

# TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS SERVICE CENTRE

(Incorporated in Western Australia)

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Professor Kerri-Lee Krause  
Chair, Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group

Dear Professor Krause and members of the working group

## **Response to admissions transparency implementation plan**

TISC welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft implementation plan. In response to the draft plan, we offer the following comments and suggestions.

### **Inclusion of Western Australian representatives**

In order for a truly national approach to be developed, it is important that all states are represented in the implementation discussions. We would request that TISC and/or a WA university representative be included in any sub-groups of the implementation working group.

This request is particularly relevant as the Implementation Working Group itself does not include any members from WA. We believe the particular characteristics of admissions reporting and processes in Western Australia can provide a positive contribution to the national discussion.

### **Additional terminology for ATAR-based admission: 'guaranteed ATAR'**

For several years now, WA universities have published 'indicative ATARs' as well as cut-off ranks for entry to most courses. In practice these thresholds have functioned as guaranteed entry thresholds, as universities have accepted all applicants with ATARs (adjusted or not) at or above the published value.

TISC and the universities have published the thresholds well before the start of new admissions cycles, and they feature prominently in other recruitment collateral in preference to cut-off ranks. This is because they provide more stable and more useful information to prospective students.

Recent discussions between the WA universities have considered whether the term 'guaranteed entry ATAR' is more appropriate and accessible to prospective students than 'indicative ATAR.' However, we want to ensure that the terminology adopted is consistent with that used across the country.

The 'guarantee' relates to the ATAR required for entry in the following academic year, and includes a caveat that other entry requirements (such as English competency) must also be satisfied for the ATAR guarantee to be valid.

In the implementation plan, all of the proposed threshold indicators for prospective students (pp 32, 33) maintain an element of uncertainty for a prospective student trying to assess how likely their ATAR would be to secure them a place in the coming intake. However, under the demand driven system, many institutions would be prepared to accept as many students with the required rank for a course as are willing to enrol in it!

The guaranteed entry thresholds may be the same as the minimum entry threshold for courses where capacity or other constraints are not issues; alternatively, the guaranteed entry threshold can be set at a higher level than the minimum ATAR value, to allow institutional control over the number of commencements.

There are precedents for the concept and terminology of 'guaranteed entry ATAR'. South Australia publishes guaranteed entry ATAR values for many courses, most of which are several ATAR points

higher than the minimum entry requirement. The University of Melbourne also publishes a guaranteed ATAR threshold for its Bachelor of Commerce degree, as well as its Access Melbourne program.

Where it is feasible to do so, the ability to publish 'guaranteed ATAR' values would provide greater certainty to prospective students on their likelihood of admission.

### **VET study and recent secondary education category**

A significant number of Year 12 students in Western Australia complete a VET qualification alongside, or instead of, ATAR-based study. For many of these students, their VET study, rather than their ATAR, is the basis of their admission. Placing such students in the 'other criteria' subgroup, instead of reporting them as a discrete cohort, obscures admissions information that would be helpful to a significant number of Year 12 students.

### **Streamlined interstate applications**

TISC has already commenced discussions with other Tertiary Admission Centres about how this objective can be achieved. TACs have the technical capability to deliver a more streamlined experience for applicants applying across state borders, as we already exchange data regularly. However, there may be a need for assistance with development costs.

As the implementation plan makes clear that the streamlined process should allow cross-border applications at reduced cost to applicants, TACs – and their constituent institutions - will also need to come to an agreement on how the forgone application fee revenue will be apportioned.

### **Communication and Education Strategy**

We appreciate that there is a strong desire to make tangible progress on these issues as soon as possible. The proposed timeline is ambitious, particularly in light of the discussions necessary to secure agreement on terminology, both within and between institutions and states. This year of 'best endeavour' could actually be used to strengthen the implementation through a coordinated program of communication and education.

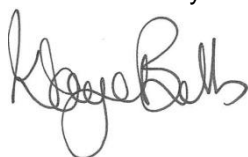
Publishing additional information on admissions policies and practices could greatly assist prospective students if done well or, if not, overwhelm and confuse them further. We need to outline the changes to students, parents, teachers, university recruitment staff and other interested members of the community *before* they are implemented, and to explain, in non-technical terms, what the newly-presented information means and how it can be used by prospective students and their supporters.

For instance, how do we explain to the parent of a Year 12 student the relevance of the 25<sup>th</sup>, median and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile ATAR to receive an offer? For careers practitioners or year coordinators in secondary schools, how do we best explain how the entry thresholds they have been familiar with compare to the various 'lowest-ATAR' thresholds in the information templates?

Institutions in various states will need to tailor the detail to their local situations, but some coordination of messages would certainly strengthen the national approach and help minimise possible confusion during the period of transition.

Once again, we thank the working group for the opportunity to provide feedback. We strongly support the objectives of the implementation plan and look forward to working with colleagues within Western Australia and across the country to improve the transparency of information available to prospective students.

Yours sincerely



Wayne Betts  
Executive Officer