

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS SERVICE CENTRE

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THOUGHTS ON 2010 UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

Introduction

The introduction of courses of study into Years 11 and 12 has prompted enquiries from schools and the public as to how these changes will impact on university admissions for school leavers from and including 2010 (the 2009 Year 12 cohort).

In establishing the admission requirements the public universities (Curtin, ECU, Murdoch and UWA) are focused on maintaining standards for university entry, allowing for a challenging range of courses for students and providing opportunities for all students capable of success in tertiary studies.

It has been difficult for the public universities to establish a position on the 2010 entry requirements until the Curriculum Council determined early this year how students would be assessed in courses, and the nature of the external examinations. Based on available information, the universities are now able to circulate a provisional position on how school leavers may qualify for entry to the universities. TISC aims to publish the 2010 admission requirements on the TISC website before the end of term two 2007, to enable Year 10 students to be appropriately counselled for course selection.

In deciding the 2010 admission requirements, the universities will consider the following factors:

- Universities must demonstrate that they have selected the most able students and retain public credibility in this selection process;
- Selection for university should be based on the completion of courses to a current Year 12 equivalent standard. The achievement of a TER on the basis of four scaled marks in courses at stage 2 is likely to be insufficient preparation for success in university studies;
- It is important to encourage students to study courses to the most challenging level of which they are capable. It is not unreasonable to expect that students aiming for university admission would be able to study at least three courses at stage 3;
- As students may be completing courses examined at either stage 2 or stage 3, universities need to consider what weighting should be attached to the results for each stage. To consider each stage to be of equal merit for the purposes of university admission would be unfair to students who have completed a more challenging stage of the course. Taking the more demanding stage 3 units should not disadvantage students;
- There is also the view that there should be an incentive for students to undertake courses at stage 3. This could be implemented in the scaling process by the use of an increment, such that for each course, the stage 3 scaled marks on average, are significantly higher than the stage 2 scaled marks (report by Dr Mike Partis on scaling stage 2 and stage 3 results is available at www.tisc.edu.au);
- Ideally, all students seeking university admission should undertake at least four courses at stage 3. However, to provide some flexibility, universities are considering whether under normal circumstances to allow a TER to be calculated on the basis of either four stage 3 courses, or three stage 3 courses and one stage 2 course;

- The universities will continue to try to restrict the number of university courses requiring prerequisites so as not to limit students' choice of courses. It is likely that course results to satisfy prerequisites will be required at stage 3;
- Competence in English remains a priority for university admission. As the scaled mark is a normative measure it does not necessarily indicate a student's level of English competence, and the universities need to consider if an appropriate scaled mark at stage 2 would be satisfactory;
- The universities have not made a decision on the role of the proposed VET courses based on the NSW VET course model in the calculation of a TER.

A Possible set of Admission Requirements in 2010

Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)

- WACE will be required by all universities as long as achievement of the 13 overarching outcomes remains a requirement of WACE.

Prerequisites

- A scaled mark of at least 50 at stage 3 in specified courses.

Competence in English

- A scaled mark of at least 50 at stage 3 in English, Literature or EALD

Concession: If a student has WACE and a TER above a prescribed minimum and has

- a scaled mark less than 50 at stage 3; or
- a scaled mark greater than 50 at stage 2;

then the student could be invited to sit STAT or IELTS to demonstrate their competence in English.

Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER)

- The sum of four best scaled course/TEE results will produce a Tertiary Entrance Aggregate (TEA) which will be translated into a TER, subject to the following:
 - there will be unacceptable course combinations;
 - courses undertaken privately will be acceptable; and
 - scaled course/TEE results can be accumulated over 5 years.

A possible rule:

The calculation of the TEA must include at least three scaled marks from courses at stage 3 or TEE subjects.

Alternative University Pathways

- Individual universities may also consider fewer than three stage 3 results for university entrance by creating alternative pathways, involving students providing further information to support their application, such as a portfolio, interview or sitting STAT etc.

Conclusion

This statement is an attempt to express thoughts and issues relating to discussions about university admissions from 2010. It does not necessarily represent the specific views of any university.

If you wish to comment on any of the above then please contact me:

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