

My Future,  
My Culture,  
My Way.

NSW Department of Education



## Case Study – Jaiden

### Yaama, I'm Jaiden!

I'm Jaiden – a proud Gamilaraay man.  
I graduated from Peel High School in 2021.

My HSC journey looked different. In fact, some people didn't even know that you could do the HSC with a School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT) – meaning that I finished with both a HSC qualification and a nationally recognised VET qualification. SBATS combine paid work, training, and school. You can get credit towards your HSC, and a nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET) credential while getting paid work experience. I now work at Tamworth South Public School as an SLSO (School Learning Support Officer) and am considering whether to accept my offer to study Business at the University of Newcastle.

Looking back, I suppose I've always been a very chilled out person, but with a bit of a rebellious streak. I like proving people wrong, so when lots of people said the HSC was hard or that the way I wanted to do it wasn't going to work, I turned to my support network to chart my own path. That made all the difference for me, and it's great to see other kids now doing similar things.

### The HSC was all about juggling my commitments

The biggest challenge for me during the HSC was going to school and working full time. I'd work Monday and Tuesday, have TAFE on Wednesday, go to school on Thursday and Friday, and then coach the boys' basketball team in my spare time. This meant I always had a lot of catch-up and juggling to do. I learned early on that I needed to organise myself better if I wanted to complete my HSC. I always knew I had a support network

In addition to my own self-discipline, having a lot of supports helped me throughout Years 11-12.

My mum was really important because she understood how to combine the HSC with my interests. Mum helped me combine my passion for sports with my desire to go to university, she picked a path that enabled me to do a fitness certificate at TAFE alongside other HSC subjects like English and Maths at school. Throughout my journey, she reminded me of my purpose and kept me on track.

Making friends at school can be hard, having good friends makes a difference. When I started year 7 it was tough, and finding my place in the right groups was not always easy. I had to make a lot of new connections. That effort turned out to be worth it in the end, with friendships carrying over into my HSC years.



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Aboriginal artwork created by Felicity Adams who is a proud descendant of the Kamilaroi people, currently living and learning on Dharug Country.

My careers advisor and year advisor were also two people that helped me a lot. They were my rocks. I always knew they had my back. Because they knew school was important, they were flexible with how they supported me, meeting me where I needed.

Outside of school, my culture and connection to community kept me motivated. Knowing where I came from, helped me see where I was going – it inspired me to stick it out and complete my HSC, especially when I experienced some setbacks. The Elders in my community were a good influence; they wanted to see me do well. I had to stay grounded with all the studying, so I took up opportunities to teach the younger fellas Aboriginal dance and coach basketball. That sense of identity and belonging in community kept me going.

## I want to be a role model

Personally, I've always planned to finish the HSC because I was interested in teaching. My mum is a teacher herself and has always been a huge inspiration to me. The other reason for staying on at school was my desire to break stereotypes, to show the younger fellas in the community that we can all do it. I wanted other Indigenous kids, especially those facing similar challenges to me, to know the HSC is not as hard as some people make it out to be. I believe finishing high school strong this way has not only meant I have learnt more, but that I am on the way to creating better opportunities for myself my family and my community.



## What's next for me

Since finishing the HSC, I have explored my interests in teaching by becoming an SLSO at the local primary school and I'm thinking more about how I can give back to my community. While I have become really attached to the kids that I work with, I now also have an offer to do a Bachelor of Business at the University of Newcastle. I don't know which to choose yet. Teaching lets me make an impact one student at a time but studying Business could potentially help me give back to the community more broadly. I could combine business with the fitness certificate I completed as part of my HSC, this could help me open a gym as a blended sports and recreation/community centre. A local meeting place where kids could come down and play basketball and connect with Elders. Lots to think about!

## Remember that you're still a kid!

Looking back, I think it's important for kids at school to remember that the HSC is not the be all and end all. Work hard, but also take time to just chill out and be a kid. To do well, you must be able to relax, enjoy yourself and not be stressed out all the time from studying. You've got your adult years still to come. Make sure you get enough sleep – it's pointless to study all night only to fall asleep during the actual exam! Don't overwork and burn yourself out. When you're struggling, turn to your support network – they will help keep you on the right path.

If you're tossing up whether to do the HSC, you should just give it a crack! In the long run, it could open a lot of doors that aren't so easy to access otherwise. The experience itself is also good. Learning about time management and study patterns helps you figure out how to manage general things in life and build yourself up mentally.

## Want to know more?

Visit My Future, My Culture, My Way, follow the Department of Education on social media, talk to your school, or contact your local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).