

Textbook Collaboration: The Co-ordinate Programme

How can your child reap the benefits of single-sex education along with the real-world experience of co-education?
Answer: The Co-ordinate Programme, run between Ruyton Girls' School and all-boys Trinity Grammar School, Kew, which is available for students studying VCE in both schools.

"In a nutshell, it provides the best of both worlds," Trinity Headmaster Rick Tudor tells *WhichSchool*. "It's a co-education in the senior years while retaining the identity of the school community."

Principal of Ruyton Linda Douglas agrees. "The students love going to their home school but around Year 11 and 12 they become more independent, and they start to think about the next step. As emerging adults, they are prepared for university by broadening horizons in the programme."

The Co-ordinate Programme began in 1993 when language classes were combined between the two schools. From there, the programme grew into more than 60 co-educational classes offered today. Most students study at least one co-educational VCE subject per year.

Not only does the programme increase the subject range for VCE students, but it also decreases the likelihood of timetable clashes.

"We both offer the majority of subjects, but we put our timetables together," Ms Douglas says. "It allows students to study the subjects they want. When they know what they want to do and they're passionate about the subject, then they usually do well."

"Say if someone wants to do Biology and Psychology but they're in the same block, they can do one of those at the other school," Mr Tudor adds. "Therefore, they're more likely to get 100 per cent of subject choices."

Two or three teachers per year teach across both schools. The programme manager is one of those teachers, and has time dedicated to running the programme. Ms Douglas and Mr Tudor meet every three to four weeks and school executives meet annually.

"We foster good relations between the schools. The essence is we're good to each other and there's a lot of goodwill," Mr Tudor says.

"It would be quite difficult to emulate the programme in other schools," Ms Douglas adds. "Ruyton and Trinity are not only physically close – only 500 metres apart – but our philosophies are also aligned."

Co-educational classmates are treated alike and students are required to respect their partner school's rules and regulations.

"If our boys misbehave, we expect the Ruyton staff to pull them up. Conversely, if a Ruyton girl misbehaves, we are responsible for discipline," Mr Tudor says. "It's an agreement we have between the schools."



The Co-ordinate Program began in 1993 when girls who wished to study a language not offered at Ruyton were given the opportunity to do so at Trinity. From there, the programme grew into more than 60 co-educational classes offered today. Most students study at least one co-educational subject per year.

Separately, each school retains its size and identity. Non-denominational Ruyton, which was founded in 1878, focuses on the holistic development of the girls in a safe, nurturing, understanding environment. Girls participate, lead and influence at every level of the school, and become strong role models. Ruyton's high standards derive from achievements girls attain when placed in a supportive environment where they can safely take intellectual risks.

Since opening in 1902, Trinity, in an equally supportive environment, places great importance on values that recognise the worth of each boy, and on the respect they should show for others.

Although the school seeks to affirm Christian values, supporting and respecting other faiths is a core value. Trinity's mission is to provide a caring, happy, dynamic environment, which encourages students to fulfil their academic and personal potential. Significant emphasis is given to the importance of positive relationships.

Both schools offer a rich and diverse range of co-curricular activities – some of which are also shared. Ruyton girls and Trinity boys collaborate through drama, debating, and dance classes. Each year, the schools hold a joint senior musical that alternates location, and, in 2012, Trinity hosted the first combined symphony concert.

"The musical is a real tradition and it really emphasises the sharing of resources, teachers and the like between schools," Ms Douglas says.

"The concert was a fantastic night," Mr Tudor adds. "So many talented musicians from both schools were involved. We'll probably run it every four or five years."

Old Trinity Grammarians and Old Ruytonians say the Co-ordinate Programme formed an important part of their school experience, and parents

appreciate the chance for their children to learn in a co-educational environment. During its 20-year history, it's become a sought-after feature of the schools.

"When we've held Ruyton information sessions parents often say, 'We've heard about the Co-ordinate Programme and it's why we're here'," Ms Douglas says. "The programme is very important for both schools, as it meets the needs of both communities."

As well as presenting a forum where students can gain a better understanding of both genders' views, the Co-ordinate Programme promotes friendships, respect, and strong and varied leadership across the schools. Overall, Ruyton and Trinity provide a large-scale example of how both genders collaborate to produce a valuable and long-term project.

By providing students the subject choices they want, with the chance to do so in a co-educational environment at an appropriate stage of maturity, the programme ensures they are given all opportunities to develop and thrive both academically and in personal development. With 20 years of history, the Co-ordinate Programme is set for another 20 years of excellence ahead.

