

NEWS

Students say new format for IB ‘not as scary or stressful’

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Education reporter

There’s something about an exam room that makes Lizzy Deters’ brain switch into gear. The tick of a clock, the nervous hum of her peers flipping through questions, the scratch of pens on paper.

“I just feel that I really perform best under pressure, and if I don’t have that pressure, I don’t feel the need to do as well,” she said.

Year 12 students sitting the International Baccalaureate will soon have the option to do their exams online, with plans for the HSC alternative to go digital between 2026 and 2029.

Students at St Paul’s Grammar School in Cranebrook sat a practice version of an online psychology test this month.

Lizzy said that typing made the exam feel more like classwork and not as “stressful or scary” as a high-stakes test.

Students could change fonts, text size and background colours – features Lizzy said were designed to make students “feel really comfortable; you could have it set however you wanted”.

“In an exam, your hand’s hurting, you are getting down as much as you can, whereas with typing it

‘With typing it did feel a lot more relaxed.’

Lizzy Deters

did feel a lot more relaxed,” she said.

Fellow St Paul’s student Ashton Russell said the exam was accessible, including a font for dyslexic students that made it easy to read.

“You don’t have the stress of having to write down, cross out, then write down again,” Ashton said. “With typing, you just back-space a few buttons and keep typing.”

IB Schools Australasia secretary Antony Mayrhofer said the move reflected the reality of the modern classroom.

“Students overwhelmingly prefer to work digitally, they all use their laptops for a lot of their learning,” Mayrhofer said.

However, not all students are fans of screens. MLC School year 12 student Crystal Huang chose the IB due to its breadth of subjects, but prefers to do exams by hand because “writing is a really important skill”.



St Paul’s Grammar year 12 students Ashton Russell and Lizzy Deters will do the IB online. Photo: Wolter Peeters

“I think nowadays a lot of young students are using screens a lot more, and I think sometimes we need to step back and go back to pen and paper,” Crystal said.

Principal Lisa Moloney said MLC was open to exploring online exams.

“As early adopters of new technologies, we would carefully consider how this option could en-

hance the learning experience and outcomes for our students,” Moloney said.

This year, 743 private school students across 20 schools are completing the IB, due to finish on Friday.

The program runs over two years, and students’ work is assessed externally in a mix of examinations (typically 75 per cent) and

school-based assessments. Students also complete a 4000-word research essay, community service and a subject called theory of knowledge, which develops critical and creative thinking skills.

All IB schools will have the option for students to sit online exams for select subjects from November 2026, with all subjects due to be available by 2029.