

CHAPTER 3 - THE QUEENSLAND SETTING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The Queensland setting for school-leaver transition to tertiary education has changed during the last three decades, notably during the last ten years and with the recent emergence of a new public focus on Vocational Education and Training.

3.1.2 Queensland has of course shared the interest in issues being tackled elsewhere in Australia concerning school-leaver transition to tertiary institutions, and extending the pool of applicants from other backgrounds. However, the settings, the histories of consideration, and the current substance of the issues, appear to vary from elsewhere in Australia in ways that bear on this project.

3.1.3 This chapter presents a general picture of the Queensland situation, giving emphasis to factors relevant to the project.

3.1.4 As is argued in later chapters, those established and developing factors give a strong local cast to the project; to the assumptions on which it is based and to meeting whatever admissions needs that are considered to arise from those assumptions.

3.2 SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT FOR TERs – 30 YEARS’ DEVELOPMENT AND ACCEPTANCE

3.2.1 In 1970, a thoughtful review¹ was conducted of the system of public examinations then in place for Queensland secondary school students. The State Government supported the review’s recommendations, then seen as radical, and legislated to create new organisational arrangements to implement them.²

3.2.2 Those events produced fundamental changes to the ways:

- the school performance of students in Years 11 and 12 was thereafter assessed;
- individual Senior³ results were derived; and

¹ Radford, W.C. (Chair) : Public Examinations for Queensland Secondary School Students (Department of Education, Queensland – Government Printer, Brisbane, 1970) passim

² A comprehensive account of the introduction and subsequent development of school-based assessment in Queensland can be found in:

Howell, Maxwell: Who Examines Controls – School Based Assessment in Queensland

(Centre for Leadership and Management in Education , Griffith University – Brisbane, 1997) passim

³ A Statewide authority traditionally provides the Senior Certificate to students completing Year 12.

- individuals were ranked for tertiary selection.

The procedures associated with those functions were refined during the following 30 years.

- 3.2.3 The previous system of Senior syllabuses and external terminal examinations was, in essence, controlled by the University of Queensland. This arrangement had provided a good foundation for the establishment of academic secondary schooling in the State.
- 3.2.4 Entry to universities, and some non-university occupational training, was based on the Senior Examination, used prescribed subjects, and was associated with the notion of securing “matriculation.”
- 3.2.5 However, this situation changed with the substantial demand for new secondary schools and places that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, school retention to Year 12 continually increased. This drew students with more varied capabilities, personal inclinations, and aspirations into higher secondary years.
- 3.2.6 From this change came recognition by some educators of a need to provide more variety of less traditional school opportunities and experiences. The expanded, increasingly higher-educated teaching profession, under increasing pressure to provide relevant local curriculums, was recognised as a potential source of professional input into the secondary process. Greater school-level involvement was seen as a vehicle for promoting professional improvement in teaching, and situational relevance in students’ school experiences.
- 3.2.7 Thus, the Senior syllabus and examination were replaced with a structured system controlled by a State-wide board⁴ established for the purpose, and continuing until 2002, when the government reformed the structure of a number of State education agencies. That Board worked collaboratively with tertiary bodies, school systems, and schools and teachers. Teachers played a key, pervasive role. Syllabuses provide for program development and content selection by school systems, and by schools and teachers, to suit local situations. These characteristics are expected to continue under the new arrangements.
- 3.2.8 The introduction of continual assessment of students by their schools, using a variety of means, was the most contentious aspect of the reform. In the mainstream of schooling, this form of assessment replaced entirely the previous single, terminal, external examination in each subject.

⁴ The Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, established by State legislation.

- 3.2.9 That decision was taken on the grounds that local, school-based assessment over two years by professionals working with students would produce fairer, more insightful, and more comprehensive assessments for individuals than a terminal, external examination.
- 3.2.10 Teachers and their schools assess and grade the work of their students for each of four semesters. They then subject work samples and assessments to peer moderation before grades are settled. This process produces Senior-certificate subject grades for students. After scaling using the results of a non-syllabus-based test⁵ taken by students in Year 12, it also provides the data for ranking for tertiary selection, all Queensland Year 12 students who have taken sufficient conventional school subjects.
- 3.2.11 Particularly for the first 15-20 years, concerns about tertiary access for school-leavers tended to produce rather emotional, uninformed, and political public expressions of concern about comparative treatment of individuals at each year's end. There were periodic calls for a "fairer" system, sometimes envisioning the reintroduction of external examinations.
- 3.2.12 Unsuccessful tertiary applicants or their parents were inclined to claim that bias caused by the new system against their - or towards others' - schools in the scaling process, had prejudiced individual chances for tertiary admission. One trigger for this was the increased competition for university and college places brought about by the educational aspirations of the rapidly increasing school population. Such levels of competition had not previously been experienced in Queensland.
- 3.2.13 Other issues included various perceptions of comparative validity of teacher assessments; the relevance of ASAT to some subjects; some problems with incorporating assessments from small schools and small classes; and suitability of syllabuses for students without academic aspirations.
- 3.2.14 However, popular concern about those and other issues seems to have dissipated following adoption of structural and process recommendations, addressing most concerns, made by an external review⁶ conducted in 1990 by Professor Nancy Viviani, and given effective public airing.
- 3.2.15 Some concerns about comparability of assessment among schools did persist for a short time – but by the early 1990s, these were generated almost

⁵ At that time, the Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test (ASAT), produced and scored annually by the Australian Council for Educational Research; since replaced by the Core Skills Test.

⁶ Viviani, N. The Review of Tertiary Entrance in Queensland 1990 (Department of Education, Queensland – Brisbane, 1990) passim

exclusively in the education community itself.⁷ There has for some years been little public concern expressed about the previously contentious issues, including notions of external examination.

- 3.2.16 Current issues are to do almost exclusively with matters that have a considerable bearing on this project, eg, Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools, and how VET results can be taken into account for tertiary admission. And more recently attrition rates in higher education are being linked in public debate to an alleged tendency for school-leavers who have unclear ideas of their futures to enter universities.
- 3.2.17 From the perspective of this project, the 30-year period spent progressively adjusting to using solely school-based assessment for senior secondary students has produced important outcomes in Queensland:
- For at least the last ten years, tertiary institutions and the general public seem to have accepted that school-based assessment, and the process for creating tertiary entry ranks for school-leavers, are in place as the normal course of events.
 - Scaling intervention between raw marks and ranks seems accepted, even if publicly little understood.
 - Although grades and ranks themselves are rendered in ways that could be said to promote the notion they are of objective origin, it seems clear that the notion of basing “results” on professionally made qualitative and quantitative assessments has been accepted by the main interested parties and the general public, at least implicitly.
 - There is, compared with public and educational discussion of two or three decades ago, a marked increase in readiness to consider alternative routes for access by school-leavers to tertiary courses, eg, regional access programs, direct school-university access arrangements and post-graduate admission to some professional degrees.

3.3 NON SCHOOL LEAVERS

- 3.3.1 The developed arrangements (set out in paras 11.0 to 18.0) provide a TER to school-leavers who have sat the Core Skills Test, and have a sufficient selection from an array of specified, essentially conventional Senior subjects to satisfy BSSSS requirements.

⁷ Topley, J., Silver, J., and Anderson, N. “The Use of School Assessments by Tertiary Institutions and Employers, and Related Issues of Comparability” Research Report - Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority (Queensland) 5: 31-56, November 1993. passim

- 3.3.2 From the early 1970s, the growth in provision of alternative entry for people assumed not to be moving directly from secondary school followed much the same pattern as the development of acceptance of TER machinery.
- 3.3.3 The University of Queensland, by the early 1970s, had well founded schedules for translating results in other Australian States, English “A” level exams, and similar measures. These rolled into the developing collaborative central admissions arrangements among the then three universities.
- 3.3.4 Subsequently, common schedules were created through QTAC by the participating institutions, including schedules for translating school-leaver achievement measures for a growing number of other countries.
- 3.3.5 Pressure from non-school-leavers of most ages for continuing formal tertiary education rose during the 1980s, increasing to represent about 50% of new tertiary enrolments. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a major increase in the sorts of evidence people aged over 19 or 21 years (varying for institutions) could present for assessment for an alternative entry rank.
- 3.3.6 This period was notable for attention given to creating schedules, for translation into TERs (OE), of specific sorts of evidence previously recognised by some institutions in individually considered cases, including employment experience and non-school, non-tertiary occupational and competency qualifications.
- 3.3.7 Consequently, in 2000, there are just under 400 different schedules in use, drawing on these main fields of evidence:
- Australian Year 12 results from other States.
 - International and other countries’ secondary education results.
 - Professional and post-secondary qualifications, apprenticeships and traineeships, specialist examining board certificates, and admission by examination to professional bodies.
 - University and TAFE studies.
 - Bridging and preparatory courses.
 - Achievement in occupations with hierarchical levels.
- 3.3.8 Recognition of this range of evidence represents a formidable scope for accepting many different types of personal achievement as grounds for admission to tertiary courses.

3.3.9 Added to these opportunities to present different sorts of evidence, are the opportunities to produce evidence or be individually assessed through:

- Sitting the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT).
- Presenting a case, addressing specified dimensions, for Personal Competencies Assessment (PCA).
- Special Consideration on grounds of disadvantage.

3.4 OTHER ROUTES FOR SCHOOL-LEAVERS TO OBTAIN A TER(OE) OR GAIN ADMISSION

3.4.1 That acceptance of the multiplicity of avenues created for non-school-leavers appears to have produced some willingness to apply similar means to give tertiary access to school-leavers. For example, those have not been eligible to receive a TER, or who regard themselves as having a slim chance of achieving a satisfactory TER to be selected for tertiary admission.

3.4.2 Seen in a structural way, this group is defined by being below the minimum age limit set by institutions or course requirements for admission by alternative TERs as described in the previous section; and almost exclusively by not having a TER produced by conventional school achievement.

3.4.3 Institutions and courses vary in their willingness to recognise these alternative school-leaver routes, or to do so for direct or very recent school-leavers. Modest numbers of such school-leavers are admitted to university bachelor courses; but acceptance into university diploma and TAFE AQF⁸ Level V courses is much more frequent. This of course can provide a useful transition route towards a university degree or the higher AQF Level V and VI programs.

3.4.4 Three routes for school-leavers that lead directly to the generation of a TER have been progressively developed during the last five or six years.

3.4.5 One route is the same Personal Competencies Assessment (PCA) process as is employed for older, non-school-leavers. Seven of the eleven Queensland and NSW institutions⁹ serviced by QTAC will consider applicants in the school-leaver age range for at least some courses.

3.4.6 However, the number of school-leavers who have been able to produce the sort of evidence relied on for PCAs, and to marshal it effectively, producing a

⁸ Australian Qualifications Framework.

⁹ All 9 Queensland TAFE Institutes are represented as one element – TAFE – in these figures. TAFE is by far the largest provider of places for such applicants.

TER at a useable level, is very small – 29 such applicants lodged a PCA submission in 2001.

- 3.4.7 A second route is by sitting the STAT. Some people with a TER choose also to take the STAT. Four universities as well as TAFE, serviced by QTAC will consider STAT by itself as an admission qualification for applicants in the school-leaver age range for at least some courses – but only minimal numbers of such applications were made.
- 3.4.8 A third method is to provide a TER to immediate school-leavers who have not been eligible to receive a TER(OE). This approach, using a published QTAC schedule, takes notice of a much larger range of subjects listed on the Senior Certificate than does the calculation of a TER. It also takes notice of the Core Skills Test if taken. (see paragraph 3.2.10)
- 3.4.9 Although an applicant is required to have the same number of semester units as for calculation of a TER, they can be drawn not only from the usual subjects used by the BSSSS for that purpose, but also from other subjects registered with the BSSSS by schools, and from VET subjects. Thus, some subjects can be included that are taken outside school.
- 3.4.10 This represents for school-leavers a broadening of recognised evidence beyond the results of completing a conventional schooling. In 1999/2000, 1232 out of 1493 such applicants were offered places. While the vast majority of offers were for TAFE diploma and advanced diploma courses, 10 of the 11 institutions serviced by QTAC will admit through this route.
- 3.4.11 An encouraging recent development arising from this process is the willingness of some institutions to consider individually, applicants considered worthy by experienced QTAC assessors but falling outside the normal admission rules for that age group may be referred to institutions for decisions. In 1998/99, 24 such applicants were referred to individual institutions, and 13 offers subsequently made.
- 3.4.12 This might well be a re-emerging fourth route, using QTAC's expertise in assessment - one that recognises worthy but unconventional applicants through a central, proactive, identification process, similar to processes that:
- have in recent years been variably practiced in particular institutions in direct contact with applicants, and
 - were much more used in institutions in the 1970s and early 1980s, when such applications were invited by some institutions, using QTAC as a mailbox and coordinating agency.

3.5 QTAC's FACILITATION FUNCTION

- 3.5.1 QTAC has long-term standing as the focus for tertiary applicants to universities and Australian Qualifications Framework level 5 and 6 courses.
- 3.5.2 Admission machinery operated collaboratively in the 1970s among universities, and separately among Colleges of Advanced Education, was merged in 1975 to become the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC). In turn, QTAC became a company privately owned by the universities, operating independently to implement the admissions policies of institutions who use its services – now numbering 25, including 12 Institutes of TAFE operating loosely as a system, and treated formally as one client of QTAC.
- 3.5.3 From its foundation, QTAC was accepted by schools and universities as providing necessary coordination for admissions machinery. QTAC itself has developed comprehensive information and advisory services offered to potential applicants of all ages, now utilising multimedia. It has enjoyed considerable confidence from schools, among potential applicants, and in the tertiary institutions.
- 3.5.4 In this atmosphere, the institutions and QTAC have increasingly collaborated to develop a substantial body of expertise in admissions policy and processing. Institutions deploy this in different ways. Some separately generate admissions routes to suit their own needs - although they invariably use procedures that maintain contact with QTAC's consolidated student and admissions data and statistical reporting systems.
- 3.5.5 The comparatively long period during which QTAC and the institutions have acted collaboratively has been an important factor in the progressive, substantial extension of the breadth of evidence able to be considered for mature-age admission. Changes to the scope and pattern of the evidentiary base during the last 20 years are shown in Table 3.1.
- 3.5.6 More recently, this established capital in experience and public confidence has facilitated the incremental extension of alternative pathways open to school-leavers.

Table 3.1 : Highest Level of Tertiary Entry Qualifications through QTAC - Illustration of Changing Recognition and Use of Principal Evidentiary Bases 1979-1980 to 1999-2000

Level of Highest Entry Qualification	Origin of Highest Entry Qualification	Level of Highest Entry Qualification		Matriculant	Graduate of University	Graduate/Postgraduate degree awarded from a CAE	Diplomate	Associate Diplomate	Part Tertiary (University)	Part Tertiary (CAE)	Certificate	Special	TOTAL 1979-80		
		No. Offers made	Offers as % Total Offers made												
Level of Highest Entry Qualification	Origin of Highest Entry Qualification	1979-1980	10,573	73%	445	162	648	100	844	668	232	889	14,561		
		Offers as % Total Offers made			3.1%	1.1%	4.5%	0.68%	5.8%	4.5%	1.6%	6.1%	100%		
Level of Highest Entry Qualification	Origin of Highest Entry Qualification	1984-1985	14,089	71%	751	357	550	359	1,348	1,283	461	786	19,994		
		Offers as % Total Offers made			3.8%	1.8%	2.7%	1.8%	6.7%	6.4%	2.3%	3.9%	100%		
Level of Highest Entry Qualification	Origin of Highest Entry Qualification	1989-1990	21,229	65%	1,832	707	901	5,742	907	747	787	32,832	32,832		
		Offers as % Total Offers made			5.6%	2.2%	2.7%	1.7%	2.8%	2.3%	2.3%	100%	100%		
Level of Highest Entry Qualification	Origin of Highest Entry Qualification	1994-1995	3,108	6.4%	849	2,075	10,587	2,814	1,420	607	26,796	48,266	48,266		
		Offers as % Total Offers made			1.8%	4.2%	22%	5.8%	2.9%	1.3%	56%	1.3%	100%		
Level of Highest Entry Qualification	Origin of Highest Entry Qualification	1999-2000	2,390	5.0%	123	282	165	459	1,755	419	4,193	1,079	26,711		
		Offers as % Total Offers Made			0.3%	0.6%	0.3%	1.0%	3.8%	8.8%	2.3%	56%	1.1%	100%	
		University Award		Part University		TAFE Award		Part TAFE		Other tertiary study ^{††}		Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAD)	Qld Senior or Year 12 equivalent	Other quals eg nursing and prof quals	TOTAL 1999-00
		Degree or higher award	Advanced Diploma ^Δ	Diploma [†]	Advanced Diploma ^Δ	Associate Diploma from university or TAFE	Part Tertiary from University or TAFE	TAFE study other than Diploma or Associate Diploma	Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT)	Matriculation or Year 12 equivalent	Other qualifications eg nursing & other professional qualifications				
		2,390	191	419	123	282	165	459	1,755	419	4,193	1,079	26,711	533	47,566
		5.0%	0.4%	0.9%	0.3%	0.6%	0.3%	1.0%	3.8%	8.8%	2.3%	56%	1.1%	100%	100%

Δ Australian Qualifications Framework Advanced Diploma level figures include Diploma (UC2) level courses.

† Australian Qualifications Framework Diploma level figures include Associate Diploma (UC3) and Associate Degree level courses.

†† Other tertiary study includes Teaching certificates (undergraduate), other University certificate level courses, miscellaneous non-award subjects, and TAFE study other than Advanced Diploma, Diploma or Associate Diploma.

3.6 SOME QUEENSLAND TERTIARY ADMISSION TRENDS

- 3.6.1 Over much the same period, changes have occurred in the demography of access and admission to tertiary education. Some changes of more strategic notice are briefly mentioned here.
- 3.6.2 There has been a continuing trend during the last decade for proportionately more women than men to apply and receive offers. Furthermore, the proportion of people aged 19 and under seeking and being offered places is gradually increasing. See Table 3.2.
- 3.6.3 Women altogether have recently made up about 58% of people who sought and received offers and then enrolled, while men at about 42% made up about 16% points fewer. See Table 3.3.
- 3.6.4 However, for people aged 19 and under, the difference is about 12% points. Since 1998-99, the proportion of people aged 19 and under has risen from 62.4% to 64.5%.
- 3.6.5 Alongside this, opportunity¹⁰ for admission has consistently risen during the last 20 years. Trends in demand for admission, and opportunity to receive an offer, are generally revealed by reference to the Table 3.3.
- 3.6.6 In the last 20 years, the 17 year old population has risen from 41,927 to 51,797 – by 24%. At the same time, the proportion of people aged 17 completing school has risen from 35% to 71%, having peaked at 74% in 1992.
- 3.6.7 The proportion of those people obtaining a school-based TER fell steadily from 97% to 76%. Over the same period, the proportion of school-leavers applying for a tertiary place fell at about half that rate from 78% to 66%.
- 3.6.8 In the last 20 years (the period for which figures are available) the “opportunities” for school-leavers to obtain a place, indicated by all offers made, has increased with some fluctuations from 34% to 117% seen against total Queensland 17-year-old population. It has fluctuated, when seen as a proportion of school-leavers, from 57% in 1980, to a low of 42% in 1990, to 67% in 1996, and 60% in 1999.¹¹

¹⁰ Some institutions give preliminary advice to applicants about TER cut-offs and course quotas that can vary considerably in the face of actual demand for courses that is experienced when offers are made in response to applicants’ preferences. Therefore, the number of actual offers made has been used as an “opportunity” indication. This figure has, over the years, maintained a moderately consistent relationship to enrolments.

¹¹ Twenty-fourth Annual Report to June 2000 (Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre, Ltd – Brisbane 2000) p.129, Table 30.

TABLE 3.2: SUMMARY BY GENDER AND AGE GROUP 2000-2001 COMPARED WITH 1999-2000 and 1998-1999

Gender and Age Group ^Δ	First Preferences ^Ω		First Pref ^s as % of Applications		Offers		Offers as % of Total Offers		Acceptances		Acceptances as % of Total Acceptances		Enrollments		Enrollments as % of Total Enrollments										
	2000-01	1998-99	1999-00	1998-99	2000-01	1999-00	1998-99	2000-01	1999-00	1998-99	2000-01	1999-00	1998-99	2000-01	1999-00	1998-99									
Female																									
19 and under	20,453	20,230	19,267	37.3%	36.7%	35.7%	18,213	17,976	17,114	38.2%	37.8%	36.5%	13,940	13,829	13,208	36.9%	36.8%	35.4%	12,922	12,594	12,138	37.9%	37.8%	36.2%	
20-24	5,100	5,211	5,253	9.3%	9.5%	9.8%	4,253	4,234	4,378	8.9%	8.9%	9.4%	3,355	3,366	3,479	8.9%	8.9%	9.3%	2,900	2,909	3,001	8.5%	8.7%	9.0%	
25 and over	6,732	6,821	6,748	12.3%	12.4%	12.5%	5,758	5,851	5,899	12.1%	12.3%	12.6%	4,695	4,799	4,861	12.4%	12.8%	13.1%	4,065	4,016	4,188	11.9%	12.1%	12.5%	
Total Females	32,285	32,282	31,268	58.9%	58.6%	58.0%	28,061	27,391	27,391	59.2%	59.0%	58.5%	21,990	21,994	21,548	58.2%	58.5%	57.8%	19,887	19,519	19,327	58.3%	58.6%	57.7%	
Male																									
19 and under	13,996	14,051	13,532	25.5%	25.5%	25.1%	12,250	12,297	11,829	25.7%	25.8%	25.3%	9,800	9,687	9,467	26.0%	25.8%	25.4%	9,086	8,773	8,760	26.6%	26.3%	26.2%	
20-24	3,996	3,995	4,164	7.3%	7.3%	7.2%	3,253	3,170	3,344	6.8%	6.7%	7.1%	2,691	2,585	2,746	7.1%	6.9%	7.4%	2,346	2,223	2,376	6.9%	6.7%	7.1%	
25 and over	4,565	4,775	4,974	8.3%	8.7%	9.2%	3,954	4,038	4,287	8.3%	8.5%	9.1%	3,267	3,325	3,504	8.7%	8.8%	9.4%	2,815	2,807	3,022	8.2%	8.4%	9.0%	
Total Males	22,557	22,821	22,670	41.1%	41.4%	42.0%	19,457	19,505	19,440	40.8%	41.0%	41.5%	15,758	15,597	15,717	41.8%	41.5%	42.2%	14,247	13,803	14,158	41.7%	41.4%	42.3%	
TOTAL	54,842	55,083	53,938	100%	100%	100%	47,681	47,566	46,831	100%	100%	100%	37,748	37,591	37,265	100%	100%	100%	34,134	33,322	33,485	100%	100%	100%	

^Ω Figures exclude applicants who did not nominate any valid QTAC preferences.

^Δ Age as at 31 March.

Table 3.3: Opportunity "to obtain Tertiary Admission through QTAC" Change : 1979-80 to 1999-2000*

Admissions Period	17 year old Qld population	Offers Made		Applicants		
		Number	As % of 17 year olds	Number	As % of 17 year olds	As % Quota places available
1979-80	41,927	14,561	34%	21,033	50%	195%
1984-85	41,884	19,994	47%	32,831	78%	234%
1989-90	51,672	32,832	64%	44,145	85%	193%
1994-95	47,841	48,982	102%	58,865	123%	170%
1999-00	51,797	52,289	101%	61,094	117%	150%

* From QTAC statistical collections and reports.

- 3.6.9 A factor reflected in Table 3.3 concerns the procedural change made in the 1997-98 admissions period from having schools submit applications on behalf of their students, to having students themselves initiate individual applications in hard copy or electronically. Year 12 applications fell from 25,300 to 23,300, from 77% to 67% of school-leavers.
- 3.6.10 These changes constitute a background to considering what need there is for further change in admission opportunities for school-leavers, in Chapter 6.

3.7 FURTHER CHANGE?

- 3.7.1 Some aspects of the Queensland situation reviewed above stand in contrast to the positions in other States. Those differences create different opportunities, possibilities and needs for change in Queensland.

Australia

- 3.7.2 For example, in all other States and territories, subject data from external examination still has a core influence on ranking students for tertiary entrance - about 50% in most cases.
- 3.7.3 Reliance on the presumed higher integrity and predictive reliability of external examinations, as distinct from school-based assessment, seems to be persistent. This persistence seems to embody regard for a form of uniform authority external to schools.
- 3.7.4 Debate on how to assess for tertiary selection continues, with sometimes relatively peripheral concerns, such as “national uniformity”, being drawn into arguments put by concerned educators. While the debate has a distinct visionary component, the unresolved, heavy conservative regard for conventional practices remains evident.
- 3.7.5 Giving a flavour of this unresolved concern in some other States, are these press statements made towards the end of one school year, each in qualification or explanation of moves to open pathways for school-leavers into tertiary places, mostly in university:
- “ ... in WA the TEE score comprise (sic) 50 per cent school work and 50 per cent of the exam mark ... there will always be some form of public examination, but it will not have the sort of prominence it does now. It may well be worth only 20 per cent...”¹¹

¹¹ The West Australian (newspaper) (Perth) 21 October 1998. P4. Paul Albert, chief executive, Curriculum Council.

- “ ... (the Education Minister) believed exams should stay. ... Exams do perform quite an important role.”¹²
- “A report prepared for the Higher Education Council last year ... called for the TER to be abolished and replaced by a national mid-year test ... (to) measure general achievement and ability ... rather than assessing students on their work in particular subjects.”¹³
- ... with regard to ... determination of Tertiary Entrance Rank across Australia ... the system varies from one extreme to the other ... States such as NSW ... use a system of external examinations ... (which) incorporate weightings of external examination and in-school assessment.”¹⁴
- “... VET should have an enhanced role in the VCE and be seen as part of a student’s overall educational program, rather than an optional extra.”¹⁵

Queensland

- 3.7.6 In Queensland, the evolved situation is quite different.
- 3.7.7 The adoption of the Radford¹⁶ recommendations in 1970 came at a time when tertiary demand was beginning to increase in school-leaver and mature-age populations.
- 3.7.8 New tertiary institutions developed and established their clientele for increasing numbers of places in both new and conventional courses. In an initially relatively generous funding climate, and faced with establishing bridges into higher education for people without conventional entry qualifications, or with little or no family tradition of tertiary education, institutions used unconventional ways of assessing eligibility.
- 3.7.9 As the client base expanded, and funding contracted, the process of having applicants, direct or through QTAC, deal individually with institutions to access those arrangements fell away – it was seen as too expensive. This perception was a stimulus to the development of alternative entry schedules, and remains a factor in consideration of alternative entry provisions.

¹² The West Australian (newspaper) (Perth) 21 October 1998. P4. Colin Barnett, Education Minister.

¹³ Campus Review (newspaper) 1998, date unknown. “Academics call for TER review” Geoff Maslen.

¹⁴ The Australian (newspaper) 16 November, 1998 “Secondary selection for tertiary education.” Richard Bowman, Principal, St Leonards College, Melbourne.

¹⁵ The Age (newspaper) (Melbourne) 8 September 1998. “Gearing up for greater choice in a vocational VCE.” Professor Sam Ball, CEO Board of Studies.

¹⁶ Radford, W.C. op cit

- 3.7.10 Reference has been made in paras 23.0 to 25.0 to the growth in means used for translation of secondary school results obtained elsewhere, and for dealing with other evidence.
- 3.7.11 During this period, other States tended to retain notions of matriculation, and clung to external examinations.
- 3.7.12 In Queensland, however, a situation came into being for dealing with admission of school-leavers and “mature” applicants to tertiary institutions, in which there was developing public acceptance of different qualitative and quantitative assessment methods. People also came to rely on well founded coordinating agencies for conducting related processes at school-leaver and mature-applicant levels.
- 3.7.13 The progressive migration of QTAC alternative entry schedules to other States has occurred relatively recently - mainly during the last five years. They have been put to various degrees of use, and some have been reconstructed to reflect local views on valid evidence. Even so, some of the fields of evidence for admission now well established in Queensland are applied in only very limited ways in other States, eg, non-school-based certificates, lower TAFE certificates, and employment history.
- 3.7.14 There has been surprisingly little public or educational concern expressed in Queensland about a major consequence of a broad field of evidence used for admission of mature-age students. The balance of school-leavers and mature applicants offered tertiary opportunities is in effect set by the use of different means for allocating TER and TERs (OE) to the two groups.
- 3.7.15 A possible reason is increasing opportunity. The number of offers made rose between 1980-81 and 1999-2000 by 266% for school-leavers, and 334% for all ages.¹ These increases have thrown into quite changed context the admissions relationship of school-leavers to non-school-leavers.
- 3.7.16 The view of that situation taken by this project is that Queensland enjoys:
- acceptance of a wide field of alternative evidence for admission of applicants aged over 19;
 - its incrementally increasing application to school-leavers under certain conditions; and
 - absence of relatively unresolved admissions issues, when compared with the inter-state situation.

¹ Twenty-fourth Annual Report to June 2000 (Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre, Ltd – Brisbane 2000) p.129, Table 30.

- 3.7.17 These differences in settings are one important factor in creating in Queensland somewhat different notions of actual current need for alternative provision for school-leavers, and in opening up approaches to providing for such a need.
- 3.7.18 Further, one issue clearly remaining unresolved in Queensland is the question of how VET in schools can contribute to the TER. Possible directions for the inevitable resolution are discussed in Chapter NNN - particularly in relation to whether resolution is shaped in the conventional terms in which it is presently viewed as a potential contributor to a TER; or whether more laterally as providing access to a number of admissions routes based on those touched on above.
- 3.7.19 Alongside that consideration sits an influence likely to predispose to a lateral solution – the current pressure in Queensland to increase the proportion of each school-age cohort completing twelve years of schooling; and how such an increase is dealt with in terms of collateral and post-school vocational and conventional education provision and admission.¹⁷

¹⁷ Student Achievement in Queensland. (A draft for consultation)
(Queensland Government, Brisbane – December, 2000) pp2-3.