



2 September 2021

MS/SS Academic Year extension

Trinity has decided to extend the current academic year until the end of Term 4, 2021.

The Rollover Model – Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the current curriculum model. You can see the years and the terms. In education speak, curriculum is organised into Stages, which are two year blocks, signified here by the colours. We have seven terms for Stage 4, eight for Stage 5 and eight for Stage 6. That's what we currently have and what we call the Rollover Model.

The Standard Model – Figure 2

Figure 2 is what we are moving to. Eight terms in Stage 4, eight in Stage 5 and eight in Stage 6. The transition between Year 11 and 12 happens at some point in Term 4, depending on the credential and subject students are doing. This is the Standard Model.

Changing to the Standard Model brings us into line with other schools in NSW.

Why is Trinity changing to the Standard Model?

This decision was not driven by a single factor or issue. There are lots of little factors. Lots of issues that could be argued one way or another. None were irrefutable when considered in isolation. However, collectively, these were the reasons that weighed most heavily in leading the School to this path.

Choosing continuity over change

The first was the consideration as to what would be best for the students when remote learning continues well into Term 4, 2021. While we want remote learning to be over, we have to recognise that it will still be with us for some or all of Term 4.

The question is 'What will make for the best remote learning in Term 4?' In the end, this became a decision between change, and continuity.

There are underappreciated benefits to continuity. As a school, Trinity has always placed a premium on relationships as an enabler of learning and a powerful connector for wellbeing. How would the start of a new academic year, when nearly all the students would change teachers, change classes, and many would start new courses, be affected without the foundation of face-to-face history that we currently have?

We weighed up change, and we weighed up continuity, and in the end we took the decision that continuity would provide the best support for the students as remote learning continues.

The Field Studies Programme opportunity

The second reason to extend the year was the desire for all students to be able to participate in the Field Studies Programme. All the students in Years 10 to 12 and two thirds of the students in Year 9 have had this opportunity, and we want to make a priority of providing that opportunity for all our students.

We are committed to giving the remaining eighty students in Programme 5 and 6 every chance to attend. Extending the academic year keeps that option open.

We are also concerned about the launch of the new extended Field Studies Programme for next year's Year 9 cohort. The extended Programme is a highly significant educational initiative for the students. The Programme itself integrates academic learning and outdoor education, along with the residential experience. We have reinvented the Stage 5 curriculum structure in a unique and innovative project. Delaying the start of the next academic year opens up the possibility that the next cohort of students can take part as planned.

Year 12

The third major reason for this decision was the situation of our Year 12 students. At this point, the IB Diploma students are expecting to start their exams at the end of Week 3 next term. The HSC students are now expecting exams to start in Week 6.

One of the consequences of starting the academic year in Term 4 is that the graduating Year 12 class are displaced. They disappear off the timetable, and their teachers' attention has to shift to their new classes. While our teachers always continue to provide some support for their graduating course by going over and above, the delay of the exams this year makes the situation particularly problematic. The rollover, which is unique to us among NSW Schools, would make it near impossible for us to support the Year 12 students as every other school is able to do in these weeks leading up to their exams.

We were not prepared to cut them loose at the end of this term.

For more details about the change to the academic year, please watch the videos and read the Q&As at:
www.trinity.nsw.edu.au/msss-academic-year-extension

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
7 terms in Stage 4	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7	Year 8
	Year 8	Year 8	Year 8	Year 9
8 terms in Stage 5	Year 9	Year 9	Year 9	Year 10
	Year 10	Year 10	Year 10	Year 11
8 terms in Stage 6	Year 11	Year 11	Year 11	Year 12
	Year 12	Year 12	Year 12	

Figure 1

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
8 terms in Stage 4	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7
	Year 8	Year 8	Year 8	Year 8
8 terms in Stage 5	Year 9	Year 9	Year 9	Year 9
	Year 10	Year 10	Year 10	Year 10
7 terms in Stage 6	Year 11	Year 11	Year 11	Year 11/12
	Year 12	Year 12	Year 12	

Figure 2

Why the rollover is not as good as it seems

Many families are aware that our current practice, which has been in place for more than twenty years, is different to the other schools in NSW.

While the current practice is easily understood and communicated – there are 23 terms in secondary school, and Year 7 is only three terms long – it is not quite that simple in reality.

Some of the reasons that led the School to professionally conclude it could let go of the rollover include:



The rollover doesn't help HSC students

NESA does not permit schools to commence Stage 6 content before the start of the Year 11 calendar year. The rollover does provide an additional term for the IB students, but in Term 4 of Year 10, the HSC students do bridging courses to prepare them for Stage 6.



Being ready for Stage 6 is more important than starting Stage 6

It is helpful to distinguish between 'content' and 'skills and behaviours'. Obviously, in educational thinking the categories are linked, but they are different. While content is taught at particular points in the curriculum, skills and behaviours are taught and cultivated continually over their years at school. The point is, the students are able to prepare for success in Stage 6 before they commence the Stage 6 content.



Laying better foundations in Stage 4

The fundamental building blocks for success in Stage 6 are laid earlier in school. Band 6s are built in Year 7, so are Diploma results of 40+. Now, we truncate Stage 4. This entails some compromises and distortions of the curriculum. And we move students through these crucial years more quickly than the curriculum design intended.



There is a hidden cost of cohort acceleration

Effectively, we accelerate a whole cohort of students. Many of our students are accelerated in individual subjects, where that is a good option for their strengths and the best way to extend their learning. However, accelerating the whole cohort by a term, with no discernment of their readiness, is at least questionable.

Trinity has a disproportionate number of students on individual education plans. We have to at least ask the question whether accelerating the cohort through the rollover contributes to this issue.



Students mature a lot between October and February

Physical maturity, emotional maturity and cognitive maturity are often unevenly aligned in individuals, and also vary greatly across the cohort. However, it is inarguable that the students are more mature on every level in February of Year 11 than they are in October in Year 10. In practice, the content that is covered in Term 4 of Year 10 often needs to be re-taught in Year 11, simply because of their relative cognitive immaturity.



The standard model provides enough time for students to succeed

Both NESA and the IB Office have designed their respective curricula to be done in a certain number of hours. NESA call them indicative hours. The IB Office calls them recommended hours. Either way, they represent the amount of time that the curriculum is designed to take for the typical student. The standard model provides the necessary indicative hours for the HSC and the recommended hours for the IB Diploma students.



Reducing disruption from staff changes

Most schools do their recruiting of teachers to start at the beginning of a calendar year. This is when teachers mostly change schools. When we recruit someone who is only able to start in Term 1, we have to make temporary arrangements in Term 4. If one of our people goes elsewhere, it will usually be to start in Term 1, and so their Term 4 class gets a new teacher. Trinity has a relatively stable staff, but there is always some disruption for reasons of long service leave or maternity leave. However, the rollover brings extra disruption into play.



Allowing rest and a re-set for the new year

There is a natural rhythm to school life that is attuned to our wider community. There is a fresh start that comes with the new year following the long summer break. There is a sense of accomplishment that follows from the completion of the year. And there is a chance for our young people to rest and re-set over the long summer break before girding their loins for the fresh start of the new year. The rollover messes a bit with this rhythm. The fresh start isn't entirely a fresh start. The long break has some study hanging over it. The coherence of the year's learning is disrupted by an eight week hiatus.

"There are certainly strengths to the rollover model. Trinity has worked hard over the years to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses. Yet, as we sought to meet the challenges of COVID and remote learning, we were prepared to develop a solution that included letting go of the rollover."

Tim Bowden | Head Master