SUBMISSION TO:

THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT’S EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE’S INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

FROM THE:

VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT

DATE: May 31st 2011

Alethea Sedgman - Currently in Year 12 at Horsham Secondary College.
In 2010 Alethea won a Commonwealth Gold Medal for Shooting in India whilst in Year 11.
Ms Kerryn Riseley  
Executive Officer  
Education and Training Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring Street  
East Melbourne 3002  
etc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Committee Members,

Re: Parliamentary Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students – Victorian Institute of Sport Submission

Please find attached for your consideration and reflection the Victorian Institute of Sport Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students.

We very much welcome the opportunity to respond to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry; we have articulated the identification of gifted and talented students for our sporting context along with our programs and policies, noting the impact on learning development and wellbeing along with nominating opportunities, strategies and recommendations for enhancing support to this particular cohort.

We would also like to express interest in participating in the upcoming public hearings of the Committee to represent our Submission with some available school age athletes. This would provide another opportunity to effectively represent our secondary student gifted and talented athlete group.

Thank you for your consideration of this Report,

kind regards

Bernadette Sierakowski - Coordinator Athlete Career & Education  
Victorian Institute of Sport  
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Executive Summary

This Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students aims to represent the voices of secondary student elite athletes who are on Scholarship at the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS). The VIS provides high performance sports programs for talented athletes, enabling them to achieve national and international success. The Motto of the VIS is *Success in Sport and Life* and this philosophy is an integral part of the athlete support services. There are approximately 400 athletes currently on Scholarship at the VIS with some 61 school athletes ranging from the secondary Years 7 – 12.

The Athlete Career and Education Program is one of the Programs at the VIS that supports athletes with career counselling and planning, personal development training courses, educational guidance, employment preparation, access to career referral networks, transitional support, lifestyle management and professional referrals and online services.

Within this document a number of experiences and issues surrounding the life of an elite athlete in secondary school are noted. These include time management required each week for training, travel and competition; the physical and mental demands of elite sport; the need for advanced planning and communication with school personnel; the ambition of student athletes to complete their VCE studies to the highest possible standard to enable them to pursue their chosen careers; a greater understanding and recognition of the broader educational benefits, culturally and socially, of those involved in elite sport; the provision of flexible school curriculum together with school structures and policy development that acknowledge a high performance lifestyle of gifted and talented secondary school students.

The VIS has nominated four key recommendations that could greatly assist the educational outcomes and opportunities for our student athletes: firstly the nomination of a point of contact in each secondary school setting; secondly the exploration of the gifted and talented students becoming a nominated category within the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre – The Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) Application Process; thirdly, enhanced opportunities for athletes access to government secondary schools near their high performance training centers and finally, the review of the policies and procedures for gifted and talented students sitting exams whilst overseas training and competing.

The VIS appreciates the opportunity to represent talented and gifted secondary school elite athletes.
INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Victorian Parliament’s Education and Training Committee’s (ETC) Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students. We make this submission in support of our student athletes who strive to live out the Motto of the VIS *Success in Sport and Life*. We believe this presents the wonderful opportunity to showcase some of our elite athletes who are currently Secondary School students within Victoria in the hope that through the research and this community involvement there will be relevant Policy Development in Victoria to assist them further in reaching the greatest possible heights in their academic and sporting performance.

For the purposes of this document we are referring to Gifted and Talented students who portray elite performance in the sporting domain. The parameters of elite sporting performance would be further defined as student athletes on VIS Scholarship and Training Agreements along with those that are concurrently on an Australian Institute of Sport Scholarship and those nominated by their respective National Sporting Organisation as in an Australian Team and Australian Shadow Squad.

We believe that for a student athlete to be successful there needs to be a strong scaffolding of support around the young person to be able to compete at the high performance level; this network of support includes the athletes’ family and friends, educational and work setting, sporting organisation at the local, regional, state and National level along with the athlete having a strong interdisciplinary team of service providers to deliver the knowledge and expertise involved; i.e. coaching, medical provision including doctors, physiotherapist, soft tissue therapists along with physical preparation, sports science and career and education services.

The clear benefits for the student athlete’s involvement in high performance sport include a fit and healthy lifestyle, success and technical proficiency in a given sporting domain thus increasing positive self esteem; the young person gaining an understanding of the decision making process and accepting responsibilities, leadership opportunities, immersion in a culture of innovation, achievement supported by professional expertise of the highest order. Skills are also developed in the area of communicating and socialising with peers as well as adults and the positive role modelling that naturally occurs from senior mentor athletes and coaches. Together with these there are additional opportunities to enhance presentation skills along with personal and professional development.

Through involvement in elite sport the student athlete also has the opportunity to develop independence, confidence and self management by having the opportunity to travel nationally and internationally, building a broader vision of the world and enriched perceptions. The benefits for the community include developing an individual who has a greater appreciation and cultural awareness and good citizenship. A healthy individual who may develop a continuing interest in sports participation as an adult within the community, thus minimising the current trends of obesity and the high cost of medical health support in the community.

This Submission is put to the ETC Committee in a spirit of collaborative enterprise on behalf of the VIS student athlete cohort. It provides an overview of the VIS, one of the programs supporting the athletes, the Athlete Career and Education Program, and an indication of our current Secondary school student cohort. We provide to you an overview of the programs we have on offer to support these student athletes.
along with issues noted and possible areas for reflection and Committee consideration.

SECTION ONE

ORGANISATION DESCRIPTION

Background

The Victorian Institute of Sport provides high performance sports programs for talented athletes, enabling them to achieve national and international success.

The VIS was set up to assist the development of Victoria’s best athletes. It was established in 1990 by the State Government as a private trustee company, with its Board of Directors appointed by the Victorian Minister for Sport. The VIS is funded by the State Government through Sport and Recreation Victoria, by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian Sports Commission and National Sporting Organisations. It also has numerous corporate sector sponsors.

The VIS currently supports over 400 athletes on scholarship and training agreements across 36 sports including able-bodied athletes and athletes with a disability. The VIS is a non-residential Institute.

From the inception of the VIS in 1990 to the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010, 30 Victorians have become Olympic champions, before which only 12 Victorian athletes had ever succeeded at this level. The VIS contribution to the national Olympic and Paralympic medal tally is always a significant one. VIS athletes have also achieved international success in non-Olympic sports such as netball, squash and golf.

The VIS is one of a comprehensive network of Institutes and Academies of sport throughout Australia and has a close relationship with the Australian Institute of Sport and the other State-based Institutes. The organisation works closely with sporting organisations, schools and universities, and private clinics and practitioners, ensuring that athletes receive optimal benefits.

By being innovative and creative in the preparation of athletes, the VIS offers an environment where athletes can perform at their best.

Winners of the prestigious VIS Award of Excellence include Olympic and World Champions such as Catherine Freeman (Athletics), Peter Antonie and the ‘Oarsome Foursome’ (Rowing), Tom King & Mark Turnbull and Glenn Ashby (Sailing), Sarah Fitz-Gerald (Squash), Alisa Camplin (Aerial Skiing), Katie Mactier, Cadel Evans and Leigh Howard (Cycling), Daniel Kowalski, Matt Welsh and Leisel Jones (Swimming) along with Lydia Lasila (Aerial Skiing).

Interest in the VIS model of elite athlete development has attracted athletes, coaches and administrators from around the world to study and participate in its programs.
The VIS moved into its facilities at Olympic Park in May 2004. The premises include office space, sport science and sports medicine facilities, a large gymnasium, a four-lane 25-metre swimming pool and recovery facilities, and a theatrette.

In 2009/10 the organisation's budget was just over $8 million. Approximately 74 (50 FTE) staff and consultants are employed in the organisation.

The Victorian Institute of Sport is located at Olympic Park, Olympic Boulevard, Melbourne – in Melbourne's famous sporting precinct.

THE VIS Charter

Vision
To be the leading provider of high performance sports programs for talented athletes, enabling them to achieve national and international success.

Mission
To provide an environment in which talented Victorian athletes have the opportunity to excel in sport and life

Values
We value:
Excellence - Collaboration - Integrity - Passion - Teamwork - Creativity - Respect - Commitment

Motto
"Success in Sport and Life"

Angela Donald - Gymnastics
Currently in Year 10 at Mount Waverly Secondary College. In 2010 Angela won a Bronze Medal on the beam at the Youth Olympics held in Singapore. The first ever Olympic Youth Medal in Gymnastics for Australia. She also won the Vic sport junior athlete of the Year

"I have been part of the VIS program for many years now, and have always felt their support and encouragement. They have provided me with physio and massage, which is very beneficial as I am usually managing injuries or sore muscles from intense training. The ACE program is always keen to help with school and life outside gymnastics, by visiting regularly and helping me with
any issues relating to schoolwork or my timetable. In general I feel blessed to have the VIS/ACE program behind me, supporting me in all my endeavours”. Angela Donald - Gymnast

Key Functions

The aim of the Victorian Institute of Sport is to assist the talented athletes of Victoria to achieve at the highest levels of sports performance, while also providing support with their personal skills, education, career management and employment opportunities. The basic philosophy of the VIS is embodied in its motto “Success in Sport and Life”. Athletes are encouraged to develop their life skills, education and career prospects along with their sport.

The specific objectives of the Institute are to:

1. Develop programs of support for the talented athletes in Victoria in the areas of:
   - Advanced coaching
   - Sport science and medicine services
   - Training and competition
   - Career and educational development

2. Encourage the identification of talented athletes

3. Build community recognition and support for the Institute

4. Coordinate the programs of support with those of the state and national sports associations

5. Encourage financial support from the corporate sector to supplement that provided by State and Commonwealth governments

VIS athletes receive advanced, specialised coaching from coaches of international standing who are kept at the cutting edge through a comprehensive coach development program. As well as contributing their own technical and tactical expertise they coordinate the delivery of other services to the athletes, as follows:

- Sport science (fitness assessment, technique analysis, psychological counselling)
- Sports medicine (injury and illness prevention, treatment and rehabilitation including massage, physiotherapy, podiatry and nutrition)
- Career and education (personal development, education, career management and employment opportunities)
- Training and competition (access to training facilities, travel, competition and accommodation support)

Athletes are encouraged to take responsibility for determining their own goals and development under the guidance of expert coaches. Programs are conducted in partnership with National and State Sporting Organisations. Several sports have established National Training Centre programs at the Institute.

Athletes eligible for assistance from the Institute are awarded scholarships based on the following criteria:
- Their national and/or international ranking, according to established standards
- Having high potential to achieve success at national and international level
- Having Australian Citizenship and normally being resident in the State of Victoria

Scholarships are awarded to athletes on an annual basis. There are two groups of scholarship holders:

1. Tier 1 sports programs at the VIS have tenure with the VIS of up to six years, and are coordinated by a full time coach or program manager. The current list of Tier 1 programs includes Aerial Skiing, Athletics, Cycling, Diving, Golf, Gymnastics, Hockey, Netball, Rowing, Sailing, Swimming, Triathlon and Water Polo

2. Individual Athlete scholarships are for athletes in sports which do not have Tier 1 programs and for elite athletes with a disability along with 2012 targeted athletes and identified talent transfer athletes.

The VIS also plays an important role in the broader community. It currently coordinates two community programs:

1. **Sports Persons in Schools Program**
   This is a joint initiative with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The program is part of the State Government’s commitment to encourage participation in sport and physical activity. This program is available at no cost to primary and secondary government schools across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

2. **VIS Athlete Speakers Program**
   This program provides schools, community groups, sporting groups and corporate organisations with access to VIS athletes and expert speakers for their events. Fees are determined on an individual basis.

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**Adele Sylvester - Cycling**
Currently in Year 12 at Loreto Mandeville Hall.
In 2010 Adele won a Bronze Medal at the UCI Junior Track World Championships in Italy whilst completing Year 11.
After claiming two gold at this year’s Nationals, Adele is off to the 2011 UCI Junior Track world championships to be held in Russia whilst also completing Year 12.
"I am a track cyclist and a full time student. I was accepted into the Victorian Institute of Sport a year ago and since then have worked closely with the ACE department. The VIS and the ACE department have put much effort into supporting me in not just the sport I participate in but in my education. This year I am in year 12 at Loreto Mandeville Hall Toorak and ACE has worked very closely with my year level co-ordinator to work around my timetable at school so I am able to train adequately and to organise how to handle my work when I miss school days for competitions. I will continue to rely on the ACE department for my further education entering university". Adele Sylvester - Cycling

**Structure and Governance**

The Board incorporates a range of experience in sport and business.

Ms Kate Palmer  
Chairman, Member of Finance Committee

Mr Ray Wilson  
Chairman of Finance Committee

Mr Ian Fullagar  
Member of Performance Committee

Prof Mark Hargreaves  
Chairman of Performance Committee & Member of Finance Committee

Mr Tim Lane  
Member of Performance Committee

Ms Kathy McLean  
Member of Performance Committee

Ms Julie Sarll  
Member of Finance Committee

Assoc Prof John Saunders  
Member of Finance Committee

The Chief Executive Officer is Anne Marie Harrison who was appointed in August 2006.

As an organisation the VIS is divided into four teams: Business Services, Communication & Marketing Services, Performance, and Performance Services. The Performance team is responsible for the evaluation and enhancement of athlete programs, ensures the continuing development of coaches and collaborates closely with state and national sporting organisations. The Performance Services team brings together sport science, sports medicine, athlete career and education services, and physical preparation.
Figure 1 VIS Organisational Structure

The VIS WEB Address is http://www.vis.org.au
SECTION TWO

THE ATHLETE CAREER AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Athlete Career and Education (ACE) Program is an essential ingredient in the VIS policies and programs. The ACE Program plays a vital role in helping VIS athletes face the challenge of balancing Success in Sport and Life. Due to the nature of sport, high demands are placed upon athletes to perform both on and off the field. Being an elite athlete not only requires an enormous amount of commitment but can also mean that retirement may come at 25 rather than 65. This emphasizes the importance of integrating learning, work and sports performance. Research has shown that if athletes balance their sporting lifestyle, they are more likely to achieve the sporting goals they set for themselves; this philosophy underpins the VIS ACE program.

The objective of the ACE Program is to contribute to the personal and professional development of eligible elite athletes with career, educational and professional development services. ACE works closely with schools, universities, and other partners, to support athletes in coordinating their training, study and career workloads.

The ACE Program tailors specific programs to reflect the individual needs and aspirations of athletes who utilize the program thus allowing for individual growth and development. ACE achieves this through a wide variety of services:

**Career Counselling and Guidance Career pathways and exploration**
- Exploring individual values, skills and strengths
- Investigating different career pathways
- Implementing action plans to achieve goals

**Lifestyle Management**
- Time management
- Minimising stress and the anxiety of competing demands
- Optimising sporting performance

**Educational Guidance**
- Secondary school subject selection and VET, TAFE, University and work pathways
- Exploration of the variety of courses available i.e. Short Course & Languages
- Letters of advocacy to educational providers e.g. alternative examination venues and assignment submission options
- Study skills development

**Employment Preparation**
- Resumes and cover letter development
- Job search skills and Interviewing skills
- Networking and communication skills
Transitional Support

- Assisting with deselection, retirement, injury and relocation
- A significant change of life circumstances
- Setting goals for life after sport
- ACE support is ongoing beyond the term of the scholarship period

Referrals

- Athletes can have access to referrals to other specialists i.e. psychologists, counsellors, and other experts in a variety of disciplines.

Matthew Haanappel - Swimming (AWD)
Currently in Year 11 at Croydon Secondary College.
He is an Australian Open Record holder in numerous swimming events for his disability. Matthew represented Australia at the International German Swimming Championships in 2010 whilst completing Year 10.

Online Services

ACEonline has been developed exclusively for Australia’s elite athletes and is an interactive website designed to help support athletes manage their career, education and personal development needs. Athletes can register by logging onto: https://aceonline.ausport.gov.au

The VIS ACE Program has also established a Blog Spot for up to date information for athletes to access VIS-ACE.BLOGSPOT.COM
**The Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) Network**

The VIS ACE program currently negotiates with eight educational institutes across Victoria to provide the EAFU Network. The EAFU network recognises Universities who support elite athletes through the development of new or existing policies that support elite student athletes. This relationship enables elite athletes to achieve sporting excellence whilst at the same time allowing them to succeed in their academic endeavours.

To see which Universities are athlete friendly - visit the [EAFU website](http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/career_and_education/resources/ace_brochure).

**Personal Development and Training**

The VIS ACE program has a number of partnerships with organisations to help enhance athlete’s professional and personal development. The following organisations offer a wide variety of workshops and courses;

- William Angliss Institute Hospitality Courses e.g. Responsible service of alcohol accreditation, Food and beverage courses, Tourism and Travel courses
- Open Universities Australia for Online Distance Education Courses
- Mt Eliza Executive Education, Melbourne Business School - Leadership, General management programs and Specialist programs
- Wizard Corporate Training - Information Technology and Professional and self development courses
- Barrett Consulting for Sales consulting and training
- Other VIS ACE workshops and courses - Airlie Police Leadership Program along with other tailor made opportunities i.e. Time management and Goal setting

**National Athlete Career and Education (NACE) Program**

The VIS ACE Program is part of an Australia wide National Program supporting approximately 3,500 athletes throughout the Sporting Academy and Institute Programs around Australia.

Link to NACE flyer:


**ACE Team Staffing**

The VIS ACE Team currently has four staff members who are available to assist athletes achieve their goals in both sport and life; these members are:

- Bernadette Sierakowski - ACE Coordinator (Full Time Mon - Friday)
- Sammy Włoszczowski (Three days per week)
• Marina Mateos (Full Time Mon - Friday)
• Dot Bussey - Pastoral Care – negotiated times

Athletes can meet the VIS ACE staff through individual sessions face to face at the VIS or at training or an alternative location, via phone, fax and Skype.

"Through the assistance of the VIS and the ACE program, I have been given the opportunity to pursue both my sporting and life dreams. Being a seventeen-year-old athlete, currently undergoing Year 12, the VIS staff in the ACE program have provided me with both support and guidance in future career options. This knowledge has allowed me to better manage my sporting and educational commitments allowing me to set and achieve higher goals and succeed in both sport and life". James Sly - Sailing

James Sly - Sailing
Currently in Year 12 at St. Bedes College.
James will be representing Australia at the European Championships in Switzerland later this year. He came 23rd in 29er Boat Class World Championships in 2008.

SECTION THREE
VIS SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT ATHLETES

As part of our total athlete cohort of approximately 400 athletes, many are students from both secondary and tertiary settings including TAFE and Apprenticeships. Each year the numbers may differ according to the individual athlete’s selection for their particular sport, their athlete scholarship status and their career and education choices.

Generally speaking our athletes range from the secondary school Years of 7 – 12. They attend varied educational contexts including Government Secondary Colleges along with Catholic and Independent schools.

Whilst we do have a few in the lower secondary levels most to the students are in Years 10, 11 and 12. At the lower levels of Secondary school we find that there can generally be greater flexibility with a student’s athlete’s educational programs. As the performances of an athlete improve and they progress through the varying levels of
state and national representation so does the training, travel and competition expectations increase. This can often occur in the peak demand schooling years of the Victorian Certificate of Education, Years 11 and 12.

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<tr>
<th>Secondary School Year Level</th>
<th>Number of Athletes</th>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
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Graphs portrays secondary student athlete by year level as at May 2011.

We aim to work closely with each athlete and collaboratively with each school setting to ensure that a supportive structure is in place that achieves optimal performance with both the athlete’s academic progress and their sporting endeavours.

See more details in Appendix No 5.1

**VIS STUDENT ATHLETE LIST**

**Darcy Taylor - Diving**
Currently in Year 11 at Trinity Grammar School.

In 2010 won a Silver Medal in the Australian Open Diving Championships (3m synchro) and at the Aust Junior National Championships (Junior A (16-18) Won (1 m), Won (3m synchro), Bronze (3m) & Bronze (Platform).
SECTION FOUR
SERVICES AND PROGRAMS OFFERED TO SCHOOL STUDENT ATHLETES

What programs we currently provide to gifted and talented student athletes:

A number of supports, processes and strategies are enacted in supporting our Secondary school athletes, these include:

- Individual meetings with athletes to explore personal needs and career plans along with sporting lifestyle management
- Links with coaches and other sporting service providers and stakeholders
- Meetings with parents/carers
- Introductory letters of support to schools and meetings with school representatives
- Career and Education resources made available – Texts, Brochures, Tools
- Suite of personal development sessions available including Time management, Career planning, Goal setting, Academic study skills and Leadership Programs
- Subject selection, VTAC applications and University entrance support
- Exam invigilation for travelling athletes
- The provision of Online Resources – ACE Online and the VIS ACE BlogSpot
- Access to career planning aids and networks
- Pastoral care support related to welfare and personal issues

Partnership with Schools:

In order to support athlete’s continuing education a number of Secondary School Partnerships have been established with the VIS ACE Program to support athletes
with their schooling. Due to the technical nature of the sport and the high number of training hours involved with the Women's Gymnastics Program in particular, we have established a Memorandum of Understanding with schools near the High Performance Gymnastics Centres in Prahran and Mt Waverley.

These schools are extremely supportive of our Gymnastics athletes and provide dedicated staff to monitor and support gymnast wellbeing and academic progress. This encompasses assisted entry, flexible class times, ongoing monitoring and effective communication channels between the schools and the VIS ACE Program. Our partnership schools include; Melbourne Girls College, Lauriston Girls College and Mt Waverly Secondary College.

See more details in Appendix No 5.2
SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP DOCUMENT - MELBOURNE GIRLS COLLEGE –
Working in Partnership with the VIS ACE Program to Achieve Success in Sport and Life

We have also partnered formally with Maribyrnong College Sports Academy (MCSA), Victoria’s first Sports School as they have developed and built their facilities and educational programs to support their developmental student athlete cohort. The VIS ACE Program has been working very closely with Victoria’s first specialist sport academy to support talented school age athletes. The MCSA strives to assist students to balance their demanding training and competition schedules with their academic studies in a supportive athlete friendly environment. State of the art facilities have now been built together with the provision of high performance coaching and the provision of varied disciplines i.e. strength and conditioning, psychology, physiotherapy and performance analysts. The school has formalised strategic partnerships with Victoria University, the Western Bulldogs and the VIS to provide industry expertise and support it with its endeavours.

Our experiences and issues surrounding these programs (including responding to negative attitudes towards giftedness):

Once an athlete comes onto VIS Scholarship/Training Agreement a letter of support is sent to the Principal of the respective school that the athlete is attending. This notification is introductory in nature and provides an overview of the VIS ACE Program services via a Brochure. As our athletes strive to manage their educational pursuits with their sporting commitments, sometimes follow up meetings are helpful; these meetings with school personnel are often very supportive and we work in collaboration to support the student athlete. Generally speaking, excellent outcomes are achieved at these meetings with advanced planning and good communication from all parties.

Sometimes we may incur negative attitudes towards a student athlete - a summary of the main issues include:

**Time:** School-aged athletes find themselves time poor, combining educational programs with sporting commitments during the school week which often exceed 15 to 30 hours per week. Normally, most athletic training sessions are completed either before and/or after the school day. On some occasions some specific sessions may be held during school time. On weekends there is often further involvement with
travel and competition. Should an athlete incur an injury attendance at specialist medical appointments maybe required to ensure an athlete returns to full health.

Sometimes school communities are not aware of the time commitment that student athletes are involved in with their sport.

**Physical and Mental Demands:** Mastery of the intense physical and technical elements of elite sport requires great strength and conditioning along with intellectual and psychological skill development. Some sports i.e. Gymnastics and Diving require great precision to execute the desired routines requiring heightened perceptual and fine motor skills, mistakes could mean injury. This can be very tiring for student athletes.

Sometimes school communities are not aware of the physical and mental demands that student athletes have with their sport.

**Travel/Competition:** The requirements of interstate and overseas competition frequently requires extended absences from school and interruption to face-to-face contact with teachers and learning unless schools have implemented flexible and alternate options to support young athletes competing at elite levels.

Sometimes school communities are not aware of the travel/competition demands that student athletes have with their sport.

**School Personnel:** All school personnel including class room teachers, support staff, year level coordinators and leaders play a vital role in assisting young athletes to remain engaged in their learning.

Sometimes school personnel are not aware of student athletes within their communities.

**Completing VCE:** Remaining at school to complete VCE is usually the first choice for most of our young school-aged athletes. The Secondary school context provides interactions outside of the sport environment and thus further develops interpersonal and life skills required for students to productively function in the wider community.

Sometimes school communities can potentially limit educational possibilities and long term career goals of student athletes.

**Dual Life Goals:** Many young athletes acknowledge the desire to succeed in their education is as important to them as succeeding in their sport.

Sometimes school communities are not aware that student athletes wish to achieve high academic results as well as great success in sport.

**Broader View of Education:** Student athletes involved in elite sport show strong commitment and dedication. There are many sporting benefits afforded along with the opportunity to gain a broader education, culturally and socially which are integral to personal growth.

Sometimes school communities do not fully recognise the broader learning opportunities inherent with elite sporting performance.
**Flexible School Curriculum:** Student athletes benefit greatly where the school curriculum can be slightly modified to suit individual needs and a variety of delivery modes expanded to include internet access and remote access to information.

Sometimes school communities are inflexible with their curriculum and methods of curriculum content delivery to support elite student athletes.

**School Structures/Policy Development:** School age athletes thrive within school communities that have flexible structures and policies in place that supports elite performance. Recognition and celebration of athlete students sporting, academic and personal achievements can greatly affirm the individual along with affording them a significant boost to their self esteem for all the hard work that they have completed. Highlighting the athlete achievements within the community also heightens the respective sport awareness and school success.

Sometimes school communities fail to have supportive structures and policies in place to support elite student athletes. Sometimes athletes’ sporting achievements lay unrecognised.

**The experience of students participating in these programs:**

*Alice Cheung – Aerial Skiing*
Currently in Year 12 at Keilor Downs Secondary College. Alice was selected as part of the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia’s development squad for aerial skiing. She spent the summer months in Salt Lake City, Utah USA learning how to ski. A typical day consisted of skiing, weight and cardio training sessions with the occasional free time to get started on schoolwork.

*Anabelle Smith – Diver*

VIS and the ACE program allowed me to excel in and balance both my sporting life and my schooling life. The ACE staff member committed to negotiating personally with my school in order to allow me to partake in a reduced schooling program that would still see me reach my educational potential, but most importantly allowing me to put full effort into my training and competition programs. Without the support of the VIS and the ACE program I would not have achieved all I have in my diving, as they helped me put all the effective structures and strategies in place. Anabelle Smith – Diver
I am in Year 12 and it was very important to know I had someone I could discuss my future career choices with outside of school. I was then able to choose my subjects needed at school to help make those very important decisions. I was also made aware of different options available for elite athletes in regard to doing my year 12. Later in the year I will be relying on the ACE program for advice on which university would be best for the course I have decided on. As a dedicated athlete my time is stretched thinly between my school work and training so having the ACE program was really beneficial in helping me make the right decisions. Brooke Dunleavy – Ski Cross

As a member of the 2012 and Beyond Squad at the Victorian Institute of Sport, I have been given access to a number of different facilities that I have found beneficial to my growth within my sport but also my life. With the help of the VIS, I have managed to work through a practical method of attaining my VCE Certificate by staying in school as well as training and attending competitions around the country as well as the world. As in many sports there is an element of difficulty that every athlete must surpass to achieve their eventual ability and potential. I personally have found some things difficult to manage by myself in the past year and have found the support and willingness of the staff at the VIS to have made it easier for me.
Alethea Sedgman - Shooting

The ACE Program has helped me get through tough times with dealing with school and training and just life in general. It has helped me work out how to used my time wisely and to help me when I need it most. I have been definitely getting better with my school and handling my training as well.
Jaymee Sanders – Aerial Skiing

The VCASS (Victorian College of the Arts) timetable has helped me a lot with my academic studies and allowed me to fulfil my Diving schedule as well. VCASS also helps by study classes 3 times a week to keep up with homework. I feel more accepted by other students as they have similar schedules and pressures as me. There is access to trains and trams close by for being on time for my classes and diving. I receive a high level of education at VCASS and a high level at VIS, which is a plus.
Joshua Kehagis – Diving.
I am currently in year 12 and am studying VCE through the Distance Education Centre of Victoria. Studying this way allows me to study at home, interstate and overseas. I find that with our heavy training schedule and constant trips for water polo it works really well. Amber Grahame – Water Polo

Our views about how the concepts of ‘giftedness’ and ‘talent’ should be defined in relation to athletic performance:

For the purposes of this Report we are referring to Gifted and Talented students who portray elite performance in the sporting domain. The parameters of elite sporting performance would be further defined as student athletes on VIS Scholarship and Training Agreements along with those that are concurrently on an Australian Institute of Sport Scholarship and those nominated by their respective National Sporting Organisation as in an Australian Team and an Australian Shadow Squad.

Mechanisms to improve the capacity of teachers and school communities to identify and adequately respond to gifted and talented student athletes:

We believe it is very important to assist school-aged athletes to succeed with their academic pursuits alongside their sporting endeavours. Searching for creative solutions to assist these students in their learning, will minimise the stress in their lives. The notion we wish to foster is not about student athletes doing less academic work but more so it is about making adjustments to their learning program so that these young people are less vulnerable to the risk of disengaging from their learning or feeling overloaded and overwhelmed by their commitments thus affecting both their education and sport.

There are a number of strategies that secondary schools can undertake that can greatly assist school-aged athletes by closely monitoring their student’s progress and implementing support structures which address:
• assisting with managing and planning for short and long term absences from school due to training, travel and competition

• reviewing possible flexibility with timetabling to maximise school participation

• providing alternative forms of content delivery i.e. via email/internet/DVD

• where possible making some adjustments to the homework schedule/timelines

• recognising when clashes with school sports may occur due to club and state representation

• where possible modifying the curriculum, paring down to essential core element/concepts

• where possible providing additional tutoring, private study time and one-to-one assistance particularly if an athlete has missed class time

• negotiating a tailored and balanced VCE study load with the option of completing the VCE over two, three or more years as required

• considering a variety of study and course combinations which may include distance education, or VET on-line training combined with school based learning

• acknowledgment of the student athlete’s preferred learning style

• flexibility on occasions for non attendance (should the student athlete and parents agree) to certain extra curricula activities i.e. school swimming/athletics meets, school camps, excursion and incursions and other school events i.e. fetes.

• promoting an athlete friendly environment which acknowledges that for most student athletes the desire to achieve in their education is as significant an element to them as succeeding in their sport

• recognising and celebrating the athlete students sporting, academic and personal achievements

• providing a supportive mentor or advocate who consults with the student, parents, coaches, Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) / Athletes Career & Education (ACE) Adviser.

• allocating a senior member of staff to oversee decisions made on behalf of the young athletes education and sport development. This assigned adult mentor or advocate within the school environment would greatly enhance the young athlete’s ability to manage time, remain focused on their learning and feel connected to their school

• career and welfare support which is holistic in its approach and sensitive to the transition phases a young athlete may experience due to non-selection, injury or movement within the sport ranks
• contact with the school career counsellor and exposure to career and education breadth of pathways available both within the sporting industry and other career fields.

See more details in Appendix No 5.3 ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN LIFE, LEARNING and SPORT - Eight School Age Athletes Share Their Journey

Any broader implications for school communities arising from the education of gifted and talented student athletes;

We have articulated the following Recommendations in response to this area;

Recommendation Number 1. Gifted and Talented Student Contact Person within the School setting:

It would be of great assistance if each school could have a point of contact for gifted and talented students (including elite athletes). Whilst we acknowledge the heavy demands of everyday life in the school setting - the nominated staff member would have the responsibility for monitoring the overall educational and sporting obligations required of the young athlete. The staff member would need to have some seniority i.e. a Year Level Coordinator, the Assistant Principal or a designated leading teacher. The staff member would primarily make decisions on behalf of the student athlete’s personal and educational wellbeing and has the role to communicate to all other staff members. The specific purpose of this role would be to minimize undue stress which may impair the student athletes overall performance.

The provision of a gifted and talented officer/nominee/representative in each school is currently being successfully completed within the National University context. The Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) Program supports Australia’s elite athletes to achieve academic excellence while pursuing a sporting career. There are over 35 Universities currently in the network. Each of the Universities has a contact person to support elite athletes within their university. The EAFU representative provides, advice and guidance on academic planning, supports the negotiation of flexibility to meet academic requirements, provides advocacy, supports in negotiating cross institutional study or credit transfer and links with the local Athlete Career and Education Advisers within the State Institutes/Academies of Sport.

See more details in Appendix No 5.4 ELITE ATHLETE FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY NEWORK

It is our belief that over time the EAFU model has afforded many of Australia and Victoria’s best athletes the opportunity to successfully combine their educational and sporting pursuits without having one work to the detriment of the other. The successful adoption of this model into the secondary school system of supporting the educational growth of these talented individuals at a younger age would prove equally beneficial to the athlete’s wellbeing, personal development, educational advancement and sporting development.
Recommendation Number 2. Gifted and Talented students as a nominated category within the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre – The Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) Application Process.

Presently there are a range of considerations for student disadvantage in the final years of high school and entry into University/TAFE education i.e. Mature Age, Non English Speaking, Indigenous Australian, Difficult Circumstances, Disadvantaged Financial Background, Applicants from rural or isolated areas, Under Represented schools, Women or Men in under represented disciplines, disability or medical condition together with coming from a Refugee background.

We would ask the Parliamentary Committee to consider the notion that Gifted and Talented students not be disadvantaged by the dedicated application of their gifts and talents. Within the Sporting domain representation at the National Level in their Sport during Years 11 and 12 could be a nominated area for special consideration; this would need ratification by the National Sporting Organisation.

It is our experience over the 21 years at the VIS that we have had some very high performing academic students. These athletes have mastered excellent ENTER/ATAR scores and who may not chose to seek special consideration should such a category be made available.

Recommendation Number 3. Enhanced opportunities to combine elite sports training and education

There are currently a number of high performance sports training centres around the state i.e. Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre, the State Netball and Hockey Centre, High Performance Gymnastics settings along with Track and Field and Cycling facilities often in close proximity to a government secondary school. The VIS seeks special consideration for the Committee to deem these athletes to be allocated spaces at the nearest secondary college – as some athletes may not live in the local catchment area. This would greatly minimise travelling time for the student athletes and maximise time at school with educational opportunities.

Recommendation Number 4. Gifted and Talented Students – Sitting VCE Exams whilst Overseas

For the Committee to Review the Policies and procedures for those Gifted and Talented students who are travelling during their VCE Exams, to ensure protocols are reasonable, adequate and equitable.
"The VIS has provided me with a fantastic group of support staff personnel to help with all facets of my sport and life. Their medical and physio team manage any injuries or muscle fatigue, their dieticians advise me on pre and post game/training meals as well as an everyday diet. The VIS strength and conditioning coaches have provided me with the appropriate training to help me improve my game. They have also given me an understanding of what training is required in order to become and elite athlete in my sport. And the ACE team have greatly helped me to research possible career options along with providing support for my health and wellbeing". Sarah Main - Netball
SUMMARY

The Victorian Institute of Sport wishes to thank the Victorian Parliament’s Education and Training Committee’s Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students for the opportunity to share some of the blessings and challenges of working with this unique cohort of gifted and talented secondary school students.

The VIS sees itself intrinsically bound by our Vision, to be the leading provider of high performance sports programs for talented athletes, enabling them to achieve national and international success and our Mission, to provide an environment in which talented Victorian athletes have the opportunity to excel in sport and life.

Some 15% of our total athlete cohort are secondary school age students at varying levels of education and sporting prowess. It takes great natural talent, commitment, passion, self-determination, planning, sporting lifestyle management, competitive toughness, perseverance and self belief for an athlete to succeed on the national and international levels.

Supporting our exceptionally gifted and talented athletes is a collaborative endeavour involving a variety of stakeholders including the athlete and their families, the sport itself at the local, regional, state and national levels; educational settings and authorities, employers, the media along with the broader community.

In this submission, a range of mechanisms to improve the capacity of teachers and school communities to identify and adequately respond to gifted and talented student athletes have been articulated from the point of view of the student athlete experience. In particular the VIS has nominated four key recommendations that would greatly assist the educational outcomes and opportunities for our gifted and talented athletes, namely; the nomination of “a point of contact” in each secondary school setting; the exploration of the gifted and talented students becoming a nominated category within the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre – The Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) Application Process; enhanced opportunities for athletes access to government secondary schools near their high performance training centers and the review of the policies and procedures for gifted and talented students sitting exams whilst overseas training and competing.

Schools in particular can provide the agency to assist in the support of allowing the freedom for growth to the maximum potential of academic development of gifted and talented students. They can greatly assist in the formation of young men and women to become wonderful ambassadors, leaders and solid citizens.

From today’s school age athletes will become tomorrow’s World Champions and Olympians.
### Appendix 5.1 VIS STUDENT ATHLETE LIST

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Appendix 5.2

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP DOCUMENT

MELBOURNE GIRLS COLLEGE

Working in Partnership with the VIS ACE Program to Achieve Success in Sport and Life
Victorian Institute of Sport and the Women’s Gymnastics Athlete Career and Education Program

February 2011

Working in Partnership to achieve Success in Sport and Life - Melbourne Girls College
Melbourne Girls College Elite Gymnasts Program

Context and Background

During the year 2000 the Gymnastics High Performance Centre moved to Prahran and the educational options for the Victorian Institute of Sport Women’s Gymnastics Program were explored. The aim was to create a relationship with two schools in the vicinity, one public and one independent, who would assist the athletes in both their academic endeavours and elite sport.

Schools were surveyed on their ability to accommodate the following:

- Reduced contact hours in class. Generally 10.30am – 2.30pm
- Allow gymnasts to selectively reduce the curriculum to core areas, in consultation with teachers and parents.
- Allow Gymnasts to be exempt from school sport.
- Provide missed information and readings for athletes when they are away travelling/competing from classes.
- Individual support from teachers regarding the modified programs.
- Links with school teachers/coordinators and leaders.

After careful consideration, negotiation and agreement from all parties, Lauriston Girls School, Melbourne Girls College and Stonnington Primary were selected to provide a modified program for the gymnasts.

The Athlete Career and Education Program (ACE)

The VIS motto is Success in Sport and Life and as such the ACE program was established in 1990. It is an essential ingredient in all our programs and it aims to integrate a balance in sport and life by adopting a holistic approach. The ACE program has been strongly embraced by VIS athletes and coaches.

The objective of the ACE Program is to contribute to the personal development and performance of Australia’s elite athletes by providing career and educational services. The program assists athletes with personal development training, career planning, business referrals, educational guidance and transition services. Career and education advisers are available for individual sessions.

The overall welfare of gymnasts is a high priority for the VIS and the ACE Program. ACE services are available to VIS gymnasts as a part of their Scholarship Contract. The ACE Program recognises the elite pathway for a gymnast and may provide educational advice to developing non VIS VWHPC athletes on a case by case basis.
**Agreement between Melbourne Girls College, the VIS and VWHPC**

Melbourne Girls’ College have agreed to accept out of zone enrolments from gymnastic athletes who are recipients of a Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) Scholarship. Applications from gymnastics athletes from the Victorian Women’s High Performance Centre (VWHPC) who are on a full training program at the High Performance Centre in Prahran will be considered on a case by case basis. All applications for enrolment for year 7 (for scholarship holders and non-scholarship holders) must follow the DEECD guidelines and adhere to the timelines. Applications for enrolment for years 8 to 12 must follow the procedures and timelines stated on the MGC website each year and are subject to the same processes as mentioned above. VWHPC and the VIS are also required to inform Melbourne Girls’ College as soon as possible of the intention of their gymnasts to apply for a position at MGC for the following year.

Melbourne Girls’ College expects all students to attend camps at each year level including the City Experience in Year 9.

**Purpose of this document**

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the roles of the parties supporting the program. It is documented in a spirit of collegial support with the overall aim of assisting the student athlete to achieve success in their sport and life.

Often athletes at school find that they have to make some special arrangements to assist them in balancing school and their sport. These arrangements may include special consideration for things, for example:

- Being absent from class because of training or competition
- Negotiating study periods within class time
- Tutorial assistance to help catch up on work
- Sitting examinations at different times or places

**The role of the Melbourne Girls College VIS Coordinator – Linda Brown**

The role of the School/VIS/VWHPC Co-ordinator is to coordinate the elite athlete program at the school. This program aims to provide support to VIS/VWHPC athletes to enable them to better negotiate the balance between study and sport and the coordinator position is therefore a vital contact point for the VWHPC and VIS Scholarship athletes and their parents.

You can expect the coordinator to:

- Address all staff sometime before the beginning of each academic year and outline expectations for athletes. Outlining to the staff the pressures these students are under and how staff can assist them in their chosen endeavours.
• Ensure school staff are aware of the key issues including late arrival and early departure, the need to document homework, and the importance of contacting the coordinator with any concerns regarding academic or social issues.
• Meet with VIS and the Gymnastics program staff at least bi-annually to discuss concerns and issues that may arise for the program and to put together plans for going forward.
• Within the first couple of weeks of the academic year, meet with all the athletes to become familiar with who they are and advise them on how they can contact you.
• Ensure the athletes are aware of their responsibilities in communicating with their teachers.
• View the academic timetables of the gymnasts and ensure core subjects are ‘reasonably’ covered.
• Encourage athletes to access the library for private study during spare time on campus.
• Be available to take enquiries from parents of athletes.
• Gain a holistic view of the student athlete and contribute to their learning via the facilitation of communication with relevant staff.

The role of the Melbourne Girls College Classroom Teachers

Class teachers are the most likely to be affected by an athlete’s involvement in elite sport. This may be because they are arriving late or leaving early, or because time taken away from school for camps and competition means that athletes are out of their class for prolonged periods of time. For this reason athletes need to be working diligently to develop a positive relationship with their teachers, by respecting the assistance and support offered by teachers and by keeping their teachers informed of upcoming camps and competitions that may lead to extended periods away from school.

To minimise the disruption to their education and to the class in general, athletes can expect their class teacher to:

• Ensure athletes are arriving and leaving the class at the correct time and liaise with the School Coordinator if any issues arise.
• When athletes arrive late to class, try to inform them of work that has been missed and what needs to be addressed in private study time.
• Ensure that athletes write their homework in their diary before leaving the classroom.
• Liaise with school coordinator, parents and or VIS Athlete Career and Education Advisor should any problems arise.

The role of the VIS Gymnastics Program Manager - Tracey Penaluna

The VIS/VWHPC Gymnastics Program Manager is specifically responsible for all athletes in the Women’s Artistic Gymnastics (WAG) program. It is the responsibility of the VIS/VWHPC Gymnastics Program Manager to:
• Coordinate with the VIS ACE Advisor Bi Annual meetings with the Schools
• Provide the MGC VIS/VWHPC Coordinator with a competition calendar of events at the beginning of each year
• Provide the School VIS/ VWHPC Coordinator with news about the athletes competition results
• Inform the school & VIS of retirements, injuries, major events that may affect the athlete, VIS and the School
• Plan the bus schedule and distribute it to athletes, coaches and school and liaise with the school coordinator about departure and arrival times of the athletes
• Manage and address concerns raised by the bus driver and where appropriate keep the school coordinator informed
• Report any difficulties with the athletes to the School Coordinator and VIS as soon as possible
• Ensure athletes leave training on time to minimise time out of class for the athletes
• Meet with the VIS ACE Gymnastics Program Coordinator regularly regarding the overall welfare of the athletes

The role of the VIS Athlete Career & Education Gymnastics Program Adviser – Sam Włoszczowski

The ACE program provides support and counselling to athletes with respect to their career, education, employment, life balance, life change and personal development and well being. One of the aims for the ACE Program is to assist athletes to achieve both their career and sporting goals, while maintaining personal well-being. The ACE program aims to achieve this by:

• Assisting athletes / parents with the negotiation process where necessary and appropriate.
• Career counselling athletes and their parents on areas such as educational or career path options
• Assisting athletes to make informed career related decisions and develop plans to achieve life goals i.e. subject selection, VCE planning and university entry
• Provide an overview of VIS ACE workshop series
• Assisting athletes / parents with medium to short-term planning e.g. Study Skills – how to use diary efficiently
  Time Management – How to use private study time wisely so that they can keep up with work commitments, being proactive before issues arise and as a result have more free time at home

It is the responsibility of the VIS ACE Gymnastics Program Adviser to:

• Meet regularly with the Gymnastics Program Manager regarding the overall academic progress of the athletes
• Meet athletes individually at the beginning of each scholarship period
• Liaise between Athletes, Parents, Schools, VIS and the Gymnastics Program regarding education and career issues
• Attend training, competition and camps where appropriate and offer continued support
• Follow up with athletes regularly during the scholarship period regarding education and career issues
• Meet with the Program Manager and the School Gymnastics Coordinator at least bi-annually

The role of the VIS Pastoral Carer – Dot Bussey

The role of the VIS Pastoral Carer is to offer counselling and follow up in such areas as: Transition, relationship conflicts, de-selection, injury, bereavement, relocation and supporting athletes during major life events. The current Pastoral Carer Dot Bussey has worked with the Gymnastics Squad for ten years.

The role of VIS/VWHPC Parents

As primary carers parents have the ultimate responsibility for your child. Program partners are available to provide information and support to enable clarity of decision making. It is the parent’s role and responsibility to assist your daughter to manage their relationships with: the school and its staff, the VWHPC Gymnastics Program and the VIS. You can do this by:

• Ensuring your daughter has entered homework and make-up study in their diary. And use the diary as a means of communicating with the teacher.
• Contacting the school coordinator with any concerns regarding schooling issues
• Ensuring the school knows program schedules and absences at least two weeks prior to departure (when known)
• Ensure the school is aware of athletes return date, and follow-up whether school information, class work has changed
• Facilitate and support your daughter in catching up on missed school work
• Informing VIS Gymnastics Program Manager of any difficulties you daughter is experiencing at school
• Provide the school with information on competition results etc to enable the coordinator to include details in articles or school newsletters
• Contact the VIS ACE Gymnastic Program Advisor if any concerns arise

The role of the VIS Athlete

It is the athlete’s role to make sure that they develop a positive relationship with the school and their classroom teachers to ensure all obligations regarding schoolwork are being met. This is particularly important in the case of consideration for alternative study arrangements, and where the athlete may need to ask for “special consideration”. It is important for the athlete to communicate regularly with their
teachers regarding their progress and any concerns. If for some reason the athlete is unable to fulfil the required obligation then it is important to make sure that they give the school plenty of notice and consult accordingly.

Some things athletes can do to help themselves and show the school that they appreciate being supported:

- Move promptly to and from the bus to minimise time lost from class. On arrival at class approach the teacher and ask if there is any work that they need to catch up on.
- Ensure all required tasks are written in the diary.
- Use any spare periods and library time wisely
- Maintain contact with school coordinator with concerns
- Inform the school coordinator of competitions in which they are involved, dates they will be away from school, and the results of the competitions.
- Attend any ‘extra lessons’ with teachers organised to support them in catching up missed work
- If possible, participate and contribute to the school’s broader curriculum and activities
- Let teachers know if you are having trouble
- Athletes must meet the education requirement of their VIS Scholarship agreement and “work towards attainment of your full potential in your sport, studies and or occupation”
- Contact VIS ACE Gymnastics Program Adviser if any changes occur or concerns arise

Athletes and families need to view the special arrangements with the school as a privilege and support the structure that is supporting them. This means if an athlete has been successful in gaining some sort of special consideration because of their status as an athlete, and in order to keep the support they have been offered, it is important that athletes show appreciation of the support. The best way to do this is to be aware of their roles and responsibilities.

**The role of Melbourne Girl’s College, the VWHPC and the VIS**

To avoid disruption to school and gymnastic timetables, all parties will be consulted regarding any proposed changes before implementation occurs. It is the responsibility of all parties that reasonable time for consultation is given when changes are proposed. Any prospective changes will be considered on their merits by all parties with the general rule being through a consensus approach.

We are committed to facilitate the smooth communication between all parties across all levels and to support the Gymnastics athletes to achieve the VIS Motto of *success in sport and in life.*
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Thanks to the following partners in supporting the
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Appendix 5.3

ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN LIFE, LEARNING and SPORT
Eight School Age Athletes Share Their Journey
Achieving Success In Life, Learning & Sport

Eight School Aged Athletes Share Their Journey
This publication was made possible through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Industry Placement Program initiative for 2008. This Industry placement provided an opportunity to work at the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) with the Athletes Career and Education (ACE) Advisers assisting them in their work with school-aged athletes holding VIS scholarships. The purpose of this resource is to inform the reader of the range of support strategies implemented by Victorian schools and the VIS/ACE program which assist school-aged athletes in their efforts to succeed in life, learning and sport.

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of this resource is to gain some insight into the challenges confronting young school-aged athletes as they seek to balance their educational needs with their sporting commitments. Over a period of seven weeks, eight young athletes attending either government, catholic or independent schools and currently holding Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) scholarships were interviewed with the intention of sharing their experiences and journey as they have attempted to balance their learning with training and competition commitments. This resource outlines the strategies and support provided by each athlete's school in collaboration with the VIS and the Athlete Career and Education Program (ACE).

Summary of considerations:

- School-aged athletes find themselves time poor, combining educational programs with sporting commitments during the school week which often exceed 15 to 30 hours per week
- The requirements of interstate and overseas competition frequently requires extended absence from school and interruption to face-to-face contact with teachers and learning unless schools have implemented flexible and alternate options to support young athletes competing at elite levels
- Many young athletes acknowledge the desire to succeed in their education is as important to them as succeeding in their sport
- Responsibility for monitoring the educational and sporting obligations required of the young athlete should be overseen by a senior member of staff. The specific purpose of this role would be to minimize undue stress which may impair the student athlete's overall performance. A Year Level Coordinator, the Assistant Principal or a designated leading teacher would primarily make decisions on behalf of the student athlete's personal and educational wellbeing
- Teachers play a vital role in assisting young athletes to remain engaged in their learning and through flexible/alternate curriculum options can assist the young athlete to further balance their learning needs with their sport commitments
- Remaining at school is usually the first choice for young school-aged athletes since school provides new experiences and interactions outside of the sport environment and further develops interpersonal and life skills required to function productively in the wider community
- A holistic approach is essential in Career and Educational counselling of young school aged athletes combined with exposure to the breadth of pathways available both within the sporting industry and other career fields
- An assigned adult mentor or advocate within the school environment greatly enhances the young athletes ability to manage time, remain focused on their learning and feel connected to their school
- Family, school friends, sport clubs and coaches all play significant roles in the physical, educational and emotional wellbeing of young school aged athletes through the support they provide

Each section of this resource outlines the assistance offered to VIS scholarship holders by the Athletes Career & Education services to ensure VIS school-aged athletes are receiving excellent personal development support, educational advice and career counselling which prepares them for the many cycles of transition they will experience at different stages.

This publication celebrates the achievements of eight young athletes currently attending public, catholic and independent Victorian schools. To capture the spirit of these remarkable young people I have intentionally used their voice to explain the challenges they have grappled with whilst pursuing their education and continuing to perform at elite levels in their sport. The concluding section of this publication presents ideas on what schools can do to further prepare and support young school-aged athletes in their efforts to succeed in life, learning and sport.

Josephine Butera
Careers Adviser Maribyrnong College
Short Term Industry Placement Recipient
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
The Role of the VIS & ACE

The Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS)

‘Success in sport and life’ is the motto of the VIS. Many VIS scholarship holders are of school age and receive support from the VIS to achieve success in their sporting and educational goals.

The VIS seeks:

- to provide an environment in which talented Victorian athletes have the opportunity to achieve at their highest level in sport and life
- to be the leading provider of high performance sports programs for talented athletes, enabling them to achieve national and international success

The VIS Values Statement:

We are committed to the pursuit of excellence in sport and life
We foster team work and mutually beneficial partnerships
We encourage innovation and continuous learning
We are supportive and caring
We maintain personal integrity and fairness
Our strong work ethic is driven by enthusiasm and passion

National Athletes Career & Education Program (ACE)

The National Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program is jointly funded by federal and state governments. It is managed through the Australian Sports Commission. The objective of the ACE program is to provide nationally consistent services that will assist elite athletes to undertake educational, vocational and personal development opportunities while pursuing and achieving excellence in sport.

The National ACE program promotes an integrated approach to:

- self exploration
- informed decision making
- short and long term planning

(VIS)/Athletes Career & Education (ACE) Program

The VIS/ACE program aims to integrate a balance in sport and life by adopting a holistic approach. The objective of the VIS/ACE program is to contribute to the personal development and performance of elite adult and school-aged athletes by providing:

- **Career Counselling and planning** to assist athletes to identify career pathways and implement plans.
- **Educational guidance and information** on school and university education, TAFE courses, vocational training programs, course selection and alternative study pathways.
- **Personal Development training courses** to help athletes develop skills in public speaking and media presentation, interviews, resume development, career planning and time management.
- **Employment preparation** to help athletes develop skills to become ‘job ready’.
- **Access to career referral networks** in the business community to identify potential career interests, sources of employment, work experience and sponsored courses provided by a wide range of organisations.
- **Ongoing transitional support** to guide athletes through all transition phases including non-selection, retirement, injury, rehabilitation, move from junior to senior teams and relocation.
- **Online services** – ACEOnline is an interactive career management tool for athletes. It compliments the existing face-to-face service delivery provided by the ACE program through the provision of online activities.
- **Pastoral care, counselling and chaplaincy services** as required by the elite athlete seeking support.
DYLAN ALCOTT
School: Brighton Grammar
Current Year Level: VCE Year 12
Age: 17

Dylan’s Journey

At what age did you become involved in your sport?
I started playing wheelchair basketball when I was 14 or 15 years old. Originally I played wheelchair tennis. I was approached by the basketball fraternity and started playing more basketball, and from there I just moved along the ranks and now I’m playing for the Australian Wheelchair basketball team. I was born with a tumour on my spine so I’ve been in a wheelchair all my life. Some people probably see this as bad, but personally I love my life and being in a wheelchair has opened up a lot of opportunities for me.

What inspired you to become involved in Wheelchair Basketball competitions?
As a child I loved watching tennis and I loved watching Pat Rafter play tennis and that’s what first got me interested in playing wheelchair sports. My older brother played basketball and I would go and shoot hoops with him and from there I just grew to love basketball.

Who & what has motivated you and kept you involved in your sport?
Obviously my parents and older brother have always been there and supported me in my efforts. My parents have been a great taxi service driving me to Dandenong and Kew and everywhere else I train. The support I’ve received from Wheelchair Sports Victoria has been awesome! They got me into the sport and helped with funding and getting players from Victoria together to compete. Brighton Grammar has provided great support, I’ve missed a lot of school because of all the sport I play so in terms of just catching up with work they’ve given me time and alternate dates to submit work. Also the VIS has been great with funding and use of the gym and other facilities. They’ve helped me and help all athletes out which is a great backup. I guess the biggest motivating factor right now is to be selected for the Olympic Games and to win a gold medal would be mind blowing. You really have to have a love for what you want to do and what you want to achieve not only in sport but in all areas of your life.

How difficult or different is it to play wheelchair basketball as opposed to able bodied basketball?
The difference is really in terms of cross training. When you play able bodied basketball you run around with your feet, shoot with your arms (etc). With wheelchair basketball everything is done with your upper body so the strain on your body is a lot tougher because you don’t get the chance to cross-train, you have to be more coordinated because everything has to do with your arms and hands. Most people would really be surprised just how incredibly fast wheelchair basketball is there are big spills and you fall out of your chair a lot. The rules are all the same so there are travel rules, pushing, charging rules, the same size courts and rings

What challenges or set-backs have you experienced and how have you overcome these hurdles?
The biggest hurdle has definitely been keeping up with school work so I can achieve the good marks I need. It’s important to liaise with the teachers so they know when you’re going away and also when you are away to ensure you have enough work to do. It’s important when competing overseas to set out a homework schedule you know you can follow. For most wheelchair athletes another major setback is the financial cost involved in playing a wheelchair sport. When you play able bodied basketball a pair of shoes might cost you $200. For the wheelchair player a wheelchair costs about $6000 to $7000. Wheelchair basketball is such a bash and crash sport you need a new wheelchair more often than people realise. Wheelchair maintenance and replacing tyre tubes are also an additional expense. So the biggest help that most sports people in wheelchairs need is assistance with buying sport wheelchairs. There isn’t the promotional money in wheelchair based sports that there is for able bodied sports. You really need to have the passion to keep going in the sport.

Describe your current training program on a weekly basis?
I train in excess of 10 hours a week and there is a huge amount of travel commitment in my current level of competition. Soon I’ll be going to Germany for a round trip of eight days. In total I’ve travelled to 20 countries over the time I’ve been involved in wheelchair basketball. My training is predominantly monitored by the Australian Coach and other coaches who keep training diaries of my physical strength and other skills. A shots chart is kept to monitor improvement. I usually try to get into the VIS gym two or three times a week and the coaches there are always ready to assist me.

Apart from all the training and study, I do try and keep my social life going. I have a girlfriend and a great group of friends that I enjoy spending time with.

Motto:
You’ve got to get a good balance so you don’t lose the passion to play the sport.
What have been the greatest achievements in your sporting career and what will be the experiences you will cherish?

In January this year I played for the Australian Men’s Wheelchair basketball team and I was one of the starting five. This was a major highlight in my sports career and something I’ll never forget. The team atmosphere of playing Wheelchair basketball for Australia is pretty awesome. Being seven years younger than everyone on the team means I’ve got a lot of amazing role models to look up to. The team camaraderie and the chance to win an Olympic Gold medal for Australia are incredibly inspiring.

What are your future goals and dreams?

Right now achieving a high Enter in my VCE and applying for an American Study Scholarship to Illinois University are major goals. I’ve also considered going to Europe and playing professionally. Career wise my goal is to get into Law or Media Presentation. Apart from this going to the Beijing Olympics and winning gold would be my dream. In the future I can see myself settling down and having a family but still being involved in wheelchair basketball.

In June 2008 Dylan Alcott was selected to represent Australia in the Beijing Paralympics as a member of the Australian Wheelchair basketball team the Rollers. On the 16th of September the Australian team defeated Canada winning gold for Australia.

Balancing School & Sport

Brighton Grammar has worked with Dylan in addressing ways he could better balance his sport with his learning by providing:

- Flexible VCE study options allowing students to complete their VCE over two or three years.
- A private study room for Dylan to complete homework at school prior to attending weekly training.
- Opportunity to negotiate submission and extension dates for school work.
- Internet access between Dylan and his teachers to ensure Dylan is up-to-date with work covered.
- Recognition of Dylan’s Sport and Academic achievements across the school community
- A Brighton Grammar scholarship to support Dylan throughout his schooling.
- Excellent Career services and counselling.
- Continual monitoring of Dylan’s academic progress and sports development through consultation with the VIS ACE Advisers.

VIS & ACE Assistance

As a VIS scholarship holder Dylan has received support with better balancing his learning, sport and life through the provision of:

- Funding for a Maths Methods tutor to further support Dylan in his learning.
- Access to personal development workshops.
- Career planning and educational guidance.
- Expert coaching and advice.
- Financial support with travel expenses.
- Access to the VIS gymnasium.
Sarah’s Journey

At what age did you become involved in your sport?
My mother is an ex-World Champion and my father also played so I’ve been exposed to Squash all my life. I started lessons when I was six and I’ve been competing since I was ten years old. My first overseas tournament was in Malaysia I played in the under 11s. I’ve won a series of titles and have been Victorian champion. Currently, I’m rated as number one for Under 17 Girls in Squash across Australia.

What inspired you to become involved in Squash competitions?
Mainly, my mother she’s my idol and also Sarah Fitzgerald I look up to her quite a bit. I like women role models. Sarah and mum have been friends for a long time. Sarah is also a World Champion and when I was little she would sometimes look after me, so I guess she’s been a big influence. Sarah is now one of the coaches at the VIS and she often gives me a few tips. I enjoy her lessons and I appreciate every minute I get on court with her.

Who & what has motivated you and kept you involved in your sport?
My whole family are very supportive and they understand when things aren’t going quite right. My school gives me approved absences when I need to be away on competitions and my friends and mum are people I can lean on and will always help me out when I’m having a tough time. I have two worlds my school and my squash and I know my friends are always there no matter what’s happening in squash. I have quite a mix of friends and some are very intelligent which makes me work hard. They raise the bar for me so I want to be as confident in my learning as I am in my sport. I really think the people you surround yourself with rubs off on you.

What set-backs have you experienced and how did you overcome these challenges?
Luckily I haven’t had any major injuries apart from tissue damage in my leg and I’ve learnt to handle this by just following the doctors and physiotherapists exercises to strengthen muscles around the damaged area. The VIS has helped immensely with massage and physio support. Athletes also have to deal with their emotions when on and off court, we’re not immune to distressing events or crisis that are part of life. I guess it really does depend on how strong an athlete is in their mind to be able to block things out so things don’t affect performance on court. Sometimes, just being on court helps to get rid of frustrations and usually relaxes me. What motivates me is the idea of being number one and wanting to achieve my personal best in all areas of my life.

What strategies do you use to balance your learning with your sport?
I have a strong work ethic and this helps to keep me focused on task. This year I have travelled a great deal and have crammed in as much as I can because next year in Year 12 travelling to competitions won’t be as easy. Over 2008 I have attended one week or two week tournaments in Ballarat, the Northern Territory, Malaysia, South Australia and Perth.
What have been the greatest achievements and experiences you will cherish?

Being ranked number one across Australia in squash for Under 17 Girls has been a great achievement. As I’ve grown I’ve come to realise that the competitions I’ve participated in have all enriched me personally and professionally. I love competing and the people I’ve met in different countries have taught me new squash styles and strategies which have helped my sports development. Being exposed to different cultures and climates have been great experiences that I will cherish.

What are your future goals and dreams?

My goals for 2008 are to do well in my studies and win the Nationals. I’d also like to win the Malaysian tournament or do better than I have in other years. I’m also hoping I’ll get an opportunity to compete in the British/Scottish Junior Open. It’s Europe and I would love to get my name out there. Over the next two years I want to achieve a high ENTER in my VCE studies and then take a gap year and play professionally in Europe. I’m also aiming to play for the Australian Junior Women’s team. Squash is currently on the shortlist for the 2016 Olympics and my dream would be to represent Australia in Squash at the Olympics. I’ll be 25 years old by then. When I’m no longer competing I’d like a career in either Sports Management or Sports Medicine. I’m also interested in travelling the world and being an advocate for young people interested in finding a future in sport and in Squash. I would like to coach or train young athletes. I’d like to think that I could use my squash talents to make a difference in the lives of others in the community.

Balancing School & Sport

At Kew High School Sarah has received support with:

- Alternate options to spread VCE units across two or three years to better manage her study with sport commitments.
- Flexible dates for submitting work requirements and extensions when required.
- On-going monitoring of Sarah’s study load with her sport commitments through consultation with an ACE Adviser, Sarah and her parents.
- Recognition of her sporting achievements from individual teachers and within the school community.
- One-to-one support from teachers in her learning through the provision of set learning activities Sarah can complete when attending competitions interstate or overseas.
- Subject selection counselling and career support which addresses Sarah’s future goals and aspirations.

VIS & ACE Assistance

Sarah has been on a VIS scholarship for two years and acknowledges that the VIS has greatly supported her in achieving her best in both her sport and learning by providing her with access to:

- Excellent personal development and study skill workshops.
- Funding to assist with travel and accommodation expenses.
- Physiotherapy, massage and medical support to assist with injuries and improve performance.
- Expert assistance with examining career and alternate education options.
- Additional tutoring support if required.
- On-going communication between the school and the VIS ACE team monitoring Sarah’s learning progress with her sport commitments.
- High level coaching in squash and tailored personal training in the VIS gym.
Fiona’s Journey

At what age did you become involved in your sport?
I became involved in gymnastics at the age of five. My neighbours at the time were gym coaches and they decided I had the potential to do well in gymnastics after watching me balance my way across the front fence at home. That’s how it all started.

What inspired you to get involved in Gymnastics?
My neighbours daughter who was into gymnastics in a big way was someone I looked up to as a child. Later I was inspired by role models like Monette Russo and other Australian gymnasts.

Who & what has motivated & supported you in your sport?
I have a lot of people to thank, my family, friends the coaches and the VIS have all helped in different ways. My family and friends have been there through the highs and lows in my career or when I was recovering from injuries. The VIS has provided excellent assistance with physiotherapy and the different sports medicine services I’ve used. My ACE advisor has also been great with helping me work out my future goals and in balancing my studies with my training. Also my school has an organised Gymnastics’ program with the VIS that looks at different timetable options and ways girls involved in gymnastic training and competitions can continue their learning at school and still keep up with the training. Mordialloc Sporting Club sponsors me and are very supportive, occasionally providing funds to assist with travel expenses, like my recent trip to America. My coaches have been incredible, always providing advice and caring about my physical and personal wellbeing.

What have been the set-backs and challenges?
I guess the nature of our sport makes gymnasts prone to occasional injuries. The worst set-back I’ve had occurred when I chipped a piece of bone off the back of my elbow which then got lodged in my joint making it difficult to straighten my arm. I had an operation which put me out of action for a year. When I returned to my normal gym training it took a while to catch up I had to re-learn everything and regain my confidence. Other injuries have included knee injuries which made landings very painful. I’ve used pain management techniques to try and overcome these physical challenges. I’m a very positive person so I haven’t let injury overcome my determination to continue in my sport. I also try and keep things in perspective by involving myself in other activities like surfing and playing drums which provide another focus and outlet. Keeping up with school work has also been a major challenge over this year because of competition and training commitments. Time is an issue and trying to keep up with everything means setting out schedules I can follow and using a lot of self-control.

Describe your training program on a weekly basis?
I probably do three major competition trips over a year. My week consists of thirty hours of training. Every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday I attend training at the High Performance Centre from 7.00 to 10.15 in the morning and then I go to school until 3.00 in the afternoon. After school I go straight back to training from 3.30 until 6.40 in the evening. Every other day we do one session usually in the afternoon. Then there are weeks when we do competitions either over a weekend or if it’s a bigger competition I might be away for a full week. Our training and competition timetable is monitored by the VIS.

How have you balanced your learning with training and competition commitments?
It isn’t compulsory at Melbourne Girls for gymnasts to do sport as part of the curriculum so we tend to have more spare periods than other students. We use our spare periods for catching up on work. I probably get about one free a day to catch up on homework and other set work. When I’m away on competitions the teachers provide activities for me to complete or else they try to cover the topic before I leave. I can email my teachers if I need to discuss my learning. Sometimes I have the option of using extra support like tutoring. I have split my Year 12 over two years and this has helped with the load.

What are the achievements that you will cherish?
This year I tried out for the Olympics and just missed out which was disappointing but I was proud of myself, I could not have performed any better than I did. It would have been harder to accept if I hadn’t performed well on the day. In 2007 I won the Victorian Championship coming first in everything, this will be a memorable moment in my career. Also, this year I travelled to America, Dallas and Chicago to participate in competitions and to gain more experience. There have been lots of amazing experiences and achievements and I often think to myself not many people have had the opportunity to train at an elite level in gymnastics. There are only fifteen girls at an elite level in gymnastics across Australia and I guess I’ve had lots of great people behind me to help me reach this level. The friendships I’ve made through gymnastics and my achievements in all competitions throughout the years will be what I will remember and cherish.
**What are your future goals and dreams?**
I want to finish my VCE and hopefully get into an American College. If this doesn’t eventuate then I’m looking at applying to TAFE to do a Myotherapy or Massage course related to sports medicine fields. I’m at a bit of a cross road with my gymnastics and have decided that by December I’ll make the decision of whether to continue competing. I’ve been training in Gymnastics for twelve years and I’ve had a great career but I’m not sure if I want to continue competing. I have considered coaching and am doing some coaching now. Most gymnasts might compete up to the age of 18 or 19 then move on to other sports. I enjoy my surfing so this will probably be the next sport I’ll pursue. My friends and I have started a band and I’m the drummer, who knows where this might lead.

**Balancing School with Sport**
Fiona commented that being at school provides a positive balance allowing her to focus on other interests and talents as well as friendships outside of gymnastics.

To further support Fiona her school has implemented a number of strategies:

- A formal partnership exists between the VIS and MGC that provides support for VIS gymnasts training at the Prahran based Victorian High Performance Centre.
- The school encourages understanding and support of the individual needs of each athlete by providing flexible delivery of their academic program within the context of their sport commitments.
- Excellent Career support is offered and recognition that students must also plan for a career beyond gymnastics.
- When absent due to competition, on-line learning is provided and athletes have email access to teachers.

**VIS & ACE Assistance**
The VIS and ACE have provided Fiona and other VIS gymnasts at Melbourne Girls College with additional support through the provision of:

- Excellent personal development and future study options through the ‘Study in America’ workshops.
- Funding to assist with travel and accommodation expenses.
- Physiotherapy, massage, nutrition and medical support with injuries and to improve sport performance.
- Expert assistance with examining career and alternate education options and support with transition planning.

The above model demonstrates the support provided which is facilitated by the School/VIS/WHPC Co-ordinator at MGC in collaboration with other stakeholders.

- Additional tutoring support when required.
- On-going communication between the school, parents and the VIS ACE Adviser to further assess and review Fiona’s study progress and to discuss alternate options to better accommodate sport commitments.
- High level coaching and tailored personal training in the VIS gym.
Erin Gangelhoff
School: Aitken College
Current Year Level: VCE Year 12
Age: 17

Erin’s Journey

At what age did you become involved in your sport?
I started triathlon around the age of nine and I did the Weet-Bix triathlons for a bit of fun. Then I competed in a few small triathlons at Carey Grammar and in the Brookes series. Later I moved onto the Schools’ National competition.

What inspired you to become involved in Triathlon competitions?
When I was nine years old I was doing a bit of swimming and running and one day I saw a triathlon promotional advertisement on a Weet-Bix box and this inspired me to get involved.

Who & what has motivated you and kept you involved in your sport?
I guess I just enjoy doing what I do and this keeps me motivated. I get to meet lots of people and travel and this is interesting and provides new experiences. My parents have been very supportive; my father has coached me in cycling. This year the VIS has supported me through the services they provide. Earlier in the year I experienced a hip injury which meant ten weeks that I couldn’t run and the VIS coaches, doctors and physiotherapists helped me to stay positive and motivated.

What set-backs have you experienced and how did you overcome these challenges?
This year sustaining my first major injuries, a hip injury and stress reaction in my foot, made it difficult to train and compete. So injuries have caused setbacks in my performance. I have overcome these problems by challenging myself and just getting up, moving on and not looking for excuses to give up on my goals. Balancing my studies with my training has been challenging, deciding to complete a Year 12 subject in Year 11 has made it easier because I am now doing 4 Year 12 VCE subjects and have more spare periods to catch up on work.

Describe your current training program on a weekly basis?
I have three coaches, a running coach, a swimming coach and a ride/triathlon coach. I do about 15 hours of intensive training during the week starting with one and a half hours of swimming in the mornings. If it’s a week leading up to a weekend competition then my training is reduced to raise my energy levels before the competition. My training schedule is monitored by the VIS coaches and I keep a weekly diary that they review.

What have been the greatest achievements in your sporting career and what will be the experiences you will cherish?
Firstly, when I was 13 years old I competed in my first Schools Nationals this was like, WOW! The second achievement was coming second in my final year as a competitor in the Schools Nationals. Being selected as a VIS scholarship holder is something I will always cherish. Travelling and meeting so many new people has been exciting. Through the VIS I have met Triathlon athletes I aspire to and these people have been inspirational.

Motto:
Enjoy What You Do!

What are your future goals and dreams?
I am aiming for a high VCE grade 82-85. I am applying to Victoria University and plan to get into the double degree Sport Science and Education program. I hope to take a gap year and travel overseas to train and work. I intend to spend some time on the Gold Coast training with friends. The following year I will return to my university studies. My sport goals are to compete in the Commonwealth Games and the 2012 Olympics in London. In the far future, when I am no longer competing I would enjoy coaching triathletes or being on the Olympic Selection Committee. If the VIS is looking for someone I’ll be available. I guess I will eventually settle down and have a family after I’ve finished travelling the world.
Balancing School & Sport

Erin has faced many challenges while trying to balance her education with sport commitments. Erin commented that being at school provides a positive balance and stability allowing her to focus on other interests and the friendships she values outside of sport. To further support Erin her school has implemented a number of strategies:

- The school provides flexible VCE study options allowing students to complete their VCE over two or three years. Extra spare study periods help to better balance the study load with sport commitments.
- Excellent Career support is offered and recognition that students must also plan for a career beyond sport.
- Teachers show a sincere interest in the students’ educational and sporting achievements and are prepared to offer extra learning support and encouragement.
- Learning tasks are set in advance so students attending competitions have the option of completing set work before, during or after returning to school.
- Lunchtime tutorials are provided for students needing additional assistance with their learning.
- The school is prepared to consult with the VIS & ACE Adviser on planning and improving strategies to better balance the athlete student’s competition demands with their learning requirements.
- Young athletes at Aitken College feel they are valued and connected to the school. This increases participation in all areas of the school’s curriculum, builds supportive friendship networks and improves motivation to succeed in learning.

VIS & ACE Assistance

As a VIS scholarship holder Erin has valued the support and professional advice provided by the VIS/ACE which has included:

- Study Skills advice targeting Erin’s needs as a visual learner.
- Specialist coaching and training that has improved performance and confidence.
- Opportunity to train in a high quality gym and access to sport massage.
- Intensive medical treatment for sport injuries by an expert medical team.
- Financial support with travel expenses.
- On-going career planning and educational guidance preparing Erin for the transition from school.
- Workshops on personal grooming and presentation.
Grace’s Journey

**At what age did you become involved in your sport?**
The first time I picked up a golf club I was six years old. It was my birthday and we were on holidays in Queensland. My father had organised for me to attend a free golf clinic for kids. I was hopeless at hitting the ball and noticed another kid who kept hitting the ball into the air. I was fascinated by this and was determined to do the same thing. This determination to get it right has stayed with me ever since this first introduction to golf.

**What inspired you to become involved in Golf?**
Usually on a Saturday my father would go out and play golf and I would go and hit 9 holes with him. He taught me a lot about the game and inspired me to take a serious interest in golf. Dad doesn’t get too much time to play anymore since he’s too busy driving me around to training or competitions. I’m also inspired by other athletes either in golf or in other sports. Watching them and how they handle set-backs to ultimately reach their goals is inspiring and motivates me to get out there and try my best.

**Who & what has motivated you in your sport?**
Probably my parents have been the strongest influence they have always been there to support me through the good and bad times. Also my coaches and friends at school have encouraged me and helped me to stay positive and motivated. My goal is to be the best in the world over the next ten years and this keeps me determined and prepared to take on new challenges and improve on my skills. I also try and play in the higher rankings where you can get the most points and where the competition is strongest this helps to improve my performance.

**What set-backs & challenges have you experienced?**
I get very disappointed when I’m not playing to my full potential or when I miss out on being selected. I try to stay positive by remembering my goal of becoming the best in the world and not letting these set-backs defeat me. I guess set-backs are all part of it and keep me determined to keep trying. Luckily I haven’t had to deal with major injuries that could keep me out of the game and slow my development. Also, trying to keep up with school work isn’t always easy especially when I’m away competing, I don’t always have the time to study when I’m playing 36 holes a day. I try and get as much of my school work out of the way before a tournament and negotiate dates with my teachers for getting set assignments in. At the moment I have exams and it’s difficult trying to balance different tournaments around my exam dates and preparation time. This is something I’ll need to work on if I want to keep playing golf.

**Describe your weekly training program?**
Over the week I spend three hours training in the VIS gym this is usually on Tuesday and Thursday. I practise for six hours over Wednesday and Friday and the weekends are usually taken up with tournaments. So in total I spend ten to twelve hours weekly on practising golf and improving my physical fitness. I don’t get too much time to socialize with friends. Although, there are times throughout the year when I don’t have too many tournaments and I try to do other activities I enjoy.

**What achievements and moments will you cherish?**
Being part of the Australian Junior team for 2007 will be one of the most memorable moments in my golfing career. Also being selected into the Victorian State Senior team for the last two years has been a great experience. I’ve had the opportunity to compete against New Zealand and international players so this has helped build up my confidence and skills. Recently, I competed in Texas at the Dough Sanders International Golf Championship and the experience was awesome!

**What are your future goals and dreams?**
Over 2008 I want to get re-selected into the Victorian Senior team. I want to play well in the Australian tournaments and the National tournaments. I’m also aiming to win the Victorian Amateur and Junior Championships. Over the next two years I want to successfully complete my VCE and I hope to get chosen into the Golf National squad. I’d like to be playing at a professional level by 2015 and competing in International tournaments around the world. After I’ve retired, which won’t be too soon, I’d like to go into sport commentary or other areas in the media.

**How has your training and competition impacted on your learning?**
I think my training has had a positive impact on my education it has given me something else to focus on. Obviously, if my grades dropped I probably wouldn’t continue to play so this motivates me to keep up with my learning. This year I am doing Year 11 and one less subject than other students. I’ve given the option of spreading Year 12 over two years a lot of thought and discussed this with my parents. I have decided to complete Year 12 in one year since passing VCE and achieving good results are important priorities in my life. I follow a weekly plan to try and keep up with my studies and on Mondays I have a Maths tutor who helps me in this subject. Overall I try and do a minimum of 2 hours of study everyday usually after training. My teachers are always willing to assist during lunch-times or when I have spare periods.

**What inspired you to become involved in Golf?**
Grace as a student at Loyola College

**Motto:**
Grace as a student at Loyola College

**Never lose sight of your dreams and the goal to be the best in the World!**

Grace as a student at Loyola College

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Balancing School & Sport

Grace has commented that being at school provides a positive balance between her sport and education. She believes her involvement in golf acts as a motivating factor to achieve good grades in her learning and she can see the relevance of her VCE subjects to the future career paths she is considering. Her teachers and friendships provide the support to remain positive and engaged in her learning. To further assist Grace the school offers:

- The option to complete the VCE over three years by spreading Year 12 over two years and completing one less subject in Year 11.
- Excellent career support in subject selection and in determining the best VCE study options.
- Lunchtime support from teachers and when required arrangements for alternate time-lines for submitting work.
- The school is prepared to consult with the VIS & ACE team on planning and improving strategies to better balance and monitor the athlete student’s competition demands with their learning requirements.
- Young athletes at Loyola College feel they are valued and connected to the school which recognises and celebrates students’ achievements in all areas of their lives.

VIS & ACE Assistance

As a VIS scholarship holder Grace has received:

- Study Skills advice targeting exam preparation and different learning styles.
- ACE Adviser has arranged a number of meetings with the school to plan Grace’s academic program in advance.
- Specialist coaching and training in a high quality gym with access to sport massage.
- Participation in workshops held by elite athlete role models, like Cathy Freeman, who share experiences and provide advice.
- ACE counselling support in career and education options that encourages action planning for future transition.
- Support and advice from the ACE Adviser on further strategies to assist with balancing learning and sport commitments.
- Funding support with travel, accommodation and sports equipment.
SAMUEL STREET

School: St Leonards College
Current Year Level: International
Baccalaureate Year 11
Age: 16

Samuel’s Journey

At what age did you become involved in your sport?
I’ve been around baseball nearly all my life my father played and I would go and watch him. I probably started playing when I was about 4 years old starting with T-ball and progressed through the ranks. I’m currently playing in the Victorian squads. Next year I hope to get selected onto the Australian Representative teams at National level.

What inspired you to become involved in Baseball?
Definitely my dad he was always telling me stories about the great times he had with his team mates down at the club. Dad played Division 1 level and loves the game.

Who & what has motivated you and kept you involved in your sport?
I motivate myself by realising that if I don’t do the work improvements won’t happen. The most important thing is putting in the effort and then the rewards come. My past experiences have taught me that the harder I work at developing my skills the better I perform when in competitions. The coaches at the Sandringham Baseball Club and at the VIS have all helped to keep me on track. Obviously my dad has encouraged me and helped me to stay positive about my performance.

How have you overcome challenges & setbacks?
Actually, I’m right now experiencing a set-back with an elbow injury which isn’t uncommon for baseball Pitchers that are still growing. My new VIS coach has been supportive in helping me to deal with my elbow injury and improve my game. The lack of time I have has been a big challenge this year. My IB studies require 50 hours of work across two years in a community service, an action activity which in my case is baseball and a creative field, I do guitar lessons. I also have a casual job on Friday nights at Rebel Sport Southland. I try and stay calm under pressure and this helps me to stay focused and in control of most situations.

Describe your weekly training program?
Monday nights I train out at Knox from six to eight under lights. This is field work pitching and hitting. Tuesday nights I’m at the VIS doing my lifting program so I leave straight from school and I don’t get home until about seven. Wednesday nights the VIS squad competes in a league in the West so I might get home about eleven. Thursday nights, I train at Sandown Indoor Tennis Centre where we book a couple of courts and set up a batting cage. Friday nights is my night off and I work at Rebel Sport Southland. Then Saturdays, I’m back at the VIS by nine in the morning and we do an oval session followed by gym, weights and recovery. Saturday afternoons we have club games for three hours. In between all of this I try and fit in my studies. My school is aware of my time commitments and have allowed me to miss school sports on a Wednesday afternoon. I usually get home from school and try to get my school work out of the way. My IB coordinator at school is always ready to help me organise a timetable that supports my learning and training commitments. My sport and studies are my top priorities. Although, my sport is almost like my free time because I love the game so much.

What have been the greatest achievements in your sporting career?
This year I played in the Under 16 State titles and I came second in the ERA (End Runs Against) this was a great moment in my sporting career. When I was younger I went to Japan with the under 12’s and played in the world titles, this was a memorable and fun time.

What are your future goals and dreams?
For this year I want to get my recovery from my injuries back on track and really excel through my baseball program and in my studies. Over the next two years I want to achieve a top score in my Year 12 exams which might translate into College baseball in America. This would help with my education expenses and allow me to continue playing at a high level. I’m not really sure where I want to be in the future. I’m doing six subjects in Year 11 as part of the International Baccalaureate and one of the subjects I’m enjoying is Economics, so maybe in the future I’ll go into a financial or commerce area as a career. I chose this course of study for my senior high school years because I believe it will provide me with greater options. When I’m no longer competing in baseball, I want to stay involved in the game either by coaching or helping to further develop the sport in Australia. I know there is a move towards bringing back the Australian Baseball League which would be great for the future of the game in Australia.

Motto:
Work First Play Later to Grow & Reap the Rewards

Samuel as a student at St. Leonards College

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Motto:
Work First Play Later to Grow & Reap the Rewards
Balancing School & Sport

At St Leonard’s a number of strategies have been implemented to support Samuel in his learning and sport development these strategies include:

- Samuel is not required to participate in school athletics on a Wednesday afternoon and can use this time to either catch up on study or attend VIS training.

- Opportunity to commence the International Baccalaureate in Year 11 with the option of taking up VCE studies if the IB becomes too demanding.

- Excellent support from the school’s Career services assisting Samuel with planning his study time-table so he can manage his learning with his training schedule.

- Support from individual teachers prepared to negotiate flexible submission dates and extensions as required.

- Monitoring of Samuel’s academic progress through on-going consultation with the ACE Adviser on how to further support Samuel in balancing his learning with his training commitments.

VIS & ACE Assistance

This is Samuel’s first year as a VIS scholarship holder and the assistance he has received from the VIS and ACE services has included:

- Opportunity to attend workshops on the process required to apply for US College scholarships.

- Presentations on a variety of personal development topics and on study skills.

- Access to high level coaching and close monitoring of Samuel’s physical and sport skills development.

- Expert physiotherapy, sports massage and medical assistance.

- Support from the VIS/ACE Adviser with career and education options and referral to further support services when required by the young athlete.

- Financial support as required for travel and accommodation expenses.

BASEBALL PLAYER

I stay calm under pressure and this helps to stay focused and in control.
Bradley’s Journey

At what age did you become involved in your sport?
My father ran a squash centre in Morwell and I was exposed to squash at a very young age. I was eight years old when I started playing competition squash. My family is into the game in a big way and my sister also plays competition squash and is a VIS scholarship holder. We have a squash court in the backyard that’s how serious we are about squash.

Who & what has motivated you in your sport?
My coaches have been there for me and having my dad as my main coach has also been an advantage and keeps me reaching for my personal best. The country community I live in has been very supportive and a couple of years ago the local council provided me with some funding from local businesses. Most of my friends are into sport and I also play competition cricket at a reasonable level. I just enjoy playing most sports and having friends to share the experience with, both the great wins and the losses. Overall, I find I’m pretty motivated in most things I do but enjoying what I do makes me want to do well in it, I guess that’s the key.

What set-backs have you experienced and how have you overcome these challenges?
Doing my VCE, although not a set-back, has made me realise how hard it is to try and balance my studies with my squash. To cope with this my English teacher acts as my advocate and works with the VIS ACE Adviser to determine ways I can better organise my study timetable around my sport commitments over the year. Living in the country the biggest hurdle is the amount of travelling I have to do. Every week I’m travelling for two hours to get to my training at the VIS in Melbourne. The advantages are that I have a lot of independence and can find my way around Melbourne without too much trouble and when I’m travelling to and from Melbourne I’m usually reading or doing some form of study.

What strategies do you use to balance your learning with your sport commitments?
I don’t think you can be good at both things so to try and cope I am doing Year 12 over two years, three subjects this year and two next year and I’ve already completed one Year 12 subject in Year 11. Spreading the VCE load across three years has been the best option for me because it gives me time to travel to Melbourne without missing too many classes. I also have a tutor from Monash University the school pays for and I get tutoring once a week. All the teachers are supportive and I can see them out of class time for any assistance I need with my studies. My advocate helps with organising necessary extensions when I need them. The college provides Skype so it’s easy to communicate when overseas and this helps with keeping up with the work. I do a lot of Maths and Science subjects so most of the time I’m working out of a book. I try and follow the areas covered in class and complete set questions. Right now all my spare time goes into study or training. I don’t have much time to socialize with friends. Although, playing squash creates opportunities to see the friends I’ve made through squash. I want to pass my VCE with good results and later head off to university to do Engineering.

Describe your current weekly training program?
I do twelve hours of training per week over six days. This might vary depending on what tournaments I’m preparing for. I regularly travel to the VIS on a Tuesday and Wednesday to use the gym and practise with the VIS squash coach. My training is closely monitored by the VIS coach and dad who as my personal coach guides me in my training plan.

What have been the greatest achievements in your sporting career and the moments you will cherish?
Going to my first tournament the Moe Junior tournament and winning a trophy was pretty good. Winning my first State title at the age of 14 was huge! I guess this stated I was coming through and I haven’t lost this tournament since winning the title. Last year I made it to the quarter finals in the Malaysian Junior Open the MILO All-Stars. This was a major achievement in my sporting career. I made the top 8 in this tournament which had 700 or more entries in the whole competition from across Asia, Australia and a few other countries.

What are your current and future goals and dreams?
I’m currently representing Victoria and I’ll be trying out for the Australian team after the Malaysian tournament in July. If I get selected this will allow me to play in Switzerland and playing at an International level while representing Australia is something I’ve strived to achieve. In 2008 I’d like to win the Australian Junior Championships. Over the next two years I hope to get good results in my VCE subjects so I can later attend University and complete an Engineering degree. If this doesn’t happen then I’ll start playing the overseas International circuit. Representing Australia in the Commonwealth Games could be a future goal. When I’m no longer competing I’d like a secure job either in Engineering or in finance, preferably the Share Market. I would continue to play squash and coach others. I can see myself with a family and living in the country away from the hustle and bustle of city life.
Balancing School with Sport

Kurnai College has supported Bradley in his learning and implemented numerous strategies to accommodate his sport commitments these have included:

- Offering flexible VCE study options allowing Bradley to complete his VCE over three years.
- Organising timetabled spare periods to fall across two days which assists with balancing the study load and accommodates weekly travel to the VIS for training purposes.
- Excellent Career planning and study support is provided by an advocate teacher that assists Bradley with planning his studies, organising extension dates and following a regularly monitored study schedule.
- Free access to additional tutoring offered through Monash University Gippsland on a once a week basis to further assist with learning needs.
- Access to Skype internet link when on tour to communicate with teachers.
- The College advocate communicates regularly with the VIS/ACE Adviser to plan ahead and improve strategies that will further assist Bradley in balancing his study and sport commitments.

SQUASH PLAYER

Enjoying what I do makes me want to do well

Bradley keeping his eye on the ball and aiming to win

VIS & ACE Assistance

The VIS and ACE has supported Bradley with better accommodating his educational needs with his sports development through the provision of:

- Access to high level coaching and advice on improving performance.
- Career and education guidance which has assisted with improving study skills, planning learning schedules and offering advice on alternate study options.
- Use of the VIS gym and tailored personal training.
- Expert physiotherapy, massage and sports medicine services.
- Financial support with travel and accommodation when competing overseas or interstate.
- Ongoing communication with Kurnai College to ensure Bradley’s sports commitments do not conflict with his educational requirements.
Tedros’ Journey

At what age did you become involved in your sport?
I have been playing soccer for eight years and I was originally playing with the South Australian Sports Institute before my family moved to Melbourne. I was seven years old when I was introduced to soccer by my older brothers and cousins. We regularly played in the local park. We didn’t know much English so it was a good way of getting to know other kids who joined us in our games. We made many new friendships through soccer. My family is originally from Ethiopia and we arrived in Australia thirteen years ago. We were refugees and Australia offered a better standard of living. I have five brothers and three sisters plus both my parents, so I live in a very busy household. There is always someone to join me in a kick of the soccer ball.

What inspired you to become involved in Soccer?
My two older brothers played for our local club at State level and for the South Australian Institute of Sport. So they have been my role models. Both my parents are very supportive but they keep advising me to keep my mind on school work just in case things don’t go as planned in my soccer career. In Ethiopia soccer is a popular sport and a game children and adults play.

Who & what has motivated you and kept you involved in your sport?
My coaches have been very good and they have taught me that it’s important to do well in soccer and at school. My teachers at Maribyrnong College have also been very good helping me with my study and trying to make sure I catch up on work so I can attend competitions. My brothers and the rest of the family, as well as, the Ethiopian community have had a big influence in motivating me because I want them to be proud of me and what I can achieve. My parents think soccer is a good game but my mum gets worried how it might affect my education. If I’m not keeping up to date with my school work she doesn’t let me play soccer. So I have no choice but to try my best at school or be grounded from soccer. I love playing soccer it is a big part of our community and upbringing. My dream is to become one of the best soccer players in the world and to give something back to my family for their sacrifices and the Ethiopian community for all their support.

What have been the set-backs and challenges?
I suppose the worst set-back I ever experienced was when I was twelve years old and the coach at the time didn’t like me. I found myself sitting on the bench for most games. I was determined to get a fair go so I worked harder and harder on my soccer skills until he had no choice but to put me back on as a player. This taught me that it’s important to not let personal feelings distract you from achieving your goals. This year I have travelled a lot and probably missed about 15 weeks of school. This has made it hard to catch up on all my work but my teachers are good at setting assessment tasks I need to complete to keep up. I try hard to stay organised with my school work and keep a timetable of what work I need to do. I take school work away with me when I am competing so I don’t fall too far behind. I’ve also been lucky I haven’t had any major injuries.

What are your future goals and dreams?
My goals for this year are to do well at school and qualify for the Under 17 World Cup for next year and just to keep improving as a soccer player. Over the next two years I am hoping to attend the Australian Institute of Sport which means I will probably temporarily postpone my studies so I can concentrate on my soccer. I also want to get into an ’A League Club’ and get a professional contract. In the future I want to be playing for the Socceroos or a European Club. I would like to be a role model for other Ethiopian boys who want to follow their soccer dreams. After I retire from playing soccer I would like a career as a Soccer Coach working with elite soccer players. In the future I hope to be successful enough to improve my family’s life so they are better off and secure.

Tedros as a student at Maribyrnong College

Describe your weekly training program?
I train five times a week for up to two hours and on Saturdays we usually play a game and do recovery in the VIS gym. So I probably spend up to 15 hours training and playing. My training is organised by the VIS coach and he decides how much training I need to do.

What have been the achievements and experiences you will cherish?
When I was with the South Australian Institute of Sport my team won the Championships for my age group. I scored the winning goal in the final and this was one of my proudest moments. This year I was selected as a member of the Australian National Under 16 Soccer team (Qantas Joey’s) and in August participated in the European tour travelling to the Netherlands and Germany. Earlier in the year I competed in Singapore and Indonesia. So soccer has provided the opportunity to visit many countries and experience new cultures which has been educational. Playing soccer with the Joey’s gives me the opportunity for future selection as part of a European team. Also, the further up the ranks I go the greater the chance of getting selected for the Socceroos which is something I hope to achieve.

What are your future goals and dreams?
My goals for this year are to do well at school and qualify for the Under 17 World Cup for next year and just to keep improving as a soccer player. Over the next two years I am hoping to attend the Australian Institute of Sport which means I will probably temporarily postpone my studies so I can concentrate on my soccer. I also want to get into an ’A League Club’ and get a professional contract. In the future I want to be playing for the Socceroos or a European Club. I would like to be a role model for other Ethiopian boys who want to follow their soccer dreams. After I retire from playing soccer I would like a career as a Soccer Coach working with elite soccer players. In the future I hope to be successful enough to improve my family’s life so they are better off and secure.

Tedros Yabio
School: Maribyrnong College
Current Year Level: Year 10
Age: 15

Motto:
Work hard to improve your life and live your dreams
Balancing School & Sport

Maribyrnong College has developed formal partnerships with the VIS, Victoria University and Western Bulldogs which further supports young athletes by:

- Aiming to assist students to balance their sporting goals and academic achievement in a supportive educational and athlete friendly environment that recognises and celebrates the athlete’s commitment to their learning and sport.
- Promoting a high performance culture for these students both in their sport and education.
- Providing state of the arts sport facilities, specialist staff and personal/sport development programs in partnership with the VIS, Western Bulldogs, Victoria University and Sport Associations.
- Encouraging exploration of a diverse range of sport based and alternate career options which recognise future career aspirations and the educational pathways available.
- Developing flexible learning strategies which include on-line delivery and modification of learning activities.
- Providing educational forums and workshops for parents, staff and athlete students to discuss issues relevant to the young athlete’s life and future development.

VIS & ACE Assistance

- Access to high level coaching and advice on improving performance.
- Career and education guidance on improving study skills and planning for the future.
- Monitoring of academic progress in collaboration with the school to better balance learning needs with training & competition commitments.
- Expert physiotherapy, massage and sports medicine services.
- Financial support with travel and accommodation expenses.
Ideas on what Schools can do

It is important to assist school-aged athletes with minimizing the stress in their lives and to look for creative solutions which will support these students in their learning. The issue is not about student athletes doing less; it is about making adjustments to their learning program so these young people are less vulnerable to the risk of disengaging from their learning or feeling overloaded and overwhelmed by their commitments.

Schools can assist school-aged athletes by closely monitoring their progress and implementing support structures which address:

- assisting with managing and planning for short and long term absences from school due to competition
- reviewing flexibility with timetabling
- providing alternative forms of content delivery (i.e.) via email/internet
- making required adjustments to the homework schedule
- recognising when clashes with school sports may occur due to club and state representation
- modifying the curriculum
- providing additional tutoring, private study time and when possible teachers offering one-to-one assistance
- negotiating a tailored and balanced VCE study load with the option of completing the VCE over two, three or more years as required
- considering a variety of study and course combinations which may include distance education, or VET on-line training combined with school based learning
- acknowledgment of the student athlete’s preferred learning style
- promoting an athlete friendly environment which acknowledges that for most student athletes the desire to achieve in their education is as significant to them as succeeding in their sport
- recognising and celebrating the athlete students sporting, academic and personal achievements
- providing a supportive mentor or advocate who consults with the student, parents, coaches, Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) / Athletes Career & Education (ACE) Adviser.
- allocating a senior member of staff to oversee decisions made on behalf of the young athletes education and sport development
- Career and Welfare support which is holistic in its approach and sensitive to the transition phases a young athlete may experience due to non-selection, injury or movement within the sport ranks
- exposure to a variety of career and pathway options
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Grace Lennon / Golf  Loyola College
Samuel Street / Baseball  St Leonard’s College
Bradley Soutar / Squash  Kurnai College
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Appendix 5.4

ELITE ATHLETE FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY NEWORK
Who is eligible?

For athletes to access the support of the EAFU, they must be recognised by one of the following as an elite athlete:

- Australian Institute of Sport
- State institute or academy of sport
- AFL Players’ Association
- Australian Cricketers’ Association
- Rugby Union Players’ Association
- Rugby League Professionals Association
- Australian Professional Footballers’ Association

or must be national senior squad members from National ACE supported sports.

If an athlete is not recognised by one of the above, they may submit an application for consideration to the university. The university will use its discretion in assessing student athletes.

To get involved

Contact your ACE adviser or player welfare manager to discuss how the EAFU network can help you. To check if your university participates in the scheme, visit the ACE website: ausport.gov.au/ace

For further information contact:

National ACE
Australian Sports Commission
Tel: (02) 6214 7354
Email: ace@ausport.gov.au

‘It’s great to have the support of the EAFU scheme, which provides open and flexible options to pursue ongoing study for a professional qualification, while training for competition and success in elite sport.’

Tristan Thomas
Gold medallist — Athletics
2009 World University Games
Bachelor of Applied Science in Human Biology
Elite Athlete Friendly University Program

The Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) program supports Australia’s elite athletes to achieve academic excellence while also pursuing a sporting career. The value of combining both sport and higher education to achieve greater life success is well recognised across the university and sporting sectors.

There are 36 universities across Australia that are part of the EAFU network. Each of these universities has a contact person to support elite athletes within their university. The EAFU contact provides:

- advice and guidance on academic planning
- support in negotiating flexibility to meet academic requirements
- advocacy within the university environment
- support in negotiating and/or implementing cross-institutional study or credit transfer arrangements
- advice and support to local Athlete Career and Education (ACE) advisers or related personnel.

To locate EAFU contacts, visit the ACE website ausport.gov.au/ace

Please note: Not all universities in the EAFU program provide all of the support services outlined. You will need to check with your university as to how they can assist you.

Benefits of the EAFU

Universities belonging to the EAFU network understand that athletes require increased support to successfully integrate their studies while training and competing. As a result, eligible athletes may be able to negotiate their study options, assessment, and course entry.

Flexible study options

Enrolment:
- academic study loads
- lecture, tutorial and practical timetables
- extending the minimum time to complete courses due to periods of decreased study load
- several leaves of absence where required (for example, Olympic Games year)
- cross-institutional study options with interstate universities.

Assessment:
- assessment deadlines, and the possibility of sitting exams externally under exam conditions while competing overseas
- attendance at lectures, tutorials or practicals.

Course entry:
- a number of universities allow elite athletes to submit accompanying documentation regarding athletic pursuits and achievements for consideration for course entry. This is normally highlighted within tertiary admissions documentation.

‘The scheme gives me the flexibility and options to achieve my best in sport and to study for a profession in life after sport.’

Alice Mills — Swimming
Bronze medallist — Beijing 2008 Olympics
Bachelor of Nursing

‘Over the past five years, I have been able to play rugby for my country as well as complete a degree. The Elite Athlete Friendly University network provided the flexibility and support that all professional athletes require as they strive for excellence on and off the field.’

Scott Fava (right)
Qantas Wallaby and HSBC Waratah
Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Management

Image: Damien Fitzpatrick, Chris Thomson and Scott Fava
Appendix 5.5

NATIONAL ACE PROGRAM BROCHURE
These are some of the things ACE can assist you with:

• Career counselling and planning — exploring different career pathways and goals.

• Personal development training courses — training in public speaking, media, time management, financial planning and interview skills.

• Educational guidance — assisting athletes with university study options and liaison, vocational training, and school.

• Employment preparation — writing résumés and applications, and assisting with job searching skills.

• Career referral networks — using ACE’s wide network to assist with work experience.

• Transitional support — assisting with retirement, injury and relocation, and setting goals for life after sport.

• Online services — using ACEonline to assist athletes in rural or remote areas, and those travelling overseas.

• Referrals — referring athletes to other services (for example, psychologists, relationship counselling, financial advisers, etc).

• Lifestyle management — helping to manage the balance between sporting and non-sporting pursuits.
Do you sometimes feel as if there are not enough hours in the day to think about anything else but training?

Have you put your studies and thoughts about your future aside, just to be able to give your all for sport?

Have a look at what the Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program could do for you.

Ensure you make the most of your sporting career and have Plan B in place when you decide to retire or something unexpected puts you off track.

‘I was 16 when I started going through the ACE program, and I think it was the best thing I ever did. I am in university now and I have a career path set out for me.’

Sam Bramham, Paralympic swimmer

Being able to balance your life, making space for education or a professional career alongside elite sport, can help you achieve your sporting goals. Many athletes participating in the ACE program report better results on the track, field and in the pool when they are achieving with their studies or pursuing a career outside sport.

Every athlete’s story is different, the needs for assistance are different.

The advisers working for the ACE program know the world of sport. We know the amount of determination and compromise it takes to reach your goal.

We are here to help you, to adapt the program to your situation and to make sure you get as much as possible out of your sporting career, without having to sacrifice other aspects of life.

‘For an athlete to get involved with ACE, all they need to do is give their ACE adviser a call, come in and have a chat about their career aspirations, and get engaged!’

ACEonline is great for athletes who are located remotely and for those travelling overseas.’

ACE adviser

SAM BRAMHAM, OAM
SWIMMER CLASS S9
Date of birth: 1988, Melbourne Victoria
Career highlights
Gold medal, men’s 4 x 100m medley relay
Beijing 2008 Paralympics
Silver medal, men’s 4 x 100m freestyle relay
Beijing 2008 Paralympics
Telstra All Star Team 2006, 2007
Education
Bachelor of Sports Management — in progress
Current occupation
Student, and working at the Victorian Institute of Sport in administration.