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24 May 2016

Dear Professor Shergold

I am pleased to forward to you Deakin University's submission to the public consultation on transparency in higher education admissions.

Deakin University supports consistent, transparent and accessible information for prospective students to enable them to make an informed choices. Information must be clearly communicated to applicants and supported by tools that help them understand the admissions process. Information must facilitate comparisons between all institutions in Australia. This submission draws on Deakin's experience in admitting over 20,000 new students in 2015.

Yours sincerely

Professor Jane den Hollander
Vice-Chancellor

Deakin University

Higher Education Standards Panel Consultation on Higher Education Admissions Processes

May 2016

- 1. Based on your experience, what is the most important information needed to help potential higher education students determine which course to study and which institution to apply for? Please feel free to rank the different types of information in order of importance.**

The information that is important to applicants depends on the course level. For undergraduate courses the most important information (in approximate order) is:

Course prerequisites, possible career pathways and qualification requirements, ATAR clearly-ins, other non-ATAR-related entry options or requirements (depending on school leaver or mature age status), institution reputation, campus facilities, accreditation of a course by a professional body or association, graduate employment and student satisfaction with the quality of courses and teaching.

Course costs are not particularly important for CSP school leaver students, but are more relevant where there are fees and for mature aged students who may have prior debt.

- 2. Is knowledge about how the ATAR rankings are calculated and published 'cut-off' thresholds a significant influencing factor on course and institution preferences? How could this information be made more accessible and useful?**

Applicants are not particularly concerned about **how** the ATAR is calculated but what their ATAR is and what is required to gain a place of their choice.

They are influenced by the published cut-off (VTAC Clearly-In) ATAR but also want to know two things:

- what chance do they have of getting an offer with an ATAR below the cut-off
- what bonus points could they get in the Special Entry Access Scheme or other schemes such as subject bonuses (see below).

Deakin University (through VTAC) publishes both the clearly-in score and the proportion of offers made to applicants whose ATAR was below the clearly-in score. This may encourage applicants with lower ATARs to apply for a course. Few institutions publish this information.

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

- 3. Is there sufficient information about how 'bonus points' are awarded and used to adjust 'raw' ATARs sufficiently understood? Should the application of bonus points be more consistent across different institutions? Is the current variety of different bonus point rules appropriate to meet the needs of individual students and institutions?**

Quantitative information on bonus points is hard to obtain. While all universities in Victoria publish a list of Special Entry Access Scheme categories, most do not publish the actual bonus points for which an applicant could be eligible. Monash University and Deakin University publish ATAR calculators so that applicants can estimate their bonus-adjusted ATAR. Other universities are much less transparent. There is a suspicion that some universities award bonus points

arbitrarily during the selection process in order to achieve their enrolment targets while maintaining the clearly-in ATARs.

There is a need for greater transparency and consistency about the application of bonus points across all institutions, while retaining flexibility for providers to apply bonuses that align with their individual missions.

A central, national calculator for the sector would enable students to make an easy assessment of the impact of adding bonus points on their 'raw' ATAR. This would be difficult without first aligning the state's Tertiary Admissions Centre processes.

4. Is there sufficient knowledge of the range of alternative admissions procedures employed by higher education institutions?

There is a lack of transparency between institutions and this is exacerbated by increasing competition as universities position for market share. Further information about the range of provisions for entry available to each applicant category would be valuable to applicants.

5. Should there be an annual report of the proportion of students accepted into courses by each higher education institution on the basis of their ATARs and/or what the median ATARs was for each course?

VTAC publishes such a report based on data provided by institutions. Further reporting would need a clear purpose before being imposed.

ATAR scores are easy for the public to understand but prospective students may benefit from more information and discussion of non-ATAR entry.

6. Do the current state-based Tertiary Admissions Centre arrangements adequately cope with students' desire for mobility to institutions across state borders? Would a more national approach to managing applications across borders be beneficial?

State-based Tertiary Admissions Centres do facilitate interstate mobility but the release of results at different times in various states adds complexity to the process. A national approach to managing the admissions process would address this problem.

7. Is there an understanding of how such mechanisms as early offers, second round offers and forced offers affect the transparency of higher education entry? How, if at all, should these factors be dealt with for the purposes of transparency?

For the purposes of transparency, it should be clear that the same rules and standards are applied to all rounds of offers. In Victoria the rules for second round are somewhat different and this leads to less transparency.

8. What information or enhancements do you think should be added to the Australian Government's [Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching \(QILT\)](#) website?

It has not been our experience that the QILT website has significant influence on student choice. Currently applicants must access many sites to locate relevant information to inform their decision-making. It would be preferable if all such information could be accessed on one national site, in conjunction with provider sites.

9. How best should comparable information on student admissions procedures be made available to the public? What is the most appropriate and effective way to communicate information to students? What information or enhancements do you think should be added to Tertiary Admission Centre websites, university and non-university institution websites, and/or Australian Government websites such as QILT and Study Assist?

QILT might be expanded to provide a national database of information (as set out in response to question 1) to enable comparisons to be easily made by prospective domestic undergraduate students.

10. What special measures are needed to ensure equity of access for disadvantaged students?

The new Higher Education Standards Framework requires providers to develop and implement institutional policies to accommodate disadvantaged groups. This includes the application of bonus points to provide equity of access. No further special measures are required.

11. Can you suggest any other changes that would improve public awareness and understanding of tertiary admissions processes?

The use of consistent terminology across jurisdictions would assist applicants to compare courses and institutions and make informed decisions. The consistent use of the same rules across all offer rounds would also help. The publication of how many bonus points are available and what the threshold ATAR cut off is should be required.