

HSC results for the Class of 2018

I want to start with the important things. The HSC is a journey for our young people, and so too for each one of the 111 girls at SCEGGS in 2018. They all had different abilities and interests, different backgrounds and home lives, different aspirations and goals. And I want them all to achieve those hopes and desires. But I also want them to be good people; to live their lives with integrity and purpose; to look after themselves and their friends and families; to stand up for what they believe in; to live with honour, and passion and kindness; to know what are the important things in life.... I want them to have a broad, liberal education, and to know how to learn and grow further at universities, in their professions, in their lives thirty or forty years from now. I want them to be strong, whole, flourishing people, comfortable in their own skin and able to manage the complexities of life. I want them to have skills to make them eminently employable and to be successful in their chosen careers. Not one of these things is captured in a leagues table!

Now it is true that our results do not look as good as previous years if you look at the leagues tables published in the media at the end of last year. I write more about this later in this article, but I think you know that I regard leagues tables as meaningless, and I will say so in the years when we get in the "top 10" just as strongly as when we don't! It means absolutely nothing!

I want the Class of 2018 to know how proud I am of each and every one of them. They are people of optimism and good humour, spirited and independent, confident and articulate, determined and energetic. They are great young women who are well-educated and thoughtful, care deeply for ideas and causes, able to live life to the full and wanting to make a difference to our community.

Having said that, I know you will want to know a little more generally about how we have gone!

Firstly, there are some outstanding individual achievements I would like to particularly celebrate:

- Four girls made the state's "Top All-Rounders" list this year, having gained a mark of at least 90% in ten or more of their HSC units, which is a great achievement for these girls:
 - Ruby Adler
 - Priya Gupta
 - Anna Ho
 - Neave Taylor
- In individual subjects, we had 222 mentions in the Distinguished Achievers lists from 91 different girls (including our Year 11 Accelerants). This means that 91 of the girls who sat one or more HSC examinations in 2018 gained in the top band with a mark over 90% in one or more of their subjects – this is an excellent achievement for each of them in those subject areas, showing a particularly strong performance in one or more of their subjects.
- Maddie Kowalenko, came 1st in the state in French Extension and 2nd in the state in French Continuers, sitting 5 HSC units whilst still in Year 11!
- Five girls were nominated for ArtExpress:
 - Oonagh Bolton
 - Sunday Hanson
 - Daisy King

- Saskia McCarthy
- Luka Ng

- Four girls were nominated for inclusion in Shape (the Design and Technology Exhibition)
 - Grace Barwick
 - Amanda Lynch
 - Jemma McKenzie
 - Chloe Whitford

- Chloe Chong's Elective Musicology essay was selected for the HSC Encore Exhibition.

- Gemma Hassall's performance was nominated for inclusion in OnStage (the HSC Drama Exhibition).

Percentages in the top two bands in 2018:

The table below represents the number of students, as a percentage of the SCEGGS candidature, who have achieved a mark in one of the top two bands for the course. For comparison, the state percentage achieving in the top two bands is also provided. In a 2 unit subject, such as Ancient History, a mark in one of the top two bands means a mark over 80%.

Subject	SCEGGS Candidature	State Percentage in top two bands	SCEGGS Percentage in top two bands
Ancient History	19	36.1	73.7
Biology	36	36.87	72.2
Business Studies	27	36.96	88.9
Chemistry	36	42.08	66.7
Design and Technology	19	46.69	84.2
Drama	18	42.37	55.6
Economics	10	46.39	90.0
English (Standard)	17	15.06	64.7
English (Advanced)	94	62.61	93.6
English Extension 1	40	95.43	97.5
English Extension 2	6	71.12	83.3
Geography	8	43.18	75.0
IPT	4	37.02	100.0
Mathematics General 2	23	26.64	69.6
Mathematics	80	51.8	75.0

Mathematics Extension 1	41	79.6	97.6
Mathematics Extension 2	13	85.41	84.6
Modern History	44	41.82	79.5
History Extension	17	78.68	82.4
Music 1	4	64.5	100.0
Music 2	1	91.34	*
Music Extension	1	95	*
PDHPE	12	33.11	100.0
Physics	10	33.79	90.0
Visual Arts	48	53.28	91.7
French Continuers	16	64.15	100.0
French Extension	4	82.11	100.0
Japanese Beginners	2	44.72	*
Latin Continuers	5	86.53	80.0
Latin Extension	2	98.92	*

* Please note: the data for small candidature subjects will not be reported in accordance with the school's Privacy Policy

When you run your fingers down those two last columns, you can see that the percentages of SCEGGS girls in the top 2 bands are significantly better than the equivalent NSW statistics in nearly every case.

ATARs:

As you would all be aware, we do not receive any information about the ATARs (Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank) achieved by our girls. These were released to the girls directly online but we do ask girls to ring in and let us know how they went – we love to hear from them all – whatever mark they achieved.

We have again used an external consultant to estimate the ATARs and help us analyse the results so that we can advise students in future years, and to build up our knowledge base of processes and procedures.

It is important to remember:

The ATAR is a rank, not a mark, so for example an ATAR of 90 indicates that the student has performed well enough in the HSC to be placed in the top 10% of their age group.

Overall, it appears that we gained the following ATAR rankings:

- 5 girls over 99
- 13 girls over 98

- 29 girls over 95
- 53 girls over 90
- 79 girls over 80

Congratulations to Anna Ho who gained the highest ATAR at SCEGGS - 99.55. What a great achievement!

But there are 111 different stories of the 111 girls which make up the Class of 2018. I thought I would share just a couple of quotes from the girls (and one from a Mum) who wrote to me when they received their HSC results:

- *The ATAR I received yesterday was 98.80, which I was quite happy with. It should allow me to enrol in my first preference course of a Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Advanced Studies (Dalyell Scholars including Mathematical Sciences) at the University of Sydney. I am sure I would not have performed so well if it wasn't for my incredible teachers and the support of the school. I have also really appreciated how all of my teachers put a real focus on actual learning rather than learning for the test.
However, finishing school is always about more than reflecting on the results that have come out of it. I've also been reflecting on what we've learnt through thirteen years of education. For me, I had enjoyed primary school on the whole, but found year 6 incredibly difficult (due to the 'friendship dramas' that typify that age). Before I began year 7 at SCEGGS, I clung to a belief that things would get better. And they really did.
The school provided so many role models of confident yet kind and approachable people, from you as headmistress to my teachers to the other students in my year. Without SCEGGS, I would not have made the wonderful friends I have now, and they are people who I hope will be in my life forever. The love, care and support of the people in my year, even those who weren't my closest friends, has always struck me as something unique to SCEGGS and for which I am incredibly grateful. I think if I had not been at SCEGGS, I would be a far less confident and happy as a person.*
- *I wanted to say a big thank you to you and to my teachers for my wonderful time at SCEGGS. My time at SCEGGS allowed me to learn that confidence in oneself and persistence is what allows one to excel. It is not without the kind-hearted help from teachers, support from the school and fun times with friends that I would have graduated with fond and loving memories of SCEGGS. It is an amazing school that allows young girls to thrive into happy, kind and mature young women as all my friends and I have. Thank you for this.*
- *I would like to sincerely thank you and the school for never giving up on me even during the complexities of my mental illness. In Year 10 I could hardly leave my bedside and couldn't begin to fathom completing my HSC, let alone achieving an ATAR of 96.25. I owe it all to SCEGGS and I am truly forever indebted to the school for the outpouring of support that I received.... Although I am very proud of my academic achievements, I am most proud to leave with the values of a SCEGGS girl and with a smile on my face. I can leave confidently, knowing that I can achieve anything that I put my mind to, even in the face of the darkest moments.*
- *My daughter is delighted by her result and she will share this with you personally. Our family certainly understands the inherent limitations of the league tables and I would rather she*

had experienced the breadth of education that she has received under your steady guidance, than a tailored education responding in any way to a league table.

Our full analysis of all the results has yet to be completed, and of course each year's cohorts are different – they select different subjects based on their differing interests, strengths, talents and abilities, and hence there will always be variation between years, but overall the Class of 2018 appears to have done well.

Leagues Tables:

Each year in this analysis, I write about leagues tables and just how misleading they are – whether the information is favourable or not! The drive to analyse school results on solid information is praiseworthy, and something we do very seriously and systematically. But the desire to rank schools on the meaningless data used to construct leagues tables sickens me. Let me explain more....

These Leagues tables are constructed around the media's definition of "success rate" (their terminology for students gaining a mark of 90 or more in a course). What does this mean....? Is a mark over 90 a good thing....?

- Can you compare a mark of 90 in one subject with a mark of 90 in another subject? Over 40% of students studying Music Course 2 gained 90, and 28.9% of students studying French gained a mark over 90. Whereas 6.83% of students studying IPT gained over 90, and 8.69% of Biology students gained over 90.
- What if students gained results over 90 by taking lower level courses - say General Mathematics rather than Ext 1 Mathematics - would that still be what we want for our students? Is that a measure of success? (I was interested to see the high percentage of students studying General Mathematics in some schools as reported in the newspapers).
- What if students were encouraged to study fewer subjects, to attempt fewer units, to study the minimum, to narrow their education - is that what we would want for our students and for their future?
- Or perhaps it does mean actually that the student did really well - balancing challenge with success, keeping a breadth of subjects that will really help them in the world ahead, and that we helped them be good people with integrity and purpose too.

The problem with reducing something as complex as education and schooling to a single measure such as this 'success rate' is that we cannot differentiate between any of these situations! And I know that there are great schools out there who feel that they have to justify to their community that they "went down" in the rankings, or who do a wonderful job in a disadvantaged area. I know that somehow a mark of 90 has now taken an unrealistically important position in many young people's minds. When you read that SCEGGS placed 25th in the state – please don't think it means anything!

I want our girls to strive for excellence and to achieve their own personal best - whatever that might be. I want them to have a broad liberal education, studying a range of subjects to encourage them to grow as people and to broaden their thinking. I want us as a community to be just as proud of an 89% in a higher-level course that really challenged a student, rather than encouraging them give up along the way and know they can achieve 90% at a lower level. I want all our girls to keep trying right up until the end, striving for 93, 94, 95 ... not just be satisfied with being 'over 90'. I want our community to value excellence, and the challenge of academic rigour and most of all - striving for and achieving your own personal best.

Where to from here:

We will continue to undertake a more careful analysis in the next couple of months of all the data we can acquire. So, we will look at how individual girls performed against their ability level; we will construct graphs of Year 10 results against HSC results, comparative information of how different subjects did against each other and so forth. We will look at the ATAR each student gained, which subjects counted in the calculation of her ATAR and which didn't. We will look at which options and electives we chose within courses, and how our students performed in each of these. We will use all of this to help us assess how this group of girls performed against their potential. And this year, as with all years, we will identify the areas that we can do even better for the following year. As usual, we will continue to work on all aspects of our programs to ensure we are delivering the best education possible in every area. And we are preparing for the new courses which will be examined for the first time for the Class of 2019 too!

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Jenny Allum