It is now time to start to seriously look at the past HSC exam papers. Between now and the HSC exam you should find at least 10 periods of 3 hours, sit at a table and work through the past 10 HSC exams. Copies can be purchased from commercial suppliers or the Maths Association of NSW: www.mansw.nsw.edu.au

There are 10 multiple choice questions worth 1 mark each and 6 further questions worth 15 marks each to be done over 180 minutes. Students need to get used to working through the 10 multiple choice questions quickly. Aim to do these inside 20 minutes. This will allow around 25 minutes per question for the rest of the paper. There is also a 5 minute reading time.

When you are practicing the papers use that 5 minutes of reading time to see how you can best use that period. Don’t ever look at the answers before an entire paper is completed. Your mind is an amazing instrument and if you are stuck on an early question it can often happen that your sub conscious will work out the answer and in an hour or so you will find that you can do that question.

You may reasonably expect close to a full question on both complex numbers and integration following on after the multiple choice. A well organised student can expect to score high marks in complex numbers and integration questions.

The remaining questions can be taken from anywhere in the Extension 2 course, with around the equivalent of 2 questions from harder Extension 1.

Set your work out neatly and always draw a large diagram – the examiners love to see diagrams.

Don’t use liquid paper – it’s too easy to forget to come back and replace the answer.

Cross out incorrect work neatly and ensure that you can understand your own writing. It is easy to use a u, U, v, V in a motion question and then mix them up.

Many later questions look very complicated at first glance. If this is the case, it is likely that part marks will be given for proving a result the whole way through and even if you miss one part, you may still be able to do the next part of the question.

Where a question has a number of parts, it is very likely that the earlier parts are there to assist you with a later part; so if stuck, look for that earlier hint.

“Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school.” Albert Einstein
• Questions 15 and 16 are often very difficult but again look for those parts where you can score marks. When you finally check the answers, don’t spend too long on a question that is way beyond your understanding. It is far better to ensure that you understand those areas on which you actually have a fair idea.

• When preparing for exams, many students spend too much time trying to figure out the last question on a trial paper. Be aware that pretty much every school sets something really tricky here and the chance of seeing it again is not all that high.

• And finally, once you have finished those past papers you can either do them again or look for earlier papers – the Extension 2 syllabus has not changed for 25 years although the examiners today have shown an increasing interest in inequalities and sketching curves where the equation of the function has not been given.

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