



20 May 2016

Higher Education Standards Panel Secretariat,
C50MA7, GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: HigherEd@education.gov.au

Transparency in admissions at UWA

The University of Western Australia (UWA) supports the position that the ATAR is a valuable admission tool, and an accurate predictor of university performance. We are of the view that the ATAR should be the primary admission facility; however, there needs to be provision for individual institutional autonomy on admission criteria and to create distinctiveness. While institutional autonomy is important, clarity and transparency are critical to the way forward on this issue. We would like all higher education institutions to be held accountable for public claims against their stated entry policies.

We provide specific feedback below regarding bonus points and ATAR adjustment schemes; transparency and cut-off thresholds; support for a national tertiary admissions centre; and admission data.

Transparency and cut-off thresholds

At UWA we are very clear and open about our ATAR cutoffs. We also apply a strict bonus scheme which we inform all about expressly. We recognise, however, that elsewhere within the sector admission criteria may not be as transparent. Consistent with the other Group of Eight universities, UWA supports the open publication of the following information:

- Additional admissions criteria, instruments and indicators used for each designated pathway;

- Any rules used to make admission decisions for each designated pathway;

- Number of students and proportion of total admitted cohort entering via each designated pathway;

- ATAR adjustment mechanisms including bonus point schemes; and,

- The median ATAR for each course.

Bonus points and ATAR adjustment schemes

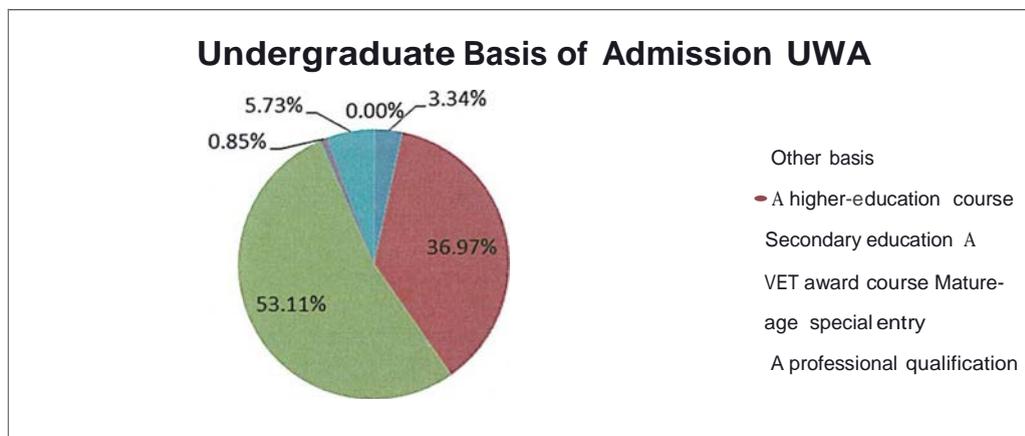
UWA currently has an ATAR adjustment scheme for students from socio-educationally disadvantaged schools; a Tertiary Entrance Aggregate (TEA) bonus point scheme for school students who study languages other than English; and, for the 2018 entrance exercise, will introduce a similar bonus scheme for students who take Mathematics Methods and Mathematics Specialist. UWA supports institutional autonomy on what and how bonus points and ATAR adjustments are used and applied. This allows institutions to develop distinctiveness, to incentivise subject choice, and attract specific groups of students.

National tertiary admissions centre

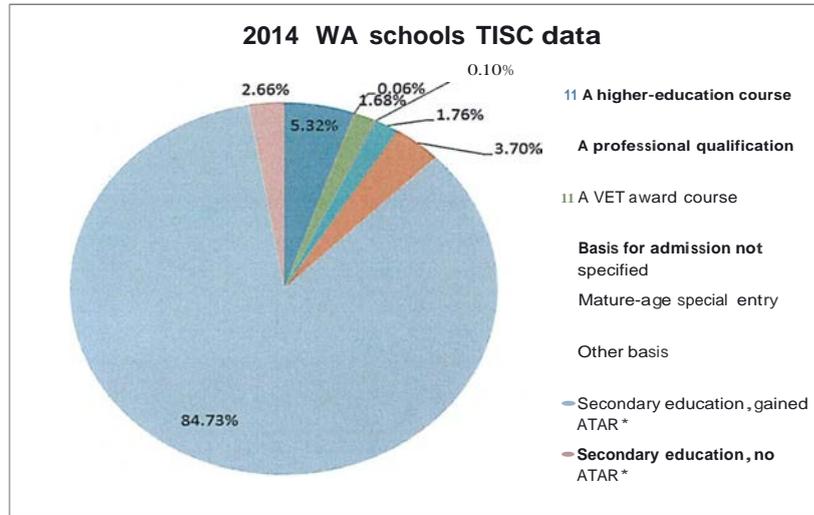
The state-based tertiary admissions centre in Western Australia (TISC) is unable to provide the services that we now require in a more competitive and deregulated environment. UWA is strongly of the view that to provide the necessary level of transparency, including accessibility and comparability of information, a national tertiary admissions centre needs to be established. A national centre will address the issues of interstate admissions and student mobility, but crucially will be the single point of information for prospective students. A national centre will need to be adept and flexible to accommodate the needs of the range of institutions and their individual needs including ATAR adjustment and bonus schemes, early offers and alternative entry pathways, for example.

Basis of admission

Following discussions within UWA, a comparison of UWAs undergraduate basis of admission was completed (below). This comparison highlights that UWA does not perform consistently with the Department of Education and Trainings findings that only 44% of students are admitted on the basis of their secondary education. At UWA over 53% of students are admitted on the basis of their secondary education.



Furthermore, a comparison was completed of the four WA universities that subscribe to TISC, using their data (below). The following results show that almost 85% of students were admitted to university using their ATAR scores.



We look forward to receiving the Panel's recommendations, and are happy to provide any further assistance required.

Kind regards,



Professor Alec Cameron