A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

The Year 11 to ATAR Roadmap

What a strong two year arc looks like, term by term, for students sitting the HSC in 2028.

MA99 EDUCATION

WHAT IS INSIDE

Key dates, the term by term plan and the parent's role

FOR Parents of NSW students starting Year 11 in 2027	COVERS The HSC, moderation, scaling and the ATAR
COHORT HSC 2028	UPDATED November 2026

Prepared by MA99 Education, Sydney. General information for families, checked against NESA and UAC in November 2026. Confirm dates with your child's school.

What this guide covers

The rules first, then the dates, then the plan for each of the eight terms.

Read it once in full, then keep it as a reference through Year 11 and Year 12.

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The whole arc on one page

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ONE HONEST NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

No one can promise an ATAR, and you should be wary of anyone who does. It is a rank against everyone in the state who sits the same year. What can be planned is the process: the habits, the technique and the term by term decisions that give a capable student the best chance at their target.

Rules and dates in this guide were checked against NESA, UAC and NSW Department of Education pages in November 2026. Each page that states a rule names its source.

Two years, one climb

Eight terms from the first day of Year 11 to the HSC exams. Each term has one job.

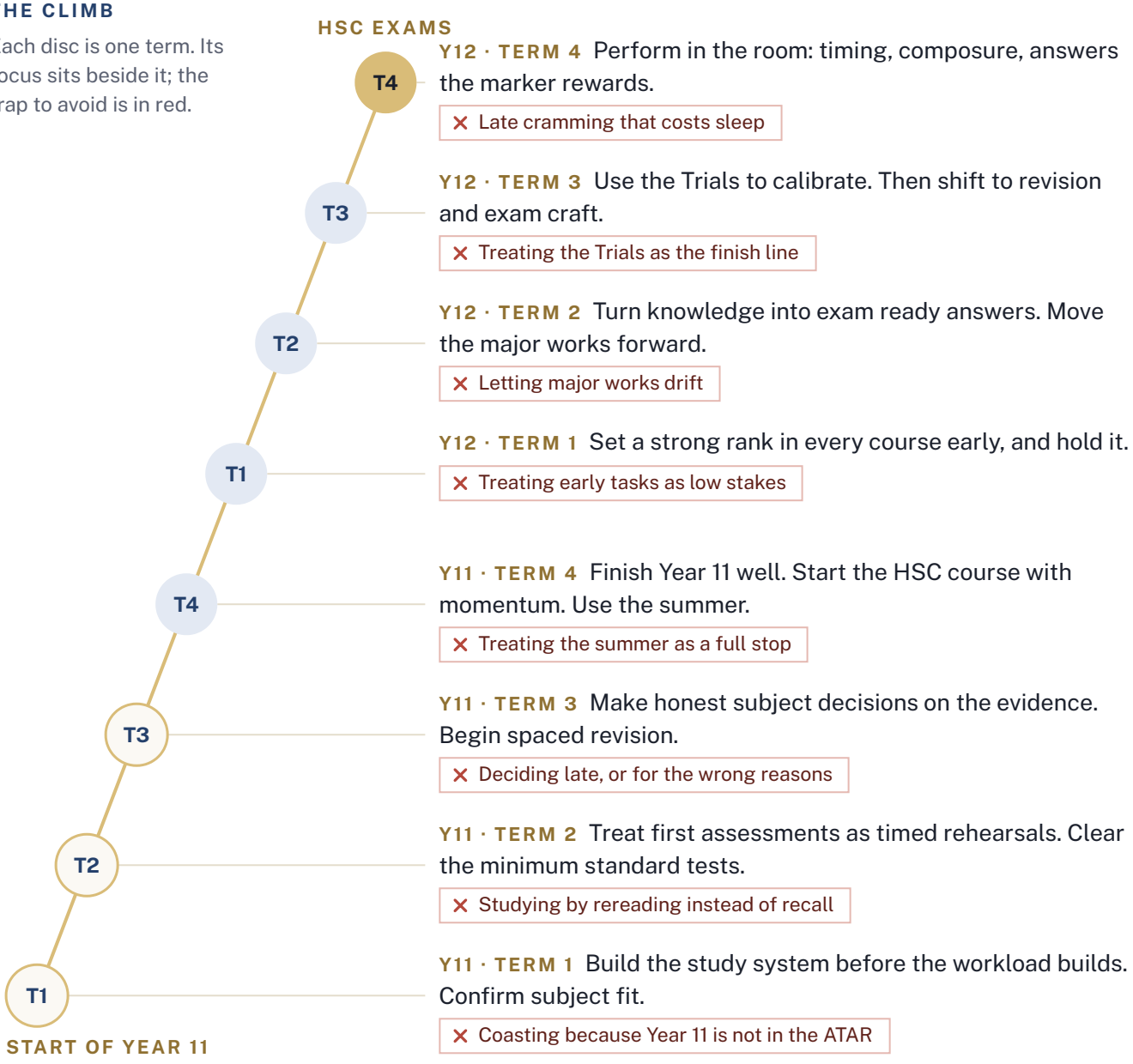
Year 11 lays the foundations that Year 12 is marked on. Families who plan both years as one climb pull ahead.

YEAR 11 · 2027	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
YEAR 12 · 2028	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	HSC exams

Year 11 course · HSC course, from Term 4 of Year 11 · HSC exams

THE CLIMB

Each disc is one term. Its focus sits beside it; the trap to avoid is in red.



Y12 · TERM 4 Perform in the room: timing, composure, answers the marker rewards.

✕ Late cramming that costs sleep

Y12 · TERM 3 Use the Trials to calibrate. Then shift to revision and exam craft.

✕ Treating the Trials as the finish line

Y12 · TERM 2 Turn knowledge into exam ready answers. Move the major works forward.

✕ Letting major works drift

Y12 · TERM 1 Set a strong rank in every course early, and hold it.

✕ Treating early tasks as low stakes

Y11 · TERM 4 Finish Year 11 well. Start the HSC course with momentum. Use the summer.

✕ Treating the summer as a full stop

Y11 · TERM 3 Make honest subject decisions on the evidence. Begin spaced revision.

✕ Deciding late, or for the wrong reasons

Y11 · TERM 2 Treat first assessments as timed rehearsals. Clear the minimum standard tests.

✕ Studying by rereading instead of recall

Y11 · TERM 1 Build the study system before the workload builds. Confirm subject fit.

✕ Coasting because Year 11 is not in the ATAR

Two courses, then one credential

Most courses are worth 2 units. Extension courses are worth 1 unit each.

The HSC is awarded by NESA. Your child needs a completed Year 11 pattern of study, a completed HSC pattern of study and the minimum standard to receive it.

YEAR 11 COURSE · 2027

12 units or more

The Year 11 course, until the HSC course begins.

→

HSC COURSE · FROM TERM 4, 2027

10 units or more

The Year 12 course, to the exams. The ATAR is built from it.

→

AWARDED

The Higher School Certificate

With both patterns met and the minimum standard reached.

What NESA requires

UNITS · EVERY YEAR

At least 6 units of Board Developed courses

COURSES · EVERY YEAR

At least three courses of 2 units or more

ENGLISH · EVERY YEAR

At least 2 units of a Board Developed English course

SUBJECTS · EVERY YEAR

At least four subjects

THE MINIMUM STANDARD

Reading **Writing** **Numeracy**

Three short online tests, in which students reach Level 3 or above of the Australian Core Skills Framework. They can be sat from Year 10.

Up to 4 tries a test a year in Years 10 and 11, and 6 in Year 12. Clear them early.

The four pattern rules apply to the Year 11 course and the HSC course alike. The minimum standard is the fifth requirement.

NEW FOR THIS COHORT

New syllabuses start in Year 11 in 2027 for several courses, including Biology, Physics, Economics and Modern History; English and Mathematics changed in 2026. Older past papers were written for the previous courses, so ask the school which ones still match.

Sources: NESA, ACE Manual 8005 (pattern of study); NESA, minimum standard tests; NESA, new syllabuses (from 2027) and 2027 HSC key dates.

Each HSC mark is half school, half exam

NESA averages the two, then reports the result against a band.

The HSC tasks your child sits from Term 4 of Year 11 carry the same weight as the exam.

HOW ONE COURSE MARK IS MADE · NESA'S OWN EXAMPLE

School assessment, moderated · 50%
89

+

HSC exam · 50%
92

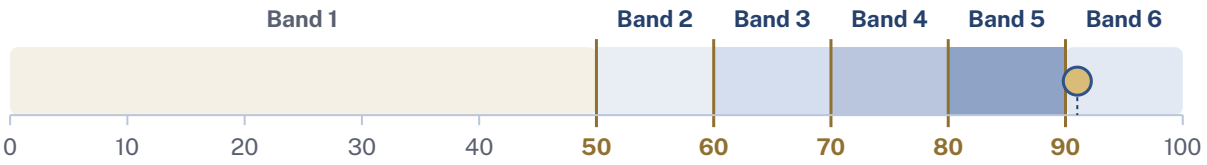
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Average, half marks round up
90.5

→

HSC mark, Band 6
91

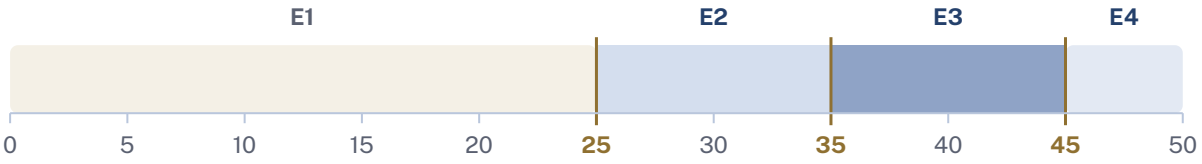
2 UNIT COURSES · BANDS 1 TO 6, ON A MARK OUT OF 100



Gold lines mark the band cut offs. A Band 6 is 90 or above.

NESA's example: 91, a Band 6

EXTENSION COURSES · E1 TO E4, ON A MARK OUT OF 50



E4 is the highest band. Both bars are drawn to scale.

TWO DIFFERENT NUMBERS

The mark on the HSC report, where a Band 6 is 90 or above, is NESA's mark aligned to the standards. The ATAR is built from the raw marks after scaling. A Band 6 and a 99+ are related, but they are not the same measure.

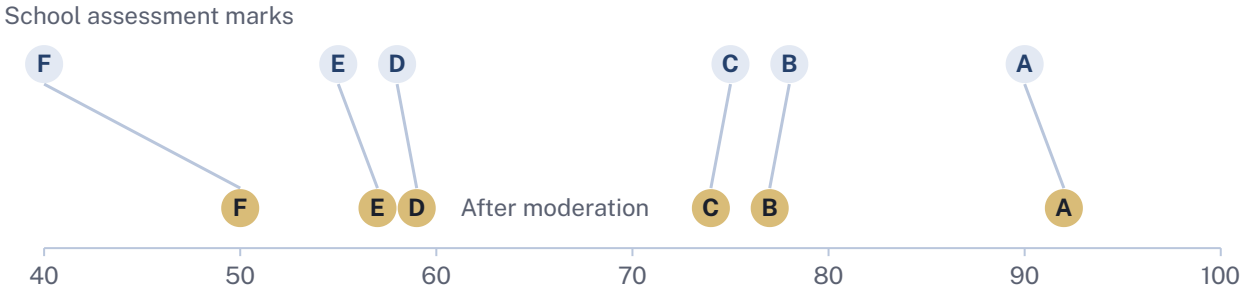
Sources: NESA, Understanding your HSC results; NESA, Determining HSC results (the 92 and 89 example, and the band cut offs at 90, 80, 70, 60 and 50, and at E4 45, E3 35, E2 25).

Moderation keeps the school's order

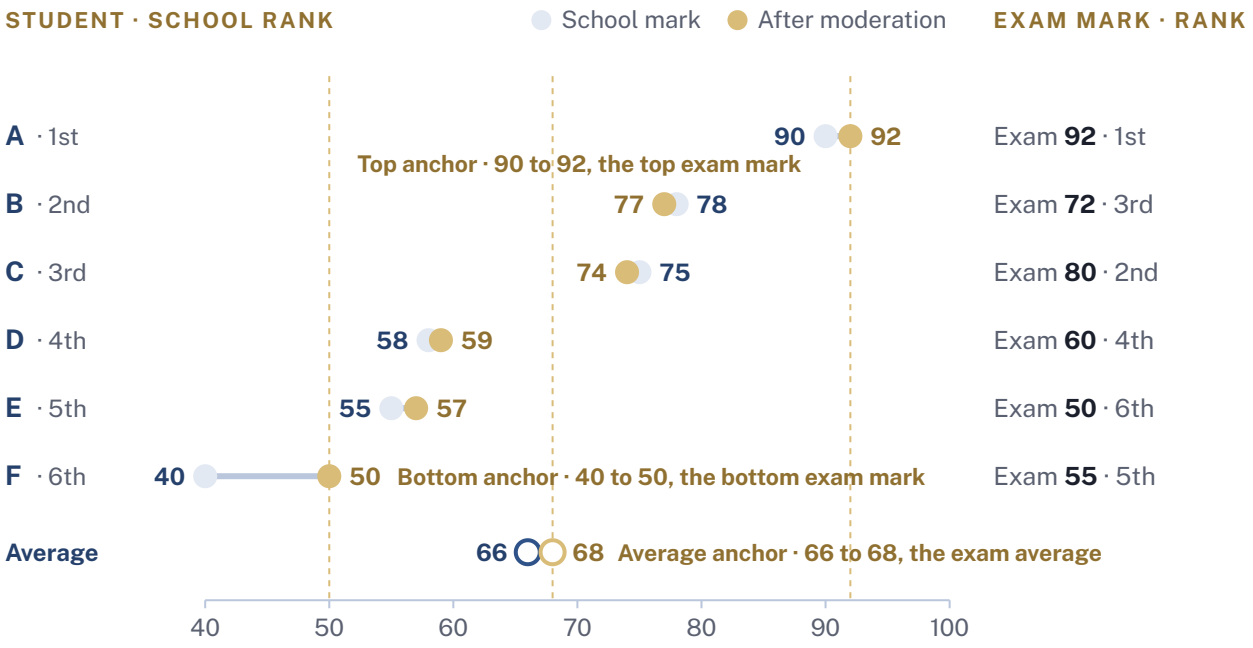
NESA moves each school's assessment marks to match how that group did in the exam.

Moderation is done by NESA, school by school. It never changes who is ahead within a school.

SIX STUDENTS IN ONE SCHOOL, BEFORE AND AFTER · NESA'S WORKED EXAMPLE



EACH STUDENT'S SCHOOL MARK, AND WHERE MODERATION MOVES IT



Dashed gold lines: the three anchors. F beat E in the exam but stays sixth. Final assessment marks are not released; ranks are shown after the last exam.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR CHILD

Rank in the school group is what carries into the HSC mark. Every HSC assessment task counts toward it, from the very first, not only the Trials.

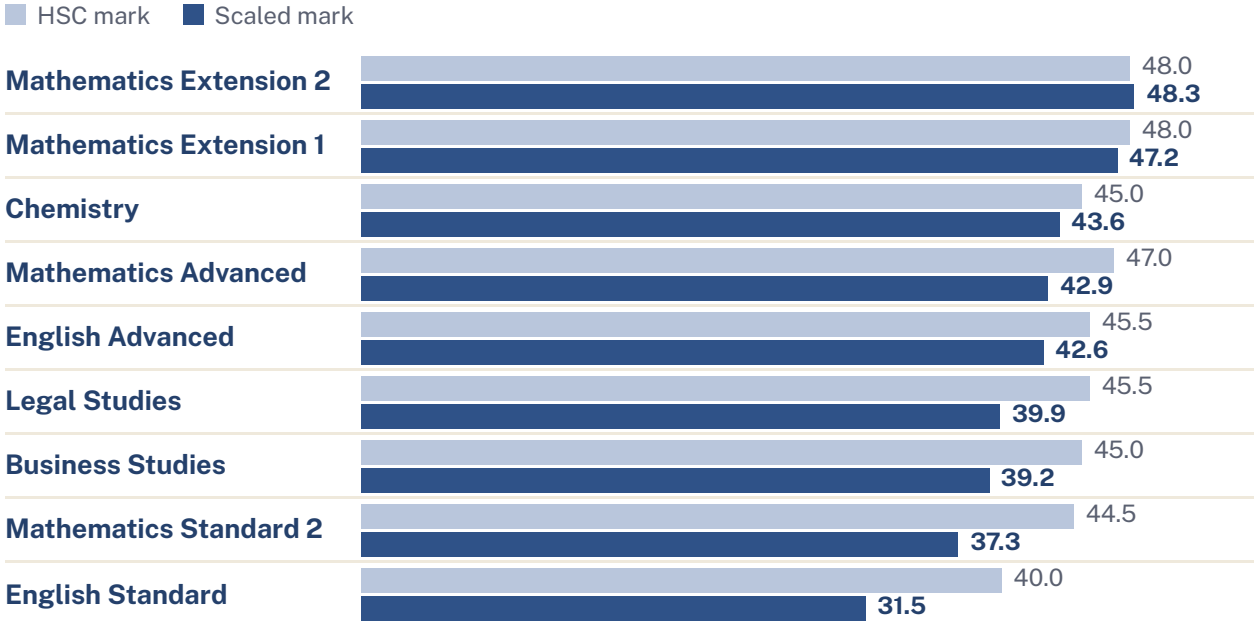
Sources: NESA, Assessment moderation (worked example of six students); NESA, HSC key dates.

Scaling puts every course on one scale

UAC adjusts each course for the strength of the students who take it.

Scaling is done by UAC, across the state, so marks from different courses can be added fairly. It never changes the order within a course.

THE TOP 10% LINE IN EACH COURSE, 2025



90th percentile marks, out of 50 per unit as UAC publishes them; double for a 2 unit course. Not a conversion table.

FROM THE HSC MARK TO THE SCALED MARK

1 · HSC MARK
NESA's mark in the course: school assessment and exam, half each.

→

2 · UAC SCALES IT
Adjusted, across the state, for the strength of the students in the course.

→

3 · SCALED MARK
Out of 50 a unit. The order of students within the course is unchanged.

→

4 · INTO THE AGGREGATE
Added with the other courses, then ranked into the ATAR.

39.2 Top 10% line, Business Studies, scaled

33.2 Middle student, Mathematics Advanced, scaled

THE POINT

No subject is automatically worth more. Position in the course decides the scaled mark, so choose subjects your child can rank highly in.

Source: UAC, Report on the Scaling of the 2025 NSW HSC, Table A3 (90th and 50th percentiles). UAC's principle: a student should be neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by choosing one course over another.

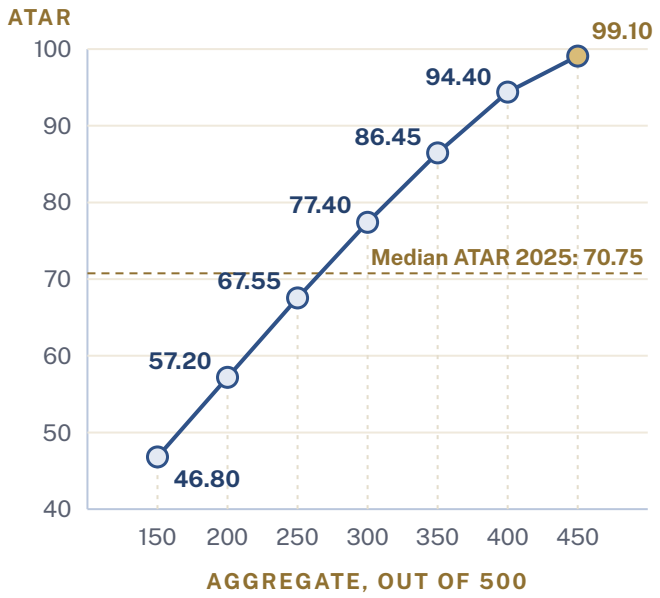
From course marks to a rank in five steps

NESA and UAC set the method at every step after the school marks the tasks.

A rank, not a mark. It places your child against the whole NSW age group, including students who did not sit the HSC, and is worked out by UAC.

1. **Course marks**
   Moderated school marks and exam, 50:50
2. **Scaled**
   UAC scales each course, keeping the order in it
3. **Best 10 units**
   The best 2 units of English, plus the best 8 others
4. **Aggregate**
   The ten scaled units added, out of 500
5. **Ranked**
   0 to 99.95, in steps of 0.05. There is no 100.

AGGREGATE AND ATAR IN 2025



Seven points from UAC's 2025 table. The curve flattens near the top: the last few points of ATAR cost the most aggregate.

TO RECEIVE AN ATAR

- ✓ At least 10 units of ATAR courses
- ✓ Including 2 units of English
- ✓ Three courses of 2 units or more
- ✓ Four subjects

The Category B limit was removed from the 2025 HSC. Any course with an HSC exam can now count.

YEAR 11 IS NOT IN THE ATAR, AND STILL MATTERS

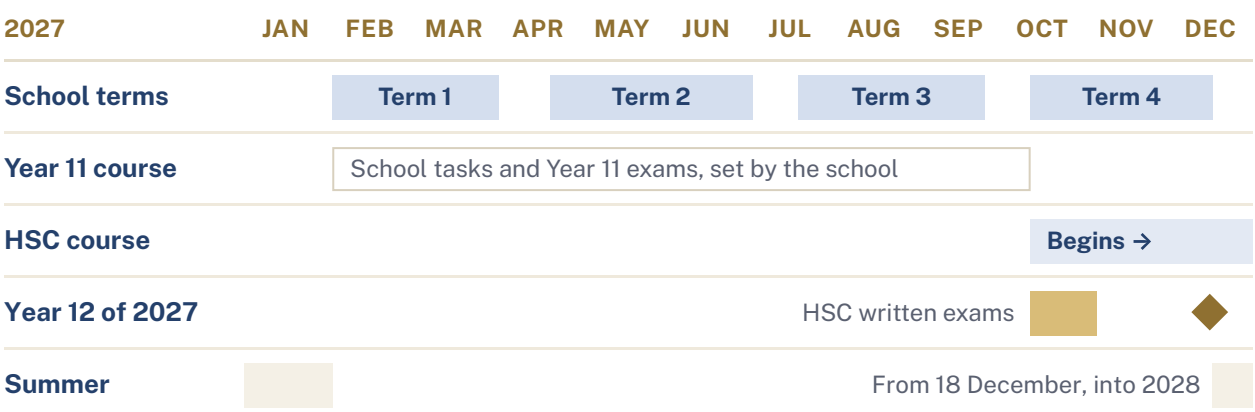
Only HSC courses count. But Year 11 sets the foundation and the habits, and UAC's early offer scheme lets universities consider Year 11 studies.

Sources: UAC, ATAR calculation; UAC, Scaling Report 2025 (Tables 3.2 and A7); NSW Department of Education, ATAR changes; UAC, SRS.

Year 11 in 2027, and the handover

The HSC course starts in Term 4, while this year's Year 12 sit their exams.

Term dates are for NSW public schools, Eastern division. Independent and Catholic schools set their own, so check yours.



Diamond: HSC results and ATARs for the 2027 cohort, 15 December.

DATES IN 2027, IN ORDER

3	**3 February**	Term 1 begins for students. The Year 11 course starts.
Y11	**Through the year**	Minimum standard tests: up to 4 tries a test in Year 11.
11	**11 October**	Term 4 begins. The HSC course begins this term.
13	**13 October to 5 November**	2027 HSC written exams: the pattern for next year.
Oct	**Late October**	Schools send Year 11 grades to NESA.
2	**2 November**	2028 HSC entries open: the school enters your child's courses.
15	**15 December**	2027 HSC results from NESA, and ATARs from UAC.
17	**17 December**	Term 4 ends. Term 1, 2028 starts on 31 January.

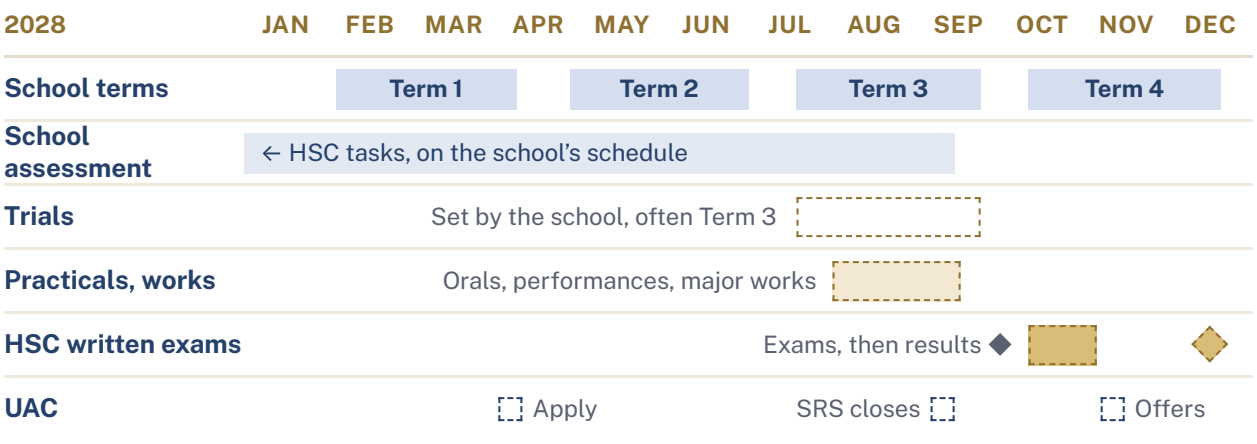
Published date · HSC course begins · Results and ATARs · Across the year

Sources: NSW Department of Education, 2027 and 2028 term dates; NESA, HSC key dates; NESA, new syllabuses (Year 12 courses from Term 4, 2027); NESA, minimum standard tests; UAC, Key dates for Year 12 students.

The HSC year, 2028

Term dates are published. Exam and offer dates are expected, from the latest pattern.

NESA and UAC publish the 2028 exam and offer dates closer to the time. Until then, the latest published dates are the best guide.



Solid: published. Dashed: expected from the latest pattern; confirm with NESA, UAC or the school.

	WHEN IN 2028	WHAT HAPPENS	LATEST DATE
31	**31 January**	Term 1 begins (development days first)	✓ **2028 published**
Apr	**Early April** · expected	UAC applications open	8 April 2026
T3	**Set by the school**	Trial exams; ask for the dates early	Varies by school
T3	**Term 3** · expected	Language orals, performance exams, major works due	3 August to 18 September 2026
Sep	**Mid September** · expected	Early offer (SRS) applications close	11 September 2026
Oct	**Mid October** · expected	HSC written exams, for about three and a half weeks	13 October to 5 November 2027
Nov	**Mid November** · expected	Early offers (SRS) released	12 November 2026
Dec	**Mid December** · expected	HSC results and ATAR released	15 December 2027

Published Expected, from the latest pattern Exams, results

Expected: confirm exams and results with NESA, applications and offers with UAC. Sources: NSW Department of Education, 2028 term dates; NESA, HSC key dates; UAC, Year 12 key dates 2026 to 2027.

Plan back from the target

Name the goal, locate today honestly, then design the two years to close the gap.

Beyond a certain level, the marks that separate good from excellent are rarely about knowing more. They are about performing under exam conditions.

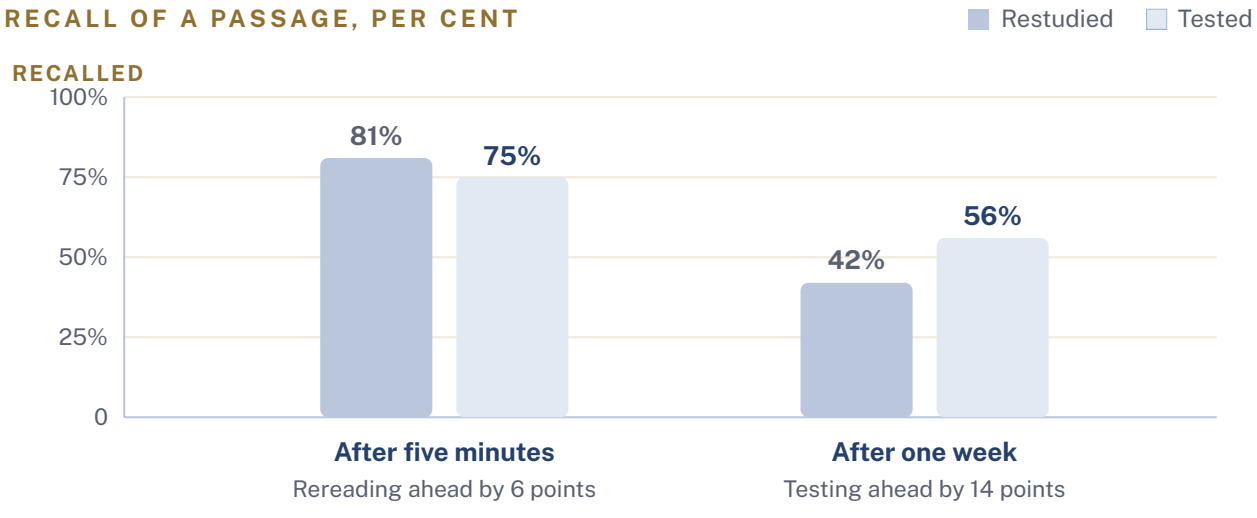
1 Where are we aiming?
A real target ATAR, and the courses it keeps open.

↓

2 Where are we today?
The true trajectory, not the last good report.

↓

3 Where does the gap close?
Usually technique and exam craft, before new content.



Rereading wins for five minutes. Testing wins at a week, which is what an exam measures.

Roediger, H. L., & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). Test-enhanced learning. Psychological Science, 17(3), 249-255.

Study in ways that last

Four habits that last, and the ones rated low utility.

1 Retrieval

Close the book and recall. It beats highlighting again.

2 Spacing

Revisit topics over weeks. In one study of 1,354 people, the best gap lifted final recall by 64% over no gap.

Study that lasts

3 Knowing what you don't know

Students who judge their gaps well revise the right things.

4 Mastery

Secure each foundation before building on it. Early gaps compound.

RATED LOW UTILITY

✕ Highlighting, rereading and summarising.

References: Cepeda, N. J., Vul, E., Rohrer, D., Wixted, J. T., & Pashler, H. (2008). Spacing effects in learning. Psychological Science, 19(11), 1095-1102. Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K. A., Marsh, E. J., Nathan, M. J., & Willingham, D. T. (2013). Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 14(1), 4-58.

ONE THING TO TRY AT HOME

Before your child opens their notes, ask them to explain the topic from memory. What they cannot recall is what to study tonight.

ASK
Explain the topic from memory

→

NOTICE
What cannot be recalled

→

STUDY
That, tonight

Year 11 builds the system the HSC runs on

Four terms in 2027 (NSW public schools, Eastern division), ending with the start of the HSC course.

Year 11, the foundation year. What a strong student is doing each term, and where families most often lose ground.

1

TERM 1 · 3 FEBRUARY TO 9 APRIL

Set the foundation

The focus. Build how your child will capture, review and recall material for two years, while the stakes are low. Confirm subject fit: if a subject is clearly wrong, act now.

THE TRAP TO AVOID

Coasting because Year 11 is not in the ATAR. The habits set now are the ones carried into the year that counts.

2

TERM 2 · 29 APRIL TO 2 JULY

Build technique under light pressure

The focus. Treat the first real assessments as timed rehearsals. Does your child plan a response, budget time by marks, stay composed? Clear the minimum standard tests.

THE TRAP TO AVOID

Studying by rereading. It feels like work and changes little. Make recall the default habit this term.

3

TERM 3 · 20 JULY TO 24 SEPTEMBER

Deepen and decide

The focus. Real strengths and weaknesses are now visible. Decide which subjects go into the HSC course on that evidence, and start spaced revisits of earlier topics.

THE TRAP TO AVOID

Keeping a subject out of habit, or because a friend takes it. That is how a weakness is carried into the HSC year.

4

TERM 4 · 11 OCTOBER TO 17 DECEMBER

The handover

The focus. Finish Year 11 well, then start the HSC course with momentum. A light, steady rhythm over summer starts Year 12 weeks ahead and far calmer.

THE TRAP TO AVOID

Treating the summer as a full stop. It is the one long, uninterrupted stretch in the two years.

Year 12 turns preparation into marks

Four terms in 2028 (NSW public schools, Eastern division), ending with the HSC exams.

Year 12, the HSC year. Every school task now counts toward rank, and rank carries into the HSC mark.

1

TERM 1 · 31 JANUARY TO 7 APRIL

Launch, with rank in mind

The focus. HSC tasks arrive quickly, and each one sets rank in the school group. Treat the first as seriously as the last, and build the content base broadly and securely.

THE TRAP TO AVOID

Treating early tasks as low stakes. Ground lost now is the most expensive to win back.

2

TERM 2 · 24 APRIL TO 7 JULY

Consolidate, and move the major works

The focus. Turn knowledge into answers that earn marks under exam conditions. Close the gaps the mid year tasks reveal, and make real progress on any major work.

THE TRAP TO AVOID

Letting major works drift. A project left late takes time from every subject in the final weeks.

3

TERM 3 · 24 JULY TO 29 SEPTEMBER

Peak preparation and the Trials

The focus. Full papers under time. Use the Trials to find where the last marks sit, then shift to targeted revision. Orals, performances and major works are expected this term.

THE TRAP TO AVOID

Treating the Trials as the finish line. Peaking here leaves nothing for the exams that decide the ATAR.

4

TERM 4 · FROM 16 OCTOBER

The HSC exams

The focus. Perform in the room: timing, composure, and answers in the form the marker rewards. Exams expected mid October to early November; confirm with NESA.

THE TRAP TO AVOID

Late cramming that costs sleep and composure. Rested and rehearsed beats exhausted.

Shape the conditions, not the work

The parents who help most are rarely the ones checking every mark.

You do not need to teach the syllabus. You hold the conditions in which your child does their best work.

WHAT GENUINELY HELPS

- ✓ **Structure and rhythm.** A set place and time to study, protected from interruption.
- ✓ **Calm about setbacks.** A poor task is information, not a verdict.
- ✓ **Perspective on load.** Watch total commitments in the weeks before assessment blocks.
- ✓ **The right help at the right time.** Knowing when outside support is needed.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- ✗ **The quiet slide.** A gradual drift no single report shows. Small slips are cheaper to fix early.
- ✗ **Effort without direction.** Busy on what already feels comfortable.
- ✗ **The mid arc dip.** Late Year 11 into early Year 12 is where momentum most often fades.
- ✗ **Sleep traded for study.** Late nights cost the recall they were for.

IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE

1. Start Year 11 as if it counts. It decides how Year 12 goes.
2. Choose subjects your child can rank highly in, not by reputation.
3. Replace rereading with recall, spaced across the whole two years.
4. Defend rank from the first HSC task. Moderation carries it through.
5. Use the summer between the years. It is the longest clear stretch.
6. After the Trials, shift to exam technique rather than new content.
7. Protect rest in the final weeks. Composure turns preparation into marks.

WHEN OUTSIDE SUPPORT IS WORTH IT

When a capable student is not turning effort into results. Lessons with no plan rarely change a trajectory. Look for a written plan, a defined method, regular review and honest reporting, and judge any provider on the system, not the sessions.

Six programmes on the two year arc

Where each one sits, from the years before senior school to the HSC.

Six programmes, one method. Each is planned, reviewed and reported, so the arc in this guide is run on purpose rather than left to chance.

	YEAR 11 · 2027				YEAR 12 · 2028			
EARLIER	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	HSC
The Band 6 Campaign								$1,500 a month
One subject, any year group. Target: a Band 6 in Years 11 and 12								
The Acceleration Track								$2,900 a month
Working above year level, gated								
The Reset Programme								$3,500 a month
Any term, after illness, a move or a hard year · to re-entry								
The Independent School Entry								$3,800 a month
Entry and scholarships at independent schools								
The Global Admissions Track								From $8,800 a month
18 months, UK or US, ATAR kept open, by invitation								
The 99+ Campaign								From $8,800 a month
Every subject, Term 1 of Year 11 to the HSC · by invitation								

THE SAME SPINE IN ALL SIX

A written Diagnostic Report, a Term Academic Plan reissued every term, the six step session, an Error Log of every lost mark, marked work returned inside the week, and a coach the family chooses from three profiles.

All prices include GST. Fees and terms are confirmed in the client agreement before enrolment. Every coach holds a Working With Children Check and follows the MA99 Child Safe Code of Conduct.

Start with the diagnostic

$80, GST included. A short parent questionnaire, then your school reports and marked papers by email. Refunded when you enrol.

Every MA99 programme starts the same way: with an honest read of where your child sits against their goal.

1
Start the diagnostic
Pay $80, answer a short questionnaire, then email your school reports and marked papers.

→

2
Read the report
A written Diagnostic Report that says honestly whether a programme fits.

→

3
Meet your coach
Chosen by you from three coach prof les, and changed on request.

→

4
Receive the plan
The Term Academic Plan, written after your f irst lesson.

FEE

$80

GST included

REPORT

48 hours

From receiving your documents

IF YOU ENROL

The $80 is refunded when you enrol. Nothing is signed at the diagnostic.

ENQUIRE OR ASK A QUESTION

ma99education.com.au/diagnostic

Phone	+61 479 074 771
Email	admin@ma99education.com
Office	Level 8, 37 York Street, Sydney NSW 2000

OUR PROMISE

If the diagnostic shows we are not the right fit, we tell you. You leave with a clear read on the road ahead either way.

Edward Ma, Director of MA99 Education. Fees and terms are confirmed in the client agreement before enrolment.