

Subject Acceleration in NSW Secondary Schools

Interview Results

Questions:

- Why did you decide to participate?
- Parents thoughts on acceleration
- Changes noticed in students accelerating
- Qualities needed for successful acceleration
- Importance of peer group or pair with you to accelerate
- Difference staying in regular class instead
- Time to feel comfortable in new class
- Feel accepted by students in accelerated class
- Feel different to age peers who haven't accelerated?
- Do you feel different to regular age students in your accelerated class?
- What is the worst thing about being accelerated?
- Have your feelings about acceleration changed?
- What do your close friends feel about you accelerating?
- What is the best thing about being accelerated?

Why did you decide to participate in subject acceleration?

To conserve time

- "More time to spend on other subjects in the HSC year."
- "Time to pursue other interests."
- "More time to concentrate and hopefully do better in other subjects."

Personal choice

- Had the confidence to stick with it
- "Decided to keep going because I was doing well."
- "It sounded pretty interesting."
- "My choice, something I wanted to do. I did it on my own, at my own pace."
- "I had actually spoken to a lot of people beforehand who had also accelerated - it had worked well for all of them, I wasn't wasting my time..."
- Talent in a language

HSC advantage

- To have a break, more convenient, less stressful
- More time if HSC spread out over two years
- Maximise units - Only way to access all desired courses
- Maximise TER (UAI) • "If I didn't get it right I would be able to do it again."
- "Gain by concentrating on 2 units I was doing."
- To get some units / subject out of the way
- Have the chance to complete a course in year 11 when things weren't as serious, and hence have a smaller workload for year 12. The chance to compete with a higher quality of student was a factor.
- 'Boredom in class'. 'Computing Studies was very boring'. 'I was bored in most of the classes'. 'Boredom in the current class was also a factor'. "I thought that in 'X' I wouldn't be bored any more."
- Suggestion by trusted adult - idea of acceleration discussed

School organisation

- Had the opportunity to do it and took it
- Teachers picked a group, put them through together
- Top class in Mathematics is given a telescoped curriculum over three years
- Top class selected in year 9 to commence Preliminary work in year 10
- Compacting of year 10 and Preliminary
- "Teachers accelerated the whole class and picked 5 of us to go on."
- Religion as a one year compression
- Chosen at end of year 10 to do HSC in year 11
- Teacher persuasion - Asked by a teacher to participate.
- Mainly because I was asked, and felt that if someone had enough belief in me to suggest it, that I owed it to them, and myself, to try.
- Because they asked me and History was going too slow.

Capacity to succeed

- "I was capable of doing it."
- "Good to do a subject I enjoyed and was good at."
- "I thought it would be a challenge." Because it seemed like a challenge.
- I didn't really want to in the beginning. My mother pushed me into it but it wasn't a problem probably because another student had been accelerated with me and we were good friends.

What did your parents think about you accelerating in a subject?

Positive attitudes

- ✓ "They were very happy that I was able to do that."
- ✓ "They thought it was a good idea as well."
- ✓ Parents didn't know much about acceleration
- ✓ "Encouraged me to take it if I really wanted to."
- ✓ "They left it up to me."
- ✓ "Parents thought I was capable of doing it and were quite supportive."
- ✓ "They thought it was a good opportunity."
- ✓ "They thought it was the right move - finish off some units, more time to study."
- ✓ Helpful, supportive teacher parents
- ✓ "Only if you are willing to put in the work."
- ✓ "My parents were fully behind any decision I made."
- ✓ "They didn't mind."
- ✓ "They knew it was what I wanted to do."
- ✓ "They saw an advantage because year 12 is pretty hectic; stressed out."
- ✓ "They liked it; they think it is more appropriate. Academically it is good, too."
- ✓ "Parents had previous experience of acceleration – They kind of accept it now."
- ✓ Cousin and sister who had accelerated successfully
- ✓ "It seemed obvious for me to progress on that way."
- ✓ "They were all for it. They thought I should do it."
- ✓ "Realised it would help my TER."
- ✓ Both my mum and dad thought it was a great opportunity, but they made sure I knew I had to still do my best and if I felt I wasn't doing my best that I could always go back to my normal class in that subject.
- ✓ They were fine with it; happy.
- ✓ They liked the idea.

Negative attitudes

- Parents concerned about the extra work but agreed to a trial
- "Worried about me being able to handle the load at such a young age."
- "If I don't do well, then I'll still be having the same amount of stress next year."
- "My parents were pretty wary of it because I've always worked pretty hard at school, and they didn't want me working too hard, being overworked..."
- "They had an information evening for our parents."
- Reassured by feedback from the school
- Mother heard lots of different things; some people like it, some people don't
- "They said if I can't cope with it then they wouldn't mind if I dropped down..."
- "Not supportive - wanted me to stay in my own year."
- They weren't supportive. They wanted me to stay in my own year.

What changes do you notice in students once they accelerate in a subject?

Workload change

- Some find the workload and the work get harder - keeping up with it
- Competition against the year above makes you work harder
- Accelerating students 'can cope with the additional demands of acceleration'. They become a lot busier
- Noticed the relative lack of essay writing skills compared to older students
- Chance to release the workload in the final year. More time in year 12. More time to do other things in year 12.
- You can no longer rely on your natural ability

Limited change

- Limited impact because it is only in one subject - not across the board
- Not really much change from outside the class
- "People's attitudes to us were different, but I don't think we changed at all."

Spin-offs to other subjects

- Students gain more experience - of senior work and of HSC conditions
- "Mainly it helped in how to approach literature, things like that."
- "Helps in other subjects - you understand the basics already."
- "I think it makes you become a more independent learner."
- Kids get better in the accelerated course. It helps them make decisions about subjects; what they are doing and how to approach them.
- Highly motivated; they do a lot more schoolwork. They perform better in a lot of their other subjects.
- Not work as hard in year 11 - concentrate on accelerated subject

Better study habits

- Lack of supervision "...meant you had to use your time yourself and it was all up to you, so it taught me how to study myself, and organise my time effectively." • Timetables, study plans are made.
- More effort, more motivation, more self-discipline when studying independently
- More dedicated than earlier on in high school
- Seniors seem to be more patient with homework; get more work done by themselves
- They seem to have more direction. Cynical about the whole school system.
- Competition amongst students. Graded against a higher year (motivates).

Personal factors

- Not welcomed by the class above
- "I felt more independent. I wanted to do it. I had to motivate myself."
- More stressed about their marks. • More urgency to get the work done
- Lose motivation if they don't do well. Some got teased, some flunk out, others get really high UAI's because of it.
- If they do well they get a good confidence boost
- Initial motivation to beat year 12 - later 'the competition was more internal'
- More discussion. More learning from each other, more concentration by individuals on the standard of their own work.
- "I think you feel like you are missing out a little bit being with people not your friends."
- "You need to adopt a more mature attitude to the subject because it's a harder course and you're with older students."
- Having the safety net of repeating can cause problems with individual motivation. The safety net can also provide reassurance that if you don't do well this year, you have next year. If you do worse than expected you have the chance to do it again without staying back a year.
- I know they get free periods! But seriously, apart from personal gains like a satisfaction and confidence in your abilities, I don't know what happens after you've finished accelerating.

What qualities does a person need to be successful in subject acceleration?

Motivation - Willingness to devote the time to the extra workload

- "You really need to be willing to put in the work, especially if you haven't got anyone to study with."
- "They need to do a lot of work at home, a lot of extra study."
- Not get stressed by the competition and the workload
- Patience
- Persistence
- Calm
- Competitive
- Self-discipline
- Intelligence
- Confidence
- Ambition
- Determination
- Commitment

Commitment to acceleration (*as worthwhile for the person*)

- "They need to be independent and committed to making a decision and following it through a course of learning that might be different to what everyone else is doing."

Capability (*natural ability to accelerate*)

- "You have to be ahead of your time almost."
- Practical subjects can be mastered by people with natural ability, but some subjects (Mathematics, Chemistry) need to be taught.

Dedication

- "You have to have a mature approach and have to be dedicated to your work and understand what's expected of you."
- "You have to be a diligent and mature student, because you are stepping into something that your other peers are not."

Independence

- "They have to be able to work on their own, that's for sure ..."
- Must be prepared to work hard and independently.

Maturity

Time management skills - (internal clashes with exams / assessments)

- "You need to be **organised**." Organised.
- "So you've just got to be able to manage your time, prioritise and not get stressed. I mean you can't take it too seriously; if you do you'll just crack."

Sociability - willingness to make new friends

- Need to be able to blend in with everybody else

Liking for subject

- Need **support** from parents, friends and teachers
- "You need to have a good peer group."
- Must be very talented in the subject.

Safety net of repeating

- "You have to know there is an 'out' without disgrace."
- "Being able to keep things in perspective, it's not just about being able to do the work but knowing that if you don't do well, then you still have the motivation to pick it up next year and do it all over again."
- A 'trial' acceleration first might be helpful to determine their capabilities (staying in same class but given higher year work). Early acceleration rather than late.

Good study habits

Adaptability

- "Pretty adaptable, because you have to fit into all the timetables, when you get into a new class you have to be socially pretty adaptable as well..."
- Pressure on accelerants - they are expected to do well
- 'Quick to grasp new concepts'. 'Motivated, quick to grasp new concepts'.
- They need to be able to blend in with everyone else - not keep making it obvious that they've been accelerated.
- "They definitely need motivation and they need to be interested in what they're doing and they also need a certain amount of self-confidence, because there are times when you feel completely overwhelmed and like a 'loser'".

How important is it to have a peer group or pair with you when you accelerate?

Very important

- It puts a lot more pressure on individual accelerants
- "Really hard to do it by yourself."
- Need people to help with notes
- "Intimidating and daunting to do it alone."
- Class feeds off each other - bounces ideas off each other
- Need people to talk things through with
- "Stops you feeling lonely and isolated."
- It's part of motivation
- "Where a few people were deficient in one area, the others made up in ..."
- "...because we were grouped we could protect each other."
- "They're also good for moral support when you go into the older class."
- Very important. At the start you can sit next to and talk to that person and after a short while everyone else accepts you completely.
- Very. It gives you someone else to talk to about your problems and you can do the work together. They're also good for moral support when you go into the older class.

Important

- "Allows you to do group work together."
- "Support each other."
- Missing out on the teaching
- "In our group we have a support network..."
- "Encouragement - someone to tell you that you can do it."
- "Just seeing other people going through the same things as you."
- "It's just good having people who are in the same boat as you basically..."
- "Negative to just form a group with other accelerants - you don't get to know classmates."
- "A group of accelerants makes you stand out with the teacher."
- "More relaxed and comfortable with friends around"
- "It is easier, we are all trying to compete against each other, trying to keep each other going."
- "It is important to have a friend to do it with because otherwise you just get sort of lost."

Not very important

- Clear about direction, worked independently, occasional help from teacher / family. "Just talking with everyone always breaks down the barriers."
- "As long as you have a supportive teaching staff."
- "It's somewhat more difficult to be in a class on your own and work."
- It would depend on the individual. If you have motivation and can take the criticism of others, then being by yourself would be fine. But it's always easier to be with others so you can share with and help each other.
- "Depending on the year you accelerate into. If they accept you and treat you as a friend then it really isn't as important but if they tease you then a peer would help."

Working with a pair

- "We had someone to rely on and knew what our situation was like."
- "It meant for competition between the two of us which was inevitable."
- "We helped each other and just everyday support; not particularly emotional but just not about studies because we were both so different to everybody else..."
- You have someone to relate to you (you can both complain to each other and help one another).

Alone in a class

- Forced to make friends.
- "Teacher doesn't treat you any differently."
- Doing it alone - no comparison with own age group.
- I don't know really. I do it mostly alone.

How do you think you would be different now if you had stayed in your regular class group instead of accelerating in a subject?

Assistance with study due to acceleration experience

- "In years 11 & 12 it will help a lot."
- It's part of motivation
- "Study skills acquired very helpful; question analysis, examination technique."
- It's part of motivation
- "It's taught me how to study independently a little bit; it's given me a look on the other side."
- "Taught me how to organise my time better so I wouldn't be studying as much."
- "It has made the HSC seem less daunting, having done an exam, it's not the be-all and end-all, it's not the end of the world."
- "I'd know how long to stay in there and how long for each question." [exam technique]
- "I've had the experience of the HSC, the technique of essay writing, the stress."
- More confidence generally and in other subjects. Confidence boost.
- Motivation increased with participation in acceleration program
- "...I feel I have grown as a person because of the challenge."
- "My knowledge and thinking processes have also developed..."
- "...I don't get as stressed because I figure I've got five pretty good units out of the way."

Opportunities gained

- "Useful to get one subject out of the way - time to concentrate on other subjects and to do a Distinction course."
- "More time for HSC study"
- "Ability to do more senior subjects"
- "Positive spin-offs to related HSC subjects"
- "Can afford to have a bad unit because of the extra units studied"
- "I wouldn't have the advantage that I do" [if no acceleration]
- "Ability to do a subject otherwise unavailable."
- "I wouldn't have as much time this year" [extra curricular activities]

Negative feelings about achievement if not accelerated

- "I don't think I would have done as well if I wasn't doing an accelerated subject."
- "I'd be pretty bored."
- Not performing as well. "I'd be worse off, definitely."
- "I wouldn't be as prepared as possible for HSC, being focussed on what I have to do to get what I want."
- "Not like class atmosphere in regular class" - competition not as intense
- "I wouldn't be as motivated or aware of what I had to do for the HSC."
- "...the stress of doing all the subjects together would probably build up and I wouldn't do as well." Workload would be a lot heavier
- "...if I hadn't engaged in the subjects I wouldn't have been challenged as much."
- I would be ahead in class.
- "It's like you know the stuff already and you don't want to repeat it."

Ambivalence about acceleration effects

- "Less stressed if I had not done it, but I don't think there is any disadvantages in doing it."
- "I probably would have been better at doing essays if I'd stayed back that extra year and got more practice in writing essays ...polishing the details."
- "I might not work as hard I suppose because I wouldn't need to."
- "Sometimes I think it might have been better if I did because perhaps I would have done better than I did."
- "The gradual progression in senior school" - was jumped
- "...maybe I wouldn't have done anywhere near as well as I did in adapting to things."
- "I don't think I'd be much different really; perhaps not as cynical."

How long did it take you to feel comfortable in your accelerated class?

Time

- "Straight away"
- "Not long at all"
- "Not very long"
- "A few weeks"
- "One month"
- "Quite a while"
- "Three months"
- "A year"

Factors in Adjustment

Not In a Class - Alone

- "My teacher would draw me into the conversation."
- Teacher "wanted to make sure I was up to it." Extra work assigned.
- "It's not really about socialising, it's about the work". Not bothered by the separateness.
- "I think it only took about two weeks or so for me to blend in, as it were".
- "After the second lesson I presented a seminar on the French Revolution. It broke the ice. I found that the other students accepted me after that."
- "The other students were very tolerant."
- "I knew a couple of people in there before I went in, so I found it pretty easy to settle in."
- "It didn't take too long; I'm used to the teacher."

Group

- Group of accelerants – "Maybe we should have mixed more."
- "Maybe I'm accepted more in Maths because I don't do as well in Maths."
- "I don't feel as though I'm on equal footing with them because they are a year ahead."
- "Now I can go in and I've got close enough friends so that I can go and talk to them without hanging around the other accelerants."
- "I pretty much felt like it was a normal subject."
- "I never felt uncomfortable in the first place."
- "The other year 12 students were very supportive of us."
- "At first it was really daunting and then after that you kind of get used to it. It's also a learning process for the students in the top class in the year above us getting used to us."
- "After a while it was more relaxed and we became friends."

Class

- "It took us a while to realise that it had actually happened."
- "It didn't take us very long because we were all new and doing it together."
- "I knew most of the people in the class and we bonded very well together quite quickly."
- "We got into a rhythm."
- "It was just a matter of how long it took you to be comfortable with people in your class."
- "Just making my friends, it was very easy for me to adjust."
- "I kind of felt sort of left behind a bit because I was coming at the bottom of the class."
- "I had all my friends around and she [the teacher] didn't start off with too much hard work straight away."
- "We've been friends since year 7 so there have been no problems at all."
- Same classes since year 7 so "We had to get used to the idea of accelerating rather than the company we were in."

Do you feel accepted by students in your subject accelerated class?

Individuals or Groups Within Classes

Yes

- Treated as a normal student
- "No problems at all"
- "Everybody has gotten used to each other."
- Accepted by the hardworking groups – given the same chances as everyone else
- "Eventually I think I did, I never quite reached their level but we all did very well in the end."
- "...from people who I know who were not in a whole class of accelerants, I found some were not supportive."
- "I'm just another person in the class, no different really."
- "It's fine now. I know them all."
- "By the end of the course, at the end of the HSC, definitely we got on well with the rest of the class because we had been there for almost two years."
- "Yes, definitely, I mean they were just friends."
- "...You didn't really think, 'well this is my accelerated class I'm going to now'."
- "Some regard me as a 'nerd', but they're okay to me."
- "Yes, we all seemed to get along fine and sometimes joked around about the acceleration."
- Yes. Definitely.
- At first, NO! But now, the majority are very friendly (albeit a bit reserved). Some are still 'hostile', but we expected that and now it doesn't worry the three of us anymore.
- "They sort of admired us but cursed us at the same time."
- "The other year 12 students were very supportive of us."
- Yes. They accepted me pretty early on. It helped that I knew ¼ of the class and the teacher from before I was accelerated.

Accelerated Class

Yes

- Accelerated class acceptance but "the regular students; they think they're above us."
- Accelerants "had a common understanding of what is going on and what strains everybody is on and it makes it easier to accept everybody else."
- (Year 12 students) "are not very happy that we seem to be stealing their spots."
- "Those peers who had not accelerated were very supportive. They were amazed that the accelerants were up there and they were interested."
- "Yes, we're basically all the same – the same point of view, basically the same qualities. No one person stands out."
- Most of the time. They don't mind as much as they used to and some of them are pretty friendly.

How do you think you are different to other students your own age who haven't been accelerated?

- Not very different at all
- Study techniques, skills and habits, essay writing
- Experience of HSC exam atmosphere
- Liking for or talent in a subject
- Different work, extra workload
- Educational opportunity
- Different outlook on the HSC
- Ahead in the work
- More stress

Personal Qualities

- "I guess like a lot of kids when they do work and actually push themselves as hard as they could."
- "I kind of accepted where I was up to. I said that I needed more of a challenge."
- "...it's nothing to do with like what you're like as a person. It's just your attitude in that particular subject. I don't think I am better than them or anything..."
- "I think a lot more motivated to get involved and also there is a determination there to do well in the subject."
- "I think we are a little bit more dedicated than they are."
- "I feel that I have an edge over them...doing something special."
- "I guess you could say I have a bit more maturity towards the subject and just the experience."
- "Probably more self-directed in learning...more disciplined than a lot of people."
- "I'm just better than them in the subject I was accelerated in."
- "The accelerated students are more intelligent, more hardworking, more devoted to their studies."

Experience Factors

- "I think study habits and techniques are a lot better because you have had that extra year ahead of them doing the HSC subjects, so you can see what you need to do and that will help next year as well."
- "I find I look at exams now. I know I have to go in there and do them."
- "...the study techniques that we developed during the time and the understanding of what you are going to be confronted with the next year when you do that same level in all your other subjects."
- "...I've been through it once, so I know what it takes the second time around for HSC success."
- "I've had the experience of the HSC, the technique of essay writing, the stress."
- "I have an insight into what is going to happen in senior years."

- "I think it comes down to the matter of being challenged. They haven't developed in the same way as I have. They haven't been exposed to the same stimuli as I have."
- "It's hard for us to see them back so far behind and we are so far ahead."
- "...so there's no difference in personalities. I've just had more opportunities."
- "...those who didn't accelerate don't treat us any differently..."
- "I am *not* any different to any of my friends who haven't done acceleration, except I've just got a few units out of the way...It's more like what you've done than who you are."
- "I guess some of the other students wish they had done it."
- "I think there are at least three or four people in my class who haven't been accelerated, who probably could have been accelerated and achieved the same results as me. I think it's just that I chose to take the opportunity and do something different that I am now where I am and they aren't."
- I don't think I'm different at all. Of course, I know more about Ancient History than everyone else doing the subject, and I think I've gained some important study/stress skills, but otherwise there's no difference.

Negative Feeling

- "...Sometimes you feel a bit left out when they talk about what they are doing in Maths..."
- "I know a lot of the accelerants. They were solid students, but now they're dropping away. They did well last year but now they're dropping away because you feel like you've peaked and you're kind of on a down and everyone else is working up to the HSC."
- Not much different. Some 'prodigy' jokes made it awkward but it was ok. There didn't seem to be any time to go out with friends which was different.

Do you feel different to regular age students in the subject accelerated class?

Yes

- "...you can't help it because you're from a different grade."
- "Sometimes I feel a bit below them...they seem to be coping but sometimes I feel stressed."
- "Not much difference but sometimes a little below the standard."
- "I think in the matter of commitment, regular age students don't have to give the same amount."
- "Well, they're just a whole year older. They're into different things." [eg driving licences]
- "In the respect that there was a different attitude to work in year 12 and that they possessed some more maturity and better techniques etc."
- "I reckon we've got it easier because they have to study for each subject and we only have to study for one."
- "There's less competition; some from the top students."
- "I feel left out of some things, but in general, less 'bludgey' about the subject than some of the students."

No

- Not an issue for students who were in classes made up of accelerants
- "You're all in the same boat."
- "It's fine. It's pretty normal."
- "We are all the same age, from the same year."
- "I did not know any of the students but as soon as we did go into the class with them, we were treated as fellow students."
- Some of them were pretty much our age anyway. They were young for their year."
- "It was just like another class."
- Yes. Mainly it's because I feel I'm 'intruding' into a place I shouldn't be. I guess that's just nerves though.
- "...It was just like we were part of the group and like I knew a lot of the people anyway..."
- "...not any more. They were more comfortable in class discussion than me at the start of the year - not any more."
- It was just like another class.

What is the worst thing about being involved in subject acceleration?

Organisational difficulties

- "Not having other students to gauge your performance by; not knowing where you stand."
- Not being in the classroom situation
- Information about tests - topics etc - not conveyed. Worst thing – not used to strict assessment system.
- "The year 12 exams overlap the year 11 ones."
- The need to do extra units because of the staff cuts to the school if the accelerants don't do 12 units "which means you get no advantage from the time saving we have been talking about".
- Doing half of year 12 and half of year 11 – "Finding a balance between what you study for and how you prioritise your studies. Not used to strict assessment system."
- Not given as much time in class as subsequent year (1 period less).
- Overwhelmed by the organisational difficulties and delivery problems associated with acceleration
- "You don't really know how the marking format goes , ie what is an assessment?." "Having to arrange everything else around it (the subject)."

Pedagogical difficulties

- "I guess that the added workload that you do would be the only handicap."
- "The workload and not getting to go out like you used to; studying more."
- "A lot of people don't know about acceleration and therefore they don't help."
- "There's a lot of pressure on you to start with, because you don't know whether it's going to work out or not, especially if you are doing it individually." Big challenge.
- "The stresses-pulled out over two years instead of one." Time spent studying.
- Not having anyone to turn to, to find really challenging work
- The jump from junior to senior studies – "...that was the single biggest thing."
- "The 'gradual progression through schooling' is disrupted when you jump ahead through acceleration. You miss a few things." [Like development of essay writing skills]
- "I think I could have done academically better in my own age group." [achieved at 91-100], "...but didn't study hard enough. Year 11 work suffered too. This year, "more mature in my studies' . "

Attitudinal and personal difficulties

- "The expectations of people your own age who assume you will do well in everything because of acceleration success in a single subject."
- Pressure exerted by teachers who 'suddenly see you as a smart person' because of acceleration

- "I'm basically at the bottom of both my classes pretty much which is a shock because all my life I've been top of everything." [Actual rank is in the middle of the grade.]
- "The social side - you miss out on it when you are not with your regular friends."
- "Because we were younger than the other people we had to acquire a lot of maturity quickly."
- Missing out on work experience in year 10 and 'community actions'. Teachers were also negative about acceleration. "When we had to miss their class they'd get really upset at you. This attitude added to the stress - and the work for missed classes had to be caught up."
- " lots of stress when you are doing the work and no one really understands except the accelerants."
- "Getting pressured into things you don't really want to do; being completely stressed; having no one understand. 'Totally lost – alone' in classes; 'guinea pigs for that subject' ".
- "Having to study for exams and stuff when all your friends are out having a good time..." The hardest part is being motivated sometimes.
- "If it is a late acceleration, you have to adjust quickly."
- "You feel a bit left out at the start." "...you need to adjust quickly".
- "It's just some of the remarks; I mean it's only in-joking, but sometimes I don't take it really well."

Have your feelings about subject acceleration changed during the time that you have been accelerated?

Yes

- "At the beginning I wasn't really sure" - option to pull out - "it's worthwhile..."
- Advantage of reduced units was lost after change of school policy. Initial positive feelings lessened once the face to face teaching was lost -year 12.
- "It was very much idealistic to start with."
- Senior work was much more demanding than junior acceleration
- "You start to sort of wonder whether you really wanted to be there."
- I don't want to 'stuff it up', because then I won't be motivated to try again in year 12.
- "In the beginning, I did think that it was going to be easy, but you need to study and have good exam technique. I realised by the end of it that it is pretty hard; you have to be exceptional."
- "I always thought that acceleration was this thing for amazing people and it just wasn't - it was just working ... I realised all I had to do was to work towards what I was doing."
- "I thought that it would be really hard, but once you get used to it, it's just like normal work."
- "I thought I could handle the workload - shocked by it - thought about dropping out - started to see the advantages - and I am back to enjoying it - the idea of it."
- "Didn't realise the difficulty of the workload - doubts - but yes I really enjoyed it nearing the end when we'd settled into it and it was just part of the everyday timetable."
- "The subjects I accelerated in were the subjects I liked, so I didn't have any subjects left that I liked; that sort of contributed to the downward [trend], like you peak and then you're going down."
- Shock of the work in the first year of acceleration - "This year I'm calming down, kind of; getting into the swing of things, so it's a bit easier that way."
- Initial positive feelings tempered by ignorance of HSC 'programs, systems, demands' leading to feelings of uncertainty and regret, but after a few months, "It did work out for the best."
- In the beginning, I think I wasn't really aware of the connotations of accelerating: I treated it lightly. Whereas, now, in year 11, doing the HSC for Ancient History, I've realised the seriousness and devotion that is necessary to really do well in your accelerated course.
- "I got myself into something that I didn't really understand."
- Not just the work - "You need personal qualities, although you might get a top mark, you might not be suited for it because you can't handle the stress or you can't handle the prospect of doing it all over again. It's just that it changes sometimes."
- Originally encouraged by the teachers - discouraged by predictions of slightly lower marks due to relative immaturity
- Feelings of advantage now - more time next year and less stress. "In year 10 you just work."

- "I was very nervous to start with, then I realised it was probably the best thing that could have happened to me; then I really enjoyed it after that."
- Originally the prospect was "really exciting, ... but now it's nothing special. It's everyday, now."
- "I didn't like the idea of being accelerated at the start, but I quickly adjusted to the new environment and I think it was a good move."
- Originally told about it in year 8 and didn't want to do it - ended up doing 5 units of acceleration
- "There were always going to be good sides and bad sides ... you get asked 'If you had the chance would you do it again?' I'd say 'yes' ... They did change; I became more positive about it."
- "I felt less comfortable as the work got harder but now I'm glad I really picked it."
- Yes, because I find that I'm not as motivated in other subjects, ie I find the Preliminary year pointless. I've become bored.
- A little. There doesn't seem to be much advantage for accelerating

No

- "I'd always thought it was a good thing...I realised I'd have this advantage."
- Good thing but care needed with big group acceleration – "I think you should look at people a lot closer, more individually. I felt that at the start and I feel that especially now."
- "At the beginning of the year I thought it would be an opportunity and I still feel the same way about it now."
- No I don't. So far it's been fabulous. Sure, it's hard sometimes, and there were times that I resented the extra work, but overall it's great and very rewarding.

What did your close friends feel about you being accelerated?

- No real change in feelings
- Very supportive friends
- Friends in accelerated class or friends also accelerating
- "We were treated no differently ... treat me like a normal person."
- People ask for help in the subject the respondent is accelerated in
- "Most of them said, 'Oh, that's great' ."
- "It's just being in a different class, that's all."
- Close friends in the class made it easier
- "I guess they felt kind of normal. ... It's just something they have accepted."
- They were happy for me.

Comments

- Friends were accelerating in other subjects, so "we could all kind of sympathise with each other."
- "They were encouraging"
- "I guess they were sort of impressed."
- "They were very happy that I could do it, really proud of me." Reassurances and support of close friends were offered; "That sort of acceptance from other people has always been really important..."
- "They thought it was a really good opportunity, they all encourage you at certain times..."
- "They just laughed about it and carried on."
- "They thought it was good because I was competing with people with similar capabilities."
- Some feel that the safety net of being able to repeat is an unfair advantage.
- "They paid you out a bit – like mucking around."
- "I don't think they care that much because I am doing the same amount of work, but at a different time."
- "It's just, we sort of faded into the woodwork, which is nice."
- "There was a kind of friendly teasing. But very friendly."
- "We just joke about how I'm a nerd because I'm doing more stuff than they are."
- "Some early resentment that I was doing something that they could also have done, but didn't."
- They've been terrific! They are all very accepting of it, and very proud of both me and the other two friends who accelerate in Ancient History. They are not at all resentful of us, rather, they support us every step of the way.
- They were a bit surprised at the start but not exactly devastated. All my good friends are at English school not at Saturday school.
- They were encouraging. They didn't tease or anything like that.
- They thought it was good because I was competing with people with similar capabilities and were very supportive.

What is the best thing about being accelerated in a subject?

The feeling that you have gotten a subject out of the way

- Finishing an exam before everybody else – “that’s always wonderful”.
- “The opportunity to get one subject out of the way and to know how to focus on the rest.”
- “You get an idea of the workload, the pressure, the stress: what it actually comes down to.”
- “Hoping to get it over and done with.”
- “Doing an HSC subject earlier.”

Freedom to do extra units or have more time

- “...It’s just having freedom to do other units.”
- “It is going to give me a lot more time next year to concentrate on other things.”
- “More time to study.”
- “You a great advantage” gained from the extra time to study.”
- “You kind of gain time, it gets rid of time wasting.”
- “The extra time I had this year, I think. There’s not as much pressure.”
- “...I can do 3 units next year or pursue other studies.”
- “I’ll have more choices.”
- “...the prospect of free periods in year 12.”

The challenge

- “I really enjoyed the challenge.”
- “Being with people who have been accelerated as well makes it much more enjoyable and challenging too.”
- “I had to pull my socks up.”
- “It makes you kind of feel good that you are studying at a higher level.”
- “Well it’s a really good opportunity to work with good people.”
- Students share their research also.
- “I guess the fact that you are extended.”
- “It’s more interesting doing things that you don’t know about.”
- “...talk to interesting people.”
- “The competition and the level of work.”

The safety net opportunity

- Having the opportunity to repeat the subject relieves the pressure when doing it the first time.
- “If I have a go at it this year, it’s sort of an experience.”
- “Getting to try out the HSC without sort of putting your whole subject course on the line...”
- “You know what is coming, what you will be doing, you have the background work done...”

Chance to do a Distinction Course

Flow-on effects

- Advanced study helps with preparation for other HSC courses.
- “Now I implement things that I did last year, skills in approaching things...”
- “It gives you an ‘outside your year’ experience - an edge”.
- “Dividing the amount of HSC subjects in one year.”
- “You can learn to your potential.”
- “You can allocate your time to what you need to do.”
- “The chance to do something different and make school a little bit more interesting.”
- “Everyone has such high expectations of it and they really do a lot of work.” - in it together.
- “It develops you at an earlier age.”
- “I think it is the fact that you know it will pay off when you get to the end, it will make your life easier and give you a better TER and give you a better chance.”