

Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC)

SUBMISSION

Response to the Admissions Transparency Implementation
Working Group Draft Implementation Plan

May 2017



Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres

Background

The Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC) was established in the 1970s and is the group that facilitates communication and co-operation between tertiary admissions centres in Australia and New Zealand.

The five members of ACTAC are:

- Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC, servicing Queensland)
- South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC, servicing South Australia and the Northern Territory)
- Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC, servicing Western Australia)
- Universities Admissions Centre (UAC, servicing NSW and the ACT)
- Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC, servicing Victoria)

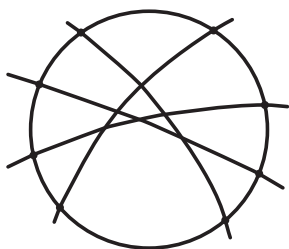
The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the University of Tasmania also participate in ACTAC meetings.

UAC's Managing Director is the current Chair of ACTAC.

ACTAC supports the education sector and the government to make better decisions, develop clearer policy and achieve improved public outcomes, via the provision of impartial information and insights about student admissions obtained through its extensive data and sector relationships developed over many years.

ACTAC is in an excellent position to support the government and education sector in achieving excellent outcomes for prospective students through a national approach to national issues, while the state-based members of ACTAC will continue to provide local solutions for local issues. Particularly, ACTAC can improve transparency of admission-related information while supporting light but effective regulation.

ACTAC welcomes the work of the Higher Education Standards Panel Implementation Working Group in seeking to improve the transparency of higher education admissions processes, and is keen to be seen as a trusted and valued adviser on national admissions and related issues.



ACTAC

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Executive summary

ACTAC is very supportive of the report of the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) on Improving the Transparency of Higher Education Admissions and welcomes the release of the consultation draft implementation plan.

ACTAC broadly supports all six objectives of the plan, with specific endorsement of:

- The tertiary admissions centres developing and implementing improved reporting products.
- The tertiary admissions centres working together to develop and implement a more streamlined approach to interstate applications. ACTAC will be able to meet the proposed August 2017 timeline for agreement on an approach to facilitate interstate applications and recognises that this will entail significant development work and system implementation in 2017/18 in preparation for 2019 admissions.
- Additionally, the consistency of terminology and information, and the reporting of additional information around selection processes will increase transparency. Public understanding will be improved if easy to understand terms are used and if the information is restricted to that which is necessary to students to make informed choices.
- The development of a national admissions information platform and, while out of scope for the Implementation Working Group, ACTAC urges the Department of Education and Training to engage with the tertiary admissions centres when work begins on this project.

Areas of concern include:

- The ambitious timelines proposed in the plan are at odds with admissions centre timelines for the 2018 admissions period.
- Funding. The costs associated with programming and other changes required will have to be borne by the admissions centres, precluding or delaying other projects being undertaken for students and institutions.
- While ACTAC supports the development of a streamlined process for interstate applicants, there are two issues around this that are problematic: i) the cost of those applications and how the income from applications can support all admissions centres, and ii) the issue of institution quota management, where there will be a large increase in applications that have no realistic prospect of eventuating in an enrolment.

ACTAC thanks the Implementation Working Group for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft implementation plan and looks forward to working with the Group, the Department of Education and Training and the sector to deliver on the commitments made in the HESP report.

Timelines can be met using a best endeavours approach, but it should be noted that the 2018 admissions period will be one of transition, with some information persisting in existing formats and some available using the new agreed standards. The challenge will be to minimise student confusion as we deal with this hybrid information in the short to medium term.

ACTAC supports the spirit of the commitments made in the draft implementation plan and looks forward to working with the Implementation Working Group to refine and finalise the plan and beyond that play a part in further initiatives to improve the process of higher education admissions.