



UAC

REALLOCATION OF COMMONWEALTH SUPPORTED PLACES FOR ENABLING, SUB- BACHELOR AND POSTGRADUATE COURSES

Response to Consultation Paper

February 2019

ABOUT UAC

The Universities Admissions Centre (NSW & ACT) Pty Ltd (UAC) was established in 1995 and is the largest tertiary admissions centre in Australia. Owned by universities in NSW and the ACT, our mission is to provide excellence in admissions services and promote equity of access to tertiary education. Central to that mission is a strong culture of servicing the needs of all our stakeholders, in particular our institutions and applicants.

UAC has a trusted and valued position in the higher education sector. Applicants, in particular Year 12 students, turn to UAC for unbiased and authoritative information about university admissions and courses and for an easy interface with which to apply. Institutions rely upon UAC services to handle the bulk of the admissions process, allowing them to focus on their core capabilities of learning and teaching, research and community engagement. Institutions and government can turn to UAC as a central repository of student data and an expert in managing and analysing that data. Parents, schools, the media and the general public know UAC as their first point of reference for university admissions in NSW and the ACT.

UAC is a member of the Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC), the group that facilitates communication and co-operation between tertiary admissions centres in Australia and New Zealand. UAC's Managing Director is the current Chair of ACTAC.

OUR SUBMISSION

UAC welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Consultation Paper on the reallocation of Commonwealth supported places for enabling, sub-bachelor and postgraduate courses.

Our mission is to provide equity of access to higher education, and we value equally students and the universities they aspire to attend.

As a not-for-profit working in the broad interests of the education sector, UAC is well-placed to provide objective and neutral advice to government.

Our expertise in student data management and analysis developed over 30 years of experience in university admissions puts us in a unique position to provide data insights to institutions and policy makers.

While the scope of the Consultation Paper is broad, our interest and expertise is in the aspect of pathways to tertiary study.

With that in mind, UAC provides the following response for consideration.

1. ENABLING PROGRAMS WORK

The Consultation Paper notes that enabling programs “give students the requisite background skills and knowledge to undertake further tertiary education” and are targeted at students “who enter university through non-traditional pathways, particularly those without an ATAR”.

Given the increased entry into bachelor programs resulting from demand-driven funding for those programs, many students have avoided enabling programs. This is in spite of the fact that in many cases an enabling program would have been a better option for those students.

UAC data and analysis show that Year 12 students with the same ATAR who complete an enabling program before entering a bachelor degree have lower attrition rates than those entering directly into a bachelor degree.

The following table illustrates the point. It shows data on students enrolled in enabling programs in 2013 who then went to a bachelor program in 2014, and provides (in the second column from the right) the comparison attrition rates for those directly entering a bachelor program from Year 12. At every level of ATAR achievement the attrition rate is lower, but is particularly noteworthy for those with ATARs below 50. These students make up almost a third of those entering enabling programs, and their attrition rates are more than halved (13% for enablers, 28.3% for directs).

The figures at the bottom of the table show that over 70% of those completing an enabling program go on to enter a bachelor program in the following year. From there, as stated, their attrition rates are consistently lower than the comparison group.

2012 NSW Yr12 enrolled in enabling 2013 then bachelor 2014

ATAR	Attrited	Still enrolled 2015	Total	Attrition enabling + 1 yr bachelor	Attrition Yr12 + 1 yr bachelor	Proportion of enabling cohort
90+	2	147	149	1.3%	3.2%	9.1%
80 - 90	16	289	305	5.2%	6.4%	18.6%
70 - 80	12	255	267	4.5%	10.3%	16.3%
60 - 70	15	123	138	10.9%	14.7%	8.4%
50 - 60	26	229	255	10.2%	18.3%	15.6%
Less Than 50	62	415	477	13.0%	28.3%	29.2%
Non ATAR	4	41	45	8.9%	17.7%	2.8%
Total	137	1,499	1,636	8.4%	9.3%	100.0%

2012 NSW Yr12	69,628	
2012 NSW Yr12 enrolled in enabling 2013	2,318	3.3%
2012 NSW Yr12 enrolled in enabling 2013 then bachelor 2014	1,636	70.6%

It is clear that Pathways programs are an excellent preparation for bachelor level study and should be widely available to students without the appropriate qualification to enter directly into a bachelor program.

2. ENABLING PROGRAMS ARE AN EXCELLENT GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT

Given the success of students who enter bachelor programs after having completed an enabling program, they are a good investment of government funds. The lower levels of attrition of these students means positive flow-on effects for lower levels of government funding, unpaid HECS debt and improved workforce participation. Department of Education data shows that lowering the attrition rate by even 1% saves \$10 to \$20 million in student debt and government funding.

3. ENABLING PROGRAMS SHOULD BE LOW COST TO STUDENTS

To avoid perverse effects of students choosing post-secondary study based on cost, enabling programs should receive the same or higher level of Commonwealth support as bachelor programs.

4. ENABLING PROGRAMS SHOULD BE DEMAND DRIVEN AND PROMOTED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS

For the same reasons stated above, for equity and access reasons enabling programs should be available at all institutions according to demand.

In addition, while outside the scope of this consultation, all stakeholders – schools, tertiary sector, government and community – should promote enabling programs to appropriate Year 12 students, especially those seeking to enter tertiary study with ATARs below 50.

UAC thanks the Department of Education and Training for the opportunity to provide this response to the Consultation Paper on the reallocation of Commonwealth supported places for enabling, sub-bachelor and postgraduate courses and looks forward to continued work with government, the education sector and the broader community to deliver greater success in tertiary education.