



the 2020

student experience

summary of findings

WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR TIMETABLE STRUCTURE +
LEARNING, TECHNOLOGY, SUPPORT AND STUDENT ISSUES

Student Representative Council Research Team, June 2020

Amber Lee, Adrian Le, Harmony Boonaerts, Holly Forbes, Manny Kneeshaw, Manu Maya, Ebony Wellman, William Stewart, Mim Macdonell, Kai Minassian & Ms Lowe

We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples on whose land we live, learn, work and play, the Murramarang peoples of the Yuin nation, and we pay our respects to elders of the past and present, as well as elders of the future emerging in our school today.

Background

Our community experienced significant disruption and stress in 2019-20. The bushfires were traumatic for our community. Some students & teachers returned to school processing stress, grief and challenges.



The pandemic caused further disruption. While some students and teachers didn't mind learning at home, others really struggled. Ulladulla High School moved to a reduced timetable of 4 periods with 30-minute breaks between each session. When school resumed, students from the SRC wrote a letter to school leaders on behalf of all students thanking them for their strong leadership and for putting wellbeing first in times of uncertainty.



This unprecedented context spurred on a new idea – to *really* listen to students' experiences of school, student preferences for a new timetable, and what students think will improve their wellbeing and learning at school. On Tuesday 16 June 2020, students conducted 17 focus groups, with about 10 students per year group. A representative sample was obtained via Year Advisors to ensure a mix of backgrounds and interests.



Summary of key findings

THE TIMETABLE



The vibe

- ✓ across all years, most students like the new routine; none want to return to the 6-period timetable
- ✓ less stressful, more headspace
- ✗ 6-periods was too many: too many to think about, time was wasted moving around & figuring out where you are next lesson
- ✓ more focussed and more work getting done in the hour lessons

"I feel like I am so much more focussed"



Breaks after each class

- ✓ everyone likes a break between each lesson. (Some feel break lengths could be changed)
- ✓ breaks let you *'relax'*, *'have time to play sport or handball'*, and *'feel refreshed before the next class'*
- ✓ you can think about what class you're going into, and not rush
- ✓ there's enough time to eat and *'not have to scoff it'* like you used to in the previous, shorter recess
- ✓ time to socialise *'which is so important after the year we've had'*



Things to consider

How long should breaks be? There's a range of views. Many like it now; some think some break/s could be shorter to extend classes or add a fifth period (which some envisioned as a study period).

Hours for seniors? Some Year 12s & students with siblings in Year 12 wondered how they're impacted by less class time each day.

What about roll call? It is valued by those in groups (like choir, Gunya, SEC). Year 7s & some Year 9s feel it gives them time to get organised each day. Seniors tend not to see roll call as helpful for their learning.

BIGGEST BARRIER TO LEARNING

Annoying kids; they're always disrupting the class and are the biggest, most common barrier students feel get in the way of learning. Students who don't want to be there annoy everyone else. No one's sure how it can be fixed. (Friends can distract but are also who we turn to for help.)

TECHNOLOGY POSITIVES

Students like a mix, e.g. where it's used for research or assessment, but writing can be used to retain information or for subjects like Maths. Technology helps you feel organised, find assessments, submit more easily than printing, and email teachers. Messy or nervous writers prefer to type.

TECHNOLOGY FRUSTRATIONS

In every year, especially juniors, students feel technology is a big distraction in class- that kid playing games or shopping. For some Year 7s and 8s, it's a struggle navigating "too many platforms". (Google Classroom was liked by many.) Old devices and ones with bad batteries suck.

GETTING SUPPORT

Across year groups, students overwhelmingly said they ask their friends for help when they need it. For most, peers are the first and only place they go. Students find 'teacher aides' so helpful (shout-out, Tracy!). Year Advisors are seen as a 'great system' by older students; some younger ones didn't know their Year Advisor or how to use them.

OTHER STUFF...

Students could raise any issues they care about. There were ideas to grow mental health services & add canteen food and payment options. Assignment due dates was raised in all years, with a request for faculties to work together to ensure tasks aren't all due at the same time. Desperation for more seats and sheltered seats was universal too.

...AND UNIFORM

There were tweaks requested such as longer sports shorts, a warmer and broader set of winter options including hoodies without zips, and the ability to wear the PE uniform to school. Some said they like the more relaxed approach to uniform since returning to school after covid-19 and want it to stay relaxed particularly on shoes.