



Submission
HESP Consultation on the Transparency of Higher Education Admissions Processes
Submission prepared by Career Industry Council of Australia
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About Us

CICA's vision as the national peak body for the career industry is to enhance transitions and productivity by advocating the individual, social and economic benefits of quality career development for all Australians.

Our mission is to:

- Advocate the value of career development for all Australians
- Promote career and skill development across the life-span
- Develop an evidence base to inform policy and best practice
- Enhance strategic relationships both within Australia and Internationally
- Promote quality frameworks to all stakeholders and professional standards for career development practitioners
- Influence government, industry, education and community sectors to embed career development in workforce development and curricula
- Enhance collegiality within the career industry to achieve agreed goals.

CICA has as its core business working to increase quality assurance for the career industry and its stakeholders around Professional Standards, Quality Benchmarking, Practitioner Registration, Research and Practice and Higher Education Course Endorsement.

CICA is the key point of contact in Australia for policy makers and other stakeholders with interests in career development.

Introduction

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission and contribute to the consultation on the transparency of higher education admission processes.

In preparing this submission, CICA consulted and sought the views and opinions of its member associations (Appendix A).

CICA supports the Minister's and the Higher Education Standards Panel's desire to improve the transparency of higher education admission processes. These improvements should at all times be based on a student centred approach ensuring that students are provided with accurate, easy to understand and transparent information, enabling them to be clear about their options and make well informed decisions about their higher education learning choices.

Opportunity

Integration of career development into the breadth of admissions and transitions processes is something the CICA believes should be considered as part of the consultation, review and recommendations into the transparency of higher education admission processes.

As highlighted by the panel as its proposed principles, a student-centred approach should be central to any solution. The opportunity to widen the scope and ensure that more students are studying the right courses, in the right university for the right reasons helps to increase the return on investment for students, institutions, government and the wider society.

Front end processes such as admissions, outreach strategies which target all future student cohorts, particularly under represented cohorts, must embed career development practices to strengthen the transition process as students navigate admission, enrolment, orientation and first year experience (FYE) This will lead to positive impacts on attrition, completion, and positive graduate outcomes.

The key is to place career development learning principles at the front end of the higher education transitions processes – thereby putting students at the heart of the learning processes (Watts, 2008)¹

Regulatory

The need to minimise the regulatory impact on any options in improving transparency of higher education student admission policies is acknowledged and agreed.

We do however believe that 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. CICA is well placed to advise the higher education sector on appropriate design and integration for quality benchmarking practices and tools.

In relation to the QILT website we would make two points.

1. There is a danger that the QILT website could lead to a league table style comparisons of higher education institutions. Measurements in quality associated with processes in career development need to be taken into account. Graduate outcomes cannot be the only measure. QILT can also strengthen stakeholder confidence in the provision of high quality career development practices and services. Expanding the fields and data sets which measure career development occurring at each university will add value to the QILT website for the higher education sector.
2. It is important that the Australian Government views the QILT website as an information resource not an investment in career development. The QILT website is an information portal. An essential part of an individual's career development is access to high quality information so that informed decisions can be made.

¹ Watts, A.G. (2008). Career development learning and work-integrated learning: A conceptual perspective from the U.K. Paper presented at the National Symposium on Career Development Learning: Maximising the Contribution of Work-integrated learning (WIL) to the Student Experience. Melbourne.

Systems

Only 31% of university admissions rely on the ATAR ranking and UAC processes, indicating an increasing need to create more transparency and systems around alternative entry pathways.

There is a need for more publically available information around courses and ATAR entry standards. This must include for each course:

- Number of places available
- Cut off ATAR
- Median ATAR
- ATAR 3 year trend
- Number of students entering the course with bonus points
- % of first years student attrition rate

We believe there is a need for the standardisation of the bonus point's scheme, as well the educational access schemes need to be scaled up and tightened. Greater levels of transparency and understanding need to be provided to students, parents and other stakeholders about how the bonus points system and educational access schemes work, how students will be assessed and the assessing criteria weightings that are applied.

Information

A system that requires universities to publish generic and comparable information that is easy for students, parents and other stakeholders to understand is essential.

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.

In relation to alternative entry and bonus points, greater transparency is required around:

- What counts?
- What does not count?
- How much does it count for?

The complexities of the processes associated with first round, second round and subsequent offers needs to be reviewed. A more consistent communication message around how the system works and the timeframes connected to each round of offers is required. A comprehensive marketing and communications strategy should be designed and delivered to ensure information is available and accessible for a target audience. This would include the full spectrum of students, teachers and parents.

Cultural capital is not evenly distributed in families, schools, even across the Teaching profession. Cleverly designed information and delivery channels will make a difference to the misinformation that comes from classroom teachers, head teachers, deputy principals and career advisers - along with parents, peers, and others.

We believe that an opportunity exists for the Australian Government to strengthen the front-end university admission processes and the transition processes through investment in greater quality assurance processes in career development with a view to improving the outcomes for students transitioning from school to higher education.

There is considerable evidence suggesting that career development can support the acquisition of both skills and qualifications by encouraging individuals to commit to and complete formal and informal learning opportunities.² In addition career development can support individuals to increase their awareness of the skills that they have acquired informally and to consider how these skills can best be deployed.³

² Killeen, J. and Kidd, J.M. (1991). *Learning Outcomes of Guidance: A Review of Recent Research*. London: Department of Employment.

³ Hooley, T. and Dodd, V. (2015). *The Economic Benefits of Career Guidance*. Careers England.

CICA Member Associations

Australian Institute of Sport - Personal Excellence (AISPE)

Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC)

Career Educators Association of Northern Territory (CEANT)

Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV)

Career Education of Association of Western Australia (CEAWA)

Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA)

Careers Advisers Association of New South Wales & Australian Capital Territory (CAANSW/ACT)

Graduate Careers Australia (GCA)

National Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services (NAGCAS)

Queensland Association of Student Advisors (QASA)

Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association (QGCA)

Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia (RCAA)