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## These students rose to the COVID challenge to achieve an ATAR of 99



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Education

Comments



Nada Vidyattama of Narrabundah College and Jamie Boyd of Dickson College both achieved an ATAR of 99 or above. Picture: Elesa Kurtz

Their final year of school was tossed upside down thanks to a pandemic, but these year 12 students managed to weather the storm and excel in their studies.

Jamie Boyd of Dickson College and Nada Vidyattama of Narrabundah College discovered on Wednesday that they had achieved an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) of 99 and 99.65 respectively. The maximum rank is 99.95.

Nada never imagined she would achieve a rank that high during such a disorienting year.

"It felt a bit unreal. I knew I could do well but I thought that I'd be getting 97 or 98 at most," she said.

Nada found it difficult at times to stay on track as time became a blur during the period of remote learning.

"Sometimes it felt like I was stumbling through everything and trying to stay afloat," she said.

Nada managed to keep a balance in her life by volunteering in the Narrabundah Interact Club and the student governance group as well as playing badminton and holding down a casual pharmacy job.

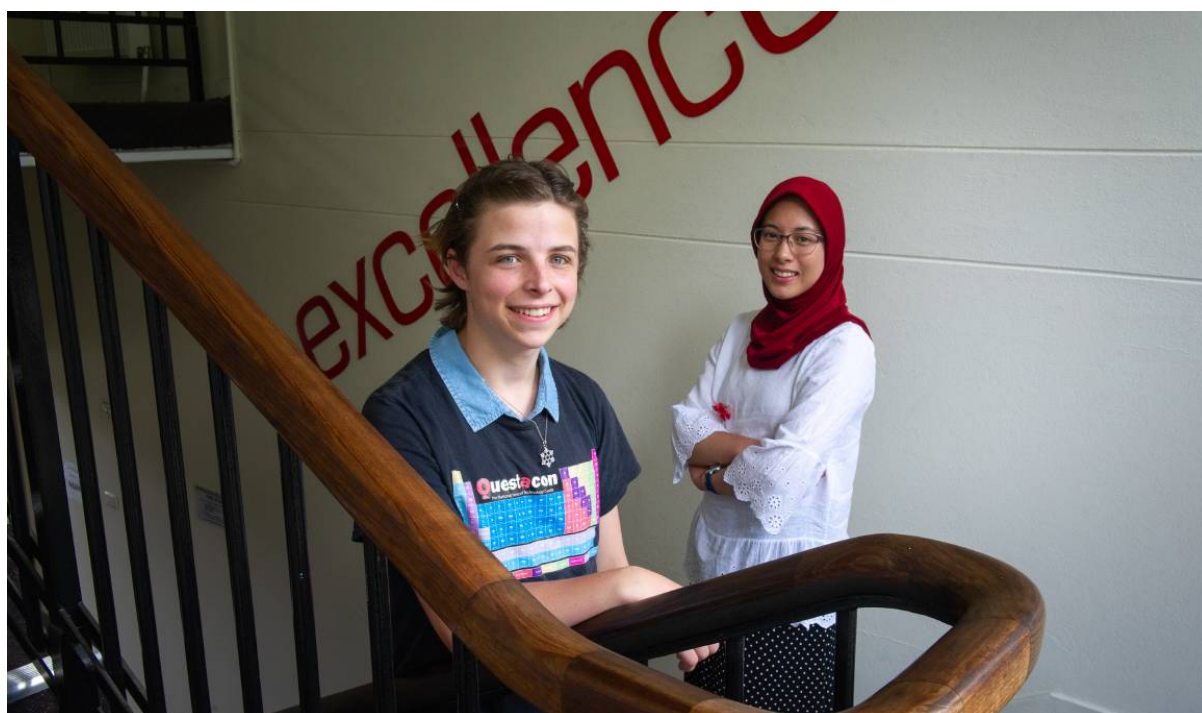
Going into year 11, some people urged her to load up on high scaling subjects, like high-level mathematics, physics and chemistry.

Instead she chose a diverse range of subjects, including Chinese beginners and biology, which is something she'd encourage other students starting year 11 to do.

"Pair high-scaling subjects with something you like so you don't get too burnt out too soon," she said.

"Trust yourself rather than be pressured to do something you don't enjoy and won't work out."

For Jamie, having to pare back on music and theatre commitments during the pandemic allowed them to put more time into assignments.



Jamie Boyd and Nada Vidyattama said the key to success was selecting subjects they enjoyed as well as support from family and friends. Picture: Elesa Kurtz

"I like doing creative responses to science assignments and things like that," the recent high school graduate said.

Jamie put the year's academic success down to having a supportive and high-achieving friendship group and an inspiring physics teacher in Chris Hammerer.

Outside the classroom, Jamie found time to express some creativity in two Canberra Repertory Society productions this year, *Grapes of Wrath* and *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and also played violin with the Canberra Youth Orchestra.

Universities usually use ATAR scores to select students for undergraduate courses, however this year, because of the pandemic, universities gave many early offers based on year 11 results from August.

Nada knew she had an early offer to Australian National University for a flexible double degree in sciences and arts and social sciences but maintained her focus nonetheless.

"I wanted to stay on top of everything and do my best in my subjects until the very end," she said.

Jamie is waiting to be accepted into a bachelor of philosophy, which is a flexible, research-driven degree at the ANU.

It will give them a taste of the world of academic research but could also open up opportunities to pursue science communication.

This year, 4497 ACT students completed a senior secondary education program. Of this cohort 2828, or 63 per cent, received an ATAR.

A total of 177 students included an extension course at a university on their certificate.

Meanwhile, 1583 students were awarded a vocational qualification and 271 students underwent an Australian School Based Apprenticeship.

New courses completed for the first time included data science, robotics and mechatronics, networking and security, design and emerging technologies and Indigenous culture and languages.