to one through a part time job.

 <p><b>A course:</b> a course for anyone studying Year 11 and 12</p> <p><b>T course:</b> a course for anyone studying Year 11 and 12 who wants to go to university</p> <p><b>M course:</b> a course for anyone studying Year 11 and 12 who meets specific intellectual disability criteria</p>	 <p><b>E unit credit:</b> vocational education that is studied separately to A/T/M courses, often through an external provider or an Australian School-based Apprenticeship.</p> <p><b>W unit:</b> units that recognise time spent on the job when completing an ASbA or some other external vocational qualifications.</p> <p><b>V:</b> an A, T or M course which includes optional vocational competencies will have a V next to the course name.</p>	 <p><b>R unit:</b> study that is recreational or community based</p>  <p><b>H course:</b> a course studied through a university while you are still at school.</p>	<p><b>Certification</b></p> <p><b>Senior Secondary Certificate:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17 units of study</li> <li>• a minimum of 4 A, T, M, H or E courses</li> <li>• 3 different course areas</li> <li>• an English course</li> </ul> <p><b>Senior Secondary Certificate with an ATAR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 units of study</li> <li>• At least 3 majors and 3 minors or four majors and 1 minor</li> <li>• at least 3 majors and 1 minor classified T or H</li> <li>• an English course</li> <li>• 3 different course areas</li> <li>• undertake the AST</li> </ul>				
	<p><b>Course Patterns</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>● Minor: 2 semesters of an A, T, M, H or E course</td> <td>● Major: 3.5 semesters of an A, T, M or E course</td> <td>● Major-Minor: 5.5 semesters of an A, T, M or E course</td> <td>● Double Major: 7 semesters of an A, T, M or E course</td> </tr> </table>			● Minor: 2 semesters of an A, T, M, H or E course	● Major: 3.5 semesters of an A, T, M or E course	● Major-Minor: 5.5 semesters of an A, T, M or E course	● Double Major: 7 semesters of an A, T, M or E course
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# BSSS Courses that include VET

These are regular T, A and M courses that also include the option of Vocational competencies. This will depend on whether the teacher has the right training, and your school is a Registered Training Organisation with the right equipment.

The following BSSS courses have VET competencies included:

Automotive Technology A-M-V  
 Business Services A-M-V  
 Construction Pathways A-M-V  
 Data Science A-T-V  
 Design and Technology A-T-M-V  
 Design and Textiles A-T-M-V  
 Digital Products A-M-V  
 Digital Technologies A-T-M-V  
 Furniture Construction C  
 Furniture Making A-M-V  
 Horticulture A-M-V  
 Hospitality A-T-M-V  
 Hospitality Industry C  
 Live Production and Services A-M-V  
 Media A-T-M-V  
 Metal Products A-M-V

Music A-T-M-V  
 Networking and Security A-T-V  
 Pathways to Work and Learning A-M-V  
 Robotics and Mechatronics A-T-M-V  
 Social and Community A-T-M-V  
 Specialised Music A-T-M-V  
 Sport, Recreation and Leadership A-M-V  
 Stage Performance A-M-V  
 Studies of Media A-T-M-V  
 Studies of Music A-T-M-V  
 Tourism and Event Management A-T-M-V

*Note: C courses are discontinued from 2024.*



# What is studying VET like?

*We asked some current ACT students to tell us what it's like to study VET while also studying at college. If their stories inspire you, talk with your careers advisor or pastoral care teacher to learn more about External VET Credit and ASbAs at your school.*

Photos courtesy of the students. Thank you for your participation!

## The students

Gemma, Studying a Cert II in Resources and Infrastructure Work Preparation

Joseph, Studying a Cert II in Electronics

Sophie, Studying a Cert II in Animal Studies

Aaron, Studying a Baking Apprenticeship

Davis, Studying a Carpentry Apprenticeship

Ben, Studying a Carpentry Apprenticeship

## What made you pick an ASBA or VET?

**Gemma:** I've always had an interest in construction, but I never knew what I wanted to do within the industry. I've been doing woodwork since I was 4 years old with my Pop. Being hands on and creating things has been something I've enjoyed for a long time. From making a wooden plane to making a Gazebo, paving a footpath, as well as fixing and creating things in general. It has always been a passion of mine. My passion for creation and being hands on made me want to get into the industry. It wasn't until I attend my college's Career night in year 10 that I was introduced to an ASbA, and one that wasn't tied down to one specific trade. I had an opportunity to explore my interest in construction further. I commenced my ASba in Year 10 Semester two.

**Joseph:** After completing a range of work experience in the construction industry both in Canberra and Melbourne, I discovered a passion to become



Gemma at work in her Certificate II

an electrician. I really wanted to start an Electrical Australian School based Apprenticeship however I found out that it is competitive to get an ASbA in this industry. Using my initiative, I searched for a pre-apprenticeship course that were cost effective and would allow me to gain my Year 12 certificate while also achieving qualifications within this area. The one-year CIT Cert II Electronics course was the perfect fit for me.

**Sophie:** I chose to do a VET course outside of school as I didn't want to wait until school finished to start studying something that I was passionate about. I felt that commencing a course at CIT would allow me to see if Animal Studies was what I really wanted to do as a career, and the course would give me a snapshot of what this career may look like. Animal Studies has been a dream of mine and having the opportunity to attend CIT, meet new people and be taught by CIT teachers has been a great experience.

**Aaron:** I thought the opportunity to work in the baking industry would be interesting and something that appealed to me.

**Davis:** The incentive of starting my apprenticeship early was a significant motivating factor so that I had a head start on my career when I left school. The ability to have a balance of days on the worksite and days at school was enticing to me as well as I prefer to be active and working with my hands.

**Ben:** I have always been interested in building, and the opportunity to do an ASbA while still at school was a perfect opportunity. Not having a solid drive to move on to University after year 12, this was something that I could try out with the support of the school and the apprenticeship network.

## What are the benefits of your ASbA or VET study?

**Gemma:** The ASbA program has given me a clearer idea of what to do after school. I've gained a new set of skills, like learning new tools and a deeper understanding of what goes on in a job site, both in management and as a construction worker. The program has impacted me in many ways. I've met some wonderful people, both through the program and in different rotations, which wouldn't have been possible without the program. It's also made me more confident. The ASbA has enable me to identify the area of construction I am really interested in, and I will be applying to CIT at the end of the year to commence studies in the area of building design and drafting.

**Joseph:** I will have gained a Certificate II in Electronics by the end of this year which contributes to six months of an electrical trade qualifications. The course is very valuable as it teaches you about workplace safety along with foundations in. I started the course with people of varying ages and although I was one of the youngest, I have demonstrated many technical skills that enabled me to pass the first semester units. In the course I have been able to see and understand how mathematics is applied, in the Direct Current module I use a lot of algebra and formulas to understand how it works.

**Sophie:** There are many benefits of studying a VET course as they give you the opportunity and freedom to learn and experience a different learning environment compared to high school studies. The Animal Studies course will lead me to VET nursing which is a high demand job not only physically but mentally and the knowledge and skills I have already learnt from the amazing teachers are one of the most beneficial things of the VET course. As a result of studying the animal

studies course I have had the opportunities to undertake pet and house sitting. I have met some amazing pets and pet owners and earned some extra pocket money!

**Aaron:** I am able to learn more about the industry at a young age whilst still attending school. I have had the opportunity to meet new people, to learn from experienced mentors within the industry and I get to have a mixed timetable of schooling and work throughout the week.

**Davis:** The benefits of my ASBA study are to get a head start on my future career and to have experience earning a wage and managing my commitments.

**Ben:** An ASbA has given me hands-on learning experience in the building industry, and having started while still at school, it was a great way to fast-track my employment options. I enjoyed my time at school, so combining work and school was comforting, plus I was being paid for my time working. The benefit of an ASbA allowed me to be confident that my chosen trade was a good fit for me before the end of year 12.



Sophie at work with a friend

## What have you been most proud of achieving?

**Gemma:** Last year, while I was in Year 11, I was nominated by my employer, Australian Training Company for the ACT Training awards. This result is being a finalist for ACT Australian School-based Apprentice of the year. I am really proud of this achievement as the selection processes including attending an interview and I was one of six students selected from all of the school in the ACT.

**Joseph:** When I commenced the VET course, I was unsure how I would be able to manage my Year 11 and CIT studies, however one semester down and I am very happy with my achievements. There are multitude of practical assessments throughout the VET course and one that I'm particularly proud of is the soldering on a printed circuit board as I've never done it before, and it turned out great.



Joseph studying at CIT

**Sophie:** One big achievement that I am proud of is that I put the knowledge I learnt from my VET course and used it in a real-life situation. One morning before school, a cat was run over by a car on the street I live on. I was able to remove the cat from the middle of the road and comfort it by wrapping it in a towel. Unfortunately, the cat did not survive so I informed the owner what had happened, and she was very appreciative. This situation showed me that I was able to act under pressure and I realised that this is what I want to do in my future career - I want to help animals and their owners.

**Aaron:** I have been most proud of getting myself into a routine, attending work on time (2am) and

learning new skills and dishes. My lemon meringue tart is exceptional. Just ask my Careers and VET coordinator who asks for at least one a week.

**Davis:** My proudest achievements to date have been completing my first year of trade studies. By the time I graduate from College I will have a High School Certificate and will have completed 2 & ½ years of my trade study.

**Ben:** I have learnt so much since starting my ASbA. TAFE and on-site work has given me the skills to start a full-time apprenticeship comfortably. I feel proud that I've been able to:

- transition to full-time work easily
- adapted from a school environment to a work site
- having the courage to ask questions within a fast-paced, deadline-driven workplace, and being able to have good working relationships with the guys on site.

## How do you fit your vocational education into your senior secondary study?

**Gemma:** When selecting my subjects for Year 11 and 12, I really thought about courses that would help me in the future and work with my ASbA. At school I studied Construction Pathways, Design and Emerging Technologies, Engineering, Mathematics Applications, English and Religious Studies. I am an organised person and I always ensure that I talk with my Careers/VET Coordinator and teachers to ensure that I keep on top of my studies at school and training with ORBUS3. I use my study periods, and this has allowed me to do most of my school work at school rather than at home.

**Joseph:** I miss one day of school each week to attend CIT and I need to stay organised to catch up on class work from that day. I use the school diary to take note of when assessments are due and when necessary, I apply for assessment alteration. I have chosen classes which has made it possible for me to combine both senior studies with my CIT vocational course including a VET course at school - Construction Pathways. My subjects are at an accredited level except for Mathematics.

**Sophie:** Completing both the VET course and my high school studies has been challenging but the teachers around me have been amazing. Studying when you have a free period is extremely important and asking questions is also essential!

**Aaron:** At St Edmund's, as an ASBA student I am allowed to reduce my study load by 1 subject. This gives me the time and capacity to catch up on missed work and assignments. I also try to stay on top of my assignment organisation so that I can manage it.

**Davis:** At St Edmund's I have the ability to reduce my studies by one subject which gives me some spare time to catch up on assessments and missed work. I also need to ensure that I am on top of my assessment schedule and I reach out for support from my teachers when necessary.

**Ben:** I had to work on my time management to fit school, work, TAFE and my sport into my week. Making lists with due dates was helpful, going to the library after school to catch up on work that I had missed, plus I was able to re-schedule exams if they fell on a day I was at work or TAFE.

## What have the challenges been?

**Gemma:** The ASbA program involved participating in a range of rotations within the construction industry. A lot of the rotations I've been a part of are brand new to me, and nothing like I've done or experienced before. Being inexperienced makes it challenging to contribute, especially as a female in a male - dominant industry. The hosts have been very supportive, which allows me to become comfortable and work effectively within the team. Over the time, it has got easier to join a new work site as I have developed a better understanding of what is required from me.

**Joseph:** The hardest part of studying a vocation course in combination with my senior years is the organisation and planning required. It was hard at the start of each semester as I have to lock in assessment dates and strategically set study times throughout the weeks to effectively complete the work loads from both of my educational institutes.

**Sophie:** One main challenge for me was being organised and knowing when assignments were due.

Time management and organisation are the most important things to focus on when doing both. I make sure I put the assignments in my calendar and double check with the teachers when the assignments are due.

**Aaron:** For work, definitely getting up for my 2am shift! At school, keeping up with school work that I have missed and managing my assignments.

**Davis:** My trade studies occur in week blocks, and that is probably the most challenging for me because a week away from school may mean that I have a lot to catch up on.

**Ben:** Definitely the early starts for work. Catching up with school work and missing out on school activities while at work. Also, depending on your chosen ASbA, I found it physically draining.

## If you were giving advice to someone wanting to study VET or an ASbA in your industry, what would you tell them? E.g., tips and tricks; subjects to study; personal attributes.

**Gemma:** If you think of doing an ASbA/VET go for it! Even if you finish it and realise it's not for you the experiences you have will (hopefully) be worth it. Never be afraid to speak up or talk to someone if you are feeling uneasy, uncomfortable or unsure about anything, there are many people that will listen to you and help.

Study subjects at school that you enjoy and assist you to develop skills for the future is important.

Finally, always put 100% effort and enthusiasm into your ASbA and VET otherwise you won't get as much out of it as you could.

**Joseph:** If you want to get an understanding of what an electrician's job is like, the best way to do so is through work experience, before committing to a VET course. To find the right work experience I recommend you spend some time talking and working with your school's Careers Adviser to ensure you undertake the training required before the placement.



I also suggest that you study Math Applications if you are considering a career within the electro-technology industry as you do use a lot of algebra as an electrician, especially in formulas.

**Sophie:** If someone loves animals and wants to study Animal Studies, I would say do it! It is such an amazing experience. Working with animals is very emotionally but rewarding industry. Some tricks and tips I have are to make sure to listen to what the teachers have to say, especially their life stories. They really help you understand what the industry provides and it may even open your eyes to something you want to do in the future that you never thought you wanted to do.

Some personal advice would be to try everything, even if you don't like the chosen animal. I didn't really like birds, and one exercise we had to do was a health check on a chicken and I immediately thought no way, I can't do this. My teachers and the people in my class supported me and I was able to face my fears of chickens and I now have a soft spot for them. So... try everything, ask questions, have fun!

**Aaron:** My most important piece of advice is to enjoy what you do. Completing subjects with similar [but not identical] skill sets, like Hospitality and Business, as well as subjects like Math that come in very handy when measuring ingredients and weighing goods.

**Davis:** Walk fast and don't waste a second, and become very good at keeping your phone in your pocket. It is an easy distraction and the boss isn't very fond of seeing it on the work site. Also, ensure you have good punctuality, arriving on site before you are due to be there.



Aaron and Davis at school as part of their ASbA.

**Ben:** Prioritise your subjects that relate to your chosen ASbA. When you're the new young worker, it helps to be respectful, not overthink things and ask questions. Be aware and focus on the direction being given. Always be eager to learn.

# End of year dates

**October 17-18 AST Second Sitting** This is for people who had serious illness or misadventure during the first sitting.

**October 23 Student Forum**  
Student forum members meet with BSSS staff to give advice and opinions about issues affecting students.



**November 17 Final day for student assessment**

**November 22 Final day for return of student assessment**

**November 24 Final day for students to be notified of unit and course scores**

**November 28 Final day for college-based appeals**

**December 1 Final day for Board appeals**

These timelines are important because they let the end of year processes like printing certificates and scaling scores for ATARs happen.



**December 11 Recognition of Excellence Ceremony**

This is for people who are nominated by their school as excelling in subjects, VET, and community service.





You need to be prepared to show genuine ownership of your work, by keeping notes or records as you do assignments. This is your responsibility, and it will make things much easier for you if you are wrongly accused of AI plagiarism. It is normal and expected for teachers to investigate possible plagiarism.

AI has changed a lot in 2023. With the introduction of generative AI, some people have been using programs to plagiarise, knowing that traditional text-matching plagiarism checkers will find it hard to pick up. Some companies claim to be able to pick up AI generated content, but these checkers are not perfect; they miss AI content, or unfairly accuse innocent people.

You need to be prepared for false positives, and prepared to discuss your work in detail, even if you did not use AI. If you refuse to participate in these processes and/or do not provide any evidence to demonstrate the work is your own, a plagiarism penalty will be applied as per BSSS Policy and Procedure. This is because your teacher needs to be certain that the work is your own, because they are certifying officially to the world that you have skills and knowledge from your courses, and that those skills and knowledge are of a particular level.

The bottom line is that AI has made plagiarism a headache for everyone – students and teachers. We all need to act together to help prevent plagiarism. It is normal and expected for teachers to check work for plagiarism, and to query work when it shows anomalies that can't be explained by other factors. They have to do it, so that they can be confident that everyone is being fairly marked on the work they've done!

## Before you hand in the assignment

When you do the assignment, keep records of what you've done to put it together. We know that is time-consuming, and we hope that future developments in technology mean we can go back to easy, more accurate plagiarism checking, but until that happens, we all need to work together to keep things fair.

You might:

- Save different versions of the document if you're using a word processor that doesn't save history
- Set up "draftback" or a similar browser extension to record your process
- Put all your printouts and notes into an envelope or folder that you keep in your study space until the assignment has been marked and returned to you
- Take photos of your assignment each time you finish doing some work on it
- Put all your digital documents relating to that assignment into the same folder on your computer or cloud storage system (e.g., Google drive, iPhone files)

Having a designated "spot" to put things while you work will mean you don't need to stress if you get asked for your notes.

**Don't go into a meeting about plagiarism angry; if you need to, ask to reschedule and explain that you'd like to pause to get your feelings in order**



## **If you are accused of AI plagiarism**

You will have a meeting with your teacher where your teacher explains what it is about your work that is indicating that it might be AI plagiarised.

These might be things like:

- A mismatch between the language in different sections of your work
- A mismatch between the quality of your usual work, and the quality of this particular piece of work
- Significant similarities between your work and someone else's
- An AI detector says there's a possibility of plagiarism

You will be given the chance to explain your side of the story. If you need to get things to help explain (e.g., your notes), then you should bring them with you, or organise another meeting so you can have what you need with you.

## **When you have the meeting**

### **Don't:**

- Don't go into a meeting about plagiarism angry; if you need to, ask to reschedule and explain that you'd like to pause to get your feelings in order
- Don't threaten: it's never okay to threaten other people

- Don't have this conversation in a corridor, or when you/your teacher is on the way to another class
- Don't bring a belligerent friend: if you bring a friend, that's fine, but they need to be quiet support (i.e., not acting like a "lawyer" or getting angry/threatening on your behalf)

**Do go into a meeting about plagiarism prepared to explain how you came up with your ideas, and your process of creating the piece**



### **Do:**

- Save your notes and drafts and bring them to show evidence
- Talk with people in pastoral care or student services if you're worried or nervous about speaking to the teacher: they can help you
- Be prepared to explain how you came up with your ideas, and your process of creating the piece
- Be prepared to do a validation task or interview
- Make some notes about what happened once you've talked to the teacher
- If you brought a friend, debrief with them and ask them to make some notes
- If you did use AI, admit it: this will save a lot of heartache, time and stress for everyone involved!



## What happens then?

### If you did use AI inappropriately in your assignment:

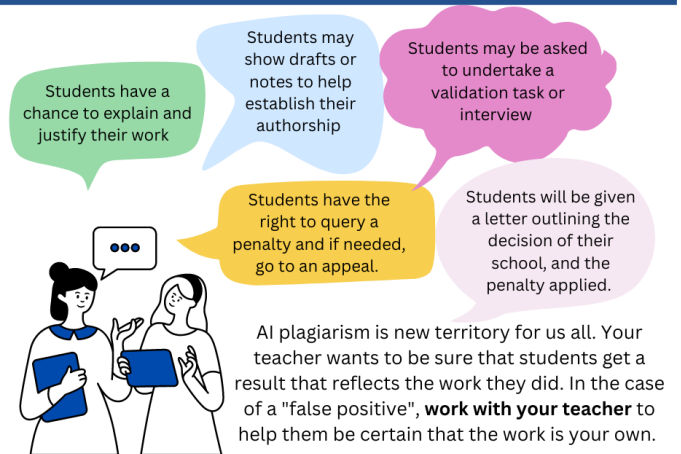
- Academic Integrity breaches don't happen in a vacuum. Usually there's a reason; e.g., mental wellbeing, prioritisation, carers responsibilities, procrastination, misunderstanding of the rules.
- Talk with your teacher about the reasons why you felt you needed to use AI and seek help from your teacher or another trusted adult to address these reasons. This might be applying for special consideration, or putting together some strategies to help you establish better study habits.
- You will get a penalty on the work, which will be drawn from the penalties in the Academic Integrity section of BSSS Policy and Procedure.
- One plagiarism penalty will not ruin your life and career. You are not a bad person; you just made a bad choice. You'll do better next time.

### If you didn't use AI inappropriately in your assignment:

- You will be okay; you get to explain your side of the story, and if a penalty is incorrectly applied, you have the right to query and appeal. This can go all the way to the Board if needed.
- Remember: your teacher is doing their job, and something about your assignment has led them to make this query. It could be a result from an automated plagiarism checker, or your work might be very different to anything they've seen from you before. Maybe it is that you don't put much effort in when doing class work, and you put in a lot



BSSS academic integrity rules apply to all teachers and students in the ACT Senior Secondary System, including the importance of natural justice.



of effort this time. This doesn't mean the teacher hates you or has it out for you – it just means they're doing their job.

- Be prepared to demonstrate genuine authorship of your work. This might be explaining your thought process that led to choices in your work; it might be showing drafts or notes; it might be drawing on a support person at your school, like your Teacher Librarian or mentor teacher if you showed them a draft.
- Be prepared to do a validation task or undertake an interview where you explain your work in more detail.

## What if I'm not happy?

You can appeal the penalty. You will need to provide evidence as to why the penalty was unjustly applied – the same kinds of evidence you would have produced to demonstrate your authorship initially.



# Students aiming for University

**Year 11 AST aspirants, if you are planning to sit the AST in 2024, make sure that you keep the first two weeks of September free in 2024 (i.e., no holidays/overseas trips).**

**Year 10 students, pick subjects you like and want to continue with. There are lots of ways to get into university.** The way most people in Year 12 do this is to do as well as they can at school, including in the AST, and apply through the University Admissions Centre (UAC). There are other ways to access university like early entry, bridging courses, and recommendation. Talk with your school.

## Year 11

Start thinking about whether you are intending to go to university. The ATAR is definitely not the only way into university, but it is the most common path for school students.

Other ways to get into university include: a bridging or early entry course (e.g. UC Connect, ANU early entry), get in using a Principal's Recommendation, a Regional Entry Test, using a CIT course, or enter as a mature-age student once you're over 21. Some courses are by audition or portfolio only (e.g. some fine arts degrees), so you won't use an ATAR for them.

Your school's Careers Adviser is the best person to talk with about this or if you want to just browse, check the UAC website here.

## Year 11 AST Reminders

**Do not organise family holidays, scheduled travel to see family, or avoidable travel for the first two weeks of September 2024.**

The second sitting is organised for a very small proportion of the ~3000 students who will sit the AST.

It is for:

- people who are unexpectedly and seriously sick
- people who have unexpected and serious accidents or misadventure

- or people who have an extremely important, once-in-a-lifetime, unrepeatable commitment (think "representing Australia in the Olympics" level of unrepeatable commitment) with significant, official, and personalised supporting evidence (i.e., explaining why you specifically need to be there).

There is no exemption from AST for family holidays or other commitments that you or your parents/carers have control over. This includes overseas trips and scheduled trips to visit a grandparent or other elderly relatives. No one wants to stop you going to see relatives overseas, but if you intend to get an ATAR you need to organise to go during school holidays and return prior to the AST or leave after the AST dates.

**Do not organise family holidays, scheduled travel to see family, or avoidable travel for the third and fourth of September 2024.**



Could you put the trip off for work, sport, cost, or convenience? If the answer is yes, it's a scheduled trip and thus **not eligible for AST special provisions or second sitting**.

Could you put the trip off for work, sport, cost, or convenience? If the answer is yes, it's a scheduled trip and thus not eligible for AST special provisions or second sitting. If you are attending a local sporting competition participation will not make you eligible for special provisions or second sitting. If you're organising to go to a pop concert, this will not make you eligible for special provisions or second sitting (thank goodness Tay-Tay is touring outside of AST time!)

There are exceptions if sudden, unscheduled travel is needed due to an emergency such as a close relative having a serious medical event meaning you need to go immediately to make your goodbyes to them. We very much hope that this is something that does not happen, and in that case, you would be eligible to apply for second sitting. Speak your school about the documentation required.

## Year 10 university aspirants

### How do I choose my courses for next year?

Choose courses you think you'll do well in, and that tie in to your future plans or current interests. Don't choose courses solely because you think they will scale well.

When choosing, select courses that you enjoyed or did well in at high school, or courses that you have an interest in for your future. The most important thing is that the subjects are right for you!

- Know and understand pre-requisites for your future opportunities. For example, do you need to have a certain level of maths for your apprenticeship? Does the internship you're planning have any guidance on which courses to pick? Are there university pre-requisites?
- Do not choose subjects because "someone" told you that they scale well. The way courses scale changes every year based on the results of the people in the course. Students can, and do, achieve high course scores in any course

You can do A courses in a T package, T courses in an A package, and E (external VET) study in either! Many courses also offer R units (Registered Units) for people who want to do them as a hobby or co-curricular without the pressure of s assessments.

People say that certain courses "scale well", but usually this just means that lots of people in that course do well in that course, and do well on the AST, and in their other courses, putting their scaling group at a higher rank overall. This can be a trap for the unwary; if you don't put the work in, or if you don't achieve results that place you high in the rank in your scaling group, you won't get any extra or special benefit from studying one of these courses. It's much more important to select courses that will be useful to you and you will do well in, rather than trying to "game the system" and ending up with a disappointing result.

Scaling refers to the process that the mathematicians at the BSSS use to make T students' scores comparable across different scaling groups (groups of subjects within a school) and different schools.



# Questions from Students

These questions came from students in our Student Forum. If you have a question you'd like us to answer, please email [bsssenquiries@act.gov.au](mailto:bsssenquiries@act.gov.au).

Why is the ACT Senior Secondary System different to other states and territories?

We are different because of the valuing of autonomy within the ACT. We give schools and teachers a lot more freedom to decide how the courses should be taught, so that they can select material that best suits their students. Structures like the AST supports this freedom while maintaining fairness for students who want to go to university.

In the 1970s, parents, teachers and members of the community came together because they wanted to create a senior secondary system where the autonomy and maturity of students was valued. Some of the key ideas were that students should be treated like young adults with a broad curriculum and patterns of study available to them, and that a high-stakes, subject-based set of exams limits the flexibility of the teacher to teach to the individuals in their class. They decided to base the system around courses that schools wrote themselves, for their individual students, and these courses were accredited to assure quality by the Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

In the 2000s, the introduction of the Australian curriculum and other expectations at a national and government level meant that the courses in the ACT were standardised and all schools started teaching from the same course documents. The course documents outline what skills and essential knowledge you need to know in that course, but the choice of the majority of the content (e.g.,

which books you study in English, or which Art movements you look at in Visual Arts) and how it is taught is up to the teacher and the school to allow content to be tailored directly to their students.

For students who want to go to university, a fair way of comparing these different courses and different schools needed to be found. It was decided in the 1980s that a "scaling test" would be used to help mathematicians at the Office of the BSSS to fairly compare the work of students in different subjects and different schools. This test it is what we now call the AST.

Schools set most of their own requirements for enrolment. They might have some restrictions on subject choices or study patterns. Part of enrolling in a school is agreeing to these restrictions.

What if my school is pressuring me to pick up or drop a particular subject?

Sometimes teachers and support staff will try to help you find a course you can be successful at, particularly if you're struggling significantly in a course you've enrolled in.

However, if you feel that pressure to change courses is not in your interest, it's not okay. Get a trusted adult to help.

English is compulsory for everyone, no matter which system you study in.

English is the only compulsory subject in the ACT Senior Secondary System; however, schools can request that students complete some subjects because it is part of their ethos or beliefs.



Your school might mandate subjects that you need to do as part of the conditions of your enrolment in that school. This is an agreement that you (or your parents/carers) made with the school when you signed up to go there. For example, you might need to do Maths or Religious Education.

If any school in the ACT is pressuring you to pick up or drop a subject that **isn't** part of the conditions of your enrolment and isn't in your best interest (e.g., pressuring you to drop English because you aren't doing well in it), that's not okay. Let your parents/carers or a trusted adult know, and if need be, speak to the principal or head of the school or sector (Government, Catholic, Independent) to get more clarity on what is going on and why the school is pressuring you to change.

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The ACT Board of Senior Secondary studies acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work; the Ngannawal and Ngambri people, and other families and groups who have an ongoing connection to the land.

## BSSS Student News Semester 1 | 2023



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If you'd like more  
information about:

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- Appeals
- Special Consideration
- Late Penalties

Check out the first issue of  
the student newsletter!