Higher Education Standards Panel

IMPROVING THE TRANSPARENCY OF HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS

Final report

October 2016

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham

Minister for Education and Training
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

In February 2016 you asked the Higher Education Standards Panel to advise you on options to improve the transparency of higher education student admissions, while minimising regulatory burden. On behalf of the Panel I am pleased to present you with our report on this work.

On 6 April 2016 we released a consultation paper *Higher Education Standards Panel - Consultation on the Transparency of Higher Education Admissions Processes*. In response, the Panel received 82 written submissions. The Panel and its secretariat also met face to face with a range of interested parties including higher education providers and their representative peak bodies, tertiary admission centres (TACs) and secondary education stakeholders including parents, principal associations and state curriculum and assessment authorities.

The consultation process highlighted the increasing diversity of Australia's higher education admission processes. Under the demand-driven system more Australians are now able to gain entry to higher education by a variety of pathways. Unfortunately, in the process, admissions requirements are becoming more complex and harder to understand. The challenges include a lack of comparable information on higher education entry requirements, alternative pathways and student cohort information. This makes it difficult for prospective students to make informed decisions. In particular there is a lack of clarity on the use of the ATAR rankings and the basis on which bonus points are awarded by universities. ATAR ranks are often reported for students who have been selected on alternative criteria.

Those we consulted share a common view that the transparency of higher education student admissions policies and processes needs urgent improvement. To achieve this, there must be a renewed focus on ensuring that relevant information and support is available to students, parents and school teachers. Information on each institution and field of study needs to be accurate, understandable and easy to compare.

There is consensus that the autonomy of higher education providers to set their own admission criteria should be respected and upheld and that regulatory and policy frameworks must allow providers to promote their distinctiveness. Diversity is the key to competition and providing students with choice. Providers, however, need to be held accountable for the information that they provide.

The consultation process highlighted some issues not in direct scope of the Panel's review, including the need to investigate student completion and attrition rates. A number of respondents noted the complexity of cross-border applications. Others emphasised the need for improved career education in schools and higher education providers. The Panel suggests these issues require further consideration.

The Panel considered the work of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in upholding the quality of Australia's higher education system. It also considered the work of the TACs and individual higher education providers, which already make a great deal of information available to potential students and their families.

Our report sets out the Panel's 14 recommendations. Together, these will improve the transparency of higher education student admission policies. Many of the recommendations have been informed by the ideas suggested through the consultation process. They have also been informed by your direction that the new processes should not impose an unnecessary regulatory burden on providers.

Our report places students firmly at the centre of the admissions process. The recommendations are intended to:

- achieve greater <u>transparency</u> through the use of common language about admissions processes and the publication of consistent information
- widen the <u>accessibility</u> of information to prospective students
- improve the <u>comparability</u> of information available from providers about their admissions processes and entry requirements
- enhance the <u>accountability</u> of higher education providers for the information they publish about their admissions policies
- ensure all higher education providers are subject to the same <u>reporting</u> requirements
- give students, parents, teachers and career advisors the knowledge and capacity to more easily <u>navigate</u> higher education admissions policies and processes.

Clearly, details need to be negotiated with the higher education sector. Nevertheless, the Panel believes the recommendations could be implemented from the beginning of the 2018 academic year. Indeed, it is pleasing to note that, since commencing the review, some higher education providers have already chosen to publish more transparent information about their admissions processes, particularly ATAR related data on offers and acceptances of higher education places.

The Panel is confident that if higher education providers adhere to the principles set out in this report, Australia's higher education admissions policies and processes will be far more transparent. The autonomy of providers to decide their own entry requirements will be upheld, within a framework of public accountability. Students will find decision-making easier. Public confidence will be restored.

Thank you for engaging the Panel to conduct this review. We have been ably assisted by strong secretariat support from the Department of Education and Training.

The Panel looks forward to the Government's response in due course.

Yours sincerely

Higher Education Standards Panel

<u>Professor Peter Shergold AC, Chair</u>

On behalf of:
Professor Greg Craven, Dr Krystal Evans, The Hon Phil Honeywood,
Emeritus Professor Alan Robson AO, CitWA, Ms Karen Thomas (Members)

Professor Ian O'Connor, Dr Don Owers AM (Observers)

11 October 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Problem

Australia's demand driven system of higher education, introduced following the 2008 *Review of Australian Higher Education* (the Bradley Review), is providing more opportunities than ever before for Australians to access higher education. Competition among providers is increasing and choice for students is widening. The workforce is becoming better educated.

The higher education providers at the heart of this transformation are autonomous institutions. They determine the mechanisms and criteria through which applicants are accepted to study the courses they offer. Since the introduction of the demand driven system, the diversity of application and admission pathways has significantly widened. This, in line with government policy, is increasing the proportion of Australians able to attain graduate qualifications, and is enhancing the skill and educational levels of our workforce. Unfortunately, there is a problem. Prospective students need to make informed decisions. The new admission processes and entry requirements are poorly understood.

Higher education providers determine the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) thresholds, where applicable, for recent secondary students. They also establish eligibility for alternative entry pathways for applicants who are not admitted on the basis of ATAR. Many providers now take into account tertiary education preparation courses, vocational education and training (VET), special tertiary admissions tests (including mature age entry), professional or paraprofessional qualifications, employment history or community experience. A range of other criteria may also help prepare a student to undertake higher education. Some students are accepted on the basis of school recommendations, performance at interview, or portfolios of creative work.

The increasing diversity of higher education admissions criteria is inadequately comprehended. Media debate tends to focus on ATAR ranks. Yet, in 2014, more than half of the students admitted to higher education courses were accepted on the basis of previous vocational or higher education study, mature age entry special provisions and the like. Figure 1 indicates that only 44 per cent of students were admitted on the basis of their secondary education – and of these, only 70 per cent were selected on the basis of their ATAR.

Figure 1: Basis of admission for higher education undergraduate commencements 2014
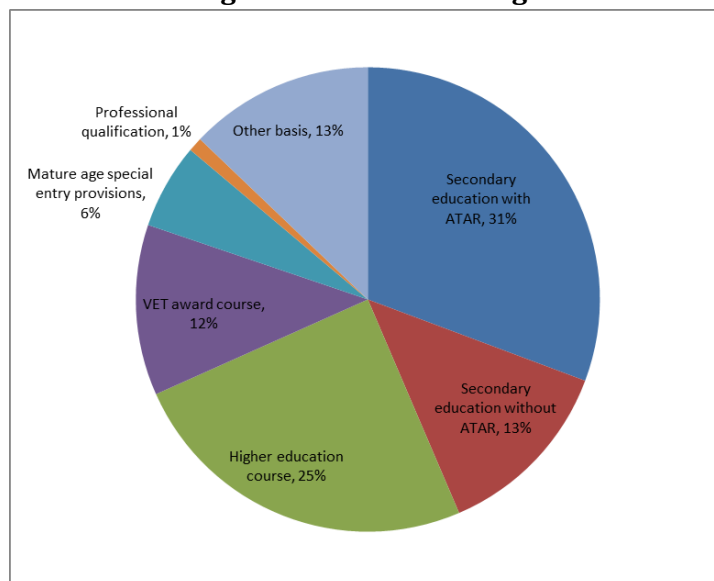
Source: Department of Education and Training

Today there are many ways to gain entry to higher education. To help readers understand the complexity we have set out the stories of 12 students in Appendix D. They represent some of the more frequent routes. In discussions as a Panel we found we could each contribute more variants.

Diversity is good. Varied entry standards and pathways are giving greater numbers of students the opportunity to benefit from higher education than ever before. More students from disadvantaged families, who in previous times would not have been able to gain entry to higher education, are now able to do so. However, choice is being undermined by information about the system's operation that is confusing, ambiguous, misunderstood and unevenly distributed. In summary:

- There is no common language adopted across the sector to describe entry requirements. For example, the use of terms such as 'ATAR', 'ATAR plus', 'selection rank', 'course cut-off', 'clearly in' are often used in different ways by different providers. It is not always clear when a cut-off is truly a minimum entry rank, when an ATAR figure includes bonus points, or how providers apply bonus points.
- Although ATAR ranks are considered equivalent and transferrable between all states and territories, the ATAR calculation itself is different in each jurisdiction, driven by different approaches to assessment in their secondary education systems.
- There is a large amount of information about higher education admissions requirements available at the provider, tertiary admission centre (TAC) and government levels, but this is not always readily accessible. Information is not presented in a manner which allows prospective students to compare all providers and make informed decisions.
- The focus on ATAR as a basis of entry into higher education can be misleading as it only accounts for a little over 30 per cent of all new higher education enrolments. As a consequence, many prospective students assume they will only be admitted if they achieve a certain ATAR, when this might not be the case.
- There is a danger that some higher education providers might make exaggerated claims regarding ATAR requirements, in an attempt to boost perceived prestige. Currently many providers and TACs publish main round offer cut-offs only, even when students are admitted in later rounds with lower ranks.

A paradoxical situation has arisen. Entry into universities has become more equitable. Yet there is evidence that families with less experience of higher education, which are economically disadvantaged or live in regional Australia, are less able to understand how admissions processes operate. This is particularly the case where dedicated school-based career advisers are not available to lend support.

The Response

With these issues in mind, the Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham asked the Higher Education Standards Panel to consider whether the transparency of domestic higher education student admissions could be improved. The terms of reference asked the Panel to recommend options to improve the transparency of admissions processes, while minimising any increase in regulatory burden for providers.

The Panel released a consultation paper on 6 April 2016. The Panel asked respondents to provide advice on how to improve the information available and the understanding of prospective students and their families about:

- the requirements for admissions to higher education
- the full range of ways in which applications can be made and are assessed by providers
- the supports available to help students complete their courses and qualifications.

The Panel received 82 submissions from higher education providers, higher educational peak bodies, TACs and interested individuals. During the consultation process, the Panel and staff from the Panel's secretariat also met face to face with a wide range of stakeholders. Details are set out in Appendix G. These discussions significantly influenced the Panel's conclusions. It also proved very helpful to talk through the Panel's draft proposals with Universities Australia.

Of course, responsibility for the 14 recommendations presented rests with the Panel alone. We believe that, if implemented, they will create greater consistency in the information available to prospective domestic students, reduce the complexity of accessing available higher education admission pathways and present information in a way that is more readily comparable. None of the recommendations interfere with the autonomy of higher education providers to decide their own entry requirements. Nor would the proposals impose an unnecessary burden of regulatory compliance on providers.

Principles and purpose

The first recommendation sets out the Panel's view of principles that should be adopted to facilitate transparency of higher education admissions policies. The Panel believes it is important to recognise the primacy of students' interests while acknowledging that higher education providers are autonomous and should take responsibility for their own admissions policies. However, with autonomy comes accountability. Higher education providers are required to ensure their admissions policies fully meet the Higher Education Standards on transparency.

The second recommendation outlines the problems that need to be addressed and indicates what the Panel intends to achieve through its proposals. Beyond the benefits that will assist prospective students and higher education providers, the Panel believes that a more transparent and easy-to-understand admissions process will help restore public confidence in the basis on which universities and colleges accept entrants.

Recommendation 1

The following six principles should be adopted to facilitate transparency of higher education admissions policies:
- A student-centred approach is critical to the provision of information about admissions.
- Higher education providers exercise autonomy over their admissions policies, consistent with the requirements set out in the Higher Education Standards Framework.
- Access to clear information relating to admissions requirements and various entry pathways are to be made available to all applicants equally.
- Any new arrangements are to be applied equally to all higher education providers, universities and non-university higher education providers alike.
- Higher education providers are to be held accountable for public claims against their stated admission policies.
- Reforms to improve the transparency of higher education admissions policies and to ensure compliance are designed to minimise regulatory red-tape.

Recommendation 2

The purpose of standardising the manner in which higher education providers present their admissions processes should be to:
- Make information on admissions policies available in a comparable format so that individuals can make better informed choices about providers and courses of study.
- Clarify the requirements of the revised Higher Education Standards Framework with respect

Transparency

The following three recommendations are intended to achieve transparency through the use of common and clear language about admissions processes and to ensure the publication of consistent information.

Presently, there is a lack of uniformity across the sector with respect to policies and processes around admissions requirements. Higher education providers and TACs employ terms in different ways. For the purposes of this report a **Glossary** of the Panel's understanding of these terms is provided. It is clear that specific guidance and common terminology need to be developed to help prospective students and their parents interpret and compare the various admissions criteria by provider and area of study, and make informed decisions relating to higher education admissions.

Different providers employ the various entry pathways to a greater or lesser extent, reflecting the communities that they serve and the students they seek to attract. Some providers enrol more than half of their students through the ATAR pathway while for others the proportion is less than 10 per cent. These differences between providers (and between courses within providers) can lead to confusion for students. More clarity is needed on the diversity of entry requirements.

Where admission is determined in whole or part by reference to an individual's ATAR, it is critical for each individual to have access to clear information about the minimum ATAR admission requirements for the course. Prospective students need to be able to assess whether they can meet those requirements and, if not, what other pathways might exist.

Applicants also need to understand whether they can access bonus points for various equity, academic or other characteristics, and on what basis. They need to know whether there is a maximum number of bonus points that can be accumulated or if a minimum ATAR is required for admission. Information about the minimum ATAR requirements or indicative ATAR cut-offs should be presented inclusive of any bonus points available, together with clear information on how bonus point arrangements operate.

By way of example, if the minimum ATAR admission requirement for a particular course is 75 (inclusive of bonus points), and the maximum bonus points available for the course is 10, then:

- a student who is *unlikely* to have access to bonus points knows that he or she must aim to achieve an ATAR of 75 or higher; and
- a student who is *likely* to receive the maximum 10 bonus points knows he or she must aim to achieve an ATAR of 65 or higher.

In this way, all individuals will have equal access to clear information about what ATAR they must achieve to ensure they meet the minimum ATAR admission requirements.

Increasingly, universities are making offers outside the main round of admissions. Unfortunately, 'early' and 'late' offers that take place outside the main round are often not included in the published information on ATARs. This reduces the transparency of admissions. To help ensure clarity, reported ATAR outcomes should be those that prevail at the conclusion of all offer rounds.

In addition, providers often publish details about a variety of bonus point schemes in different locations. For instance, information on equity points is often published in one place, and subject bonus information in another. Moreover, so-called bonus point 'calculators' may include some types of bonus points, but not others. Standardisation is necessary. Information should be provided at a single location.

The Panel strongly recommends the adoption of consistent templates for admissions information, both by institution and by course or study area. These would make accessible a wide range of comparable information on the admission pathways available to prospective students. Such templates would make decision-making easier. At the moment there is uncertainty for many prospective students.

At the same time, prospective students need to understand where opportunities exist to gain access to higher education on the basis of alternative pathways. They need to know whether or not their ATAR will still be a consideration and how providers make their selection decisions. At present, there is often confusion over whether ATAR ranks are the only basis of admission, whether they are just one factor taken into account, or whether they are irrelevant. There is evidence that some students would have been accepted into the courses they preferred if they had known exactly how a provider's ATAR bonus point schemes operated or if they had been aware that there were alternative pathways. This is inequitable.

Recommendation 3
Common language around admissions processes should be adopted by all higher education providers.

Recommendation 4
For each course, the provider should publish information that clearly identifies the basis for determining admission to the course, including whether admission is on the basis of ATAR or an alternative pathway.

Recommendation 5
Where admission to a course is determined in whole or part on the basis of an individual's ATAR, the provider should publish information that identifies clearly the minimum ATAR admission requirements for the course and the provider's bonus points arrangements. ATAR acceptance outcomes or thresholds should be reported at the completion of all offer rounds.

Accessibility

National consistency and accessibility of information about higher education admissions must be improved. As a way of achieving this, the Panel carefully considered the benefits of developing a single national tertiary admissions centre.

The state and territory TACs have a wealth of course information, strong connections with the providers they service, and their processes reflect the diverse state school systems in which they operate.

Significant elements of the TAC role are necessarily tailored to particular jurisdiction or provider requirements. However, much of their work in accepting applications and issuing offers of higher education places is generic and open to streamlining or the application of more common approaches. This would be particularly valuable for students contemplating whether to undertake higher education study outside their state of residence.

The Panel heard evidence on the difficulties faced by students who apply to a higher education provider in another state. It believes further work is necessary to simplify the cross-border application experience for prospective higher education students. While most students choose to study in the state or territory of residence, increasing numbers are looking further afield to pursue their academic ambitions. They need to have their task made easier.

There was limited support for the concept of a national TAC during the consultation process. It is also the case that many non-university higher education providers do not currently utilise TAC services. Consequently, the Panel decided not to recommend establishing a national TAC at this stage. However, the Panel recognises that there would be value in TACs working cooperatively to improve consistency in admission application processes and the information they publish. Consistent use of language and more streamlined access to cross-jurisdictional applications for both students and providers would improve national consistency of admissions processes and enhance the comparability of offerings on a national basis.

More cooperation, consistency and integration between the TACs, particularly on cross border applications, would also better reflect that there is a national higher education policy and funding framework. Certainly, it would improve the student experience for applications across jurisdictional boundaries.

If greater collaboration is unsuccessful in achieving such outcomes, further consideration should be given to establishing a national TAC in the future. Other options worth examining include:

- developing a single national application form or online tool for Australian higher education that could capture all of the information that providers might take into account in selecting a student for admission (such as ATAR, workplace experience, vocational education certification, higher education achievements, community engagement, and equity criteria)
- enhancing the capacity to redirect cross-border preferences or applications to the relevant TAC without levying an additional application fee
- simplifying the process for providers to opt in to accessing cross-border student preferences.

In the absence of a national TAC, there remains a need to centralise information for prospective students. Rather than having to peruse admissions processes on each individual provider's website, presented in a variety of forms, it would be best to have key comparative information available in a standard format on a single platform. More detailed information could then be accessed for each provider separately.

With this in mind, the Panel strongly recommends establishing a national higher education admissions information platform which should include information on:

- each provider's admissions policies, application pathways and processes
- study area requirements, including academic prerequisites, ATAR thresholds, additional requirements and assessment criteria
- data on the student cohort admitted in recent years, including the entry pathways taken

- links to other relevant information, particularly the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) performance data, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) national register, TAC application portals, and provider admissions policies and processes.

Recommendation 6
Tertiary admission centres (TACs) should work together to develop consistent language and reporting around admissions processes, and to streamline cross-jurisdictional application processes.

Recommendation 7
A national higher education admissions information platform should be established to provide a single point of entry for information about higher education admissions policies and processes across all registered providers.

Comparability

The following three recommendations, which propose standardised institution and study area templates, are intended to improve the comparability of key information available from higher education providers about their admissions processes. It needs to be emphasised that most providers or TACs already publish the key information that the templates would require in some form. Consequently, reporting is unlikely to place a significant additional regulatory burden.

The proposed institution level template would contain providers' admissions policies and processes, and would be available on the national higher education admissions information platform. The template, which is adapted from the current approach taken by the New South Wales University Admissions Centre (UAC), is set out at **Appendix A1**. An example, with mocked-up information, is provided at **Appendix A2**.

The Panel believes that the admission information for each institution should encompass:

- the general admissions philosophy which underpins the provider's overarching educational mission, including institutional guidelines
- admission requirements, incorporating the full range of admission pathways available, how students may access or apply for them and how they will be assessed
- the criteria for any ATAR bonus points and the maximum number of bonus points that can be applied
- the availability of early entry schemes, such as schools recommendation schemes
- the proportion of domestic and international students
- equity scholarships information
- special consideration schemes
- information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- information on bridging courses
- courses available by direct application
- enrolment information
- financial assistance information
- accommodation information
- student and campus services information
- appeals and grievances information
- where to get further information at the provider level, including course or study area information.

In preparing this information, the needs of all relevant student cohorts should be considered. Institutions should consider the interests of mature age students, those currently enrolled in

vocational education and training and higher education, and professionals in the workforce not currently participating in formal education.

A proposed template for information about the specific admission requirements for a course or area of study within an institution is provided at **Appendix B1**. A mocked-up example is presented at **Appendix B2**. In order to enhance comparability the Panel suggests that, for the purposes of a national admissions information platform, this template should adopt the same study area definitions used for the QILT surveys and website, to enable direct comparability of admissions and performance information.

The study area admissions information template should encompass:

- an admissions statement relevant to the area of study, including information on work based learning, internships, work placements and graduate career pathways
- a profile of admission pathways available for each area of study, including both the proportion of students anticipated to enter via the various routes and the proportion of students who entered via the various pathways in the previous year
- a link to the provider's ATAR and bonus points arrangements, including information for the previous two years at the conclusion of all entry rounds
- course costs
- where to access further course-specific information.

The Panel considers that this represents the minimum level of comparative information that needs to be provided. Of course, individual providers and TACs are encouraged to supplement this information with additional course-specific details, particularly where admission requirements vary significantly within an area of study. Many universities already do so.

For those recent secondary students selected on the basis of their ATAR, the proposed template requires the publication of information about the previous year's admission outcomes. This should include, for each area of study, at the conclusion of all rounds:

- the minimum ATAR required to be admitted (including the impact of any bonus points)
- the maximum number of bonus points allowable
- the percentage of domestic students admitted with bonus points
- the ATAR ranges for each study area in previous years, including the 25th percentile, median, and 75th percentile.

The proposed study area template is adapted from models suggested by Universities Australia and the Council of Private Higher Education in their submissions to the Panel's consultation process.

From a student's point of view, it is important that standardised information is also easily comparable. The national admissions information platform should enable prospective students to search a number of providers and compare their admissions information. A mocked-up example of information in a comparable format is at **Appendix C**.

Recommendation 8

A template should be adopted by higher education providers to publish **institution level information** in a standardised format about their admissions processes, which would be made available to prospective students on the national higher education admissions information platform.

Recommendation 9

A template should be adopted for higher education providers to publish **study area information** in a standardised format about their admissions processes, which would be available to prospective students on the national higher education admissions information platform.

Recommendation 10

The national higher education admissions information platform should be designed to enable **direct comparison of information** on admissions requirements and data on previous years' admission outcomes.

Accountability

The following two recommendations are intended to ensure that higher education providers can be held answerable for the information they publish about their admissions policies. They are intended to ensure that all providers meet their obligations under the Higher Education Standards Framework.

The key mechanism to ensure providers are held to account for the accuracy of the information they provide should be the national regulator, TEQSA. Following discussions with higher education providers, TEQSA should document and communicate the types of evidence it considers would demonstrate compliance with the admissions transparency requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework.

TEQSA should work with higher education providers to assist them to meet their reporting requirements. TEQSA already provides a range of Guidance Notes on the Higher Education Standards Framework. A further note outlining best practice in ensuring transparent information on admissions processes (and TEQSA's monitoring of minimum requirements) should be developed.

Recommendation 11

TEQSA should have an active role in monitoring compliance with guidance to the sector on transparency in higher education admissions, complementing the regular cycle of assessing applications for provider re-registration.

Recommendation 12

TEQSA should draft a Guidance Note to providers, canvassing best practice in providing clear information on admissions processes.

Support

The Panel's recommendations on reporting are intended to be as simple to use as possible. However, users may benefit from assistance on how best to harness the available information for decision-making purposes, particularly in the early years of implementation.

The following recommendation is intended to assist students, parents, teachers and career advisors develop the ability to navigate higher education admissions policies and processes.

Recommendation 13

There should be an online guide to explain higher education admissions information and how to use the national higher education admissions information platform more effectively.

Issues for further consideration

A number of other related concerns were raised during the Panel's consultations. These matters were seen to impact on the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of higher education admissions. The Panel considers the following issues need further consideration.

Student success, completion and attrition rates

Admission processes are important. However, it is equally necessary that students accepted into higher education have the capacity and receive the support necessary to ensure that they can benefit from their experience. The Panel is of the view that a further review is needed on the extent to which students drop out of higher education, their propensity to change courses or providers, and the likelihood that they will complete their chosen course.

Higher education providers are required to ensure that only students who have capacity to complete a course are admitted. For providers with higher attrition rates, the question arises as to whether this expectation is being met; and/or whether admitted students are being provided with the necessary support to take advantage of their opportunity.

Recent media reports have claimed certain providers' attrition rates are symptomatic of poor admissions standards and processes, or that the lower a student's ATAR, the greater the risk of non-completion. Evidence suggests that the problem is far more complex, with attrition correlated to the interconnected issues of intensity of study and mode of attendance, and the need to undertake paid employment while studying. This important debate needs to be better informed.

The Panel heard evidence that, while some providers with a significant proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds appear to do well at supporting high levels of unit and course completion, there are significant differences in outcomes across the sector as a whole. The specific approaches or interventions which support higher levels of success for such students are not immediately identifiable. The Panel considers that further research is required to build evidence on what factors lead to high success rates and minimise attrition rates among different types of students. In terms of public policy, this is a matter of priority.

Recommendation 14

Further consideration should be given to assessing the factors and approaches that contribute to student success, completion and attrition rates in higher education.

The need for improved career education in schools and higher education providers

The Panel came to recognise that, while higher education admissions processes are becoming more complex, career education support in schools and within higher education providers appears to be decreasing. As a consequence, students (and their parents and teachers) find it harder to make fully informed decisions.

A number of stakeholders noted the importance of career education in supporting students to choose their senior secondary school subjects or higher education courses. Without such support, students – particularly those who are the first in their family to seek entry to higher education – find it more difficult to understand ATAR requirements or access non-ATAR entry pathways. Schools, education systems and higher education providers could all usefully improve the focus on career development approaches. Students need support to help them effectively match their interests, ambition and capabilities to appropriate study and career pathways.

As an immediate first step, consideration should be given to the provision of online training which would help prospective students (and, in particular, their teachers) to understand how to use the comparative information templates that the Panel recommends.

Conclusion

Admissions information needs to be designed to help prospective students make the best decisions for their future. The Panel considers that national consistency in the presentation and comparability of information about higher education admissions is an essential first step towards providing them with fairer, more inclusive admissions processes. The increasing variety of admission pathways is confusing for schools, parents and students – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, or whose families have previously had little engagement with higher education. They need to understand clearly what requirements are necessary to gain entry to a higher education course and how to compare alternative providers and choose between different fields of study. They need to exercise informed choice in an increasingly competitive and diverse higher education sector. Greater community understanding of how admissions processes work will also help inform media commentary and public debate on how students gain access to higher education, in a demand-driven system.

IMPROVING THE TRANSPARENCY OF HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS

CONTEXT

Demand driven system

In response to the 2008 *Review of Australian Higher Education* (the Bradley Review) the Australian Government lifted previously imposed limits on the funding of bachelor-degree students at public universities. Fully implemented in 2012, this new system was called 'demand driven' because it allowed universities to respond to student demand therefore enabling more students to benefit from higher education. The former government also set a higher education attainment target of 40 per cent of young people aged 25-34 by 2025[1]. For this target to be reached, universities would need to enrol a broader range of entrants than they previously had done.

Admission pathways

Providers determine the mechanisms through which applicants are accepted to study the undergraduate courses they offer. They determine ATAR requirements, where applicable, and eligibility for alternative entry for applicants who do not meet ATAR admission requirements. Providers also take into account tertiary education preparation courses, TAFE courses, special tertiary admissions tests, alternative entry schemes and programs, professional/paraprofessional qualifications, employment experience and other criteria relevant to their missions.

Issues and misconceptions

During the consultation process, the Panel has heard from a wide range of organisations and individuals that there is an unacceptable lack of transparency in the current system of higher education admissions. The lack of transparency is due to a number of issues and practices:

- There is no common language adopted across the sector to describe entry requirements. For example, the use of 'ATAR', 'ATAR plus, 'selection rank', 'course cut-off', 'clearly in'. It is not clear when a cut-off is truly a cut-off, when an ATAR includes equity or academic bonus points, or how providers apply bonus points.
- There is inconsistent public information about course entry requirements. There is anecdotal evidence of universities making exaggerated claims regarding ATAR cut-offs, apparently in an attempt to boost perceived prestige. Universities and tertiary admissions centres (TACs) generally publish main round offer cut-offs only, while later offer rounds may see entry at lower ATARs.
- The number of individual courses offered by providers within broader study areas has increased significantly in recent decades. While this increases choice and can provide study programs tailored to specific professional needs, the lack of common naming conventions often makes it difficult to directly compare study options between providers.
- The wide range of pathways into higher education study are confusing for some prospective students who may assume they need to achieve an ATAR cut-off that is unobtainable for them in their circumstances, when this might not be the case.
- ATAR is the largest single mechanism for university entry for recent school leavers, accounting for 70 per cent of offers to this group. However, the focus on ATAR can be

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[1] Australian Government, 2009, Transforming Australia's Higher Education System: available
http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A14895 . In 2014, the attainment rate for 25-34 year olds was 37.3 per cent.

somewhat misleading as it is the entry mechanism only for a little over 30 per cent of all higher education enrolments for commencing students. Other bases of entry, including a large increase in applications directly to providers in recent years, means a more holistic view of admissions is appropriate.

What is an ATAR?

An Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a percentile ranking from 30 (lowest) to 99.95 (highest) of overall academic results for all students who were due to complete senior secondary education in that year (including those students who left school early or otherwise did not actually complete senior secondary studies). The ATAR has been adopted by all states and territories except Queensland and is considered equivalent across all jurisdictions. Queensland currently uses its own system, the Overall Position (OP), which ranges in the reverse direction from 25 (lowest) to 1 (highest). Queensland will adopt the national ATAR approach for students commencing senior secondary education in 2018. For current Queensland students applying to institutions in other states, the OP is translated to an ATAR by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

While the ATAR itself is a common approach, different methodologies are used to calculate ATARs in each jurisdiction, drawing on characteristics of each state or territory's senior secondary curriculum and assessment regime. For example, in Western Australia a Tertiary Entrance Aggregate (TEA) score is calculated by adding a student's best four scaled (annual) subject scores plus 10% of that student's best Language Other Than English (LOTE) scaled score. Scaled scores are adjusted to take account of the relative strength of a student's local peer group, factors such as the relative difficulty of subjects and disadvantage factors like disrupted study or personal circumstances. These scores can be accumulated over five consecutive years, with only one score counted for a particular subject. The TEA is then converted to an ATAR in rank order from highest to lowest. By contrast, in New South Wales, the best ten scaled (semester) subject scores (including two units of English) are aggregated before conversion to an ATAR. In Victoria, ATARs are calculated based on an aggregate of students' scaled (annual) unit score in English, the next best three scaled scores permissible, and 10 per cent of the next two best scaled scores.

Misplaced prominence of the ATAR

Much of the media scrutiny of admissions transparency in early 2016 was focused on offers to study at university for students with low ATARs. This scrutiny reflects a general misconception that ATAR is the main tool used to determine eligibility for entry into higher education. While it may once have been true that the majority of university entrants were recent school leavers, in 2014 around 60 per cent of commencing students were accepted on the basis of previous vocational or higher education study, mature age entry special provisions and other admission pathways. Of the minority admitted on the basis of their secondary education, only 70 per cent were admitted on the basis of an ATAR. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Basis of entry for commencing domestic undergraduate students at universities - 2014
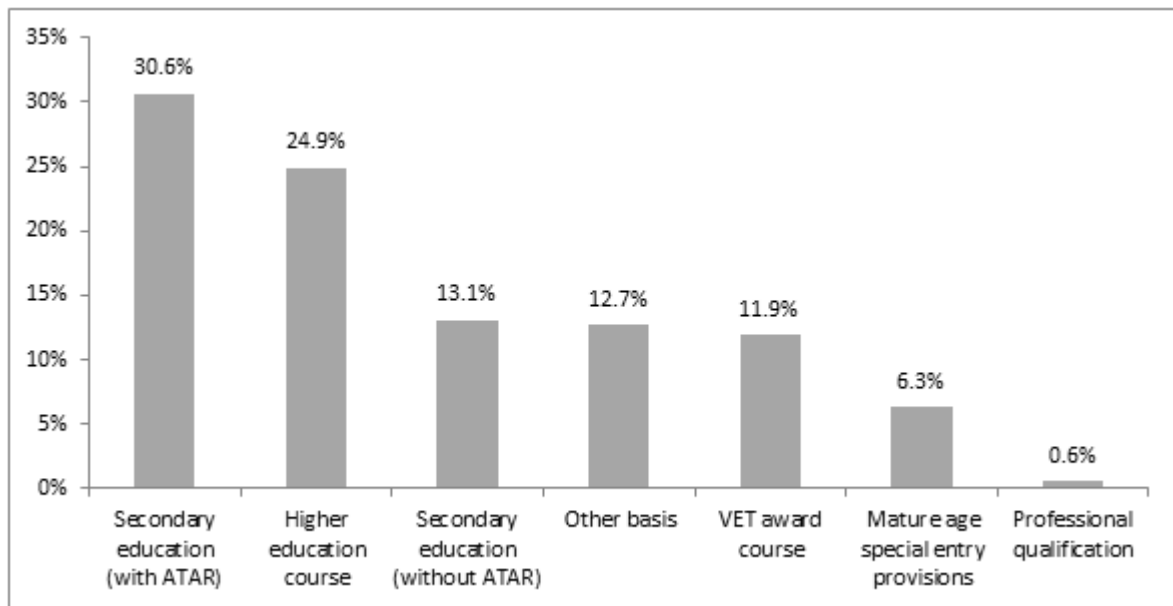
Source: Department of Education and Training: Higher Education Statistics Collection

In addition to applications through TACs, students increasingly apply directly to universities for admission. In 2016 there were 106,693 applications made directly to universities, an increase of 11 per cent over 2015.[2] This represented around a third of all first year applications.

University distinctiveness

The proportion of students entering university via various pathways varies significantly between providers. A large proportion of students (53 per cent) commencing studies at Group of Eight (Go8) providers entered via the ATAR system, whereas Regional Universities Network (RUN) providers had an average of 15 per cent of their commencing students enter via the ATAR pathway. The Australian Technology Network (ATN) providers (38 per cent) and the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) (31 per cent) were around the sector average for ATAR entry in 2014, while unaligned universities vary widely in terms of proportion of basis of entry. See Figure 3.

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[2] *Department of Education and Training: Undergraduate Applications and Offers, February 2016*

Figure 3: Basis of entry for commencing domestic undergraduate students at Table A universities - 2014

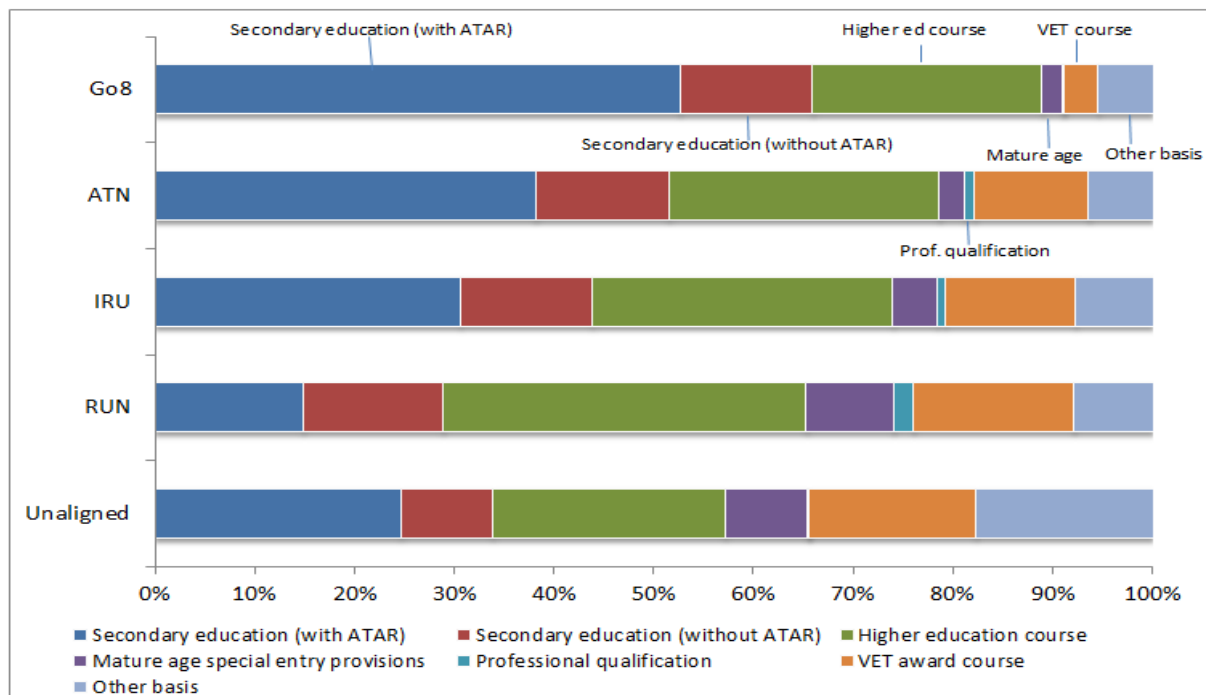*Source: Department of Education and Training: Higher Education Statistics Collection*

These differences in student admissions pathways and student profiles at providers reflect the differences in the communities they serve, and were also reflected in universities' submissions to this review. For example, the Go8 expressed strong support for the ATAR:

> *Go8 strongly supports the ATAR as a measure of school achievement on which to base higher education admissions decisions. The ATAR will continue to play a vital role in admission to Go8 universities.*

In contrast, RUN noted:

> *Most mature age students (the majority of students at RUN universities) and some school-leavers are admitted on a basis other than ATAR.*

ATAR vs selection rank

A common cause of confusion for prospective students and media commentators alike is inconsistent terminology used to describe admission requirements. This is discussed in the Transparency chapter and the Glossary. One prominent example is the 'selection rank'. Many students are eligible for bonus points, which are added to their ATAR to create a selection rank that is adjusted to take account of equity, academic or locational factors. This is often referred to (including in this report) as an 'ATAR with bonus points included'. But the selection rank can also include recognition of the value of non-school factors like previous employment, vocational or other qualifications, mature age entry tests and professional or employment experience. All of these factors can influence the selection rank on which the final decisions to offer places in particular courses are made.

The Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC), in their submission to this review, used the following graphic to illustrate how selection ranks are derived for Year 12 and non-Year 12 students:
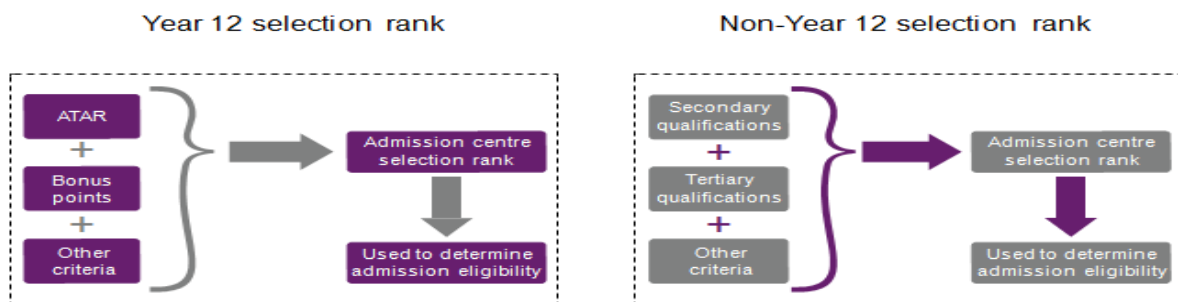
As noted in the University of Tasmania's response to the consultation paper, ATAR rankings are widely misunderstood in the community and in media reporting of university offers:

> *One of the significant problems in the community understanding of the selection mechanisms is the media reporting of ATAR entry scores. In a system where the aim is to have 40% of the 25-39 age cohort completing a bachelor degree, all students with an ATAR of 60 (ie in the top 40% of their age cohort) should be eligible for entry to a bachelor degree. Given that not every student in this range applies for university entry, it follows that students below these levels are considered suitable for a range of courses, especially where other factors such as bonus points are taken into account.*

Inconsistent information on bonus points

Most students seeking entry to tertiary study via their ATAR do not receive bonus points, although most providers offer bonus points for Year 12 students. Compensatory bonuses address disadvantage, for example, regional residence, low socioeconomic status, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. Aptitude bonuses reward special characteristics, for example, having studied high-level mathematics, or having engaged in relevant out-of-school activities, such as community services. Attraction bonuses seek to promote enrolments at a university from a regional area or local schools to which they are closely linked. Most universities have all three types of bonus points.

In South Australia, bonus point rules are applied consistently across all providers, but in other states and territories bonus point schemes differ by provider. Some providers require a minimum ATAR before a person is eligible to receive bonus points, while others will only allocate bonus points when applying for particular courses. Many providers have a maximum number of bonus points that may be awarded. Bonus points do not change ATARs, but rather they change selection ranks for a particular course or provider.

Offers to students with low ATARs

There is a sceptical mythology that has arisen in Australia about students being accepted on the basis of very low ATARs. It is not well-informed. Although in recent years the cohort of students with low ATARs entering higher education has increased, offers to students with ATARs below 50 represented just four per cent of offers in 2016 – 9,723 offers out of 221,060. Indeed less than 10 per cent of Year 12 offers were made to students with ATARs below 60. Previous analysis has shown

that only around half of students with ATARs below 50 who receive offers actually accept them; and fewer still go on to enrol and stay beyond the census date.[3]

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[3] http://andrewnorton.net.au/2016/01/28/low-atar-offers-result-in-few-low-atar-completions/

Table 1: Share of Year 12 offers by ATAR band, February 2012-February 2016

ATAR band	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
50.00 or less	3,607 (1.6%)	5,066 (2.3%)	6,975 (3.1%)	7,071 (3.2%)	9,723 **(4.4%)**
50.05-60.00	10,511 (4.7%)	11,496 (5.2%)	12,069 (5.4%)	12,399 (5.6%)	11,610 **(5.3%)**
60.05-70.00	18,797 (8.5%)	18,982 (8.5%)	19,553 (8.7%)	19,312 (8.8%)	18,719 **(8.5%)**
70.05-80.00	25,407 (11.5%)	25,605 (11.5%)	24,500 (10.9%)	23,411 (10.6%)	25,262 **(11.4%)**
80.05-90.00	28,361 (12.8%)	29,254 (13.1%)	28,888 (12.9%)	28,163 (12.8%)	29,443 **(13.3%)**
90.05 +	33,356 (15.0%)	34,101 (15.3%)	33,985 (15.1%)	32,606 (14.8%)	34,736 **(15.7%)**
No ATAR	101,726 (45.9%)	98,696 (44.2%)	98,693 (43.9%)	97,404 (44.2%)	91,567 **(41.4%)**
Total	**221,765**	**223,200**	**224,663**	**220,423**	**221,060**

Source: Department of Education and Training: Undergraduate Applications and Offers, February 2016

Universities are required under the Higher Education Standards to admit only students whom they believe have the academic and other knowledge necessary to successfully complete their study. In reality, there is no minimum ATAR which is logically required to successfully pursue a particular course.

Australia is increasingly able to offer life-long learning opportunities. A student may leave school with a low ATAR but, in later years, undertake vocational education, gain entry to university foundation courses or take a mature age entry route. While their ATAR may still be recorded, it is not the basis on which the student is accepted.

ATAR cut-offs

There have been allegations that some providers have made claims in marketing material that exaggerate the ATAR required for entry to a course, when compared to actual offers and outcomes.

In practice, universities offer students positions in courses via a number of offer rounds. In second and subsequent rounds, ATAR cut-offs may vary from the initial cut-off or 'clearly in' ATAR, as the provider seeks to fill the course where demand was lower than expected in the main round. Universities also make offers to some students who have not met the entry requirements. It needs to be recognised, however, that many providers that make early entry offers outside the usual offer rounds, do so by extending their admissions criteria to draw on interviews with applicants, additional tests and evidence of other experience to complement or replace the straight ATAR pathway.

Tertiary admission centres (TACs)

Australia has five TACs, which play a key role in Australia's tertiary admission processes:

1. Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) primarily servicing students from Queensland
2. South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC) primarily servicing students from South Australia and the Northern Territory
3. Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) primarily servicing students from Western Australia

4. Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) primarily servicing students from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory
5. Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) primarily servicing students from Victoria.

Tertiary applications within Tasmania are made directly through the University of Tasmania.

The five TACs vary in size. They receive and process applications for admission to courses on behalf of many of the tertiary institutions in each jurisdiction. They do not select applicants or make decisions regarding students' qualifications, but instead act as a central agency for all applications and advise applicants of the result of their application. TACs process the majority of Year 12 applications and a significant proportion of mature age applications, with the remainder applying directly through universities. Almost all international students apply directly to individual universities. A few non-university higher education providers use a TAC as a central agency but the majority do not. The TACs themselves are funded by their service users.

ACTAC was established in the 1970s. It facilitates communication and co-operation between tertiary admissions centres in Australia and New Zealand.

In 1995, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs accepted a report from its taskforce on a national tertiary admissions system which established core elements of a national system, administered through ACTAC. These elements include: common dates for the submission of on-time applications and the publication of and response to main round offers; the latest date for the release of results to students; and the eligibility of interstate applicants.

Inconsistent data

TACs publish a range of tertiary admission data. However, the varying degree of information each centre publishes makes comparisons difficult. For instance, in Victoria, VTAC publishes 'clearly-in' ATARs and the percentage of offers made below the 'clearly-in' ATAR. It previously also published a 'fringe ATAR' – the rank above which 95 per cent of offers were made. In Western Australia, TISC publishes indicative ATARs alongside ATAR cut-offs as well as an indication of the availability of places that may become available in the second round of offers.

This inconsistency is to some degree a result of the unique nature of the school systems in each jurisdiction. It also reflects the historical development of each of the TACs' services. Such differences make it difficult for stakeholders to compare information on a like for like basis across jurisdictions. This has a particular impact for students wishing to study interstate. Although only a small proportion of students actually move interstate to study, this issue was highlighted by a number of submissions to this review.

PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSE

The Panel proposed 10 principles for higher education admissions transparency in its consultation paper. Of the eighty-two written submissions received in response to the paper, a majority were broadly supportive of the proposed principles. The Group of Eight (Go8) lent their full support to the principles, stating:

> *The Go8 fully supports the 10 principles articulated in the Panel's consultation paper and believes these are appropriately aligned with the new Higher Education Standards that relate to admission and the provision of information to prospective students.*

This was echoed by Australian Technology Network (ATN), which stated:

> *The ATN are broadly supportive of the ten principles to underpin initiatives to improve transparency in admissions policies and practices… In particular, the ATN acknowledges that a student-centred approach is essential to improving the transparency of the admissions process.*

The initial 10 principles were reduced to six principles that capture the Panel's main areas of concern and issues that arose during consultations. These principles provide a basis for an agreed framework on admissions transparency and a foundation for the remaining recommendations of this report. The Panel intends these principles to increase public awareness of, and confidence in, the information available on admissions pathways.

Recommendation 1

The following six principles should be adopted to facilitate transparency of higher education admissions policies:

- A student-centred approach is critical to the provision of information about admissions.
- Higher education providers exercise autonomy over their admissions policies, consistent with the requirements set out in the Higher Education Standards Framework.
- Access to clear information relating to admissions requirements and various entry pathways are to be made available to all applicants equally.
- Any new arrangements are to be applied equally to all higher education providers, universities and non-university higher education providers alike.
- Higher education providers are to be held accountable for public claims against their stated admission policies.
- Reforms to improve the transparency of higher education admissions policies and to ensure compliance are designed to minimise regulatory red-tape.

In order to be clear about the scope of the Panel's advice, the second recommendation outlines the purpose of the recommendations within the report. The Panel has sought to strike a balance between giving each higher education provider the capacity to promote a strong sense of its distinct educational ethos and admissions policies, and the ability for prospective students to compare these distinctions by provider and study area.

Recommendation 2

The purpose of standardising the manner in which higher education providers present their admissions processes should be to:

- Make information on admissions policies available in a comparable format so that individuals can make better informed choices about providers and courses of study.
- Clarify the requirements of the revised Higher Education Standards Framework with respect to transparency of admissions policies, and ensure that higher education providers know what they must do to meet fully those requirements.
- Reduce uncertainty among students and their teachers about what is required in order to be admitted to higher education, especially where admission is on the basis of the ATAR achieved.
- Give each higher education provider the capacity to promote a strong sense of its educational ethos and how admissions policies seek to contribute to that mission.
- Ensure higher education providers can be held accountable for the information they publish on their admissions policies.

What students want and need

The Department of Education and Training conducted student surveys at university open day events in 2016 to collate feedback on how students find information relating to tertiary studies. Two specific questions related to admissions. The responses were revealing. Note that more than one answer can be chosen per question.

Q6: When deciding on which course you want to do, what information do you need?

Answer choices	Percent	Number of responses
ATAR / OP cut- offs from previous years	66.79%	547
Pre-requisite criteria	54.09%	443
Career specific skills/needs/qualifications/information	40.17%	329
Alternate course entry requirements (e.g. experience/knowledge)	31.38%	257
Non-ATAR pathways (e.g. mature aged, early offers, principal's recommendation	10.50%	86
Other	4.52%	37
Total Respondents	100%	819

Source: DET, 2016 Student Engagement Data.

Q7: Finish this sentence… When deciding on a course I want to do, I could not find enough information about:

Answer choice	Percent	Number of responses
I have found everything I need	33.70%	276
Alternate course entry requirements (e.g. experience/knowledge)	23.32%	191
Career specific skills/needs/qualifications/information	21.98%	180
Pre-requisite criteria	12.09%	99
ATAR / OP cut- offs from previous years	11.84%	97
Non-ATAR pathways (e.g. mature aged, early offers, principal's recommendation)	11.48%	94
Other	7.69 %	63
Total Respondents	100%	819

Source: DET, 2016 Student Engagement Data.
Answers to 'other' include but are not limited to: fees, job outcomes, and industry recognition.

Prospective students are looking for clear ATAR and pre-requisite information that is consistent around the country. Around a third want information on the non-ATAR pathways (remembering many may not be aware of such options). They also want career-relevant information about the links between study options and potential career pathways.

TRANSPARENCY

The higher education sector serves very different communities across Australia. It is natural that universities and other providers communicate to prospective students in different ways, reflecting their communities, their mission, and their attracting different types of students. In making recommendations to improve transparency, the Panel has sought to respect these differences and encourage providers to communicate their philosophy and uniqueness, while ensuring that information presented on admissions is, as far as possible, comparable and reliable.

There is much more to student admissions than ATAR. Some providers rely more heavily on ATAR for admissions than others. Some providers have a much greater focus on equity than others, and thus seek to take contextual factors into consideration to a greater extent when considering a prospective student's capability.

These differences can make it difficult for prospective students seeking information on the providers which they may be eligible to enter, courses that require specific prerequisites or minimum ATARs, bonus points available, and alternative entry pathways.

Providers communicate through their websites in a way that maximises the perceived benefits and strengths of the provider. This is entirely understandable – no business would seek to highlight a competitor's advantages over its own.

While TACs do an admirable job of processing large volumes of applications, their published information and data differs from state to state. As already indicated, different terminology is used in different jurisdictions, for example 'clearly in' and 'ATAR cut-off'. It is not always clear whether different ATAR cut-offs were applied in different offer rounds, or how many students received offers in each round.

Universities generally seek to fill all available places in a course with the highest quality applicants in the main round. If demand is lower than expected, or if fewer students accept offers, then the entry requirements may be relaxed (for example, ATAR cut-off lowered) in subsequent rounds. Many universities also make offers to students who have not met the entry requirements or offer places in alternative courses with lower entry requirements to students might not have gained entry to their preferred course. This process is far more complex than some media commentary suggests.

Third-party sources – for example *The Good Universities Guide* – seek to fill gaps in the information market. They do a good job overall, but there remains a lack of comparable information in a standardised format.

For school leavers, these important decisions about their future are being made during a difficult and complex stage of their development. For mature age applicants, often with limited time to make decisions, the range of entry pathways can be perplexing. Serendipity – which peer you ask, the views of professional associations, or even what campus you pass on the bus – can play a large role in which option is ultimately selected. Compounding the problem, research has shown that this complexity impacts most negatively on those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those whose parents did not attend university, Indigenous Australians, and others who remain underrepresented in the system as it currently stands.[4] This is unfortunate, as many of the admission pathways that contribute to the complexity of the tertiary entry system were created in order to address just such disadvantage.

Dr Andrew Harvey and Mr Matt Brett of La Trobe University noted in their submission:

> *Complex forms and publications are often perceived as streamlined and engaging by universities and admissions centres, but as hard to comprehend and navigate by students, careers teachers and parents. In particular, we found that low SES and regional students have less awareness of the admissions process than their counterparts, and are often unlikely to access and navigate a tertiary admissions centre website.*

The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education at Curtin University had a similar view:

> *Research…indicates that low SES students are less likely to amend their university applications portfolios following the release of ATAR scores due to poor knowledge regarding*

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[4] Harvey et al, 2016, *The Adaptation of Tertiary Admissions Practices to Growth and Diversity*.

admissions processes. As students who do not adjust their portfolios are less likely to receive an offer, low SES students in particular are unable to direct course and institution preferences appropriately due to lack of understanding and transparency in this area.

Standardised information and common terminology on admissions processes

In their feedback to the Panel, stakeholders noted the lack of consistent language in admissions information material, and the resulting impact on prospective students. For example, the University of Adelaide noted the need for more consistent information for students:

A nationally consistent format for displaying Admission requirements for all entry pathways to undergraduate courses on TAC and government websites would enable greater ease of reference, and enhance the user experience.

Similarly, the submission by Universities Australia stated:

> *Greater consistency and transparency will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of admissions processes. Further, better informed decision-making by students could also be expected to lead to an increase in student satisfaction, retention and success… Universities Australia supports measures that, without undermining the autonomy of universities, ensure students have easy access to clear, unambiguous information that is consistently presented to allow for comparisons to be made between institutions.*

The University of Melbourne stated:

> *We also recommend that principles of transparency should apply to all admissions pathways, criteria, methods and instruments and be broadly comparable between institutions. For example, a standard definition of ATAR should be determined such that ATAR references relate to unadjusted ATARs and any 'adjusted' ATAR generated for university decision-making should be clearly disclosed.*

Recommendation 3
Common language around admissions processes should be adopted by all higher education providers.

This common language framework should be incorporated into existing course admissions materials and policies. The detailed requirements proposed are outlined in the templates at recommendations 8 and 9. In the Panel's view those templates should incorporate the information described at recommendations 4 and 5.

Information on admissions pathways

As mentioned previously, ATAR entry accounts for only around a third of commencing domestic students. However, it is the basis of entry for a majority of school leavers and, as such, information on ATAR entry requirements is a central issue in improving transparency in admissions processes.

The Panel notes approvingly recent moves by some universities to publish more detailed information on ATAR entry. The Go8 universities now publish information on median, upper and lower quartile ATARs for those who were offered places in or entered their courses. This approach has recently been agreed for adoption by all Go8 institutions, as published in its *Statement on Transparency in Admission at Group of Eight Universities* in May 2016. For example, the University of New South Wales now publishes ATAR statistics showing median, maximum, minimum, plus upper and lower

ATAR quartiles, the number of school leavers and non-school leavers offered places, the main round cut-off, and average bonus points granted. This additional information is welcome, but it is not consistently presented, even across the Go8.

Data from the Department of Education and Training sheds some light on why different universities may want to highlight different aspects of their admissions practices. Go8 providers enrol more than half of their secondary school leavers with ATARs above 90. For the Regional Universities Network (RUN) providers, less than 10 per cent of their commencing students enrolled on the basis of ATAR have achieved an ATAR above 90 (see Figure 4). It is important to note however that the RUN universities enrol only around 15 per cent of their commencing students on the basis of ATAR, while the Go8 collectively enrol more than half of their commencing students on that basis.

Figure 4: Commencing domestic Bachelor students admitted on basis of secondary education (with ATAR) by ATAR band and affiliation
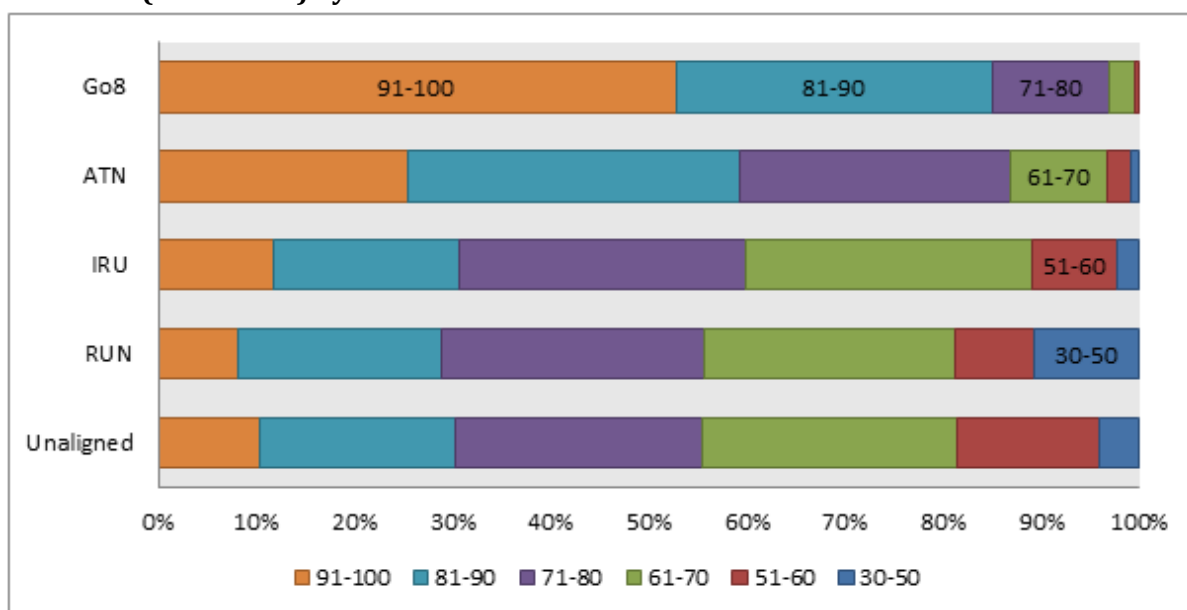
Source: Department of Education and Training, University Statistics Collection (unpublished)

Submissions received in response to the consultation paper confirmed that providers have very different admissions policies and processes. For example, RUN noted in their submission that the majority of students enrolling in their providers come through non-ATAR pathways:

> *…we support the proposed principles relating to the transparency of the admissions process as outlined by the panel in their paper. In doing so, we note that the transparency must cover non-ATAR criteria and requirements as well as ATARs. Most mature age students (the majority of students at RUN universities) and some school-leavers are admitted on a basis other than ATAR.*

In contrast, the Go8 stated:

> *There has been substantial recent public debate on the value of the ATAR within a demand-driven system. The Go8 strongly supports the ATAR as a measure of school achievement on which to base higher education admissions decisions.*

This difference in approach and practice leads to communications aimed at different audiences, and promoting or highlighting different aspects of university entrance requirements. But it is students' interests that should be placed front and centre. The Panel has sought to maintain a focus on why

and how this is a problem for prospective students. The need to ensure that, whatever their background, they have access to information that tells them what they should aim to achieve in order to gain entry to their preferred course is the driving principle behind the Panel's recommendations.

Recommendation 4

For each course, the provider should publish information that clearly identifies the basis for determining admission to the course, including whether admission is on the basis of ATAR or an alternative pathway.

Information on ATAR requirements and bonus point schemes

If a course has a minimum ATAR requirement, this should be clearly stated. It should be made apparent if that requirement is inclusive of any bonus points. If the minimum ATAR requirement is likely to change following the main round of offers, this information should also be readily available. Published information on ATARs of student cohorts should reflect the outcome after the final round of offers has been completed.

Bonus point schemes are a good innovation in admissions practices. They give universities freedom to implement their missions, especially in regard to equity in the student body. They assist students who may have faced disadvantage gain entry to a course that might not otherwise be attainable.

Most, if not all, providers offer bonus points of some kind. Typically, they are available for some or all of the following:

- outstanding academic achievement in particular subjects
- social or economic disadvantage faced by the student
- regional or remote residence
- attendance at particular schools
- participation in elite sport or artistic activity
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Students are ostensibly able to gain a good idea of the bonus points they are eligible for by seeking this information at each provider's website. Unfortunately, there is no consistent model across providers for how bonus points are applied, or for the maximum number of points available to a student. In addition, providers often publish information on the operation of various bonus point schemes separately and on different web pages. This makes it difficult for students to understand the relationship between the schemes and whether they can access points across multiple schemes. Some providers, such as Macquarie University, offer bonus point calculators which simplify the process to some extent but it remains complex, with different courses applying different criteria.

A number of submissions highlighted the need for clearer information on bonus point schemes. For example, Navitas noted:

> *The rationale for the implementation of such bonus point schemes is not widely understood by those outside the sector. … There is not sufficient knowledge of the range of alternative admissions procedures… Navitas believes that there is a case for greater information and transparency.*

The Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE) extolled the South Australian system which standardises bonus point allocation across providers:

> *In COPHE's view there is very little understanding about how 'bonus points' are awarded and used to adjust 'raw' ATARs. This is hardly surprising given the range of schemes offered by individual institutions and operated by the TACs. COPHE recommends discussion and possible national adoption of the South Australian model whereby institutions agree on the allocation of bonus points. Once institutions have agreed on such allocations, if an individual institution wishes to engage a particular equity group it might do this through the use of equity scholarships.*

Not all respondents were supportive of the proliferation of bonus points. The NSW Department of Education and the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) warned that bonus point schemes could cause students to relax their efforts at school in the knowledge that they can make up the difference with bonus points:

> *There is a danger that access and bonus point schemes and lower university entry standards that are evident for a range of courses, can work against efforts to lift achievement in Year 12 by sending a signal that lower achievement will be accepted.*

Australian Catholic University was concerned by the lack of clarity around bonus point schemes:

> *To improve transparency, the application of bonus points should be standardised across institutions and applied consistently (ideally by the TACs). There could be agreement amongst institutions on broad issues such as the legitimate grounds for bonuses, the calculation of bonuses, the maximum addition of bonuses and the legitimate types of alternative entry schemes.*

The criteria for entry on the basis of ATAR and the application of bonus points need to be clearly stated in each provider's admissions policies. This would aid students seeking to compare providers. The Panel notes that this would need to be presented at a high level, but it would nonetheless be a useful first step for prospective students and would simplify their search for information. Information on how to access bonus points or the basis of identified criteria, and whether there is a maximum number of points that can be accumulated should be clearly stated and in one place. Links to further details, for example course-specific arrangements and detailed eligibility criteria, should also be prominent.

Recommendation 5
Where admission to a course is determined in whole or part on the basis of an individual's ATAR, the provider should publish information that identifies clearly the minimum ATAR admission requirements for the course and the provider's bonus points arrangements. ATAR acceptance outcomes or thresholds should be reported at the completion of all offer rounds.

ACCESSIBILITY

As noted previously, the higher education admissions system is complex. There are many pathways for admission and navigating the pathways can be difficult. For the ATAR route, students need to be able to broadly predict what ATAR they might achieve (with or without bonus points), match that prediction to published information about previous cohorts, and apply for courses that they would like to enrol in and believe they have a chance of successfully completing

Some universities expressed dissatisfaction with the service they are receiving from their relevant state TAC. The University of Western Australia, along with a small number of other respondents, suggested in their submissions that a national TAC should be established:

> *UWA is strongly of the view that to provide the necessary level of transparency, including accessibility and comparability of information, a national tertiary admissions centre needs to be established.*

Most respondents did not believe that a national TAC was either necessary or advantageous. They cited the small number of interstate applicants who would be the main beneficiaries, the impracticalities of a national TAC when state school systems are so diverse, the fact that few non-university higher education providers made use of a TAC, and the increasing amount of direct applications to providers.

The University of Southern Queensland expressed the view of a number of respondents:

> *Centralised management does not seem feasible and it would arguably be wasteful of the gains and positives of existing arrangements. Instead a national framework with as much consistency and clarity as possible would seem a more efficient and effective next step. This would build on the existing trajectory to commonality as far as possible and clear mappings where variations are warranted or preferred.*

The greatest call was for a national information site not a national TAC. Close to half the submissions encouraged greater national consistency and cooperation in the approaches to managing applications and the provision of information about course options and admission requirements. The Go8 submission supported improved access to national admissions information:

> *Any student, anywhere in Australia, should be able to access full information on course offerings in all States and Territories, and apply to be offered a place in a course.*

The Go8 also advocated that universities and TACs be encouraged to develop a single national application process whereby students make a single application and single payment irrespective of the TAC through which the specific course admission is administered.

The University of Sunshine Coast (USC) stated:

> *In order to facilitate greater understanding and transparency around university admissions processes, USC suggests that it be a requirement that all Higher Education Providers use a single, easily accessible webpage that allows prospective students to ascertain information on all available pathways into courses of study.*

Central Queensland University also supported this, noting the increased complexity of the admissions process for Queensland high school leavers who may not have an ATAR:

> *As each state differs in its methodology of ATAR calculation, ranking criteria is not readily understood by all applicants and becomes confusing when applicants are looking to cross state borders. In addition, non-school leavers struggle to understand how their qualifications will translate to entry to a course. A centralised online platform covering all Australian institutions, explaining ATAR/OP ranking calculations with multiple examples to demonstrate the process, would provide greater transparency for applicants.*

The Australian Centre for Career Education recommended:

> *A national website that provides intake data for all institutions, completion rates and employment rates to the general public. A robust search engine that provides local, state and*

national information, including the percentage of international students in the institution and per course.

Deakin University, like many other providers, supported:

A central, national repository of such information from all institutions [that] would enable applicants to easily compare the options.

Dr Andrew Harvey and Mr Matt Brett referred to their academic study exploring the inequity of the current system in their submission:

Our research revealed markedly different opinions on the accessibility of information made available through the admissions process...In particular, we found that low SES and regional students have less awareness of the admissions process than their counterparts, and are often unlikely to access and navigate a tertiary admissions centre website.

...

There are inefficiencies and inequities associated with the need for disadvantaged students to make multiple direct applications to different universities. The UAC model streamlines principal recommendation/early offer schemes and provides an efficient model that reduces the administrative burden on students and schools.

The Panel carefully considered the benefits of recommending the development of a national tertiary admission centre. At this time, however, it considers a requirement for TACs to work together to develop consistent language and more consistent presentation of information around admissions processes and outcomes will improve the accessibility and comparability of information across providers and jurisdictions to a satisfactory level. However the Panel does not believe the matter is closed. If greater collaboration is unsuccessful, further consideration could be given to a national TAC in the future.

The introduction of standardised information templates for the presentation of information on admissions processes (recommendations 8 and 9) and a new national higher education admissions information platform (recommendation 7) would enable prospective students to more readily compare offerings across providers, including on a national basis where desired.

Some elements of the TAC role, including the conversion of school results to ATAR rankings are highly jurisdiction-specific. Indeed the determination of institution and course admission ranks and the range of course offerings managed by the TAC is often tailored to individual institution needs. Not all higher education providers use the TAC services – including the majority of non-university providers and some private universities.

The generic process of accepting applications and issuing offers to prospective students have common elements which could be streamlined. More common approaches could be applied across jurisdictions. The panel heard evidence that this could have particular benefits for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and rural locations who have poorer access to quality career advice and support. It could help to minimise current inequalities in awareness of and access to non-ATAR and equity-focused alternative entry schemes. It could also assist cross-border applicants expressing preferences for courses at institutions in other states or territories.

Currently, students wishing to apply to universities across Australia need to do so by applying to each relevant state TACs and paying multiple application fees. While the numbers of students seeking entry to interstate higher education providers is small, the current process is complex and

costly and can impede student mobility. Students dealing with a number of TACs access differing information concerning equity schemes and bonus points, which adds further complexity to the process. This is an issue of particular concern for those students who live near a state border.

The Panel believes further work is necessary to simplify the cross-border application experience for prospective higher education students. Integration of the TAC system would better reflect that there is a national policy and funding framework for higher education.

Submissions raised concerns about mobility across state borders. TAFE Directors Australia highlighted in its submission:

> *Anecdotal feedback from TAFE HEPs suggests that admission to HEPs in other states through TACs can be difficult to navigate and can incur additional costs for students. Consistency across TACs in application processes, templates and fees would be a welcome improvement.*

Development of a common application form or online tool that captures the range of information required to ensure consistent access to information on equity and other bonus schemes, in addition to the improvements suggested at Recommendation 6, would assist those seeking to study interstate. It would also provide benefits to all students by potentially streamlining access to a wider range of non-ATAR admission pathways of which awareness is currently uneven.

Such a form or online tool could also provide the beginnings of a more centralised national admissions process, which may over time provide a stronger basis for consideration of moving to establish a national TAC.

Recommendation 6
Tertiary admission centres (TACs) should work together to develop consistent language and reporting around admissions processes, and to streamline cross-jurisdictional application processes.

The Panel strongly recommends a new national higher education admissions information platform be developed to provide a central point of access for all prospective higher education students. The platform should adopt common language and classes of information to enable ready access to and comparison of information about admission requirements across all Australian higher education providers.

A national higher education admissions information platform will enable prospective students, parents and schools to access a single point of entry for initial information about higher education admissions processes, and be provided with further links to other websites for more course-specific information.

Recommendation 7
A national higher education admissions information platform should be established to provide a single point of entry for information about higher education admissions policies and processes across all registered providers.

COMPARABILITY

Australia's higher education providers and TACs currently make available a wide variety of descriptive information about admission pathways, career and academic pathways, student experience and support services. They also publish a range of technical information, such as entry requirements, ATAR prerequisites and academic thresholds, including ATAR and bonus points. The approaches taken and level of detail of this information vary across providers and jurisdictions. There are concerns regarding the usefulness of much of the information about entry requirements and academic thresholds. Conversely, making ready access to the comparative information which is of most value is a challenge.

In its submission to the Panel, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) noted:

Current approaches are often complex and while appearing to have the same objective, for example the use of bonus points, the actual processes differ considerably between providers. Hence there may be a need for simplification of admissions policies and specific information to meet the needs of prospective students.

Many submissions propose enhancing the comparability of published data as a driver of increased transparency both at individual course level and for overall provider reporting and accountability.

TEQSA concurred:

The disparity in information available creates an information asymmetry between providers and prospective students. Such an asymmetry raises the risk of sub-optimal outcomes for students and providers, such as reduced progression rates and increased attrition levels.

The University of Adelaide stated:

Irrespective of these mechanisms, national consistency in key aspects of admissions would significantly improve clarity for potential students and the general public, and enhance mobility to institutions across state borders.

The Universities Admission Centre (UAC) made a similar point:

To assist with decision-making, prospective students require access to accurate, timely and comprehensible information about the courses available, the institutions offering those courses, and the selection methods used by those institutions for admissions purposes. …This information must be clear, consistent and comparable. For inspiration on methods of packaging this information we could look to existing practices such as the Standard Information Statements required for each product offered by a health fund or the Critical Information Summaries used by telecommunications companies.

Taylor Nelson Sofres Australia (TNS) were contracted by the Department of Education and Training to undertake market research for the QILT website in May-June 2015. The aim of this research was to gather feedback on student preferences when they were using a website to assist them in making decisions on their higher education options. Their feedback was used to support the refinement and future development of the QILT website.

The research consisted of two phases. The first was a qualitative phase which utilised an online forum with students and in-depth telephone interviews with career advisors. The second was a

quantitative phase which used an online survey for students, parents and employers. More than 1,500 participants took part in the quantitative phase which included 1,074 potential and current students, 344 parents and 101 employers.

The outcome of this research highlighted that students find current information sources, such as individual university websites, TACs and Universities Australia websites, to be informative but often too broad, complex and containing too much information. Student expectations were quantified during the online survey. It was revealed that 60 per cent of students wanted to find course information and the cost of higher education courses. In addition, 58 per cent of students wanted information on the course duration, prerequisites and the study options available.

The department also recently conducted several surveys of its 2016 graduate cohort. The results concluded that the employment outcomes, course prerequisites and entrance requirements were all rated very highly. There was also a strong focus on career pathways with over 50 per cent of respondents ranking this information as important. Prospective students did not just want to know what was predicted about entrance requirements. The majority of respondents wanted information on the previous year's overall ATAR cut-off rank with and without bonus points applied.

On the basis of this overwhelming sense of the need for action, the Panel makes three recommendations which are intended to improve the comparability of information available from higher education providers, TACs and Government about higher education admissions.

Institution information template

Recommendation 8

A template should be adopted by higher education providers to publish institution level information in a standardised format about their admissions processes, which would be made available to prospective students on the national higher education admissions information platform.

The proposed template is provided at **Appendix A1**, with a mocked-up example at **Appendix A2**. The institution admission information template encompasses:

- the general admissions philosophy which underpins the provider's overarching educational mission, including overarching guidelines
- admission requirements, incorporating the full range of admission pathways available, how to access or apply for them, and how they will be assessed
- the criteria for any ATAR bonus points and the maximum number of bonus points that can be applied
- the availability of early entry schemes, such as schools recommendation schemes
- the proportion of domestic and international students
- equity scholarships information
- special consideration schemes
- information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- information on bridging courses
- courses available by direct application
- enrolment information
- financial assistance information
- accommodation information
- student and campus services information

- appeals and grievances information
- where to get further information, at the institutional level, including course and study area information.

Students should be placed at the centre. The information needs of all relevant cohorts should be considered. This includes the needs of mature age students, current vocational education and training and higher education students and professionals in the workforce who are not currently participating in formal education.

A number of formats incorporating much of this information are already available at the state level. The challenge is to standardise it. After careful consideration, the Panel concluded that with some minor additions, the provider admissions policy statements available on the New South Wales University Admissions Centre (UAC) website would best meet this need. The proposed template is modelled on the UAC approach for institution-level admissions information

Study area information template

Recommendation 9

A template should be adopted for higher education providers to publish study area information in a standardised format about their admissions processes, which would be available to prospective students on the national higher education admissions information platform.

The proposed template is provided at **Appendix B1**, with a mocked-up example at **Appendix B2**. The Panel notes that this template provides comparable information for each study area in a standardised format, employing the study area definitions presently used for the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys and website. This template should also include links to provider websites that will provide significant detail on each particular course. This will assist students to make an informed decision on their academic options.

The study area information template encompasses:

- an admissions statement relevant to the study area including information on work based learning, internships, work placements and graduate career pathways
- a profile of admission pathways available for each area of study, including both the proportion of students anticipated to enter via the various routes and the proportion of students who entered via the various pathways in the previous year
- a link to the provider's ATAR and bonus points arrangements, including information for the previous two years at the conclusion of all entry rounds.
- course costs
- where to get further course-specific information.

The Panel considers that this represents the minimum comparative data to be provided. Of course, individual providers and TACs are likely to supplement this information with additional course-specific details.

The Panel has been conscious of the need for a trade-off in presenting comparable information that is useful to prospective students and their families. Research conducted by the Department of Education and Training indicates that prospective students wish to have access to information at the individual course level. However, the QILT website provides information at a more aggregated level, using 21 study areas. While ultimately an issue for government and the sector, the Panel has chosen to recommend adoption of the 21 study areas to maximise comparability. The Panel notes that this

comes at the price of some utility, but anticipates this would be met by reference to institutional websites for additional course-specific information.

In relation to ATARs specifically, the proposed template makes provision for the publication of information about the previous year's ATAR admission outcomes. This should include, for each area of study, at the conclusion of all rounds:

- the minimum ATAR required to be admitted
- the maximum number of bonus points allowable
- the percentage of domestic students admitted with bonus points.

Higher education providers should also publish the ATAR ranges for each study area in previous years, including 25th percentile, median, and 75th percentile, to give a better sense of the range of the peer cohort being accepted into a course.

The proposed template is adapted from models proposed by Universities Australia and the Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE) in their submissions to the Panel's consultation process.

It is important that standardised information can be readily compared. The national admissions information platform should enable users to search and compare information for a number of providers. A mocked-up example of information in a comparable format is at **Appendix C**.

> **Recommendation 10**
> The national higher education admissions information platform should be designed to enable direct comparison of information on admissions requirements and data on previous years' admission outcomes.

Basis of admission categories

With regard to information on the range of admission pathways, the Panel noted that data currently collected by the Department of Education and Training on the basis of admission to higher education courses may not be fully robust. Guidance to institutions on the reporting of secondary student admissions needs to be tightened to increase the level of confidence that ATAR-related and non-ATAR-related admissions are being correctly distinguished and that those allocated to an undefined 'other' category minimised.

Where recent secondary students are concerned, the Panel considers it is important to be able to distinguish between three types of circumstance – i.e. where:

1. ATAR (with or without the impact of bonus points) is the *sole* factor considered in the decision to offer a place
2. other factors are considered *in addition* to the ATAR, or
3. ATAR is not a factor in the decision to offer a place (whether or not the student themselves had an ATAR allocated by the relevant TAC).

These three admission categories for recent secondary students are reflected in the templates at Appendices A, B and C. Some illustrative examples of cases that would fall into each category for basis of admission are provided at **Appendix D**.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Australia's higher education sector has an enviable reputation. The Australian higher education system comprises public and private universities, Australian branches of overseas universities, and other higher education providers with and without self-accrediting authority. TEQSA plays a key role

in assuring the quality of the education provided. TEQSA continues to perform well and is generally well-regarded by the sector. It is the most appropriate body to ensure transparent admissions processes are consistent and fairly applied to all.

Prior to the establishment of TEQSA each state and territory had its own legislation setting out the requirements to operate as a higher education provider. The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes provided a common frame of reference for the regulatory operations in each state and territory but did not ensure a consistent approach. Further, jurisdictions took different approaches to mutual recognition of provider standing and to the level of oversight which various categories of provider were subject to.

The *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act) was given royal assent on 29 July 2011. TEQSA began its regulatory function on 29 January 2012. The establishment of TEQSA created a single body responsible for both compliance monitoring and quality assurance. The Regulation Impact Statement which supported the legislation anticipated that the legislation would be interpreted so that different levels of evidence would be required from different providers, based on the level of risk exposure of the provider.

TEQSA registers and assesses the performance of higher education providers against requirements articulated in the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, which all providers must meet in order to enter and remain within Australia's higher education system. Revised standards in the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* come into effect from 1 January 2017.

Some submissions and stakeholder discussions identified the possibility of TEQSA taking a more proactive role in monitoring and assuring the transparency of admissions information – scrutiny could be ongoing, not just conducted when registrations are being reviewed. Others advocated reliance on sector collaboration and self-regulation. The Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE), in its submission, stated:

> *We suggest that a great deal of progress could be achieved through industry self-regulation measures that could be implemented as a result of consultation between peak bodies, TACs and TEQSA, thus avoiding the need for additional government regulation. It is acknowledged that such collaborative effort will involve significant challenges and take some time to bring to completion but it should not, because of that, be avoided.*

Revised higher education standards

Under Standard 1.1 of the revised Standards, providers are required to ensure that admissions policies, requirements and processes are documented and are applied fairly and consistently.

Admission and other contractual arrangements with students must be in writing and include any particular conditions of enrolment and participation for undertaking particular courses that may not apply to other courses more generally.

Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups must be monitored and the findings used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those subgroups.

Standard 5.3 of the revised Standards requires providers to ensure that the results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education.

Standard 7.2 of the revised Standards states that providers are required to ensure that information for students is available prior to acceptance of an offer, and written in plain English.

TEQSA's Risk Assessment Framework

Under TEQSA's revised Risk Assessment Framework, published in March 2014, provider risk profiles are developed and updated annually to inform the scope and intensity of assessments that TEQSA undertakes. A provider's risk profile is determined by its history of higher education delivery, previous regulatory outcomes and a risk assessment, which focuses on risks to students, the provider's financial position and academic risks. The latter includes an assessment of a provider's internal capability to quality assure its teaching and learning performance and outcomes.

A low-risk provider seeking re-registration is asked for evidence against a reduced set of standards. A tailored extension to these requirements may be made on the basis of higher risk. In exceptional cases, providers are assessed to the broadest extent possible. For course accreditation and re-accreditation assessments, the approach focuses on reduced evidence requirements for low-risk providers, without narrowing the scope of standards considered. La Trobe University noted:

> There is scope for the TEQSA Risk Framework to play an important role in upholding diversity and equity related standards and building public confidence in the Australian higher education system by better integrating consideration of admissions practices and outcomes.

To a significant extent the fact that admissions processes and criteria are transparent, and subject to public scrutiny, will ensure that the 'power of sunlight' shines on provider practices. Nevertheless it is also necessary to ensure that providers can be held to account for the accuracy of the information they make available to prospective students.

The Panel considered a number of options to ensure the confidence in the accountability of providers. Following deliberations, it was agreed that TEQSA was the appropriate body to monitor admissions practices and ensure that the report's recommendations are put into practice.

The Panel were persuaded that the new higher education standards will give TEQSA the necessary authority to require compliance with the Panel's recommendations on comparability and transparency. The Panel also agreed that TEQSA is the appropriate body to ensure consistent and fairly applied admissions processes are maintained by all higher education providers. Through TEQSA the public can be assured that higher education providers are held accountable for the information they publish about their admissions policies and meet their obligations under the Higher Education Standards Framework.

TEQSA is willing to undertake this role. Its submission stated:

> TEQSA recognises the primary responsibility of autonomous higher education (HE) institutions to manage their admissions processes within the HE Standards...TEQSA wishes to ensure that it is providing relevant advice for providers on the requirements of the new HE Standards; that it is taking proper account of the impact of unclear or inadequate entry standards on the risks to students, particularly in relation to attrition; and that it considers appropriately the direct evidence which is provided by the courses it accredits for non-self-accrediting institutions.

The Panel believes TEQSA should document and communicate the types of evidence it considers would demonstrate compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework. TEQSA should

ensure admissions information published by higher education providers is not misleading or deceptive and if necessary use its powers to pursue civil or criminal remedies in accordance with the TEQSA Act or competition law. TEQSA should also have a proactive role in monitoring compliance with its guidance on transparency in higher education admissions – over and above the regular cycle of assessing applications for provider re-registration.

Recommendation 11

TEQSA should have an active role in monitoring compliance with guidance to the sector on transparency in higher education admissions, complementing the regular cycle of assessing applications for provider re-registration.

TEQSA, as the regulator, should continue to work with the sector on implementing the Panel's recommendations. It should assist higher education providers to meet their reporting requirements. TEQSA currently provides a range of Guidance Notes on the Higher Education Standards Framework, and a further note on admissions process information (and its monitoring) should be developed. TEQSA should consider whether, in addition to a more proactive ongoing role in relation to monitoring admissions transparency, a further specific review of admissions practices across the sector might be beneficially conducted within the next three years. The Panel notes, that any such action should be cognisant of the need to minimise any associated regulatory red-tape.

Recommendation 12

TEQSA should draft a Guidance Note to providers, canvassing best practice in providing clear information on admissions processes.

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CAREER ADVISERS TO NAVIGATE THE SYSTEM

In addition to simplifying information through consistent terminology and standardised templates, and centralising access through the establishment of a national platform, support is required for prospective students, their families, and schools to use this material to make informed decisions.

During the Panel's consultation process it became clear further support, either through provision of professional development or through the preparation of resources, would be beneficial for careers advisers in secondary schools. This would be most helpful for prospective students whose families have not had any experience with the higher education system.

Submissions highlighted the complexity of the system and the importance of conveying this information to students in schools to assist them with their selection of course and provider preferences. The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) noted the importance of careers advice in schools:

> *Based on QTAC's experience over forty years, the most effective method to support prospective students in evaluating the options before them is career counselling provided by appropriately trained and resourced professionals.*

The Career Industry Council of Australia explained the challenge:

> *The complexity of conveying accurate ATAR and scaling information is a significant issue in schools. The complex nature of the ATAR and associated alternative entry schemes, leads to students and parents not receiving a clear and consistent message about the process for university entry. High ATAR equating to the status of the university course and selecting senior secondary subjects based on how they may or may not be scaled favourably are common misconceptions that emanate through school communities.*

A 2016 paper written in collaboration by La Trobe University and the University of New England, funded by the Australian Government Higher Education Participation Programme National Priorities Pool[5], analysed the impact of the growing diversity of tertiary admission pathways on students – particularly those experiencing disadvantage. The Panel considered the paper and discussed its findings with the lead authors in May 2016. The paper notes that:

> *At secondary school level, the effects of the changing admissions landscape are being felt acutely. Schools must deal with the proliferation of early offer schemes across multiple universities, and the task for careers advisers and students is complex. Careers advisers highlight the growing workload involved with advising students on alternative pathways, careers, and tertiary options. Advisers typically feel unable to devote time to students in the lower year levels (i.e. Year 7-9), and struggle themselves to understand the multiplicity of tertiary options.*

While the national admissions information platform should be user friendly and intuitive, supplementary guidance about the platform, how to use it, and where to get more detailed information and data will need to be prepared and promoted to all relevant stakeholders. This is necessary in order to inform and empower prospective students, their families, and careers advisers. Online training could also be provided to help prospective students (and, in particular, their teachers) to understand how to use the comparative information templates that the Panel recommends.

Recommendation 13

There should be an online guide to explain higher education admissions information and how to use the national higher education admissions information platform more effectively.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

During the Panel's consultations it became apparent that there were a number other issues which, though closely connected to transparency of admissions were outside the scope of this report. The Panel believes that they require further consideration. Primarily these included the need to further examine student success, completion and attrition rates; and to improve career education in schools and higher education providers.

Student success, completion and attrition rates

The Panel concluded that much of the media coverage of sector attrition rates in September 2016 (following the release of 2015 student data by the Department of Education and Training) was unnecessarily alarmist. Initial reports misrepresented raw attrition rates, unadjusted for impact of students changing courses or institutions as indicative of an emerging crisis.

It is a fact that many students change their degree program mid-course, both within the same institution and by moving to another institution. Sometimes this is because they were unable to get into their preferred institution initially and they use their good performance at another provider to gain a place at their preferred institution in the second or third year (which helps to explain why a quarter of students are admitted by providers on the basis of previous higher education experience). Sometimes changes simply reflect a refinement of course choice but because of the proliferation of degree names, a change in enrolment is required.

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[5] Harvey et al, 2016, *The Adaptation of Tertiary Admissions Practices to Growth and Diversity.*

Attrition rates also vary widely across institutions, reflecting differences in their course offerings, the enrolment status of student cohorts and the nature of their student catchments and communities.

It needs to be emphasised that there is no crisis evident in the data. Across the sector, overall attrition rates adjusted for movement to other courses and institutions have changed little over the last decade. Suggestions that attrition is reaching dangerous levels, or that widened access to universities is inevitably leading to lower completion rates are not based on facts. Policy needs to be informed by evidence.

The statistical record suggests that overall rates of attrition have not increased substantially in the last ten years. Between 2005 and 2014, the national adjusted attrition rate increased only marginally from 15.04 per cent to 15.18 per cent.

Figure 5: National adjusted attrition rate. 2005 - 2014
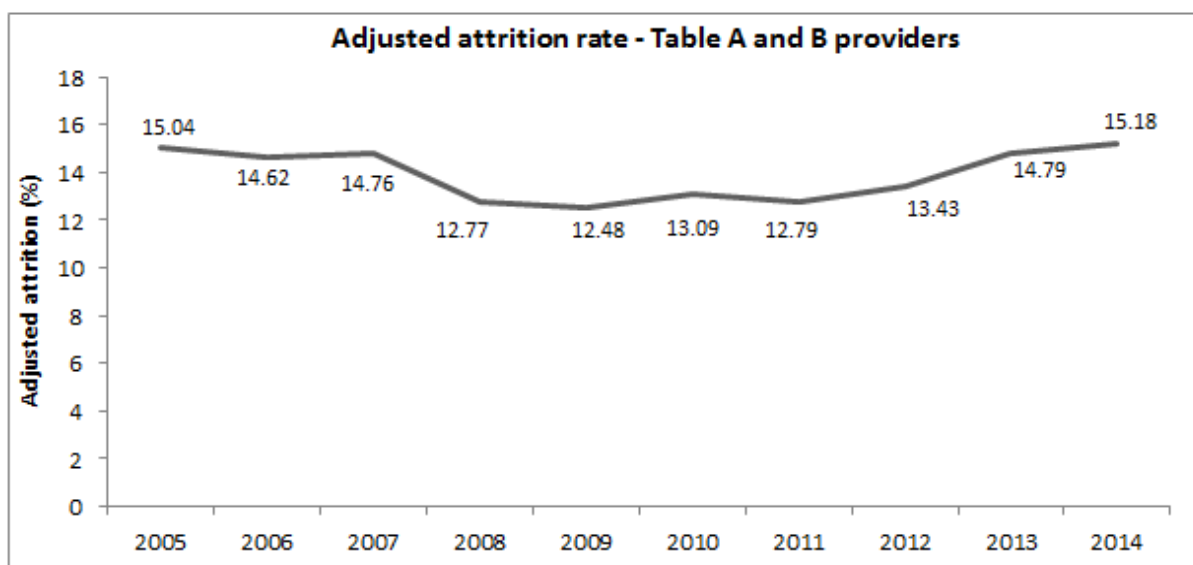
When individual institutions' rates of attrition are examined, there are variations. There is evidence that some institutions are supporting higher-risk students to succeed more successfully than others. There is also evidence of institutions across the sector enrolling relatively larger cohorts of low SES and low ATAR students, and still achieving high success rates for those students. For the majority of universities, however, adjusted attrition rates are lower now than they were a decade ago and well before the implementation of the demand driven system. In 2005, there were five universities with an attrition rate of 25 per cent or higher. In 2014 there were two universities with an attrition rate of 25 per cent or higher. This shows that there is no sector-wide crisis occurring due to the demand-driven system. However there are clearly some institutions doing better than others in retaining enrolled students.

Nonetheless, during consultations the Panel received a number of submissions that identified attrition as an important issue needing further consideration. For example, the Australian Catholic University noted:

> *There is a misconception that admitting students with lower ATARs necessarily results in greater attrition or drop-out rates. Since the introduction of the demand driven system, however, retention figures have remained relatively stable, indicating that students who are*

admitted to university with lower ATARs or on the basis of other factors are sticking with study, and ultimately succeeding.

Similarly, Swinburne University of Technology noted:

Since 2012, participation in higher education has increased substantially without significant change to the overall national attrition rate.

The Go8 presented a rather different view. It noted that as a result of admitting students with high ATARs, its institutions have:

…a relatively low first year domestic undergraduate attrition rate of 7.2 per cent, less than half the national rate (14.8 per cent).

Critical to success is the support that is provided to students with poorer educational backgrounds. Charles Sturt University noted:

With CSU's educational mission, concerns regarding the capacity of some students to complete their courses is a constant. Significant resources are placed on supporting these students to achieve their goals. CSU's success is demonstrated in the fact that while it has one of the highest proportion of non- school leavers in the country, and overtly promotes alternate entry pathways to its potential students, it still has better than average first year attrition for both 'internal' and 'external' modes of study.

The Higher Education Standards Framework sets out providers' obligation to ensure that only students who have capacity to complete a course are admitted to it. The Standards emphasise the need to offer academic and non-academic support to students that is consistent with the requirements of their courses of study, their modes of delivery and the learning needs of student cohorts. As such, services to support students to complete their studies are widely available at higher education providers. Most universities offer a range of student services, typically including:

- Foundation or transition programs, to help commencing students become accustomed to higher education
- academic support services, such as peer mentoring and academic skills workshops
- student support services including health care services, counselling, on-site child care facilities, financial hardship assistance careers advice, and counselling.

Given the ubiquity of such offerings, the evident variation in attrition rates suggests the availability of such services alone is not preventing students from leaving higher education. It is likely that many other factors play a role, including the specific delivery models adopted for student support. There is evidence, for example, that students studying online are more likely to drop out of their course.

The Panel heard evidence that, while some providers with a significant proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds appear to do well at supporting high levels of unit and course completion, there are significant differences in outcomes across the sector as a whole. The specific approaches or interventions which support higher levels of success for such students are not immediately identifiable.

While TEQSA examines student support services as part of its registration and re-registration process, the Panel considers that further research is required. It is necessary to build the evidence base on what factors lead to high success rates and minimise attrition rates among different types of

students; and to confirm that higher education providers are delivering the range of academic and non-academic support services required to maximise students' success.

The Panel heard evidence from the Department of Education and Training which demonstrated that a range of student characteristics influence attrition. Among measured variables, the type of attendance and age appear to have most influence on attrition. This is consistent with older students studying part-time finding it more difficult to combine study with work and family responsibilities. While a student's ATAR or basis of admission also influences the likelihood of attrition, this appears less important than the impact of these other factors.

The 2015 *Student Experience Survey* shows that students consider withdrawing from studies for a range of situational and education-related reasons. Non-academic reasons cited by students include health or stress (42 per cent), study/life balance (29 per cent) and the need to do paid work (26 per cent). Educational reasons include students' expectations not being met (22 per cent) and lack of academic support (16 per cent).

The Panel considers the factors underpinning success in supporting high rates of completion need to be further explored. It is too simplistic to argue that low ATAR students should be prevented from entering higher education when some providers are clearly able to support these students to successful outcomes. More research should be undertaken on the causes of attrition, along with consideration of policy measures that would incentivise the uptake of strategies that have been demonstrated to be successful.

It may be also be worth considering in the future whether completion rates, attrition rates, and employment outcomes of graduates should be included in published information at study area or course level to improve transparency and assist prospective students in making enrolment decisions.

The Panel notes that TEQSA is conducting its own research into attrition, and work is also being done within universities and by the Department of Education and Training. The Panel considers that additional qualitative research on successful support strategies is needed to support the quantitative work already underway. This should be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 14
Further consideration should be given to assessing the factors and approaches that contribute to student success, completion and attrition rates in higher education.

The need for improved career education in schools and higher education providers

Through the consultation process, stakeholders indicated to the Panel the value of career education in secondary schools and higher education providers. Career education supports students to make informed choice of senior secondary school subjects, higher education courses and access to non-ATAR entry pathways. As such, the Panel believes that career education is an issue that requires further investigation.

The complexity of higher education admissions means that students are becoming increasingly reliant on careers advisors to provide accurate information on how to navigate the higher education admissions process. This is particularly true in low socioeconomic areas, where parents may not be able to decipher the application process. This was highlighted in the submission from the Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE):

Recent research on low SES students and the application process highlighted the importance of family members in providing support and that the level of expertise that high SES students received put them at distinct advantage. In addition, the results reinforced previous research that career counselling had a significant impact on participation and course application.

Greater support for careers advisors can lead to students receiving accurate and timely advice surrounding key issues. An education program for careers advisors should be considered. This could ensure that the information careers advisors are providing to students is up to date and relevant.

Another issue for consideration is support for career advisors to engage with all secondary school students, rather than just those in the second half of Year 12. Interaction with students in the earlier years, especially in Year 10, can assist senior secondary subject choice, promote career aspirations throughout a student's high school career and contribute to more considered decision making. The ACCE highlights in its submission that:

Governments (Federal and State) need to action improving career education services in schools so that student preparation in career decision making commences much earlier than in August of their graduating year 12. The flurry of activity to select courses in two months with little to no preparation is the main reason why we have high attrition rates in first year university courses, lack of completion in second and third year.

Career education within higher education providers also requires attention. There is currently no explicit requirement for higher education providers to have career services available to students. Some universities and higher education providers do provide a careers service for students and include industry involvement as part of this service. This promotes graduate employment. The Career Industry Council of Australia outlines in its submission:

We do however believe that [there is a need for] the addition of an element or field in the revised Higher Education Standards Framework which makes explicit reference to career development service provisions and practices. The objective would be to encourage universities to set quality assurance processes and systems based around career development which are designed to aid the transition processes.

This evidence is supported by research[6] that showed that Year 11 students are not aware of the options available for entry to universities:

Over 40 per cent of respondents were unaware of the existence of early offer/principal recommendation schemes, and very few knew which universities offered schemes relevant to their school. Half the respondents were unaware that they could apply for courses through a tertiary admissions centre, and 60 per cent of respondents were unaware of the existence of educational access schemes.

The Panel considers that support of careers advisors and availability of career education will complement the work outlined in this report on admissions transparency and help to ensure that students are well informed of admission processes and receive appropriate support to navigate them.

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[6] Harvey et al, 2016, *The Adaptation of Tertiary Admissions Practices to Growth and Diversity.*

CONCLUSION

The transparency of higher education student admissions policies needs improving. Students, parents and schools need to have the knowledge and training to navigate higher education admissions policies and processes.

Students need to have easy access to relevant, clear, comparable information on higher education entry requirements. They need to understand the alternative pathways. They require access to student cohort information to help them to make informed decisions about their futures. If a course has a minimum ATAR requirement, this should be clearly stated. It should be clear if that requirement is inclusive of any bonus points that may or may not be applicable. If the minimum ATAR requirement is likely to change following the main round of offers, this information should also be made available.

Higher education providers are autonomous institutions. But they need to be answerable and accountable for the information they publish about their admissions policies. They need to meet their obligations under the Higher Education Standards Framework.

The changes recommended in this report focus on improving the transparency of higher education student admission policies in order to benefit students and ensure they have the best chance to receive a quality education. They need to be able to make a major financial decision to invest in their higher education with eyes wide open.

The Panel considers more work needs to be undertaken on a range of other issues raised during the consultation process that were not in scope of this review.

The Panel wishes to sincerely thank the stakeholders who provided submissions to its consultation process and/or engaged in discussions with members of the Panel. We are grateful for the support we have received from the secretariat within the Department of Education and Training. We, alone, are responsible for the conclusions we have reached and the recommendations that we have presented.

Glossary

Admissions pathway: A description of the combination of all the factors – including method and process through which a person must apply, the supporting evidence they must produce and the way in which that evidence is assessed – in order to gain acceptance into a higher education course. There are many such pathways available including through evidence of successful completion of senior secondary education, successful completion of a vocational education and training (VET) qualification or previous higher education course, entry into a preparatory course as a prerequisite for further higher education study, evidence of professional experience in the workforce, entry through special consideration programs like a school principal recommendation or Indigenous entry scheme, audition or portfolio assessment for entry into a fine or performing arts course.

Admissions philosophy: A higher education provider's mission statement of its general philosophy and overarching guidelines that indicate the sort of student it wishes to attract.

Admissions policies: Individual institutional policies on admissions.

Alternative entry schemes: Alternative selection methods used by higher education providers to assist students, who may otherwise not meet standard selection criteria, have been disadvantaged throughout their schooling or have other relevant skills and experience that make them a suitable candidate.

Area of study information: Information based on the aggregated areas of study used in the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website to display comparable performance information from the QILT surveys. QILT currently uses 21 aggregate areas of study.

ATAR related terms

- **ATAR:** The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a percentile number (not a mark) that indicates a student's relative position within Year 7 cohort, including students who did not complete Year 12. The ATAR is reported as a number between 30 and 99.95 in increments of 0.05, with 99.95 being the highest achievable ATAR and 30 the lowest. The ATAR enables the comparison of students who have completed different combinations of senior secondary subjects. It is calculated solely for use by institutions, either on its own or in conjunction with other selection criteria, to rank and select school leavers for admission to tertiary courses.
- **Bonus points:** Points that may be added to a student's ATAR by an institution and taken into account *as if they were part of the ATAR* – see detailed description below.
- **ATAR-plus**: An informal term generally used to signify that, *in addition to the ATAR*, other non-ATAR factors were taken into consideration when assessing eligibility for a course – such as an assessment of a portfolio of artistic work or performance in a supplementary test.
- **ATAR alone**: A student's ATAR rank (with or without the impact of bonus points) was the only consideration in assessing entry to a course.
- **ATAR cut-off**: Currently, this is generally defined as the lowest ATAR/Overall Position (OP – see definition below) for a recent secondary student offered a place in a higher education course through the main round of offers in the previous year. It is intended to be indicative of the ATAR required to ensure entry into the course in the following year.
- **Clearly-in ATAR**: Where this term is currently used (chiefly Victoria), it has the same meaning as "ATAR cut-off" above. It is used as an alternative expression to more clearly signal that, while this level of ATAR would likely ensure entry into a chosen course, it is possible that a person with a lower ATAR may also be admitted, depending on the availability of and competition for places.
- **Minimum ATAR**: The absolute minimum ATAR that would be necessary for entry into a course or institution.
- **Non-ATAR**: Admission granted without consideration of the person's ATAR.

Attrition: Attrition is where a student leaves the higher education system without completing the course they were enrolled in. In Australian Government data, "first year attrition" is defined as the proportion of commencing students who did not complete a course in the year they enrolled and were not studying in the following year.

Basis of admission: The main criterion on which the applicant was offered a place in a higher education course. Australian Government data on basis of admission currently includes: secondary education undertaken at school, VET or other higher education provider; higher education course; TAFE/vocational education; professional qualification; mature age special entry provision; other.

Bonus points related terms

- **Bonus points:** Additional points that may be added by an institution to a student's ATAR as part of their course selection rank. Bonus points do not change a student's ATAR, but change their selection rank for a particular course preference. Examples can include subject bonus points where the student undertook a senior secondary subject of particular relevance to the higher education course, regional bonus points for students living in non-metropolitan areas, or Educational Access Scheme (EAS) bonus points where a student falls into defined equity groups or experienced some identified personal, health or other circumstances that impacted negatively on their senior secondary studies.
- **Maximum number of bonus points**: The maximum number of bonus points available to an individual applicant from all types of bonus points they may be eligible for.
- **Inclusive of bonus points**: The 'ATAR' or selection rank includes the impact of any bonus points the person is eligible for.
- **Equity points**: Bonus points added on the basis of characteristics associated with disadvantage, for example being from a regional or low socioeconomic status geographical area.
- **Subject bonus**: Bonus points offered due to the particular relevance of a past secondary subject to the academic requirements of the higher education course.

Bridging course: A course designed to help students make the transition to tertiary study, which usually assists students to gain 'assumed knowledge' in specialist areas like maths or science that are a key component of the course. If a course requires a prerequisite in an area that students have not studied or worked with before, a bridging course will help students to bridge the gap in that knowledge and gain admission.

Completion When a student completes all course and other requirements to attain a qualification.

Cross border application: Application to a higher education provider in a different state from the state where the applicant currently resides.

Direct application: Application made directly to a higher education provider, rather than through a Tertiary Admissions Centre.

Early entry scheme: An application pathway whereby an offer of enrolment can be made prior to finalised senior secondary marks being received. These are sometimes conditional on other requirements being met, e.g. achievement of a minimum ATAR.

Early offer: An offer of a place in a higher education course that is made prior to the end of the final year of school.

Higher education provider: An educational institution that is registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to deliver higher education in Australia. Australian higher education is generally provided by universities and other non-university providers. Some VET providers, including many Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes are also registered with TEQSA as higher education providers.

Identified criteria: Special ability or knowledge or potential used as the basis of admission.

Institution level information: Information available about a university or non-university higher education provider that has general relevance across all courses and programs at the institution.

Interview: A well-used alternative entry pathway often combined with a portfolio of work.

Mature age entry: Entry to higher education more than two years following the completion of secondary school – generally with eligibility assessed on the basis of other factors in addition to or instead of performance in secondary education.

Offer rounds: Refers to the series of offers of higher education places issued to prospective students by the TACs and institutions – generally with a "main round", where the bulk of offers are made and timing is governed by dates agreed between the states, territories and the Commonwealth. A subsequent series of offers may be issued to fill unaccepted places or where demand was lower than expected. In total, there may be three or four offer rounds before the start of the academic year, with further rounds later in the year.

Overall Position: The Overall Position (OP) refers to the tertiary entrance rank used in Queensland for selection into universities. As with the ATAR, the OP shows how well a student has performed in their senior secondary studies compared with all other OP-eligible students. Overall Position (OP), ranges in the reverse direction to the ATAR (larger number is lower) from 25 (lowest) to 1 (highest). Queensland will adopt the national ATAR approach for students commencing senior secondary education in 2018.

Previous university education: The person's entry to a higher education course is based on their performance in a previous higher education enrolment. This can include a student changing courses mid-stream as well as a student re-entering higher education after a period away.

Prospective Student: A person thinking of applying for admission to a higher education course.

Potential student: All people that could apply for admission to a higher education course whether interested in doing so or not.

School recommendation: Also known as Principal's Recommendation. A testimonial to the abilities of a student that may result in an early offer or an offer that is not based on ATAR rank.

Selection rank: The actual ranking that entry to a specific course is based on. A person's course selection rank can include their ATAR, any bonus points they are eligible for, contributions calculated on the basis of work experience or previous non-secondary study, portfolio assessments, results of the Special Tertiary Admissions Test, other supplementary tests, etc. For the majority of recent secondary education leavers, the course selection rank will be the same as their ATAR, if there are no other factors considered.

Tertiary admissions: Admission to a course with a registered higher education provider.

Vocational education: Successful completion of a vocational education and training (VET) course – especially if used as the qualification for admission into higher education.

Work experience: Experience in employment that is used to determine a person has the capability and is suitable for acceptance into a higher education course.

Appendix A1 – Whole of Institution Information Template

[Insert Name of Higher Education Provider]

1. Admissions philosophy

Institutions to populate with a statement of their general philosophy and overarching guidelines for domestic student admissions (e.g. school leavers, students transitioning to Higher Education from VET qualifications).This information needs to be factual, not marketing information.

2. Basis of admission for commencing domestic students

Institutions to populate with statement on their admissions pathways and illustrate how their students were admitted in the previous year.

Commencing domestic admissions in 2015

Admission Pathway (Basis of admission) 2016	Number admitted	Proportion of domestic students
Secondary education		
• Students admitted solely on the basis of ATAR		
• Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor		
• Students admitted not on the basis of ATAR		
Higher education course		
VET qualification		
Mature age special provision		
Other basis		
All commencing domestic students		100%

*data definition is available at the end of this template. It is also available at http://heimshelp.education.gov.au/sites/heimshelp/2016_data_req uirements/2016dataelements/pages/327.

Commencing student body in 2015:

2016	Number admitted	% of all students
Domestic students		
International students		

3. Bonus points

Institutions to populate with their ATAR bonus points system. Maximum bonus points permitted must also be included:

Bonus type	Number of bonus points
Total maximum bonus points permitted	

4. Admission requirements

Australian secondary studies

2016 Australian Year 12 students

Institutions to indicate how ATARs and selection ranks are calculated by TAC, International Baccalaureate (IB) equivalence, etc.

Offers made to applicants who have an ATAR below the published cut-off

Institutions to indicate how students are selected through other alternative pathways if their ATARs are below the published cut-off.

Previous Australian secondary studies

Institutions to indicate how students are selected and assessed if they completed Year 12 before 2016 and have not attempted any tertiary studies since that time.

Australian tertiary studies

Institutions to indicate how students are selected and assessed if they have undertaken tertiary studies, provided they have completed at least 0.2 year's full-time equivalence.

Overseas qualifications

Institutions to indicate how Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia with overseas qualifications are assessed.

For detailed information, please visit xxx.

Alternative entry and pathway courses

Institutions to populate with information on how students are assessed if they do not have formal tertiary or secondary educational qualifications, such as tertiary preparation certificate/TAFE qualifications, special tertiary admissions test (STAT) and other pathway programs.

5. Early Entry Schemes

Institutions to provide information about their selection process for current Year 12 students who can receive early offers of

admission, such as Schools Recommendation Schemes, Educational Access Schemes.

6. Equity Scholarships

Institutions to outline the selection criteria and application process for equity scholarships.

7. Special Consideration

Institutions to provide information about what special consideration schemes are available, such as elite athletes or performers.

8. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Institutions to provide information about their admission requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, such as an interview or other support that is available to students.

9. Bridging courses

Institutions to detail bridging courses available and where to go to access more information.

10. Courses available by direct application

Institutions to provide information on courses which students need to apply directly.

11. Enrolment

Institutions to provide relevant enrolment information.

12. Financial assistance

Institutions to provide financial assistance information, such as Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY, etc.

13. Accommodation

Institutions to provide information on accommodation options for students.

14. Student and campus services

Institutions to provide relevant information, including but not limited to:

- CRICOS details
- Phone numbers, email addresses, social media information
- Physical addresses of each campus
- Important dates, including open days
- Student support services, such as counselling, chaplaincy, academic assistance and learning support, and employment and career advice

- Campus facilities, such as medical centres, computer centres, sporting and recreation facilities, and childcare centres.
- University student organisations, clubs and societies.

15. Appeals and grievances

Institutions to provide their appeals and grievances processes.

16. Where to get further information

Institutions to provide links to other relevant information providers including but not limited to:

- TEQSA national register
- QILT website
- Relevant TAC website

Basis of Admissions Data Definition:

Basis of Admission: Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) identifies the main criterion used by the Higher Education/VET Provider in granting a student admission to the current course, OR a Higher Education Provider granting an offer/admission to an applicant in a course.

Secondary Education: Education of the type usually (but not always) undertaken by a student in secondary schools, and extending up to and including Year 12 studies or education of a similar type undertaken in institutions other than secondary schools (e.g. in evening colleges, TAFE institutions).

- Students admitted solely on the basis of ATAR (inclusive of bonus points if any) (new definition- previously included as part of secondary school with ATAR)
- Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor (where ATAR may be considered as part of the admissions requirements inclusive of bonus points if any, plus other considerations) (new definition- previously included as part of secondary school with ATAR)
- Students admitted NOT on the basis of ATAR, where ATAR is not relevant or not applicable (new definition- previously defined as secondary school without ATAR)

Higher Education Course: Higher education courses may be award courses, non-award courses, Bridging for Overseas Trained Professionals or enabling courses. Higher education courses do not include TAFE courses. It is an Australian or overseas equivalent, complete or incomplete course. These include students who attended pathway colleges that award undergraduate diplomas, students switching courses or universities, or students returning for a second degree.

VET Award Course: A program of study which the responsible State or Territory authority deems to be a vocational education and training course.

Mature age special provision course

Professional qualification

Other basis: includes any other pathway which does not fit in any of the above categories.

All offer rounds: Data published include all offer rounds, such as early offers, main round, and subsequent rounds.

Appendix A2 – Whole of Institution Information Template – Example

Higher Education Provider A

Admissions philosophy

The provider has a rich history and sets the standard in teaching, research and community engagement.

Admission to all courses is on a competitive basis, taking into account all relevant academic qualifications. Course intakes are determined by the number of places available and the number of eligible applicants seeking entry to those courses.

Students are accepted via a range of pathways. Section four of this document provides more information.

Courses in Design Arts, Visual Arts and Music Performance streams have special selection criteria. For further information, please visit xxxx.

1. Basis of admission for commencing domestic students

There are many pathways for admissions entry to the provider. The provider accepts students on a range of selection criteria, not just on ATAR. As an example to illustrate the various pathways and proportion of students who were admitted to the provider in 2015, please see below table.

Commencing domestic admissions in 2015

Admission Pathway (Basis of admission)* 2015	Number admitted	Proportion of domestic students
Secondary education		
• Students admitted solely on the basis of ATAR	564	8.5%
• Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor	564	8.5%
• Students admitted NOT on the basis of ATAR	1661	25%
Higher education course	3497	52.7%
VET qualification	15	0.2%
Mature age special provision	58	0.9%
Other basis	272	4.1%
All *commencing* domestic students	Nnn	100%

*data definition is available at the end of this template. It is also available at

Commencing student body in 2015

2015	Number admitted	% of all students
Domestic students	6,631	69.7%
International students	2,882	30.3%

3. Bonus points

The provider offers six bonus points schemes. The provider also offers up to 10 bonus points for students. Please see below a summary of the types of bonus points schemes and maximum bonus points permitted for students.

For further details on the bonus points criteria, please visit xxx.

Bonus type	Number of bonus points
Equity (Educational Access Scheme- EAS)	2-5
English or other languages	5
Music	5
Mathematics double major	5
Chemistry or physics	2 each
Total maximum bonus points Permitted	10

4. Admission requirements

Australian secondary studies

2016 Australian Year 12 students

If you are a 2016 or previous Australian Year 12 student and have not completed further study, admission to is based on your ATAR or equivalent.

Offers made to applicants who have an ATAR below the published cut-off

Most students admitted to have an ATAR at or above the published cut-off, but various schemes allow the consideration of additional information, which may facilitate entry below that cut-off. These schemes include:

- Bonus points for strong performance in relevant Year 12 subjects
- Educational Access Scheme (EAS)
- Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) Scheme
- Schools Recommendation Scheme (SRS).

For further information xxx

Australian tertiary studies

For admission to undergraduate courses at the provider, the following qualifications from an approved institution will be

considered when assessing your eligibility:

- completion of an Associate Degree, Diploma or Advanced Diploma (except for admission to Law courses)
- successful completion of at least one year's full-time study load (1.0 FTE) of Bachelor degree-level studies.

Note: The definition of what is considered a standard full-time study load can vary between universities.

Present and former students

If you are currently enrolled in a course, or if you are on approved leave and you would like to transfer to another course, you must apply directly to the provider for an internal program transfer.

Graduates and students completing a program who would like to start a second undergraduate program, and students who left the provider without completing their degree or taking approved leave, must apply for readmission through UAC.

Overseas qualifications

Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia with overseas qualifications should contact the Provider's Domestic Admissions Office for information about eligibility for admission before submitting an application through UAC.

Note: The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) alone is not acceptable for admission to the Provider. You must also submit a copy of your high school transcript to UAC when you apply.

If you hold overseas secondary or tertiary qualifications from countries where English is not the standard language of instruction you must provide evidence of English language proficiency. For further information, please visit xxx.

Alternative entry and pathway courses

Pathway courses

Read the Provider's pathway courses information at xxx.

Provider preparatory and bridging courses

The Provider accepts a number of preparation courses. Visit xxx or contact the Domestic Admissions Office for further information.

Special Adult Entry Scheme (21 years old and over)

If you are over 21 years of age and do not otherwise meet the academic requirements for entry to the Provider, you can apply for admission on the basis of the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) Written English and Multiple Choice tests.

Limited ATAR/ACT Year 12 (20 years old and over)

To be eligible to apply for admission in 2017 on the basis of an ACT or interstate Year 12 mature-age package, you must be 20 years of age by Wednesday 1 March 2017. Not all interstate packages are acceptable. If you are a 2016 NSW HSC student, read section 7.6 in Part 1 for details.

Tertiary Preparation Certificate/TAFE qualifications (18 years old and over)

If you are over 18 years of age, you can apply for admission on the basis of the NSW TAFE Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC).

Certificate-level qualifications are not assessed for entry to the Provider and will not contribute to your entrance rank. If you are unsure if your qualification can be assessed for admission, contact the Provider's Domestic Admissions Office.

Note: Application through alternative entry schemes is not available for courses in Design or Visual Arts.

5. Early Entry Schemes

Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS)

The Provider participates in the Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS), which allow current Australian Year 12 students to receive early offers of undergraduate admission using criteria other than (or in addition to) ATARs. SRS for the University is processed centrally through UAC. To be considered under the EAS category of SRS, you must submit an EAS application to UAC by **Friday 30 September 2016.**

Visit xxx for further information.

Educational Access Schemes (EAS)

The Provider participates in Educational Access Schemes (EAS), which help current and recent Year 12 students (with no tertiary study) who display good academic potential but have experienced serious long-term disadvantage in their educational preparation for tertiary entrance.

EAS applications are processed centrally through UAC.

If you have commenced tertiary study and experienced long-term disadvantage, you may be able to apply for special consideration. Read 'Special consideration' below.

6. Equity Scholarships

The Provider offers a number of Equity Scholarships which are open to all eligible applicants applying to or currently enrolled at XXX.

Many scholarships are processed centrally through UAC including Commonwealth Indigenous Scholarship applications. For further information about other scholarships available at XXX, read 'Financial assistance' below.

7. Special Consideration

If your previous academic performance at either secondary or tertiary level has been adversely affected by circumstances beyond your control, you may be eligible to submit a 'Request for Special Consideration (Admission)' form to the Domestic Admissions Manager at XXX. This is in addition to applying for admission through UAC. The form and additional information is available at xx. Applications for special consideration must be received by the change of preference closing date for Main Round offers.

Note: To apply for special consideration you must have completed at least one year of full-time tertiary study. Applicants with no tertiary study must apply through the Educational Access Schemes administered by UAC; read xx for further information on EAS.

Elite athletes

The Provider is an Elite Athlete Friendly University and will consider applications for special consideration from applicants who are recognised as elite athletes by the Australian Sports Commission's AIS Personal Excellence program. For further information, visit xxx.

8. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Institutions to provide information about their admission

requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, such as an interview or other support that is available to students.

9. Bridging courses

Mathematics: Bridging modules in Mathematics are offered by XXX College. Visit xxx for further information.

Chemistry: The provider offers a chemistry bridging course which can be used to satisfy chemistry prerequisites. This course runs after the UAC Main Round, so applicants may want to consider including B Science as a preference. If you meet entry requirements and successfully complete the chemistry bridging course, you can apply direct to the Provider to transfer to your desired course later. Visit x for further information.

10. Courses available by direct application

Apply directly to the Provider for the following courses:
- Honours year courses
- non-award study, including the Australian National Internships Program

Visit xx for further information.

11. Enrolment

Acceptance of offer

Once you receive your offer from UAC, visit xxx.

Advanced standing/Academic credit

Credit may be given to applicants transferring from other tertiary institutions. Applications for credit may be submitted at the time of enrolment and must be accompanied by course and subject outlines from your previous course. For further information, visit xxx.

Deferment of offer

For details about the Provider deferment policy, visit xxx. Approval to defer is not automatic and your deferment will lapse if you undertake tertiary studies in Australia during the deferment period.

Fees and charges

For 2017 fee information visit xxx.

All students must pay student contributions for a Commonwealth-supported place (CSP). Students will also need to pay the services and amenities fee.

12. Financial assistance

Youth and student allowance

For details on Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY, visit xxx.

Scholarships

For detailed information about undergraduate scholarships available at XXX, including application processes and deadlines, visit xxx.

13. Accommodation

There are a number of different accommodation options for undergraduate students at the Provider . You can live on campus in an approved residence, such as a Hall, Lodge or College; or choose to find private rental or share accommodation off-campus.

For applicants from outside the region, the Provider guarantees new, full-time, first-year, undergraduate students in their first semester an offer of accommodation at one of our approved student residences. The Provider also offers up to 50 accommodation places for local applicants.

Visit xxx for further information.

Applications for accommodation open on 2016. If you wish to be considered for your preferred residence, you must apply for accommodation by **Friday 6 xxx 2017**. For further information, visit xxx.

14. Student and campus services

The Provider has a range of student support services including counselling, chaplaincy, academic skills and learning support, and employment and career advice. Campus facilities include a medical centre, computing centre, sporting, and recreation facilities, and childcare centres.

Canberra campus

CRICOS provider number xxx

Postal enquiries	*In person*
Student Administration Office	Student Administration Centre
XXX Provider	XXX Provider Canberra Campus
Canberra Mail Centre	XXX Street
ACT 2600	Canberra ACT 2600

tel:	(02) xxxx xxxx
	1800 620 032 (free call)
email:	domestic.admissions@xxx.edu.au website: www.xxx.edu.au
facebook:	www.facebook.com/Thexxx
youtube:	www.youtube.com/XXXchannel

Open days

Open Day Saturday 27 August 2016

Important dates

First semester

Orientation Week	Monday 13 – Friday 17 February 2017
First semester	Monday 20 February – Friday 26 May 2017
Second semester	
Orientation Week	Monday 17 – Friday 21 July 2017
Second semester	Monday 24 July – Friday 27 October 2017

15. Appeals and grievances

The Provider is committed to a fair and just environment for all its members. It has separate processes for managing grievances and appeals for prospective students. Please visit xxx.

16. Where to get further information

If you are unclear about the admissions processes explained above, please contact the Provider Admissions Office at xxx.

If you want to find out nationally registered higher education

providers, please visit:

If you want to do side by side comparisons of the quality of the higher education institution and the study areas that you are interested in, visit the website of Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) at:

https://www.qilt.edu.au

If you want to apply to study at xxx through Tertiary Admissions Centre, visit xxx.

Basis of Admissions Data Definition:

Basis of Admission: Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) identifies the main criterion used by the Higher Education/VET Provider in granting a student admission to the current course, OR a Higher Education Provider granting an offer/admission to an applicant in a course.

Secondary Education: Education of the type usually (but not always) undertaken by a student in secondary schools, and extending up to and including Year 12 studies or education of a similar type undertaken in institutions other than secondary schools (e.g. in evening colleges, TAFE institutions).

- Students admitted solely on the basis of ATAR (inclusive of bonus points if any) (new definition- previously included as part of secondary school with ATAR)

- Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor (where ATAR may be considered as part of the admissions requirements inclusive of bonus points if any, plus other considerations) ((new definition- previously included as part of secondary school with ATAR)
- Students admitted NOT on the basis of ATAR, where ATAR is not relevant or not applicable (new definition- previously defined as secondary school without ATAR)

Higher Education Course: Higher education courses may be award courses, non-award courses, Bridging for Overseas Trained Professionals or enabling courses. Higher education courses do not include TAFE courses. It is an Australian or overseas equivalent, complete or incomplete course. These include students who attended pathway colleges that award undergraduate diplomas, students switching courses or universities, or students returning for a second degree.

VET Award Course: A program of study which the responsible State or Territory authority deems to be a vocational education and training course.

Mature age special provision course:

Professional qualification

Other basis: includes any other pathway which does not fit in any of the above categories.

All offer rounds: Data published include all offer rounds, such as early offers, main round, and subsequent rounds.

Appendix B1 –Study Area Information Template

[Insert Name of Higher Education Provider]

[Insert Study Area]

1. Admission to study [Study Area] at [Name of Higher Education Provider]

Include additional criteria that apply to [Study Area] beyond those outlined in the *institution admissions statement*. For example, some courses set additional entry requirements. These may include course prerequisites, tests, interviews, auditions or portfolios of work, depending on the course.

Other significant variations should also be indicated here.

Include information on the key features and benefits of studying [Study Area] at [Higher Education Provider A]. This could include:

- Course information - e.g. courses available, course design, qualifications on offer, accreditations and endorsement of the course/s by professional or other associations/organisations, whether required by law, by the profession itself or purely voluntary.
- Work based learning, internships and work placements available as part of the course.
- Graduate career pathways / Postgraduate study pathways / facilities and staff / campus information where [Study Area] is offered.

2. Basis of admission

Provide commentary on the anticipated range of students to be admitted to [Study Area]. For example, the anticipated proportion of commencing students in 2017 likely to be admitted on the basis of their ATAR (including any bonus points that may have been applied), other higher education courses and VET qualifications. Include comparison to basis of entry to the course in the previous year, including students admitted through all offer rounds:

	Anticipated for 2017	2016 (previous year)	
Basis of admission	**Percentage of all domestic students**	**Number of students**	**Percentage of all domestic students**
Secondary education			
• Students admitted solely on the basis of ATAR • Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor • Students admitted NOT on the basis of ATAR			
VET qualification			
Mature age special provision			
Other basis			
Total domestic students			
	Percentage of all students	**Number of students**	**Percentage of all students**
International students			

3. Bonus points

For information on the types of bonus points and criteria visit the institution information template at: xxxx

Significant variations

If there are significant variations between courses within [Study Area], then indicate here where students can obtain additional information. Please also provide an example.

ATAR range for those admitted to [Study Area] in previous years

Provide data on the ATAR range from previous cohorts. This information should information all offer rounds.

ATAR range	2016 (previous year)	2015 (year before last)
	ATAR range (including any applicable bonus points)	ATAR range (including any applicable bonus points)
25th percentile		
Median		
75th percentile		

For those selected on the basis of ATAR

Minimum ATAR and bonus points data for [Study Area]

Include information on minimum ATAR and availability and application of any bonus points for [Study Area].

Across all rounds	2016	2015
Minimum ATAR required for entry (including any applicable bonus points)		
Maximum number of bonus points allowable		
% of domestic students admitted with bonus points		
Lowest ATAR to receive an offer		

4. Other admission pathways for [Study Area]

Outline other different admission pathways for entry to [Study Area] including for:
- recent school leavers (no more than two years out)
- people who left school more than two years ago or has undertaken other study since leaving school

Other recent school leavers

Provide information on other admission pathways that may be suitable for secondary students who do not meet the ATAR requirements in any offer round.

Special consideration

Information on special consideration schemes if applicable.

Other pathways into the course

Include information on alternative entry pathways and methods to obtain equivalent skills and knowledge required for entry into [Study Area].
- Pathway 1
- Pathway 2

Non-school leavers

Include information on ways of meeting the entry requirement for Australian residents who finished school more than two years ago or have undertaken other study since leaving school, e.g. previous study in a higher education or enabling course, achievement of a vocational education and training (VET) qualification, professional or employment experience, admissions tests, and alternative admissions schemes.

Bridging Courses

Include information on any relevant bridging courses to provide potential students with the skills and knowledge required for [Study Area].

Inherent requirements

Include any relevant information on physical or other requirements for the completion of practicum or work placements, or other requirements that may preclude some students from graduating or entering the profession.

5. Course costs for [Study Area]

Include information about:

- Fees for domestic students
- Student services and amenities fees
- Links to information about scholarships.

6. Where to get further information

Institutions to provide links to other relevant information.

Basis of Admissions Data Definition:

Basis of Admission: Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) identifies the main criterion used by the Higher Education/VET Provider in granting a student admission to the current course, OR a Higher Education Provider granting an offer/admission to an applicant in a course.

Secondary Education: Education of the type usually (but not always) undertaken by a student in secondary schools, and extending up to and including Year 12 studies or education of a similar type undertaken in institutions other than secondary schools (e.g. in evening colleges, TAFE institutions).

- Students admitted solely on the basis of ATAR (inclusive of bonus points if any) (new definition- previously included as part of secondary school with ATAR)
- Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor (where ATAR may be considered as part of the admissions requirements inclusive of bonus points if any, plus other considerations) ((new definition- previously included as part of secondary school with ATAR)
- Students admitted NOT on the basis of ATAR, where ATAR is not relevant or not applicable (new definition- previously defined as secondary school without ATAR)

Higher Education Course: Higher education courses may be award courses, non-award courses, Bridging for Overseas Trained Professionals or enabling courses. Higher education courses do not include TAFE courses. It is an Australian or overseas equivalent, complete or incomplete course. These include students who attended pathway colleges that award undergraduate diplomas, students switching courses or universities, or students returning for a second degree.

VET Award Course: A course of study which the responsible State or Territory authority deems to be a vocational education and training course.

Mature age special provision course:

Professional qualification

Other basis: includes any other pathway which does not fit in any of the above categories.

All offer rounds: Data published include all offer rounds, such as early offers, main round, and subsequent rounds.

Data definition is also available at
http://heimshelp.education.gov.au/sites/heimshelp/2016_data_requirements/2016dataelements/pages/327.

Appendix B2 –Study Area Information Template – Example

Higher Education Provider A

Health Sciences

1. Admission to Study Health Sciences

The provider offers a vast range of undergraduate programs and courses to spark whatever interest you have in Health Sciences. The provider provides single degree programs or if you have interests in many areas you can combine a health science degree with another degree, such as languages or law, as part of a Flexible Double Degree.

Study areas within Health Sciences include:

- Dentistry
- Health services and support
- Medicine
- Nursing

- Pharmacy
- Rehabilitation
- Veterinary science

The Bachelor of Health Sciences provides a broad overview of healthcare and is suited to both clinical and non-clinical health careers. Students seeking a clinical career (treating or testing patients) may complete this program and then, subject to meeting entry requirements, enrol in a clinical postgraduate degree such as the Doctor of Medicine or Master of Dietetics Studies.

For non-clinical students it offers studies in health promotion, health management and public health, leading to careers in planning and delivery of efficient quality healthcare.

For students seeking Provisional Entry to the Doctor of Medicine, the Bachelor of Health Sciences is a preferred pathway, providing future medical practitioners with a solid grounding in biomedical sciences, public health, healthcare ethics, behavioural sciences and the healthcare system.

The provider accepts students on a range of selection criteria, not just on ATAR. The application process depends on the type of degree or program you are applying for. A full list of health science degrees can be found at: xxxx.

For the Bachelor of Health Sciences program, students will need to have completed Year 12 or equivalent English. It is highly recommended that students undertake one of Year 12 or equivalent Chemistry, Physics, Biology or Science 21.

However, there are some exceptions to some of the Health Sciences Bachelor program pre-requisites. These are detailed at: xxxxxxx.

The Provider may make offers in the earlier rounds to applicants with completed qualifications or transferring from another institution with one year of full time tertiary study. Visit the TAC website for all offer round deadlines xxxxxx.

2. Basis of admission

The anticipated proportion of commencing students in 2016 likely to be admitted on the basis of their ATAR (including any bonus points that may have been applied) is 20-30 per cent. In 2016 27.4 per cent of students were admitted on the basis of their ATAR (with bonus points and other factors considered if any).

	Anticipated for 2016	2015 (previous year)	
Basis of admission	Proportion of all commencing domestic students	Number of commencing domestic students	Percentage of all commencing domestic students
Secondary education			
• Students admitted solely on the basis of ATAR	10-15%	81	13.7%
• Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor	10-15%	81	13.7%
• Students admitted NOT on the basis of ATAR	30-40%	196	33.3%
Higher education course	20-30%	165	28.1%
VET qualification	0%	0	0.0%
Mature age special provision	0-5%	13	2.2%
Other basis	0-10%	53	9.0%
Total domestic students	100%	588	100.0%
	Percentage of all students	Number of students	Percentage of all students
International students	20-30%	217	27.0%

3. Bonus points

For information on the types of bonus points and criteria visit the institution information template at: xxxx

Significant variations by field of study

Please note, in 2015 a Bachelor of Health Sciences required a minimum ATAR of 90 whereas a Bachelor of Nursing required a minimum ATAR of 60. More information on these courses can be found at xxxxxxx.

ATAR range for those admitted to Health Sciences in previous years

ATAR range	2016 (previous year)	2015 (year before last)
	ATAR range (including any applicable bonus points)	ATAR range (including any applicable bonus points)
25th percentile	83.9	83.05
Median	89.8	89.45
75th percentile	97.18	94.95

For those selected solely on the basis of ATAR (inclusive of bonus points if any)

Minimum ATAR and bonus points data for Health Sciences

Across all rounds	2016	2015
Minimum ATAR required for entry (including any applicable bonus points)	80-99	80-99
Maximum number of bonus points allowable	10	10
% of domestic students admitted with bonus points	%	x%
Lowest ATAR to receive an offer	70.2	71.6

For those selected not solely on the basis of ATAR(where ATAR may be considered as part of the admissions requirements inclusive of bonus points if any plus other consideration)

Across all rounds	2016	2015
Minimum ATAR required for entry	70-89	70-89

4. Other admission pathways

Other admission pathways for entry to Health Sciences for other recent school leavers (no more than two years out and people who left school more than two years ago or has undertaken other study since leaving school is detailed below:

Other recent school leavers

Admission pathways suitable for secondary students who do not meet the ATAR requirements in any offer round include:

Special consideration

If your previous academic performance at either secondary or tertiary level has been adversely affected by circumstances beyond your control, you may be eligible to submit a 'Request for Special Consideration (Admission)' form to the Domestic Admissions Manager. This is in addition to applying for admission through the TAC. The form and additional information is available at xxxx. Applications for special consideration must be received by the change of preference closing date for Main Round offers.

Note: To apply for special consideration you must have completed at least one year of full-time tertiary study. Applicants with no tertiary study must apply through the Educational Access Schemes administered by the TAC; visit xxx for further information on EAS.

The Provider is an Elite Athlete Friendly institution and will consider applications for special consideration from applicants who are recognised as elite athletes by the Australian Sports Commission's AIS Personal Excellence program. For further information visit xx

Current Year 12 students whose qualifications do not meet minimum admission requirements can seek admission through the Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS). These applicants will need to submit a statement directly to the Provider after they apply for SRS through the TAC. For further information visit xxxx.

Other pathways into the course

Most students admitted to study Health Sciences at the Provider have an ATAR at or above the published cut-off, but various schemes allow the consideration of additional information, which may facilitate entry below that cut-off. These schemes include:

- Bonus points for strong performance in relevant Year 12 subjects
- Educational Access Scheme (EAS)

- Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) Scheme
- Schools Recommendation Scheme (SRS).

For further information visit xxxx.

Non-school leavers

Pathway courses
Students can access pathway courses to gain entry. Visit xxx for more information.

Special Adult Entry Scheme (21 years old and over)
If you are over 21 years of age and do not otherwise meet the academic requirements for entry, you can apply for admission on the basis of the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) Written English and Multiple Choice tests.

For further information on the scheme, visit xxxx.

Limited ATAR/ACT Year 12 (20 years old and over)
To be eligible to apply for admission in 2017 on the basis of an ACT or interstate Year 12 mature-age package, you must be 20 years of age by Wednesday 1 March 2017. Not all interstate packages are acceptable. If you are a 2016 NSW HSC student, visit xxx for more information.

Tertiary Preparation Certificate/TAFE qualifications (18 years old and over)
If you are over 18 years of age, you can apply for admission on the basis of the NSW TAFE Tertiary Preparation Certificate.

Certificate-level qualifications are not assessed for entry and will not contribute to your entrance rank. If you are unsure if your qualification can be assessed for admission, contact xxxx.

Bridging Programs
Mathematics: Bridging modules in mathematics are available. Visit xxx for further information.

Chemistry: The Provider offers a chemistry bridging course which can be used to satisfy chemistry prerequisites. Visit xxxx for further information.

Inherent requirements
Some Health Sciences courses have inherent requirements in the below areas and you should think about whether you may experience challenges in meeting these requirements.

- Ethical behaviour
- Behavioural stability
- Legal
- Communication
- Cognition
- Sensory abilities
- Strength & mobility
- Sustainable performance

For more information go to xxxx.

5. Course costs for Health Sciences
If you are an undergraduate student and have been offered a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP), your fees are set by the Australian Government for each course. 1 EFTSL is 48 units (normally 8 x 6-unit courses). You can find your student contribution amount for each course here: xxx.

If you are a full-fee paying student, your fees are set by the institution. Please check the costs information at xxx.

Information about costs associated with student services and amenities fees is available at xxx.

Information about scholarships available and how to apply is available at xxx.

6. Where to get further information
Further information on studying Health Sciences is available at xxxx.

Basis of Admissions Data Definition:

Basis of Admission: Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) identifies the main criterion used by the Higher Education/VET Provider in granting a student admission to the current course, OR a Higher Education Provider granting an offer/admission to an applicant in a course.

Secondary Education: Education of the type usually (but not always) undertaken by a student in secondary schools, and extending up to and including Year 12 studies or education of a similar type undertaken in institutions other than secondary schools (e.g. in evening colleges, TAFE institutions).

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- Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor (where ATAR may be considered as part of the admissions requirements inclusive of bonus points if any, plus other considerations) ((new definition- previously included as part of secondary school with ATAR)
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Higher Education Course: Higher education courses may be award courses, non-award courses, Bridging for Overseas Trained Professionals or enabling courses. Higher education courses do not include TAFE courses. It is an Australian or overseas equivalent, complete or incomplete course. These include students who attended pathway colleges that award undergraduate diplomas, students switching courses or universities, or students returning for a second degree.

VET Award Course: A program of study which the responsible State or Territory authority deems to be a vocational education and training course.

Mature age special provision course:

Professional qualification

Other basis: includes any other pathway which does not fit in any of the above categories.

All offer rounds: Data published include all offer rounds, such as early offers, main round, and subsequent rounds.

Data definition is also available at
http://heimshelp.education.gov.au/sites/heimshelp/2016_data_requirements/2016dataelements/pages/327.

Appendix C – National admissions information platform comparative data example – Science at three institutions

- **L/N** - Low numbers – The number of survey responses or students are too low to display or suppressed to maintain privacy
- **N/A** - Data not available for this study area or institution
- **N/P** – Not published – The number is hidden to prevent calculation of numbers in cells with less than 5 students.
  The values of the suppressed cells can be approximated by using the totals and subtracting the values of some other cells, but only to within 5 students of the actual number, thereby retaining the confidentiality of the cells marked "<5", but allowing other cells to be used for data analysis if required.

Admissions (2014)

Basis of admission	Australia (mean)	Higher Education Provider A (uni)	Higher Education Provider B (NUHEP)	Higher Education Provider C (uni)
Secondary education				
• Students admitted solely on the basis of ATAR	31.5% 91962	15.9% 104	11.9% 6	2.2% 6
• Students admitted where ATAR is a consideration, but not the only factor	12.5% 39412	6.8%% 44	5.1% 3	0.9%% 2
• Students admitted NOT on the basis of ATAR	14.8% 43,208	11.8% 77	50.9% 27	L/N <5
Higher education course	20.3% 59,264	34.5% 225	24.5% 13	NP np
VET award course	17.5% 51,090	16.3% 106	-	44.5% 114
Mature age special entry provisions	1.4% 4,087	1.4% 9	L/N <5	22.3% 57
Professional qualification	-	0.8% 5	-	-
Other basis	2% 19	12.6% 82	L/N <5	19.1% 49
TOTAL Domestic	289042 100%	652 100%	53 100%	256 100%
International students – proportion of all students	1.6% 4,671	L/N <5	-	7.6% 21
Admissions policy statement	N/A	Link to admissions policy statement e.g. on UAC	Link to admissions policy statement e.g. on VTAC	Link to admissions policy statement e.g. on QTAC

Data source: Department of Education and Training Higher Education Information System (HEIMS)

Commencing domestic student profile 2014	Australia (mean)	Higher Education Provider A (uni)	Higher Education Provider B (NUHEP)	Higher Education Provider C (uni)
Median ATAR for secondary education (with ATAR) cohort	67	74	72	69
Lowest/25th percentile/75th percentile/highest ATAR	35, 60, 77, 99.5	62, 69, 79, 99	59, 70, 77, 94	56, 61, 78, 81
Low SES *	13.9%	20.6%	20.6%	26.2%
	40,580	134	11	67
Indigenous	4.0%	5.2%	L/N	9.0%
	11,678	34	<5	23
Non-English Speaking Background	1.6%	L/N	-	3.5%
	4,671	<5		9
Disability	4.5%	4.1%	-	4.7%
	13,137	27		12
Regional and remote	10.4%	11.0%	35.8%	4.3%
	30,362	72	19	11

Data source: Department of Education and Training Higher Education Information System (HEIMS)

* Low SES postcode measure is based on the students' postcode of permanent home residence, with the SES value derived from the 2011 SEIFA Education and Occupation Index for postal areas, where postal areas in the bottom 25% of the population aged 15-64 being classified as Low SES.

Course/institution details	Australia (median)	Higher Education Provider A (uni)	Higher Education Provider B (NUHEP)	Higher Education provider C (uni)
Duration	3 years	3 years	3 years	3 years
Domestic course fee per year (indicative only)7	$6,256 (CSP)	$6256 (CSP)	$6,256 (CSP) $15,648 (full fee)	$6,256 (CSP)
CRICOS Code	http://cricos.education.gov.au/	NNNNNNX	N/A	NNNNNNX
Course webpage		Course link on institution website	Course link on institution website	Course link on institution website
Institution website		Link to provider homepage	Link to provider homepage	Link to provider homepage
Tertiary Admissions Centre website	UAC, VTAC, QTAC, TISC, SATAC, UTAS	UAC	VTAC	QTAC
TEQSA national register	TEQSA National Register Homepage	Higher Education Provider A TEQSA Register entry	Higher Education Provider B TEQSA Register entry	Higher Education Provider C TEQSA Register entry

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[7] Course fees are indicative only. They may vary depending on the fees associated with individual units undertaken. Fees may also vary if courses are not subsidised by the Commonwealth. For detailed information, please refer to individual higher education provider's website.

Comparable data below is currently available on the QILT website

Experience of current undergraduate students

Survey results	Australia	Higher Education Provider A (uni)	Higher Education Provider B (NUHEP)	Higher Education provider C (uni)
Overall quality of educational experience	81.8% (60.6% - 97.1%) 17327 responses	85.4% (83.4% - 87.4%) 570 responses	91.9% (88.5% - 95.2%) 86 responses	74.7% (70.8% - 78.6%) 233 responses
Teaching quality	80.3% (69.0% - 98.6%) 17411 responses	81.8% (79.6% - 84.0%) 567 responses	95.3% (92.7% - 97.9%) 85 responses	82.5% (79.1% - 86.0%) 229 responses
Learner engagement	74.6% (53.2% - 96.1%) 16491 responses	65.9% (63.2% - 68.6%) 569 responses	82.6% (77.9% - 87.2%) 86 responses	55.1% (50.5% - 59.6%) 227 responses
Learning resources	85.4% (55.2% - 96.6%) 16243 responses	88.4% (86.6% - 90.3%) 553 responses	82.1% (77.4% - 86.9%) 84 responses	88.5% (85.5% - 91.5%) 218 responses
Student support	71.9% (60.1% - 97.6%) 13661 responses	69.5% (66.4% - 72.6%) 452 responses	92.6% (89.2% - 96.0%) 81 responses	68.6% (64.1% - 73.0%) 210 responses
Skills development	85.1% (53.9% - 96.3%) 16975 responses	81.1% (78.8% - 83.4%) 555 responses	92.9% (89.8% - 96.1%) 85 responses	80.0% (76.3% - 83.7%) 225 responses

Data source: University Experience Survey 2014 and Student Experience Survey 2015

Experience of newly qualified higher education undergraduates

Survey results	Australia	Higher Education Provider A (uni)	Higher Education Provider B (NUHEP)	Higher Education provider C (uni)
Overall satisfaction	78.8% (48.1% - 89.5%) 13979 responses	83.4% (81.2% - 85.5%) 433 responses	N/A	85.5% (83.3% - 87.8%) 421 responses
Teaching scale	72.1% (48.2% - 99.9%) 13852 responses	65.0% (62.3% - 67.8%) 432 responses	N/A	79.0% (76.4% - 81.6%) 423 responses
Skills scale	79.5% (78.7% - 92.2%) 13548 responses	85.4% (83.4% - 87.5%) 432 responses	N/A	87.9% (85.9% - 90.0%) 423 responses

Data source: [Course Experience Questionnaire 2014-2015](#)

Employment outcomes

Survey results	Australia	Higher Education Provider A (uni)	Higher Education Provider B (NUHEP)	Higher Education provider C (uni)
Full-time employment	75.6% (52.6% - 97.6%) 15555 responses	85.9% (83.9% - 87.9%) 511 responses	N/A	77.8% (70.3% - 85.3%) 81 responses
Full-time study	64.5% (2.1% - 98.1%) 18762 responses	3.1% (2.2% - 3.9%) 621 responses	N/A	77.5% (75.0% - 80.1%) 503 responses
Median salary	$59,000 ($42,300 - $98,700) 7093 responses	$57,000 ($55,900 - $58,100) 332 responses	N/A	$60,000 ($55,500 - $64,500) 42 responses

Data source: [Graduate Destinations Survey 2013-2015](#)

Appendix D – Pathways to higher education

The following cameos are intended to illustrate to the various 'basis of admission' categories canvassed in the report by reference to the type of student who might fall within each category. The proposed definitions are indicative and would need to be confirmed before sector-wide adoption.

Recent secondary education solely on the basis of ATAR

Ceased secondary education within the last two years with selection for admission to higher education based on a selection rank assessed only on the person's ATAR and any equity, academic or other bonus points they may be eligible for at the institution.

Ping's story

Ping was a high achieving year 12 student. She anticipated achieving a high ATAR and applied to undertake an engineering degree at the University of New South Wales. Based on her ATAR of 97.5, Ping was offered a place in the Bachelor of Engineering degree at UNSW in the main offer round. Ping's ATAR did not include bonus points as she was not eligible for bonus points under the university's admissions policy. ATAR was the only factor considered by the university in making the offer to Ping, which she subsequently accepted.

Julian's story

Julian was keen to study a business degree when he finished high school. The published indicative requirement to enter a Bachelor of Business at the University of the Sunshine Coast was an OP of 18 or ATAR of 62. Julian achieved an ATAR of 59 so would not have been accepted on his ATAR without bonus points. However, Julian was eligible for bonus points under USC's Education Access Scheme, as his study was disrupted in year 12 due to family circumstances. Julian was awarded four bonus points bringing his ATAR up to 63 (inclusive of bonus points). He was offered a place in the Bachelor of Business degree, which he accepted. As the only consideration here was his ATAR (inclusive of bonus points) this is still considered a 'Secondary education on the basis of ATAR' basis of admission.

Recent secondary education on the basis of ATAR and other factors

Ceased secondary education within the last two years with selection for admission to higher education based partly on a selection rank assessed on the person's ATAR and any equity, academic or other bonus points they may be eligible for at the institution and partly on other factors such as additional tests or qualifications, portfolio assessment, audition, interview, additional written exercise, references or other non-academic factors.

Bridie's story

Bridie wanted to study medicine at the University of Adelaide. She had selected the required subject prerequisites in senior secondary school and expected to achieve an ATAR of at least 98. This was well above the indicative minimum ATAR of 90 advised by the university for admission to its Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (BMBS), though competition for places meant the final ATAR required was likely to be higher. In addition to her choice of school subjects and ATAR, Bridie also needed to complete the Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admission Test (UMAT) and attend an interview with faculty staff. Bridie sat the UMAT and applied for the BMBS. She performed well on the UMAT and, additionally, ended up with an ATAR of 99.85. The University of Adelaide invited her for an interview, at which she performed well, and she was offered a place.

Woodrow's story

Woodrow had done well at school and had achieved an ATAR of 85. Although this meant he was likely to be eligible for entry to a variety of courses at multiple higher education providers, he was passionate about art and design and particularly wanted to work in the fashion industry. Woodrow applied to enter the Bachelor of Branded Fashion Design at the Billy Blue College of Design. Selection for the program

required him to have achieved an ATAR of at least 60, and to submit a creative portfolio of his past artistic and design work. Following assessment of his portfolio and statement, Woodrow was offered a place in the degree program and enrolled.

Recent secondary education not on the basis of ATAR

Ceased secondary education within the last two years with selection for admission to higher education based primarily on non-ATAR-related factors such as additional tests or qualifications, portfolio assessment, audition, interview, additional written exercise, references or other non-academic factors.

Dorinda's story

Dorinda completed Year 12 and wanted to enrol in a Bachelor of Policy Studies at the Australian National University (ANU). This course had a cut off ATAR of 80. Dorinda had been performing well at the beginning of year 12; however, during the year, Dorinda's studies were adversely affected by various documented health issues. A refugee, she required ongoing counselling support for trauma-related issues. Her school formed the view that Dorinda's marks would suffer, and encouraged her to apply for entry to the course through ANU's Schools Recommendation Scheme (SRS) which facilitates entry of students whose Year 12 results were adversely affected by factors beyond their control. She received an ATAR of 75 but Dorinda's school Principal recommended her through the SRS, and she was admitted on that basis.

Paloma's story

Paloma was passionate about music and had been learning piano since she was six years old and clarinet since starting high school. Paloma undertook music as part of her VCE senior secondary certificate, including instrumental music performance and was a member of her high school wind band and orchestra. In the last couple of years, Paloma had also been expanding her ambitions to include composing music and had written several short pieces for piano and for the wind jazz group that she and some of her friends formed to busk in the city occasionally. Paloma was determined to study music at university and applied to enter a Bachelor of Music at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. While there was no minimum ATAR required to enter the degree, Paloma did well academically at school and achieved an ATAR of 90. She submitted the required supplementary application form and attended an audition where she performed on the clarinet – including one of her own pieces. Paloma was accepted into the Bachelor of Music program, with the intent to study both Clarinet performance and composition initially and make a decision on her major focus at a later time.

Higher education course

Admission to the current higher education based on the results of or articulation from study in another higher education course at the same or another higher education provider (includes transfers between different higher education courses).

Chris' story

When Chris completed high school his first preference was to enrol in a Bachelor of Law degree at La Trobe University. Chris did not achieve a high enough ATAR to be accepted into the course, and was instead offered his second preference of a Bachelor of Psychological Science – also at La Trobe. After one year of study, Chris achieved high distinctions in all of his units. On the basis of these results, Chris reapplied to the law school and was able to transfer into a combined Bachelor of Psychological Science/Bachelor of Laws at Australian Catholic University. Admission to the new degree program was considered to be on the basis of his previous higher education study, rather than his school results and ATAR.

Thien's story

Thien wanted to enrol in a Bachelor of Social Work at the University of Queensland (UQ). She had not fared well in her year 12 results, and his Overall Position (OP) was below the course cut-off. Thien

looked into bridging or pathway programs the university had on offer and found that UQ offered Tertiary Preparation Programs (TPPs) through their subsidiary company UQ College. UQ College required applicants to fill out a form and complete a Language, Literacy and Numeracy test in order to be considered for enrolment to their TPP. Thien applied for the course and sat the test, which she subsequently passed. Thien was admitted to the TPP, successfully completing it with a high grade point average. She then applied for UQ's Bachelor of Social Work on the basis of his achievements in the TPP, and was subsequently offered a place in the course.

VET award course
Admission to a higher education based on the results of or articulation from study in a recognised vocational education and training (VET) award course (includes transfers to higher education before the completion of the VET qualification).

Ahmed's story
Ahmed was unsure what he wanted to do when he finished high school and while having an interest in history and English achieved a relatively low ATAR of 52. After looking after friends' children while in a period of unemployment, he decided to enrol in a vocational education and training (VET) Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care at South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE in NSW. After successfully completing those studies and receiving his Certificate, and after a period working in a childcare centre, he decided to pursue further study by applying to undertake a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) at Western Sydney University. While students with a VET diploma or higher qualification would be eligible to move directly into the degree program, as Ahmed only had a Certificate III, he was required to also demonstrate English competence by sitting the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) - Written English Test. Ahmed sat the test and passed, after which he was enrolled on the strength of his vocational qualification.

Mature age special entry
Ceased secondary education more than two years previously with selection for admission to higher education based on assessment of the person's aptitude for tertiary study – either by reference to those earlier secondary studies or through additional assessment such as the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) or elements thereof.

Billie's story
Billie left high school part way through year 12 following the birth of her first child. When her child was a bit older, Billie returned to study part-time to complete some senior secondary subjects through her local TAFE. After successfully completing two secondary subjects, Billie sat the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) and applied directly to Murdoch University to study psychology. Billie did well in the STAT and her secondary subjects and was offered a place in Murdoch's Bachelor of Psychology degree program.

Professional qualification
Ceased secondary education more than two years previously with selection for admission to higher education based on assessment of the person's aptitude for tertiary study by reference to a non-VET professional qualification or demonstrated relevant work experience (where completion of additional assessment such as the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) or elements thereof was not required).

Ananya's story
Ananya wanted to learn German and took multiple courses at the Goethe Institute after completing school. After some years of study she achieved a C2 level of German proficiency – the highest certification they offered – and was working part-time time as a German interpreter with a community welfare agency, while balancing family responsibilities. Ananya was keen to continue her German studies in a higher education environment and broaden this to include cultural elements. She looked

into Macquarie University's Bachelor of Arts degree with a Major in German Studies. On the basis of her professional language qualifications and the supportive references from her work managers, Macquarie University accepted Ananya for enrolment as a part-time student in its Bachelor of Arts degree program.

Other basis
The category of 'other' should include only those cases of non-secondary students that do not fall into any of the other defined categories. The following is an example that would not fit into the categories above.

Jad's story
Jad, an Aboriginal man from the Northern Territory, had worked hard and done reasonably well at school, but didn't achieve the ATAR he needed for entry to tertiary study in engineering as he had hoped. Jad initially wasn't sure what he wanted to do after school. After a couple of years working in the hospitality industry and then a period traveling and working overseas, Jad decided that he still seriously wanted to become an industrial designer. He returned to Australia and moved to Sydney to be close to members of his extended family. He identified and researched the Indigenous Admission Scheme at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) as a possible avenue to enter tertiary education. This required Jad to submit an application form and course preferences to the NSW Universities Admissions Centre; plus a separate application to Nura Gili – UNSW's Indigenous Program Unit. After submitting these applications, Jad was invited to an interview where he also had to complete a written task related to his preferred course. Jad's interview and written task went really well, and he was offered place into the degree program on that basis.

Appendix E – Revised (2015) Higher Education Standards (in effect from 1 January 2017)

Admissions

Under Standard 1.1 of the revised Standards, providers will be required to ensure that admissions policies, requirements and processes are documented, are applied fairly and consistently, and are designed to ensure that admitted students have the academic preparation and proficiency in English needed to participate in their intended study, and no known limitations that would be expected to impede their progression and completion.

The admissions process will need to ensure that, prior to enrolment and before fees are accepted, students are informed of their rights and obligations, including: all charges associated with their proposed studies as known at the time and advice on the potential for changes in charges during their studies; policies, arrangements and potential eligibility for credit for prior learning; and, policies on changes to or withdrawal from offers, acceptance and enrolment, tuition protection and refunds of charges.

Admission and other contractual arrangements with students, or where legally required, with their parent or guardian, are in writing and include any particular conditions of enrolment and participation for undertaking particular courses of study that may not apply to other courses more generally, such as health requirements for students undertaking clinical work, requirements for security checks, particular language requirements and particular requirements of work placements.

Standard 2.2 of the revised Standards will require providers to ensure that institutional policies, practices and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds.

Specific consideration will be given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups are monitored and the findings are used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those subgroups.

Provider quality assurance

Standard 5.3 of the revised Standards requires providers to ensure that the results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

Representation, information and information management

Standard 7.2 of the revised Standards states that providers will be required to ensure that information for students is available prior to acceptance of an offer, written in plain English where practicable, accompanied by an explanation of any technical or specialised terms, and includes information to give access to current academic governance policies and requirements including admission, recognition of prior learning, transition, progression, assessment, grading, completion, qualifications, appeals,

academic integrity, equity and diversity, intellectual property and withdrawal from or cancellation of enrolment.

Appendix F – Higher Education Standards Panel

The Higher Education Standards Panel is a legislative advisory body under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act (2011)* with responsibility related to Australia's Higher Education Standards.

The current Higher Education Standards Panel members are:

Chair:

- Professor Peter Shergold AC

Members:

- Professor Greg Craven
- Dr Krystal Evans
- The Hon Phil Honeywood
- Emeritus Professor Alan Robson AO, CitWA
- Ms Karen Thomas

Observers:

- Professor Ian O'Connor
- Dr Don Owers AM

Appendix G – Consultation process

On 6 April 2016 the Higher Education Standards Panel released a consultation paper, calling for public submissions on how to improve transparency in higher education admissions processes. Eighty-two written submissions were received and are listed below.

Note: The submissions below can be found at:
 https://www.education.gov.au/submissions-received-higher-education-standards-panel

1. Dr Dale Murphy
2. Mr Justin Garrick
3. Ms Catherine Macaulay
4. Australian Institute of Professional Education
5. R. Bradley
6. Erin Shale
7. Jacky Burton
8. Christina Scaife
9. Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET)
10. Federal Council of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA Australia)
11. University of Western Australia (UWA)
12. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education
13. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education Pathways to Higher Education
14. Group of Eight
15. Deakin University
16. Gale, Wilson and Wilson
17. University of Sydney
18. Box Hill Institute
19. University of Notre Dame (UNDA)
20. Murdoch University
21. Queensland University of Technology
22. Queensland Catholic Education Commission
23. Victoria University
24. Australasian Council of Deans of Arts Social Sciences and Humanities
25. Australian Catholic University (ACU)
26. Macquarie University
27. Australian Secondary Principals Association
28. Western Australia School Curriculum and Standards Authority
29. Kay de Jong
30. University of Tasmania
31. Australian Council for Educational Research
32. Regional Universities Network (RUN)
33. Torrens University Australia
34. Monash University
35. University of Newcastle
36. University of Technology Sydney
37. Catholic Education South Australia

38. Bond University
39. Tertiary Institutions Service Centre Western Australia (TISC)
40. Swinburne University of Technology
41. Australian Careers Business College
42. University of Queensland
43. University of Wollongong
44. Ms Debbie Taffel
45. Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC)
46. University of New South Wales
47. University of the Sunshine Coast
48. Universities Admissions Centre
49. Australian Centre for Career Education
50. Global Study Partners Australia
51. University of Adelaide
52. Navitas
53. Victoria Institute for Education Diversity and Lifelong Learning
54. Australian Student Veterans Association
55. Charles Sturt University
56. South Australia Tertiary Admissions Centre
57. University of Southern Queensland
58. Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC)
59. Canberra Girls Grammar School
60. Innovative Research Universities (IRU)
61. Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC)
62. James Cook University
63. Australian National University
64. Universities Australia
65. Julie Withers
66. University of Melbourne
67. Australian Technology Network (ATN)
68. Council of Private Higher Education
69. Suzanne Ingram
70. Career Industry Council Australia
71. La Trobe University
72. Australian Education Union (AEU)
73. Griffith University
74. Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)
75. CPA Australia
76. National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)
77. Dr Andrew Harvey, Mr Matt Brett
78. Universities Australia (UA)
79. Flinders University
80. Mark T Jones
81. TAFE Directors Australia (TDA)
82. NSW Department of Education

As part of the consultation process, members of the Panel and staff from the Department of Education and Training, within the Panel's secretariat, met with a range of key stakeholders, listed below.

Members of the Higher Education Standards Panel met with:

- Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA)
- Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC)
- Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET)
- Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO)
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA)
- Australian Parents Council (APC)
- Australian Secondary Principals Association (ASPA)
- Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA)
- Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA)
- Catholic Secondary Principals Association (CaSPA)
- Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE)
- Federal Council of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA Australia)
- Group of Eight Ms Vicki Thomson (Go8)
- National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)
- TAFE Directors Australia (TDA)
- Universities Australia
- University Chancellors Council (Panel chair only)

Departmental staff in the Panel secretariat met with:

- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
- Chief Scientist of South Australia, Dr Leanna Read (teleconference)
- National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE)
- NSW Department or Education and Communities
- Tertiary Institutions Service Centre WA (TISC)
- Universities Admissions Centre NSW (UAC)
- University of NSW admissions
- University of Sydney admissions
- University of Western Australia admissions (UWA)
- WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority (WA SCSA)