Taking a Gap Year

Some students choose to have a break from formal study at the end of Year 12. This has become known as ‘taking a gap year’. The reasons for choosing a gap year might include:

- Having a rest from study
- Working to earn money for further study, a car, a trip, etc.
- Exploring future career options
- Focusing on a particular activity (e.g. sport, music, art).

**Gap year activities**

There are many activities you can participate in during a gap year. These include:

- Travelling
- Working overseas
- Working in Australia
- Doing a traineeship or a short course
- Going on an overseas exchange
- Volunteering
- Doing work experience to gain an insight into the type of jobs you could consider in the future.

Whatever you choose to do, it is important to have a purpose and a plan for your gap year. Without this you could end up wasting a year of your life (e.g. alone in your bedroom playing computer games!).

If you just want a break from doing anything structured, think about the three months of holidays between finishing Year 12 and starting tertiary study the following year. This could be used to take the break you need.

Some students organise their gap year activities themselves. Others use the services of a gap year organisation.

**Gap year organisations**

The following is a selection of gap year organisations. You can do an Internet search for other organisations by using the search words ‘overseas exchange’ or ‘gap year’.

- Global Vision International [http://gvifoundations.co.uk/](http://gvifoundations.co.uk/)
Choosing a gap year program

Always thoroughly investigate any gap year program you are considering. Get your parents involved in this process. Start your research early to avoid missing out. Some gap year programs have application due dates early in Year 12 for the following year. Ideally, you should begin your research in Year 11 by:

- Exploring the gap year program websites
- Attending gap year program information sessions or online events (these are listed on the websites)
- Talking to people who have used the programs in the past.

Questions to ask when researching gap year programs include:

- What exactly will I be doing?
- Will I be alone or will other students on a gap year be with me?
- What can I expect for accommodation and food?
- Is there someone I can speak to who has used your program previously?
- What is the total cost of the program?
- What safety considerations are in place?
- What happens in an emergency?
- What support will I receive during the program?
- If I have a problem with my placement, is there someone to talk to?
- Is there a pre-departure orientation and a debriefing activity when I return?
- Do I have to sign anything?
- Who organises my travel plans and visas?
- What will the program expect of me when I return?

Should I apply for tertiary courses if I am going on a gap year?

Whatever you choose to do during your gap year, you need to consider whether to apply for a tertiary course at the end of Year 12. If you do apply and gain a place, you can request a deferment. This is a wise move as it keeps your options open.

In terms of tertiary courses, deferment means that you are first offered a place in a course by a tertiary institution. You then accept the offer but ask that your place in the course be reserved until one year later. The institution then guarantees that you can begin the course the following year.