

SASTA Newsletter

February 2026

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FEBRUARY

Teachers New to Stage 2 Science

WEBINAR: Running the Room - How to Manage Behaviour in the Labs

MARCH

WEBINAR: How to teach Science in composite classrooms

The SHE Task Workshop

Leading Science Workshop

Dealing with AI in Science Workshop

Strategies for Metacognitive Thinking Workshop

Term 1 Members Networking & Nibbles

2026 SASTA Annual Conference

13 - 14 April 2026 | Morialta Secondary College

Join primary and secondary educators at the SASTA Annual Conference. This year's theme focuses on curiosity as a driver of scientific thinking, exploring practical ways to engage students and build meaningful connections across science learning.

We're pleased to confirm Professor Kishan Dholakia, 2025 SA Scientist of the Year, as our keynote speaker, bringing insight into contemporary science and its relevance for classrooms.

SAVE THE DATE! Program details and registration will be released at the end of February.



@SASTAInc



@sascienceteachers



South Australian Science Teachers Association



South Australian Science Teachers Association Inc.

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Education Officer
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Newsletter copy deadlines 2026

(Advertising deadlines one week earlier)

Edition	Deadline
May	17 April
August	10 July
November	16 October

Advertising rates & booking form available online at www.sasta.asn.au

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From the Education Officer



Hi everyone! I hope you had a relaxing summer holiday and that the start of the year has gone smoothly for you. Welcome to our first edition of the SASTA Newsletter for 2026, and my first edition as Education Officer.

My name is Rachel and I began my education journey demonstrating and tutoring at Flinders University while I completed my PhD in Chemistry. In 2015 I pivoted into the school sector after completing a Graduate Diploma in Education. Since then, I've been teaching science to students in Years 6-10, as well as SACE Chemistry and Physics, at Kangaroo Island Community Education. This year I am teaching Chemistry and Physics for half the week and working in my new role at SASTA for the other half. Most of the time I work from home, but I come to the Adelaide office at least twice a term. I love being able to contribute in a positive way to my community by working with students and their families, and I've really enjoyed beginning to extend my skills by supporting our teaching community with improved member resources, opportunities for networking and some wonderful professional learning experiences.

One of my first tasks was helping to finalise our Professional Learning calendar, and I have to say that Term 1 has been action-packed! Our annual 'Teachers New To' workshops for Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Nutrition and Psychology are held in February. I remember attending the Physics workshop myself and it was incredibly useful and reassuring to

access quality resources, get my head around assessment tasks and connect with other beginning Physics teachers. I hope those who attended this year found them just as valuable.

I know how challenging it can be to get release time to attend PD opportunities, so I'm pleased that we'll also be running two Members Free Webinars in Term 1.

The Oliphant Science Awards are beginning to ramp up again, and we recently hosted our Navigating the Oliphant Science Awards Webinar. If you weren't able to join us, please keep an eye on the SASTA website for a recording. Our New Schools Incentive, Country Schools Bursary and Regional Student Travel Fund applications are open until Sunday 22 March, and our judging registrations will open on Monday 2 March.

Our Annual Conference is fast approaching and will be held at Morialta Secondary College on April 13-14. We're looking forward to welcoming many of you there. We will also be holding our SASTA Annual General Meeting at the Conference and would like to call for nominations from anyone interested in sitting on the SASTA Board.

Do you know a colleague who has inspired you or makes an outstanding contribution to science education? Nominations are open for our SASTA Awards and I encourage you to consider nominating either yourself or one of your peers.

Enjoy, and I look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming events!

Rachel Pillar
Education Officer

Your SASTA Membership for 2026

Whether you're planning Term 1 lessons, mapping out your PD goals or connecting with colleagues, your SASTA membership is here to support you.

A big thank you to those who have already renewed for 2026 — we're excited for what's ahead.

Haven't renewed yet? It only takes a few minutes: <https://www.sasta.asn.au/renew/form>

In 2026, your membership includes:

- A full Professional Learning calendar of workshops, webinars and member events
- Access to an expanding resources library designed by teachers, for teachers

Thank you for being part of the SASTA community in 2025. Your engagement strengthens science education across South Australia.

Professional Learning for Term 1 2026



Teachers New to Teaching Stage 2 Science

Education Development Centre
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Key topics covered in these workshops include an overview of the course, planning and assessment, sample tasks, and discussion and moderation.

Participants will have the opportunity to share and discuss ideas, tasks, and other resources for teaching the current course.

Biology

Friday 6 February

Andrew Sayers (Henley High School)

Physics

Friday 6 February

Presented by Michael Smith
(Tatachilla Lutheran College)

Chemistry

Friday 13 February

Presented by Vera Dunaiski
(Westminster School)

Psychology

Friday 20 February

Presented by Emma Beukema
(St Mary's College)

Nutrition

Monday 23 February

Presented by Elizabeth Arthur
(Nazareth Catholic College)



The SHE Task Workshop

Friday 6 March | 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Education Development Centre

Presenter: Jason Greenslade, Curriculum Leader Science, Westminster School

This workshop is aimed at people who want to further their skills in setting, assessment and providing feedback on the SHE task. It also will cover the writing and marking of SHE questions for tests and examinations. There will be time to examine your own students' work and participate in cross-moderation and marking of drafts.

"Brilliant workshop. Learnt many useful and creative techniques. Great resources. Knowledgeable and generous presenter." - 2025 Attendee



Dealing with AI in Science Workshop

Friday 20 March | 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Education Development Centre

Presenter: Jarrod Johnson, Pulteney Grammar School

An open, collaborative space to explore how AI can support and enhance teaching practice. This session will focus on practical ways to reduce workload, create engaging learning experiences, and streamline tasks such as planning and administration using tools like ChatGPT.

Whether you're just beginning to explore AI or seeking new ways to integrate it into your classroom, you'll gain actionable ideas, shared experiences, and hands-on examples to help make your teaching journey more efficient, impactful, and inspiring.



Leading in Science: Established Workshop

Friday 13 March | 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Education Development Centre

Presenter: Jason Greenslade, Curriculum Leader Science, Westminster School

In this workshop we will look at more advanced topics of pedagogical and staff leadership. This day builds on the Leading in Science workshop but is not required. This will be useful for anyone hoping to work with or lead teachers in areas of curriculum.

Professional Learning for Term 1 2026



Strategies for Metacognitive Thinking Workshop

Monday 23 March | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Education Development Centre

Presenter: Renee Rees, Cardijn College

This interactive professional development session explores how explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies can enhance student learning, engagement, and independence.

Participants will unpack what metacognition looks like in practice and learn how to embed it within existing routines and curriculum.

Drawing on high-impact teaching strategies and cognitive load theory, the session models a range of classroom-ready approaches that help students plan, monitor, and evaluate their thinking. Educators will engage in hands-on activities, collaborative discussion, and structured reflection, leaving with practical tools and strategies to implement immediately. Follow-up opportunities allow teachers to share implementation experiences and deepen their understanding of metacognitive instruction.

Members Events for Term 1 2026

Networking and Nibbles

Friday 27 March | 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM
Brickmakers Arms

Join fellow members of your science community for a relaxed and engaging afternoon designed to spark connections and ideas. Whether you've been part of the association for years or just recently joined, this is your chance to meet new faces, share stories, and strengthen your professional circle.

Enjoy a relaxed afternoon with a selection of tasty nibbles, your first drink on us, and plenty of great conversation with fellow members.

Webinar: How to teach Science in composite classrooms

Wednesday 4 March | 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
Online via Zoom

Presenters: Liz Gehling, Ardtornish Primary School

This webinar will present strategies for teaching composite classes across a site, backed by classroom-tested examples. Participants will also receive resources designed to assist in implementing these approaches within their own educational sites.

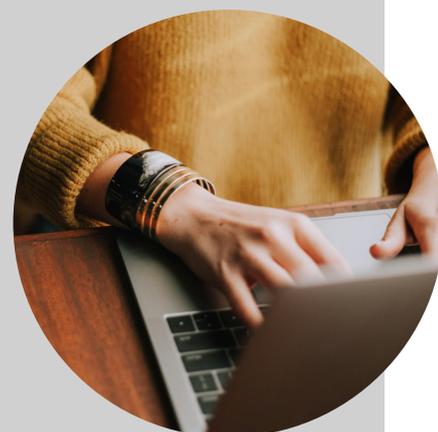
WEBINAR: Running the Room - How to Manage Behaviour in the Labs

Wednesday 18 Feb | 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
Online via Zoom

Presenters: Oliwia Derda and Daniel Mawhinney, St Columba College

Creating a calm, respectful and productive learning environment is essential in every classroom, particularly in the science lab where safety and engagement are closely linked. This workshop explores how effective behaviour management underpins strong science learning. We will examine how clear expectations, consistent routines and proactive teacher presence support both safety and focus.

Participants will leave with practical, ready-to-implement strategies for establishing lab norms, responding to disruption and strengthening class culture.



CULTIVATING CURIOSITY

Join primary and secondary educators and members of the science education community at the 2026 SASTA Annual Conference, on 13-14 April 2026.

This year's theme, 'Cultivating Curiosity,' invites educators to explore how curiosity drives scientific thinking and learning in the classroom. The program will highlight teaching practices, learning environments and real-world connections that engage learners and nurture deep inquiry across all year levels.

INSPIRING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

We're pleased to confirm Professor Kishan Dholakia, the 2025 SA Scientist of the Year, as our keynote presenter. Professor Dholakia's work exemplifies innovative scientific inquiry, and his session will inspire teachers to foster curiosity and connection in science learning.

CUTTING-EDGE SESSIONS

The program will include workshops that showcase current scientific research and thinking, giving teachers insight into how science is being investigated and applied in real-world contexts. These sessions highlight contemporary issues and emerging research from South Australian scientists, supporting teacher content knowledge and broader scientific understanding.

- Associate Professor Hannah Wardill exploring supportive oncology and how cancer treatment impacts the gut and mental health
- Associate Professor Tasha Stanton examining how the brain and body interact in chronic pain
- Dr Georgina Falster unpacking long-term drought patterns in Australia

WHY ATTEND?

- Engage with leaders in science education and professional practice.
- Gain practical strategies you can apply in your classroom or school.
- Connect with fellow educators and share insights and experiences.
- Explore hands-on sessions designed to spark curiosity in students.

With keynote presentations, breakout sessions and networking opportunities, this is your chance to be part of a vibrant professional learning community shaping science teaching in 2026.

Save the date and join us for this exciting professional learning opportunity!

PROGRAM TO BE RELEASED LATE FEBRUARY. REGISTRATION OPENS SOON.



2026 Oliphant Science Awards

It's time once again for School Coordinators to register for the 2026 competition: www.oliphantscienceawards.com.au

As always, the website and booklet have everything you need to know about this year's competition, including registration fees, deadlines, rules, forms, and titles (where relevant). **We've added checklists for each category to help students prepare all required information for their entry!** These can be found in the Information Booklet or can be downloaded from the website.

We have developed an AI policy to clearly outline how AI tools may be used in the competition entries. You can find this document in the Information Booklet, as well as a Student AI checklist to assist with correct use of AI.

KEY DATES

- **Sunday 17 May:** Student registrations close
- **Sunday 17 May:** Judges registrations close
- **Friday 5 June – Sunday 28 June:** Multimedia, Science Writing and Scientific Inquiry entries and Reports for Programming, Apps and Robotics **MUST** be submitted online
- **Saturday 25 July:** Programming, Apps & Robotics Judging Day (strictly by appointment)
- **Monday 27 July - Sunday 2 August:** Models & Inventions reports and risk assessments can be submitted online. Supporting videos for Games projects may also be submitted online.
- **Wednesday 5 August:** Crystal Investigation, Games, Models & Inventions, Photography & Poster entries to be delivered.
- **Friday 7 - Sunday 9 August:** Open Day at Science Alive!

NEW & COUNTRY SCHOOL INCENTIVES

NEW SCHOOLS INCENTIVE

Schools that have not participated in the past five years needing assistance for participation in the Oliphant Science Awards are eligible to apply for support. Recipients of the New School Incentive will have the opportunity to enter the Oliphant Science Awards with the provision of up to \$200.00 allocated towards entry project registration fees.

Closing Date: Sunday 22 March

COUNTRY SCHOOLS BURSARY

Country and regional schools needing assistance for participation in the Oliphant Science Awards are eligible to apply for the Country Schools Bursary. Country Schools can apply for a bursary of up to \$500 per school to support the cost of: student registration fees, courier/transport costs for the delivery and pick up of projects and/or project materials

Closing Date: Sunday 22 March

REGIONAL STUDENT TRAVEL FUND

To assist the participation of country and regional students in the 2026 OSA Open Days and Presentation Ceremony, OSA Coordinators can apply for funding of up to \$300 through the Regional Student Travel Fund.

Closing Date: Friday 5 June



2026

SA'S LARGEST SCIENCE COMPETITION

2026 SASTA Awards

Great teachers often fly under the radar, and **SASTA wants to celebrate their outstanding achievements and contributions to the science community.**

Do you know a colleague who inspires you or serves as a role model in science education? Or would you like to share your own accomplishments? **Now is your chance to nominate!**

Nominations are free and open to SASTA members across several prestigious awards:

SASTA Medal

The SASTA Medal is the highest honour awarded by SASTA to one of its members in recognition of their significant long term commitment to the association and their contribution to science education.

Credit Union SA / SASTA Outstanding Contribution to the Teaching of Science Awards

The Outstanding Contribution to the Teaching of Science Awards recognises educators who have made a meaningful impact on student learning in science.

Helen Castle Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship is in memory of Helen Castle, a dedicated and enthusiastic science teacher who tragically died during the Eyre Peninsula bush fires in 2005. The scholarship is designed to assist country science teachers attend the SASTA Annual Conference and gain professional development to assist themselves and other country teachers to maintain a high standard of science teaching in country areas. Two (2) scholarships of \$500 plus a complimentary conference registration are awarded to enable country based science teachers to attend the SASTA Annual Conference.

Nominations close on Monday, 9 March, at 4:00 PM. Online nomination forms and full award criteria can be found at

www.sasta.asn.au/about_us/awards

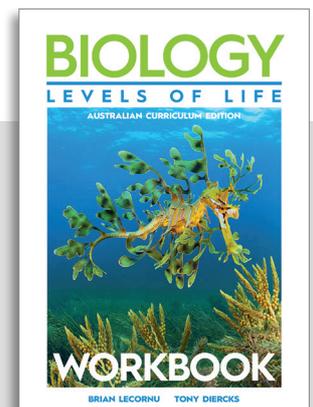
HELP US SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON THE INCREDIBLE WORK OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE EDUCATORS. NOMINATE TODAY!

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is given that the 2026 Annual General Meeting of members of the South Australian Science Teachers Association Incorporated will be held on Tuesday 14 April at 10.10am for the purpose of transacting the items of business listed below.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Apologies
2. Minutes of the 2025 AGM
 - (a) Acceptance
 - (b) Business Arising
3. President's Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Board Members
6. General Business
 - (a) Membership Fees
 - (b) Appointment of Auditor
7. Any Other Business



Biology: Levels of Life - Teaching Notes (\$120.00)

Teachers will find the Teaching Notes invaluable in ensuring that all Science Understandings are covered for each of the four topics. There are teaching tips throughout as well as additional information. Answers to questions in the Workbook will assist teachers in explaining concepts to students.

Call for SASTA Board nominations 2026

South Australian Science Teachers Association
ABN 22 938 317 192

Closing date: 5.00 pm 16 March 2026

Call for nominations

All members of SASTA are hereby notified of a call for nominations for two (2) positions on the Board.

Composition of the Board and terms of office

The board consists of up to nine (9) elected members who shall hold office for a term of three (3) years. Continuous elected membership shall not exceed nine (9) years.

Responsibilities of Board Members

The Board governs SASTA and has overall responsibility for determining the strategic plan and priorities, monitoring implementation and developing a resource base to support the organisation's activities. It is also responsible for the financial viability of SASTA and ensuring compliance with statutory requirements applicable to an association. All Board members are required to act in what the Board considers are the best interests of the organisation, being the interests of the membership as a whole.

Nominees should be aware that there are at least six Board meetings each year for corporate governance purposes. There is an emphasis on policy and, specifically, corporate governance. The Board is not involved in the day to day running of the association's business.

Position description and nomination form

A Board Member position description and nomination form is available on the SASTA website in the 'Members Area'.

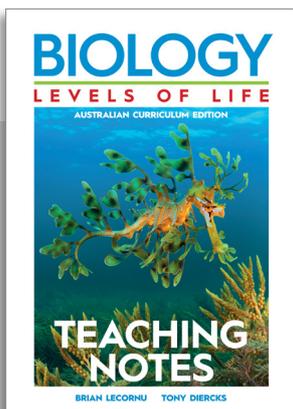
NOTE: Personal Members are entitled to vote and hold office in the Association. Each Corporate Member shall be entitled to one vote by a nominated delegate acceptable to the Board in elections of the Association but no such delegate shall be entitled to hold office through Corporate Membership nor may Corporate Members nominate others for office.

Further information

Members interested in nominating for the Board are welcome to contact Tegan McClean, Executive Officer, on 8354 0006 or email tegan@sasta.asn.au if they require further information.

BIOLOGY: LEVELS OF LIFE

Brian LeCornu and Tony Diercks



Biology: Levels of Life - Australian Curriculum Edition Textbook PRINTED VERSION \$64.95 | E-BOOK \$17.00

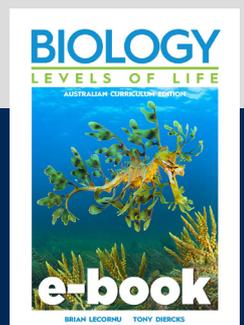
This textbook provides detailed coverage of all the content (Science Understanding) of the SACE Stage 2 Biology subject. The new content is relevant, up-to-date and addresses Science as a Human Endeavour, with many examples throughout. The textbook is divided into four topics, with each topic presented in chapters designed to make the material easy to follow, with study questions at the end of each chapter. **A complimentary 15 month subscription to the e-book is available with every hard copy purchased.**

Biology: Levels of Life - Australian Curriculum Edition Workbook

PRINTED VERSION \$24.40 | E-BOOK \$10.00

Written specifically to complement the textbook, this workbook covers all Science Understandings of the Biology subject outline. It can be used in conjunction with the textbook or on its own as an aid for understanding and revision. By completing answers to the workbook questions, students will develop their knowledge and understanding of biological principles and concepts.

The Biology: Levels of Life Textbook AND Workbook are available as **INTERACTIVE e-books!**



For full details visit the SASTA website.



AUSTRALIAN
SCIENCE
INNOVATIONS

Release the scientists!

Get your high school students involved in our science extension programs.



**Big Science
Competition**
4 to 15 May



**Junior Science
Olympiad Exams**
10 & 12 June



**Australian Science
Olympiad Exams**
27 to 30 July

Join our digital mailing list & follow us on social media to be notified when registrations open in 2026.



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Students Soar with Fleet Space's LaunchBox Program

Years 7 and 8 students at Mary MacKillop College reached for the stars during an exciting two-day LaunchBox program run in partnership with Fleet Space on December 1 and 2. This immersive experience, funded through the Australian Government's Schools Pathways Program, gave students an authentic taste of the space industry as they formed their own space companies and completed real-world satellite missions.



Over the course of the program, students were placed into seven teams, each named after trailblazing women in the space industry. This inspiring theme set the tone for a collaborative and forward-thinking experience that celebrated curiosity, innovation and teamwork.

The LaunchBox journey began with an introduction to Fleet Space followed by a series of onboarding activities where students learned about roles and responsibilities within a space organisation. Teams established their companies, developed names, logos and missions, and defined each member's role whether as an engineer, scientist, marketer or manager.

Through a sequence of modules, students explored satellite design, orbital science and company strategy. Using their RASCube-LB kits, teams built and tested small-scale satellite models, troubleshooting and coding as they progressed. Between modules, lively movement activities kept energy high and encouraged teamwork and friendly competition.

Day two took the experience further with a focus on solving real-world problems through satellite technology. Each group selected a global issue to address. Projects explored challenges such as algal blooms, remote internet access, deforestation, communication barriers and even the mysteries of dark matter in space exploration. Guided by research and data, students developed innovative RASCube-based solutions and learned that plans sometimes need refining which encouraged them to persevere, problem-solve and return to the drawing board when ideas didn't unfold as expected.

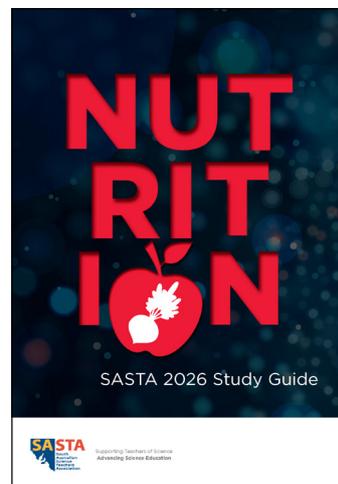
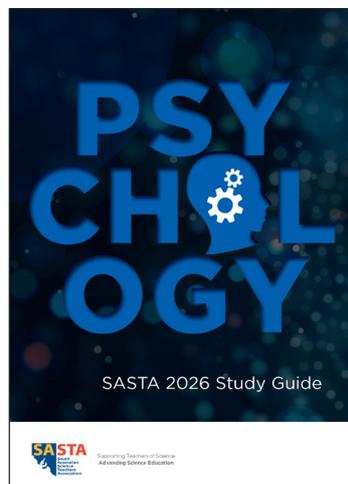
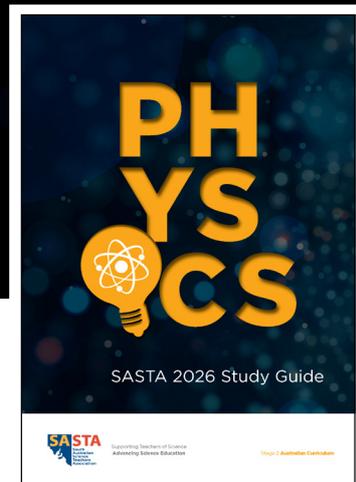
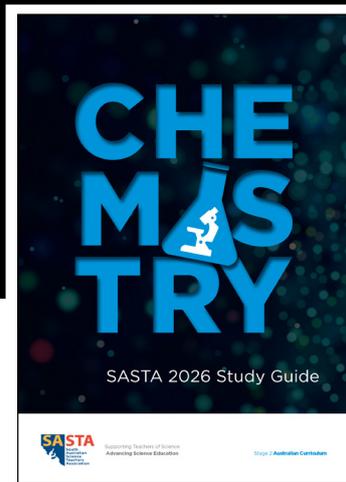
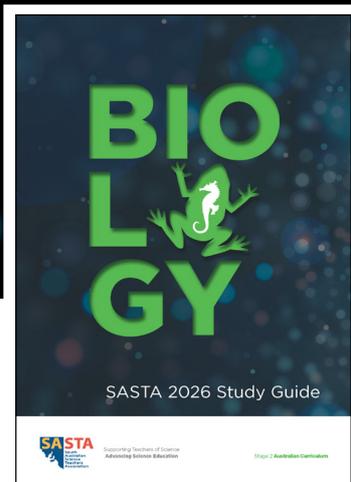
The program culminated in each team presenting a five-minute pitch which included a one-minute company video showcasing their brand identity, mission statement and team roles. Judges and peers watched as students explained their chosen problem, presented data, demonstrated their solutions and shared insights from their mission results. Awards and certificates were presented to celebrate their achievements in teamwork, leadership, innovation and technical understanding.

By the end of the two days, students not only had hands-on experience with satellite technology but also gained confidence in communication, collaboration and critical thinking. The LaunchBox program proved to be an inspiring way to conclude the school year, encouraging the next generation of innovators to look to the stars while keeping their feet grounded in teamwork and discovery.

Dimitra Thomas, Learning Area Leader – Science, Mary MacKillop College



SASTA 2026 Study Guides



SASTA Study Guides are the perfect companion for students gearing up for their Stage 2 SACE exams. These guides provide a comprehensive range of questions, accompanied by worked solutions covering all topics in the Subject Outline. To keep things fresh and relevant, we update our guides each year with solutions from the previous year's exams and introduce brand new questions to further enhance exam readiness.

\$35 each

plus delivery or orders can be collected from the SASTA office

Available May 2026

Available to pre-order at www.sasta.asn.au