

BACK TO SCHOOL

EDUCATION SPECIAL

Professional views.

Representatives from three Costa del Sol schools and colleges share their optimism for the new year **P2&3**

Getting off to a good start.

Caution, planning and family communication are vital as the new term starts **P6**

Technology. A variety of study apps can help pupils of all ages organise their time and optimise their learning **P10&11**



ONLINE ROUNDTABLE. Melissa Butler, campus director **American College in Spain**, Chris Long, principal **English International College**; Amanda Hughes, school principal at **Laude San Pedro International College**; all brought their expertise to the discussion, moderated by **SUR in English** editor, Rachel Haynes

International schools and colleges all set for a successful new year

MALAGA

SUR in English. September marks the start of a new school year, and everybody now knows that with the pandemic nothing is as it used to be and there is a great deal of uncertainty. On Monday 6 September SUR in English hosted an Education and Learning Virtual Roundtable Webinar with professionals from three international schools on the Costa del Sol, to see how they were feeling and what they had prepared for the new term.

The webinar was hosted by SUR in English editor Rachel Haynes, and the participants were Melissa Butler, the Campus Director of The American College in Spain, Chris Long, the Principal of The English International College Marbella (EIC), and Amanda Hughes, the Principal of Laude San Pedro International College, who was unable to take part in person but provided her contribution to the discussion a little later.

Covid-19 precautions

The virtual meeting began with a look at how these international schools and colleges are feeling about the Covid-19 protocols which still have to be in place, and how they have prepared for a new year of teaching.

Melissa said the American College was completely prepared for the new term, which was due to start the following day, and the measures were the same as last year. Each pupil has a designated desk and screen, and wears a mask while they are sitting there, although Melissa hopes it may soon be possible for the mask rule to be relaxed at their desks, even if masks have to be worn as they move around the campus.

Chris Long, who was joining the webinar on the first day of term at the EIC, said the atmosphere was slightly different this year because people are used to the protocols now, whereas last year they were something completely new. He said people understand that the rules are necessary, although he too hopes that it might be possible for the requirement for masks in the classroom and student bubbles to be lifted.

At Laude, Amanda said, where the new school year had already begun, parents had been sent a Welcome document setting out all the proce-



A group of students listen to their teacher's explanations. SUR

dures that students, staff and families have to follow, and new families had received a very clear guide to show them where they enter the school and how to connect with the academic team, so that everyone feels supported.

All three said they were looking forward to this new school year and were excited about being able to do more extra-curricular activities this year. There is a sense that things are becoming a little more normal, and all the schools are placing a strong focus on activities relating to the environment and outdoor pursuits.

Nerves and excitement

Rachel asked about the atmosphere surrounding the start of term, and Chris Long said that on that first day it was really nice. "There are a lot of nerves today, but also a lot of positivity," he said. "There's a feeling of excitement about everything that lies ahead, and it is so nice to have them all back again."

Melissa Butler said she was expecting a lot of nerves when term began the following day and wasn't sure whether there would be much excitement, and if there was it would probably be more among the par-

Teachers and pupils are feeling excited and optimistic about the start of the new school year and feel that things are finally beginning to get back to something resembling normality. Here, three head teachers talk to SUR in English about how their schools have coped so far, what they are looking forward to this year and how proud they are of their students

ents than the pupils. Entry on the first day would be staggered, she said, so the new students can be welcomed warmly, and a 'class buddy' system would be in place for a couple of weeks, whereby older pupils befriend new ones and help them to become accustomed to their new environment. She said the staff were looking forward to the new term and seeing the children again. "We're missing them," she said.

At Laude, Amanda Hughes said the school's philosophy is based on their Three Pillars: that the children are Safe, Happy and Learning. "The safety and happiness of students, staff and families are so important at the start of any year when children meet new teachers, new friends etc. To do this during a pandemic means that we all have to take time to get to know each other. Interestingly though, one thing we noticed last year was that the children thrive on their school routines. They enjoyed the comfort of familiarity and continuity after so much change and uncertainty," she explained.

More extra-curricular activities this year

As mentioned earlier, all the schools

are looking forward to being able to do more extra-curricular activities and many of these have an environmental focus.

Chris Long pointed out that this is an important year for environmental matters, with the COP26 summit in Glasgow coming up, and that these activities will help to build a sense of community among the students. Whereas before the pandemic pupils at the EIC had had the chance to travel abroad, the restrictions made the school realise that they have fantastic local facilities which they have never really used. "The beach is an excellent resource," he said, "and we also have woods nearby which we have never used much. We will be doing much more local field work now".

Melissa Butler agreed. Like those at the EIC, students at the American College will be taking part in beach clean-ups and the school is keen to offer scuba-diving as a new extra-curricular activity. "We have agreements with some local clubs, and scuba-diving can also be linked with beach clean-ups," she explained. She also emphasised that these after-school activities bring the students together, and they feel part of whatever they are doing.

Amanda Hughes is also enthusiastic about the extracurricular activities this year. "They give the students the opportunity to follow their passions, learn new skills, develop new friendships and practise communication in a variety of ways," she explained. "When we restarted our extracurricular activities this year we could see how much the children and families appreciated this additional service".

While health experts stress the benefits of outdoor activities during the pandemic, they are by no means the only ones to be offered by these schools this year.

Students at the EIC have a "rich programme of activities," said Chris Long, including sports, debating, coding and performing arts. "We put a show on every year and invite parents and members of the community to come and see it, and the preparation for that begins with choir, singing classes, drama etc".

Melissa Butler said that as well as all the extra activities which are being introduced this year, she is looking forward to students at the American College being able to go on trips around the area to places such as Granada and Ronda, and discover the local culture, as many of them are unaware of it. The pupils will also have the opportunity to try new things, with guest speakers on matters such as survival, kickboxing and other options. "We hope this will encourage more interaction and the students will enjoy spending time together," she said.

Size and support

The American College of Spain, the English International College and Laude San Pedro International College are all very different. The American College prepares students for the American university system; many students from the EIC go on to universities in the UK and Laude is based upon the English National Curriculum with an option to study within the Spanish system from the age of 12, but they are all small educational centres and they believe this helps the rapport between pupils and teachers and between students of all ages, which means there is plenty of support, something that is needed



Melissa Butler Campus director, American College in Spain

"Every student has a designated desk and screen and wears a mask while sitting there, but I hope the mask rule will be relaxed soon"

"The extra-curricular activities bring students together and they feel part of whatever they are doing"

"We will maintain some online teaching methods but face-to-face is better for teachers and students"



Chris Long Principal, English International College

"It feels a bit different this year because everyone is used to the protocols, whereas last year it was all something new"

"We realised that we have fantastic local facilities for extra-curricular activities which we have never really used"

"There are some benefits to technology and it's good to know the hybrid system is there if we need it"



Amanda Hughes Principal, Laude San Pedro International College

"All parents were sent a Welcome Document setting out the procedures and new families received a very clear guide"

"The activities give the children the chance to follow their passions and develop new friendships"

"I am so happy that we are back on campus and will continue to work alongside our outstanding team"

after the difficulties of the pandemic.

What will stay?

Asked whether the schools will be continuing with any of the new technologies which had to be introduced as a result of the pandemic, Melissa said some of the online teaching methods will be continued, although the American College would prefer face-to-face teaching as much as possible because the hybrid approach is harder for teachers and not as beneficial for students.

Chris Long pointed out that teachers had had to upskill very quickly because of the pandemic, and that there are some benefits such as the ease of holding meetings and sending information online, but he too feels that although the hybrid method of teaching is good, he would prefer a total in-class system because it is less disruptive. "However," he said, "it's good to know that that system is there if we need it".

Despite all the difficulties and problems faced by school pupils last year, many of them did well in their exams. Chris Long says the EIC's GCSE and A-level students had been fantastic, even though so many things were different. For example, they had to wear masks to do the exams, and that raised the question was it fair for them to have to do exams at all if they had to wear masks, and the whole approach to education throughout the whole year had been different. "They have been remarkable and they deserved to do well," he said.

Melissa Butler explained that the American system is different as the exams take place all through the year, and are sent from and graded by the USA. "It's very good, but it's a different system," she said, "and we're lucky we can do that."

And Amanda Hughes summed everything up nicely: "I feel hugely proud of and happy for our graduates who have achieved wonderful exam results. I am really excited to see the school continue to grow and develop academically for the children. I am so happy that we are back on campus and that we will continue work alongside the outstanding team of colleagues that we have at school," she said.



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THE SCHOOL RUN. Spain's General-Directorate for Traffic (DGT) has issued advice to ensure safe and healthy journeys to and from school this new term

How do you get to school?

MADRID

SUR. Many children started going back to school already this week and the government's Traffic authority (DGT) is calling on everyone to make the start of this new school year as safe and healthy as possible by promoting walking, cycling and public transport. This has also been one of the objectives of the Spanish Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020.

This is because using an active means of transport to get to and from school is not only good for the health because it improves physical fitness, avoids a sedentary lifestyle and prevents obesity, but it is also beneficial for school performance: being physically active on the way to school improves attention, interest and participation in class. It is also good for socialising, because walking to school with friends or relatives promotes social relations and ties with the community. And, of course, if fewer motor vehicles are used for this purpose more space is available for pedestrians and safety is improved.

In any case, whatever means of transport is chosen to return to school, it is essential that the basic rules regarding road safety are always respected:

On foot

- When walking, always cross the road where there are official crossing places, wait until the cars have stopped completely and look both ways carefully before starting to cross.

By bike

- When cycling, always wear a helmet and reflective elements so you can be seen. Give clear signs when you are manoeuvring and respect other road users.

School bus

- Always use the seatbelt on the school bus. Doing so reduces fatal injury by 90 per cent in a head-on collision or if the vehicle turns over.



School buses are back on the roads this week. SUR

Nine out of every ten accidents on school transport take place when children are getting on or off the bus, or immediately afterwards

Be careful when getting on and off the bus, because nine out of every ten accidents on school transport take place when getting on or off or immediately afterwards, and in many cases there are collisions resulting from a distraction, either by the child, the bus driver or parents.

By car

- In a car children should always be restrained by a system which is suitable for their weight and height, even when going to after-school activities. There are no excuses for failing to do this! Drivers should always respect traffic regulations and make sure they park the car correctly.

By motorbike

- Children can travel as a passenger on a motorbike from the age of 12, or the age of seven if they are travelling with parents or guardians. They must always wear a helmet and their rucksack must be fastened securely so as not to destabilise the driver.

THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF MÁLAGA

The British School of Málaga in Cerrado de Calderón expands its facilities with a new Primary building



New Primary Building

The new Primary building, with its new technological, sports and cultural facilities, represents the consolidation of this well-known school in the city both in the number of places and the quality of the facilities.

MÁLAGA

SUR. The British School of Málaga, the only British school in the capital is to extend their facilities with a new Primary building. The new construction will

include new technological, sports and cultural facilities. Upon completion, the school which is surrounded by greenery and sits amongst more than 19,000 square metres in the residential area of Cerrado de Calderón, will be able to offer a building dedicated to each educational stage (Infants, Primary, Secondary & Sixth Form) as well as boast impressive sports facilities.

The new Primary building, which will be situated next to the tennis courts and will consist of a four storey structure of some 3700 square metres will be dedicated to primary education. This new building will house students from Years 1 (5 years of age) to Year 6 (10 years old) and

will enable each year group to have a three class intake. The extension will also allow for a larger intake in Secondary and Sixth Form given that the main building will principally be for the use of the older year groups.

This project is in response to parent demand, given that many of our Primary and Secondary year groups already have a waiting list. The school, which has almost 750 students on roll, follows the British Curriculum complemented with Spanish studies through which the students obtain a double qualification (valid in both English and Spanish Systems).

This combined curriculum, whose central focus is English, has increasingly become the choi-

ce of many local families. Equally, the growing international population in Málaga choose this education for their children.

The new Primary building has been designed not only to increase the number of places but to improve the quality of the facilities. Furthermore, of the proposed 18 classrooms, the building will include rooms for Food Technology, Music and Theatre, Art, ICT, a Library as well as Spanish, EAL (English as an Additional Language) and support classrooms.

The school will also benefit from a fully equipped multipurpose covered area on the ground floor which will be used for sporting and cultural events.

The British School of Málaga situated in Málaga capital for over 20 years, became part of the International Schools Partnership in 2018 and aims to be the school of choice in Málaga. The philosophy of the group is that each student develops amazing learning which progresses and improves individually, at the same time forming an international mindset through innovative learning.

MORE INFORMATION

Sophie Lowe
admissions@britishschoolmala-
ga.com
952 290 149

Amazing Results

A LEVEL RESULTS 2021

23%

of grades achieved were

A*

60%

of grades achieved were

A*-A

83%

of grades achieved were

A*-C



A* A* A* A*

Sara de la C.
Business Administration
IE University, Madrid



A* A* A* A*

Anna G.
International Relations
Universidad Carlos III



A* A* A* A*

Marina G.
International Business
WHU – Otto Beisheim School



A* A* A*

Adriana M.
Business Administration
CUNEF, Madrid



A* A* A

Andrey M.
Mathematics
Durham University

(I)GCSE RESULTS 2021

26%

of grades achieved were

9 (A*)

49%

of grades achieved were

9-7 (A*-A)

90%

of grades achieved were

9-4 (A*-C)



10 A*-A

Mia A.



9 A*-A

Tyra H.



9 A*-A

Rula I.



8 A*-A

Carine G.



8 A*-A

Veronika K.

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SCHOOL YEAR 2021/2022. The new term is marked again this year with some of the same Covid-19 prevention measures, such as face masks for children over six, although class sizes can go back to as they were pre-pandemic in most cases; the main difference this year is that the majority of the 12-19 age group have been given at least one Covid jab



Going back to school in September can be complicated for children and parents. Freepik

As children start back to school, parents are encouraged to talk to youngsters about their new routines, allowing them to share their excitement, worries and fears

tious” and not “drop their guard”.

A new stage

Aside from the problems related to the pandemic, the return to a school routine after a more relaxed summer holiday means an important change for the whole family as timetables and homework obligations reappear.

While going back to school for many children is a time of excitement at the thought of seeing old friends and starting new activities, for others it can mean stress and anxiety as they leave the comfort of their home and family to unknown circumstances.

It is at these moments of change that experts point out the importance of fluid and real-life communication among family members. It's good to encourage young children to talk about their new classes and for their parents to be familiar with the activities that make up their new routine and to create a space where they can express their fears, questions and wishes.

Another obstacle can be the return to fixed school-night bedtimes to ensure that the first few days of school are not complicated by the consequences of a lack of sleep: irritability and poor concentration among others.

Nutrition is also on the list of ingredients to help get the new term off to an ideal start. Avoid processed products and select natural foods that provide energy and nutrients.

Start the new term with caution, planning and communication

MÁLAGA

SUR. Students at public and private schools throughout Andalucía have started their new school year this week or are looking forward to going back next week.

In all cases this new academic

year will be marked to a certain extent by the Covid-19 pandemic, although this time with less uncertainty than in the previous two years

According to the education authority in Andalucía, the Covid

protocol for the new term is similar to that of the previous academic year with the prevention measures approved in May and updated in June. These, said the authority, are designed to ensure a “safe, healthy and sustainable” return to the classroom.

Face masks are still mandatory for students over the age of six, classes must have frequent and cross ventilation and hygiene measures must also be applied.

This year, though, according to the Andalusian education authority, classrooms can now hold their usual number of students, except for the first four years of Primary education where ‘bubble’ groups will still be maintained.

Another change brought in this year is the reduction in the minimum interpersonal distance to 1.2 metres from the 5th year of Primary upwards.

In the Andalusian education sys-

tem all classes will go back to 100 per cent on site teaching, with the exception of years from the third year of Secondary where safety measures cannot be complied with.

An important difference this year for Secondary schools is that in Andalucía a majority of the 12 to 19-year-olds are now fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

Figures on 8 September showed that in the region 74% of the 12-19 age group had received at least one Covid vaccine jab, and 53% were fully vaccinated.

Practically the entire teaching staff are also fully vaccinated.

Despite this more positive situation, the authorities continue to remind the general public of the need to remain “cau-

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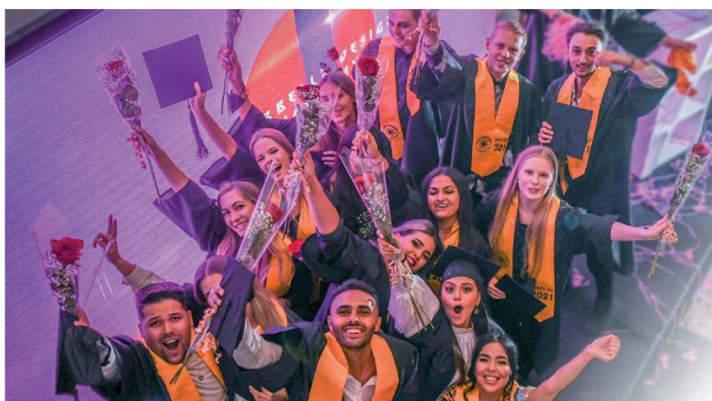
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Graduation of The American College in Spain students. ACS

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The American education system is considered one of the best in the world, especially at university level.

US community colleges and universities are recognized at an international level and graduating from a US university is highly valued by most multinational companies.

The best way for students wishing to access US universities is by completing their secondary education in an American high school and obtaining a high school diploma. Following an American curriculum helps students familiarize themselves with the system as well as getting acquainted with the American customs and culture.

The American College in Spain offers a High School program where students finish their high school studies and graduate with a high school diploma that is fully recognized. This program offers its stu-

dents many advantages:

The diploma obtained is issued directly from the United States and is also recognized internationally by universities in other countries.

Students who graduate from the high school program can either continue their university studies at the American College in Spain's university program, or they can apply directly to universities in the United States and Europe.

The American College in Spain's high school program is taught by qualified teachers who have previously been approved by the mother school in the US. These teachers work in conjunction with instructors from the main campus to ensure that each student's needs are being addressed. This method of teaching is possible thanks to the collaboration agreement between ACS and Mizzou Academy (high school program from the University of Missouri).

One of the advantages of this partnership is that students who gra-

One of the advantages of this partnership is that students who graduate with a 3.5 GPA (equivalent to B+ grade point average) can automatically be admitted into the University of Missouri if they should wish to apply

Melisa Butler: "At ACS we insist on personalized attention; our classes are taught in reduced groups as this allows us to get to know each student as well as promoting a stress-free environment"

duate with a 3.5 GPA (equivalent to B+ grade point average) can automatically be admitted into the University of Missouri if they should wish to apply. This university is famous for having had the first School of Journalism in the world and is currently known for its clinical research center in medical investigation.

The American College in Spain's high school program also has other agreements with universities in Canada, London, and Paris in order to facilitate university admission for its high school graduates.

The American College in Spain's campus is small but very modern and is equipped with the latest technology. Located in Urbanización La Alzambra, close to Puerto Banus, the school sits in a residential area close to all amenities and public transport, making this easily accessible to our students.

"At ACS we insist on personalized attention; our classes are taught in reduced groups as this allows us to get to know each student as well as promoting a stress-free environment," said founder and campus director, Melissa Butler.

Since opening its doors in 2013, dozens of students from the Costa del Sol have already obtained their high school diploma through The American College in Spain and all of them have either finished or are currently enrolled in universities in the United States as well as Europe. Some universities from where students have graduated are Florida International University, University of Miami, Lynn University, University of California, University of Alabama, Hult Business School in London, amongst others.



Melissa Butler with President Obama during the conference organized by the College. SUR



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DIGITAL UNIVERSE. From homework planning to traditional exercises transferred to the screen, new applications are used to support the education of today's pupils

Apps for learning inside and outside the classroom

MÁLAGA

SUR. Some years ago technology revolutionised learning with the introduction of mobile devices and digital whiteboards into classrooms. Now, however, the education sector has had to cope with a real shock, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. For the past three terms traditional teaching has given way to a hybrid model of blended learning in which face-to-face and virtual scenarios combine, creating infinite settings for learning with numerous ways of receiving quality tuition.

It should be noted, however, that, although the situation has been, and still is, very complicated, experts recognise that some very good results have been produced by this technological revolution in education. This applies to the teachers, who have carried out tremendous work by adapting their educational

activity to digital platforms, and the pupils, who have adapted so well to the different circumstances. In fact, according to a study carried out by international sustainability platform Quiero and Samsung Electronics, eight out of every ten teach-

During the past three terms traditional teaching has given way to a hybrid model of blended learning, in which face-to-face and virtual teaching combine to create infinite settings for education

ers consider that technology facilitates pupils' learning and can be a major ally in connecting the content with the reality for the pupils and their interests. The objective of this report is to understand the role that technology is playing in present-day education and the role it could have in the future, which is why the opinion of teachers is one of the fundamental keys.

School diaries and homework organisers

Microsoft To Do: Lists, tasks and alerts

This application has been designed by Microsoft with school pupils in mind and it has a desktop version which can be synchronised with the mobile version. It is used to make a note of the homework which has to be done, and that note can be easily erased at a

touch when the task has been completed.

My Study Life

A good tool for planning the school calendar, with reminders of the dates when homework needs to be handed in, exams and work deadlines. As it is not age-specific, it is useful for any level of education. The added data is stored in the cloud so that it can be accessed from any device.

Trello

Companies use this to assign a specific task to each employee and see at which point the work is in progress, because it is a quick and visual way of monitoring how projects are developing. In the case of school pupils and teachers, it facilitates working in a group, as it allows them to check at a glance that everything is progressing at



These applications mean children

the pace that was initially set.

Language dictionaries

Wordreference
This is one of the most complete dictionaries. It includes multiple



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have fun as they learn. Freepik

languages and offers the possibility of listening to the pronunciation of many words (including the different forms of pronunciation of a word by region). It has an interesting forum regarding doubts about how an

expression is translated in a specific context.

Babbel
Nobody learns to speak a new language overnight, but the language

learning apps do at least make it easier to get started and gain a basic understanding. Babbel includes practical exercises in 14 different languages, with short classes planned by experts. To help pupils

become familiar with the language, there is a podcast which puts into practice what has been learned in each lesson.

Study aids

Brainly
This app for students focuses on group learning and is set up as a meeting point where they can seek help and offer assistance when it comes to doing homework. There are various categories, including maths, language, physics, history, chemistry and English. It operates as a type of forum, with questions and answers. The system enables you to see how many people are connected and gives a list of the solutions and answers that other users have given to previous questions. The app is free and is available for iOS and Android.

MyScript calculator
A calculator which offers the advantage of being able to write the operation on the mobile screen and the device recognises the movements. It is used to resolve all types of calculations and the results can be exported to the clipboard and other applications. The history enables previous calculations to be retrieved so they can be reused or exported. It costs just over three euros.

Study Aide
This is an app with 20 natural sound effects and music to create an am-

bience which is conducive to study. You can choose several at the same time and even the intensity of each one separately. Among the predefined modes, there are some specific ones which are designed to improve concentration. It can be useful for students who are preparing for an exam, and also those who like to 'isolate' themselves when they work.

Easy study
Ideal for the people who find it hard to sit down and work on a syllabus ahead of time. This application creates a homework schedule, setting out how many subjects are going to be studied on each day of the week. The routines are organised in cycles so the contents do not accumulate. It is free, but there are some options which are only available to subscribers.

Repetico
This is the virtual version of the traditional cardboard card used to create flashcards and prepare for exams. As well as creating cards, you can share them between friends or buy those of other users. It offers different alternatives and methods of learning, to work on short and long term memory. Users also have the possibility of creating an individual study timetable, a summary and statistics of their studying and a rapid search for cards. And it even gives study points as a means of motivation.



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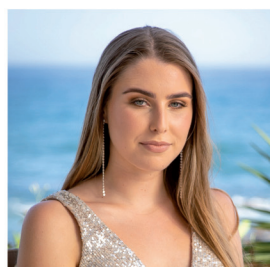
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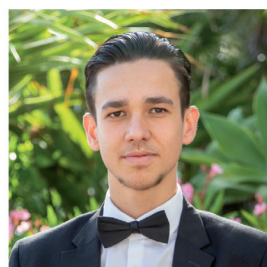
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BEng Automotive Engineering



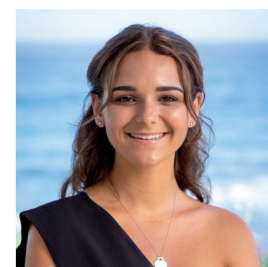
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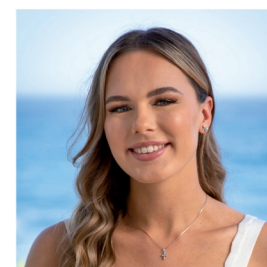
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