

## Submission No 54

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### Higher Education Standards Panel

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

Dear Panel,

My name is Matthew Sharp and I am the co-founder and director of the Australian Student Veterans Association (ASVA) which aims to promote the academic success, empowerment, and professional development of student veterans at Australian universities through advocacy and supportive resources.

A particular enrolment option available only through the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) offers an entry rank of 82 for those who have completed their Australian Defence Force (ADF) training plus two years' experience post training. This is the option exercised by myself in 2013 and ASVA's other co-founder Michael O'Connor in 2015, to study for a Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University.

If it wasn't for this special entry rank system in Queensland neither myself nor Michael would have left the ADF to attempt university, because without this rank we would have been required to sit the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT). Neither Michael nor I were confident enough to sit the STAT as we both felt that our six years in the Royal Australian Infantry did not prepare us well for such a test. Since being accepted into Griffith University solely on the basis of our armed service entry ranks, however, both myself and Michael have gone on to achieve academic excellence at university.

For example, despite not having completed year 10, and despite the fact that I enrolled at university immediately after discharging from the Australian Army (i.e. without sitting the STAT or completing any academic bridging/preparation course etc.) I was awarded the New Colombo Plan Scholarship in 2015 which is a prestigious scholarship scheme run by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In addition to this, I was awarded the Griffith Award for Academic Excellence in 2013, 2014, and 2015, and received the Undergraduate Prize for Excellence in Academic Achievement. Michael has had similar success during his very short time at Griffith University. For example, last year Michael was awarded the 2015 Griffith Award for Academic Excellence. He was also welcomed into the Griffith Honours College (which is a prestigious program for exceptional students in the top 2% of all students at Griffith University) and Griffith University's Academic Excellence Society.

We list all of these achievements not to boast, but to highlight the vast potential that we believe exists within Australia's ex-service personnel. Our academic successes at Griffith University thus far are by no means a coincidence.

In our view, they are the product of our military training and experience, the very same training and experience which has been identified by QTAC as being worthy of an entry rank of 82.

#### Submission 1

As such, we at ASVA request for this special entry rank for armed service training/experience to be implemented by universities and tertiary admission centres across Australia to help encourage more ADF personnel to enroll at university following their service. Doing so, we believe, will significantly increase the amount of current/former ADF personnel at higher education institutions throughout the country.

#### Submission 2

In relation to enrollment, ASVA wants to ensure that each incoming former/current ADF member is informed by each institution, upon admission, of the institutions' credit transfer arrangements. After doing some research, we have discovered that only a few universities throughout Australia (such as the University of Adelaide, University of Tasmania, and Charles Darwin University) are members of the Australian Defence Force Higher Education Advanced Standing Scheme (ADFHEAS Scheme). This scheme serves ADF personnel by ensuring they can achieve maximum recognition for professional military studies, experience and skills. We would very much like to see the ADFHEAS expanded and introduced to all higher education institutions across Australia.

For your consideration

Yours Sincerely,

Matthew Sharp

Australian Student Veterans Association