University Credit for School Students

Jane Figgis and Lesley Parker
with Julie Bowden, Laurie Money and Gordon Stanley

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Contents

Tables and figures

Tables

Figures

Acknowledgements

Thirty-seven universities (of the 39 in Australia) provided the Project Team with accurate and up-to-date data about the arrangements which enable secondary school students to study their courses. It was not always easy for them to track down this information and it is important that their effort be recognised. Without that base input, the investigation could not have proceeded.

Further, well over one hundred people were interviewed: university personnel responsible for these programs, school principals, teachers, guidance officers and students participating in programs. All were generous with their time and exhibited a willingness to share their thoughts to a degree that surpassed our expectations. The fact that these individuals discussed their problems and concerns as well as the highlights of their endeavours speaks highly not only of their integrity but of their commitment to helping students.

Special acknowledgement goes to the schools and universities which agreed to further scrutiny as 'Case Story' sites. The fifteen schools will remain anonymous, the universities are listed on page 9. The school students we met with deserve an extra 'thank you': many came back to school during their study break to talk to members of the Project Team.

The ACACA agencies provided us with valuable information. They also reserved a two-hour session of their annual conference for the Project where each agency (and New Zealand) presented its perspective on university credit for school students. The session gave us, and others, an opportunity to probe their positions. We are extremely grateful to agency leaders and the conference organisers.

Susan Dunn at Curtin University contributed to the project by conducting a number of the university interviews, following up on data and joining some of the Team's discussions. The Project Team also received much appreciated support from the staff of the Office of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Curtin University of Technology.

Executive Summary

This study was undertaken to accurately map the opportunities secondary school students have to study university units for credit and to document the policies and conditions which facilitate (or impede) student access to such programs. Anecdotal evidence had suggested – rightly, as it turns out – that universities and schools are increasingly interested in developing arrangements which enable school students to access university units. In part, their interest reflects a world-wide trend towards framing all of education in terms of lifelong learning with a concomitant blurring of boundaries between educational sectors. In part, too, their interest is a recognition that able Australian school students need, and deserve, the stimulation of challenging advanced study.

The landscape of access to university study by Australian school students is extremely uneven. The first systematic programs were devised in 1993 by three universities. Two of those, provided by Monash University and the University of Melbourne, remain the most comprehensive. They cater for the largest numbers of students and have the greatest (State-wide) reach. Indeed, with their combined total of more than 1000 student enrolments annually they account for nearly half the current Australian total of 2050 enrolments.

The growth in accredited university study for school students has been gradual but steady. Twenty-three of the 37 universities which took part in this study have put in place at least one such program[1]. Many of the others are seriously investigating the possibility of developing a program in the future. Outside the two largest programs, the arrangements range in size from 142 students to six or seven.

Benefits and costs

The universities expressed largely similar motives for making some units available to school students. The programs:

- provide a mechanism for recruiting very able students;
- deliver a community service through sharing the university's intellectual resources with capable school students;
- create better relationships with schools;
- ease the eventual transition of selected students to full university study.

In fact, the first motive – the ambition to attract bright students who might otherwise have chosen a different university – rarely meets its objective. All the evidence from this investigation indicates that students choose their 'Year 12 university' according to one set of criteria and their 'real' university, post-school, by another set. There are occasions when students do switch their preference to the university where they studied in Year 12 but, judging from the experiences of respondents in this investigation, it does not happen often.

[1] There are 39 universities in Australia. All were invited to participate in this study. From other sources of information it appears that the two universities which did not participate either do not have systematic arrangement for school students or run only an embryonic program for a handful of students.

A few universities have designed programs specifically to address a fifth motive: to assist in the fulfilment of their equity objectives and the achievement of equity targets. These programs have targeted students in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and have purposely sought to push beyond the existing limits of students' aspirations, teachers' perceptions and familial expectations. Early signs are that, where the relationship between the university and the students is a close and personal one, these 'equity' objectives are being realised. It is, however, early days for such programs. Apart from these targeted equity programs, however, there is a distinct impression that, overall, the present programs enabling university credit fro school students have favoured the already most privileged students, especially those attending non-Government schools.

Successful programs from the students' (and their schools') point of view are those which generate exciting learning *and* which give the students a sense of independence. Students value the opportunity to do something 'different' and to extend themselves beyond school. Many students do extremely well academically: it is not unusual for a secondary school student to gain the top mark in the university unit. Students do, however, need the school to keep a watchful (if subtle) eye on their progress and to quickly provide support if the demands accumulate.

Guidelines for designing and operating successful programs could be readily distilled from the data collected during this project. The full report describes in detail five elements that need care and attention:

- clarity of purpose;
- thorough planning – which includes aligning the program with the university's strategic direction, establishing a close working relationship with the schools involved and undertaking a comprehensive risk assessment;
- wise marketing and careful student selection – besides being academically able, students have to be motivated, excellent time-managers and not already over-committed to extra-curricular activities;
- adequate support for the students;
- perceptive monitoring of outcomes.

A wide choice of mechanisms for delivering university units to school students have been tried. The most common model is 'normal' on-campus delivery where students attend university lectures/tutorials (sometimes in a special tutorial group). Off-campus teaching centres have also proved popular, for example, a secondary school serving as a hub for students from a number of schools. The subject can be taught by a university staff member or an 'accredited' school teacher. On-line provision is rare but a number of universities are fully engaged in developing this model. Other mechanisms include: traditional distance education, using the summer break, and awarding university credit for an advanced *school* subject.

Three forms of 'credit' are possible for school students who pass a university unit. The unit studied could:

(1) be recorded on the student's official certificate of upper secondary education issued by the relevant State-based Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authority (ACACA);

(2) contribute to the student's evidence for admission to university

(3) be recorded on the student's university transcript, either as a direct contribution to a degree, or as an un-designated contribution to advanced standing towards a degree.

Each form of credit has been used, but the variation across States/Territories and individual universities is substantial:

- in some States/Territories the unit is recorded on the student's official secondary education certificate; in other States/Territories the ACACA agency is not even informed of the study;
- in some States/Territories the university study (and the result obtained) is factored into the student's official Year 12 university admissions rank/score; in other States/Territories it is not;
- a very small number of universities adjust the student's admission score to take account of results in *that* university's units; such adjustments remain specific to the university where the student studied.

Some students are interested in accelerating their university studies and use the 'credit earned' while still at school for this purpose. The vast majority of students, however, appear not to be interested in accelerating their university course. For many students, in fact, the university subject studied at school is not particularly relevant to their intended degree.

With a handful of exceptions, these programs are currently provided by the universities without cost to the students. Most describe themselves as 'waiving' the fee for school students; others describe the arrangements as a scholarship. The students are admitted as non-award candidates. Few universities have had enough experience with these programs to have developed a thorough understanding of all the costs involved or precisely how to apportion the costs that they do recognise.

If the school student places were to be costed at the rate of 'normal' university students, on a national basis, 2,000 students taking only a single one semester university unit would create a program load of 250 EFTSU. If funded at the average rate of $11,000 per EFTSU, the program would cost of $2.75m. Alternatively if the funding were at marginal cost the program would cost $0.65m. If five percent of Australian Year 12 students (10,000 students) were to be enrolled in two one-semester units, such a base would yield a program cost of between $27.5m at the average rate and $6.7m at the marginal rate.

Future directions

Overall, these are still early days in considering, designing and operating systematic programs of university study for school students. The potential for building on the existing base is widely appreciated. But at this point it is the province of each university, on its own – in light of its own purposes and resources, subject to its own pressures – to address the issues involved. Similarly, accreditation authorities in each State/Territory have come to their own judgments about how to certificate university studies by school students.

The current situation – with many stakeholders making many isolated, independent judgments, has resulted in considerable diversity across Australia. While diversity itself is often valuable, the consequence in this case is that access to university study, and the rewards for such study, are uneven. The demonstrable benefits are available to some students but denied to most.

If more equitable access is to be generated, the reach of existing programs must be extended and new programs developed. This expansion implies, inevitably, system-wide national policies, frameworks and resource models. This is challenging because, in shifting some of the action to the system level, the spontaneity, responsiveness and innovation which are part of the strength of present provision could be lost. Equally, expansion should not be interpreted as "more pilot programs". One can, in fact, consider the outstanding efforts of individual universities and individual champions within universities to have been effectively the pilot phase of the provision of university programs for school students.

This investigation has shown that, if "university credit for school students" is to have a productive future, there needs to be sustained conversation and information sharing within and between the higher education and school education sectors. Processes ought to be set in place to enable these 'learning conversations' to take place sooner rather than later, efficiently rather than sporadically. Many stakeholders can play a role in stimulating and guiding such a nation-wide conversation: DEST, the AVCC, State/Territory governments, ACACAs, teacher associations, and others. There are many interested parties. Discussions should be as frank and open as possible. One aim of the conversations should be to ensure that decisions are reached about which part of the education sector is responsible for funding these programs.

If there is a single conclusion to be drawn from this investigation it is this: carefully constructed programs that enable secondary school students to study accredited university units are of demonstrable value. It follows, then, that the opportunity to pursue this form of study should be available to all eligible students and appropriate means to pay for it devised.

1 Introduction and Outline

1.1 Background

Significant developments in cross-sectoral arrangements in Australian education have taken place in the past few years. These appear to have occurred in response to a number of pressures, and in the context of new ways of thinking about school education with respect to vocational education and training and higher education. With the development of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and its antecedent the National Qualifications Framework, cross-sectoral articulation of education and training programs has been promoted. It is now relatively commonplace for schools to include Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificates in the curriculum offered to their students, and, increasingly, both schools and universities also are exploring possibilities for links at the school-university interface. As a result of these explorations, programs have been developed which enable some school students to complete university subjects while still at school. By the end of 2000, however, it was becoming clear that there was little systematic information available regarding such programs.

Recognising the need for information of this type, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) [formerly the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA)], through the Evaluations and Investigations Program, developed a brief for the project reported here: *University Credit for School Students*. In line with the brief, the project set out to:

A. provide an overview of the development of practices in this area;

B. identify and document policies that allow or encourage students to gain university credit while still at school, and the conditions which these policies impose;

C. describe programs and relationships between schools/school students and individual universities that allow students to gain credit for completing university subjects; and

D. develop guidelines for effective policy and practice.

1.2 The broad context

At the broadest level, the relatively recent development of programs which encourage and enable better school/university linkages is usefully conceptualised in the context of key economic, social, cultural and political drivers. Internationally, the educational impact of these drivers has been analysed extensively in a number of recent OECD reports, focused, for example, on employment and growth in a knowledge based economy (1996a), on lifelong learning (1996b) and on scenarios for future schooling (2001). Two major world-wide shifts are of particular relevance to the project reported here: one, a philosophical shift towards the notion of lifelong learning, and the other, a more pragmatically based shift towards communities receiving the best value from their investment in educational facilities and infrastructure.

Increasingly, the concept of lifelong learning is being used to frame educational policy and practice, both nationally and internationally. As emphasised in a the recent paper produced by the Australian Business and Higher Education Round Table (BHERT), a number of themes permeate the deliberations of agencies such as the OECD, UNESCO, the European Parliament, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Japanese Parliament and APEC, including:

- *"the acceptance of a new philosophy of education and training, with institutions of all kinds – formal and informal, traditional and alternative, public and private – having new roles and responsibilities for learning;*
- *the need to promote a multiple and coherent set of links, pathways and articulation between schooling, work, further education and other agencies;*
- *the importance of governments providing incentives for individuals, educational providers, employers … to invest in lifelong learning;*
- *the need to ensure that emphasis upon lifelong learning does not re-inforce existing patterns of privilege and widen the existing gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, simply on the basis of access to education."*

(BHERT Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, 2001, p.4)

It is made clear in some of the OECD papers, however, that the contribution of schooling to lifelong learning is "ill-understood", partly because discussion and analysis (at least up until 1996) focused mainly on the contribution of other sectors of education and training (OECD, 2001). At the same time, there is recognition that "schools cannot do everything" (OECD, 2001, p.160), but need to work in partnership with other sectors and providers of education. At a broader level, governments need to think holistically about education, as they strive to provide a system which will prepare people to participate in the knowledge-based economy – a system which must accommodate a cohort of increasingly wide diversity, an aging society, the pervasiveness of information and communication technologies, shifts in the labour market and technological change. In this kind of environment, linear, hierarchical concepts of knowledge and skills are beginning to be questioned. Such questioning has far-reaching implications for how educational credentials are acquired and will function in the future.

It is also clear that the relationship between the school/university interface and lifelong learning is somewhat neglected. In the latter context, it is noteworthy that discussion of lifelong learning rarely mentions structural or educational continuity between schools and universities, or the idea that students might shift between the secondary and higher education sectors, dipping into each according to their needs, aspirations and previous achievements. In this sense, the point is made that schools, in particular, "should not be seen as sacred sites" (OECD, 2001, p.214). Although the same might well be said of universities, there are some signs that countries other than Australia have recognised the potential of forging more effective links between schools and universities. The Blair government, for example, has recently made available millions of pounds for this purpose, in a strategy designed to get half of all 18-30 year-olds into higher education by the end of 2010, in particular by addressing current regional discrepancies in participation rates (*The Guardian*, 20 November, 2001). At this time, no details are available in relation to implementation of the Blair initiatives.

Details are available, however, regarding the Advanced Placement program operated by the College Board in the United States, which was evaluated recently [College Board 2001]. The Program provides some 33 courses, based on the content and standards of typical first-year university units, which are delivered by and in approved secondary schools to the school's own students. The College Board is responsible for developing the curricula as a cooperative effort between university academics and school educators. The Board provides professional development for the school teachers teaching the courses and it administers and marks the students' examinations. The Program has been in existence since 1955. However, in the last decade the numbers have escalated, doubling between 1990 and 2000 to 770,000 students and involving 13,000 schools.

Of particular relevance to the present investigation is that the evaluation explored the difficulty – but the necessity – of providing quality advanced programs while ensuring equitable access, especially for students in schools serving disadvantaged populations. Some of the concerns were as follows:

- the number of teachers qualified to teach Advanced Placement (AP) courses – without vigorous recruitment and increased in-service training there will not be enough qualified teachers to meet AP needs, particularly in underserved areas;
- the number of university faculty engaged with AP – without strong efforts to recruit faculty into the critical work of validation studies, examination development, and reading and scoring examinations, quality will suffer. There is a concern that desirable curricular reforms have not been embedded in AP programs;
- intense pressure to provide AP in all schools on a fast track can lead to 'parachuting' AP courses into schools without constructing the required support (building blocks);
- the growth of AP has led to its use for some purposes beyond those for which it was originally intended – clearer guidelines need to be issued so that schools and teachers, for example, do not use AP as a measure of performance and accountability;
- approximately 34 percent of students enrolled in AP courses do not take the AP examinations – that so many students fail to follow through on this fundamental element of the programs indicate something is amiss;
- many more students could succeed in AP if they had the good preparation for AP's challenging course work – it is not merely opening up opportunities to study AP but the grounding provided by schools so students have acquired the skill to succeed at AP.

1.3 The specific Australian context

The ways in which the above broader and international context is played out in Australia needs to be understood in terms of the current pattern of engagement of Australian students in post-compulsory education. Although there is some variation between States, most Australian students are aged between 17 and 18 years at the end of formal schooling and approximately 60% of the age cohort completes Year 12 with their cohort (some may return later). On completing their final year of schooling (Year 12),

they receive a Certificate, indicating their grades in the various subjects studied, from the State agency established for this purpose [one of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACAs)]. If they are amongst the 40% of the total age cohort aspiring to study at university, they will also have completed an assessment in each subject (either school-managed and externally moderated, or a mix of moderated school-based grades and external examination results) to produce a number of marks. These marks are aggregated to form a "tertiary entrance rank", which is used by universities as the main basis for competitive selection to university.

Given the above context, passing a university course in Year 12 could deliver to students one of three forms of 'credit' by contributing to:

(1) the student's certificate, issued by the State ACACA body: the course completion appears on the student's official transcript of upper secondary education – either as a simple statement that the student did the course (perhaps indicating the grade achieved) or as an element in meeting State certification/graduation requirements;

(2) the student's eligibility for admission to university: the course (and result) contributes to the student's 'admissibility' to university – either by contributing directly to the tertiary entrance rank or by the university making special arrangements or adjustments to the tertiary entrance rank on the basis of the course;

(3) the student's university record: the course (and result) are accepted by the university either as general credit for the degree program in which the student enrols or as admission to advanced standing in the degree program.

As will be seen in Chapter Two of this report, the decisions which individual universities have come to about these possibilities – the rules they have established in each category – vary greatly, as do the decisions reached on these matters by the ACACA in each State/Territory. The details presented in Chapter Three also demonstrate this variation, showing that, in 2001, amongst all Australian universities, only two Victorian universities operated systems of "university credit for school students" on a significant scale; 14 universities offered no programs at all, and amongst the remainder the size of the enterprise varied from extremely small (2-6 students) to moderate (150 students).

Irrespective of this wide variation, a variety of factors in the Australian context are focusing attention on the university-school interface, in addition to the international influences and initiatives described in the preceding section. These include, for example, the national shift to recognition of students' achievement in terms of the learning outcomes they have achieved. This approach has encouraged the development of mechanisms for flexible progression through the curriculum and, once such arrangements exist, one of the challenges for schools and school systems is to provide ways for highly achieving students to access learning beyond the prescribed school curriculum.

Extending high achievers becomes particularly important in the context of recent political recognition that, if Australia is to participate effectively in the global knowledge economy, bright and ambitious students need to be stimulated and possibly fast-tracked, not only into advanced mathematics and science studies [as proposed in much of the innovation literature (e.g. *Backing Australia's Ability*, 2001)], but also into areas of critical

importance globally, such as ecological sustainability and health, ethics, and international relations. The challenge of fast-tracking the high achievers is especially great at present, because upper secondary schooling is striving increasingly to meet the needs and aspirations of the whole spectrum of Australian youth, and this places schools' resources under pressure. Universities, with their existing resources, both on-campus and, increasingly, online, seem a logical source of help for meeting the special needs of high achievers across a whole range of subjects.

There are also other forces at work. Studies on the transition from secondary to tertiary education suggest that efforts need to be made to ease this transition: linking students still at school to university work may be one avenue for doing so. In addition, market forces on both schools and universities appear to have encouraged the development of direct relationships between particular universities and individual or small groups of schools. Finally, communities, especially rural and regional communities, are demanding more access to university education, and in some cases, this appears to be facilitated by effective cross-sectoral links.

At the outset of this project, there was considerable anecdotal evidence of arrangements being put in place which enable school students to gain credit for the completion of university subjects. These included the co-location of secondary and tertiary campuses , the skilling of school teachers to deliver university level courses (which are then accredited by the university), and school students (sometimes in a purpose-designed "Year 13") undertaking university classes. At the same time, universities' policies and policy guidelines about linkages with school students appeared to be largely embryonic. Further, very few of the known arrangements appeared to have been systematically monitored or evaluated. Thus, there was little, if any, reliable evidence of the outcomes for schools, universities, or the system as a whole, or of the way(s) in which these arrangements actually benefit the students involved – a question which must, in any education system, be the acid test of the efficacy of an educational strategy.

The project brief from EIP, *University Credit for School Students*, thus came at an opportune moment. There were enough programs/arrangements in place to deliver useful examples of practice and policy development, but there were also a host of unresolved issues which needed to be examined. These issues are integral to the methodology described in the next section.

1.4 Methodology

The methodology for this project was designed to produce an accurate and thorough picture of Australian developments in university-school linkages which provide school students with university credit. It should be noted that there are numerous types of school/university links made for purposes other than credit – for example, those with pastoral or recreational aims – and that these links were not included in the brief for this project. It should also be noted that, in accordance with the project brief, this project was not intended to be an evaluation of existing programs. Rather, the intention has been to document, analyse and describe the current situation in ways which are helpful to policymakers and practitioners in government, school systems, schools and universities.

The approach taken in this project was to map the current (and previously tried) opportunities for school students to access university studies, and to catalogue and quantify each type of provision, the numbers of students involved and any outcomes data available. Further, while the numbers and types of arrangements were important, it also was considered essential to understand the thinking which lay behind the arrangements on offer by the universities (and those not offered but considered) and the motivation of students and schools to access university courses or develop partnerships. In addition understanding the position of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authority (ACACA) in each State was a central element in the project design, because of the key role of these agencies in upper secondary school curriculum and certification.

The overall strategy was to start with the 39 Australian universities to get an accurate picture of the arrangements and policies that currently operate and (in order to develop an historical overview) may have operated in the past. The next requirement was to drill down to understand the motivation of the participants in these programs (university personnel, school education leaders, schools, students) and to obtain some indication of their experience.

The data-gathering and analysis were undertaken by members of the Project Team in six phases. The first five of these were completed during the period June-November, 2001. The sixth phase was completed during December 2001-January 2002, following which the draft report was circulated to "Case Story" institutions (see Phase Five below) for comment and validation.

Phase One: designing and testing a survey instrument

In order to gather initial basic information from universities in the most economical way possible, a survey instrument was designed by the Project Team. The survey was in two sections. The first section, which could be completed electronically, aimed to gather essentially demographic and policy-related information and to provide some historical context for the study – the latter by requesting that universities provide information not just on current programs, but also on past programs which were no longer operating and on programs planned for future implementation.

The second section consisted of open-ended questions framed around the following issues considered by the Project Team to be important:

- equity issues – access of students to university courses may be limited because of their location (especially for students in rural and regional Australia or in small metropolitan secondary schools) or by their lack of access to online technology; further, if university study is only open to school students who are high achievers, what is the definition of a high achiever?
- duty of care issues – who is responsible for school students when they are on a university campus?
- certification issues – what decisions are being or have been made by State ACACAs about certification of university studies on students' certificates of secondary education?
- university admission issues – what decisions are being or have been made by universities (and/or university admission centres) about how a university

course credit translates into a tertiary entrance rank or is recognised in some way for admissions purposes?

- issues of transferability – will the credit awarded to a school student by one university be accepted by another?
- industrial issues – the workload of university staff is already problematic (and under review in most universities): how will teaching atypical students impact on that workload?
- financial issues – university education is not free: who pays for school students' university studies?
- what role does (and could) on-line delivery play in these arrangements?
- intellectual property issues – what are the implications for the intellectual property and reputation of universities if school students routinely access first year university courses, and if university studies are equated in some way to Year 12 studies?
- what is the anticipated scale of the operation?

A copy of this survey instrument is included as Appendix 1.

Phase Two: information from universities – survey and interview

This phase included:

- informing the Vice-Chancellors of each of the 39 universities, by letter, of the purpose and design of the project and requesting the name of a contact person (Appendix 2);
- explaining the project to each nominated point-of-contact individuals, with a follow-up telephone call or visit to discuss the open-ended questions and to determine and follow up other valuable contacts within the institution;
- identifying, from university data, the schools which had individual students or groups of students accessing university courses/credit.

Agreement to participate was obtained from all except one university, and, with one exception, all who agreed to participate responded to the survey (resulting in a total of 37 participating universities). The universities were very forthcoming with information, the only barriers being where corporate memory had been lost because of the movement of key personnel. Two universities provided written reports of their own internal evaluations of initiatives they had taken. Although 14 universities were not offering any programs at the time of the survey, most of these nevertheless engaged actively with the project including on-site interviews, either out of potential interest or because they had offered programs in the past.

Phase Three: information from schools

As indicated earlier, the pressure for change in the relationship between school students and university resources has not come only from the higher education sector but is at least as much a result of changes in the educational needs and expectations of Year 11 and 12 students, including the most academically talented. It was thus important to understand the views and experience of teachers, students and school leaders.

In addition to the information about schools obtained during Phase Two, contact with schools was made through the three secondary principals association in each State (representing principals from schools in the Association of Independent Schools, Catholic education, and government education systems) – Appendix 4. It was explained to these bodies that the Project Team was keen to hear from schools involved with or interested in university credit arrangements.

In all, 45 schools contacted, or were contacted by, the Project Team (Appendix 5), and telephone interviews or visits were carried out with 23 of these. Schools participating in arrangements with universities discussed their view of the way the arrangement worked and provided their perspective on a range of school specific issues. Schools wanting to be involved in such arrangements, but which had none available to them, explained their reasons for wanting their students to have access to university subjects and how they envisioned such arrangements would work best for them.

As with universities, school and school system personnel were extremely helpful, and willing to share their insights and opinions.

Phase Four: information from ACACAs

As indicated earlier, members of the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities have the responsibility for validating the transfer of students' achievements (possibly including university credit) on to an official State certificate. Consequently, a key element in this study was to understand their thinking and the policies and supports that they have put in place or may put in place to facilitate university-school credit linkages. For this purpose, a two-hour workshop session was conducted at the annual meeting of all ACACAs in July, 2001 where participants from all States/Territories and New Zealand considered, discussed and answered a series of questions on this issue (see Appendix 3).

Phase Five: five case 'stories' of school students in university–school linked programs

Five university-school arrangements were selected for more detailed study, to explore in depth the various kinds of linkages in different States/Territories and in regional/rural locations. It was considered that a vivid description of some current arrangements from participants' points of view was necessary to give university and school education policy-makers and providers a grounded perspective on the issues.

The following "cases" were explored:

New South Wales: a well-established but small program located at Coffs Harbour, in a situation where the school and TAFE college are co-located with the Southern Cross University.

Queensland: an on-campus program conducted by the Carseldine campus of Queensland University of Technology with nine schools in the area – a program with a strong equity focus, and with a relatively reduced emphasis on the requirement for students to have an outstanding academic record.

South Australia: two schools linked to Adelaide University, in a recently established on-campus program focused on a small number of accelerated mathematics students of exceptionally high academic ability, taught in a separate group, outside of normal school hours.

Victoria: five schools with students enrolled in both the University of Melbourne and Monash University programs (MUPHAS and Enhancement Studies Program, respectively) which have been in place for a number of years and cater for more than a thousand school students between them. Both programs provide units through off-campus teaching centres some of which are located in regional Victoria. Monash also provides units through Distance Education.

Western Australia: a newly established program, with a strong equity focus, and based on online delivery, involving four schools from a region with relatively low socio-economic status, linked to Curtin University of Technology.

Members of the Project Team talked with students, teachers and administrators at the Case Story schools, thus gaining, through participants' own voices, information on how they were thinking and reacting, and subsequently cross-checking this information with the relevant universities. As with other respondents in this project, all participants in the Case Stories were exceptionally helpful and generous with their time. Through these Case Stories, the Project Team was able to add information about programs and arrangements for university courses and credit for school students which could not be captured in the other phases of the project.

Phase Six: analysis, findings and conclusions

In practice, the analysis of incoming information was continuous and findings from the phases were drawn together as the research proceeded. The Project Team members communicated frequently by email and telephone, and gathered on several occasions for lengthy meetings at which data were shared, analysed and structured, and key issues were distilled.

1.5 Structure of the report

This report is organised in four chapters, with all chapters enriched and illustrated with data gathered from the Case Stories completed during Phase Five of the project.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two, *University credit for school students: framing and motivation,* describes some of the policies at State, university and school levels which essentially frame the possibilities for school students in relation to obtaining credit for study of university units. It then explores the drivers and motivators, for schools, students and universities, underpinning the development of practices in this area.

Chapter Three, *Development of practice,* then provides a very detailed description of programs and relationships between school/school students and various universities, Australia-wide. It highlights the variety of programs which are in place including the models for funding and resourcing the programs.

The final Chapter, *Future directions*, distils, from the analysis of the information gathered throughout this project, some guidelines for good practice. It then goes on to discuss the possibilities and limits in relation to future demand for university access programs. The chapter concludes with some suggestions about roles and responsiblities which might be taken by stakeholders at government, school and university levels in considering the place and the efficacy of programs which provide "university credit for school students".

2 University Credit for School Students: Framing and Motivation

2.1 Framing the rationale

Policies articulated at State, university and, to a lesser extent, school levels, essentially frame what is possible and worthwhile for school students engaging with university studies. For State systems and universities, these policies can be seen as a reflection of policy-makers' perceptions, attitudes and motivations, which, in turn are assumed to reflect those of the community. Some State school systems have developed policies supporting the acceleration of highly achieving students [for example, the South Australian *Students with High Intellectual Potential* (SHIP) program] and some non-Government schools have adopted similar practices, even if not always supported by formal policy. All of these policies – whether at State, university or school level – essentially frame not only the rationale, but also the formal reward system, for school students considering university studies. They provide and govern, in an important sense, the students' extrinsic motivation for undertaking such studies.

In Chapter One, it was noted that there are three forms of 'credit' available to school students who pass a university course. These are:

(1) recording the university studies, in some way, on the student's official certificate of upper secondary education issued by the relevant State ACACA organisation

(2) enabling the student to use their successful university studies, in some way, as part of their evidence for admission to university

(3) recording the student's successful studies on their university transcript, either as a direct contribution to a degree, or as an un-designated contribution to advanced standing towards a degree.

In the first part of this chapter, the various policies referred to above are discussed in terms of these three forms of 'credit'. The discussion then shifts to explore in detail the motivations of students, schools and universities in relation to 'university credit for school students'.

2.1.1 Credit on the student's secondary school certificate

As noted in Chapter One, the ACACA agency in each State/Territory has legislated responsibility for approving curricula, moderating assessment, and certifying that students have successfully met all requirements for completion of Year 12. These authorities determine, in collaboration with all sectors and systems of education in the State, what appears on students' school certificates.

ACACA positions in relation to recording university studies on students' certificates were discussed with senior personnel from these agencies at their Annual Conference. The point was made that, if a university unit is to appear on a student's certificate, the

relevant ACACA has to officially sanction the subject and in principle moderate the student's results. This role of moderation caused considerable comment from members of ACACAs (and, in other contexts, some university personnel).

Opinion was divided as to whether an essentially *school-level* authority (an ACACA) should moderate a *university* subject. A number of respondents – from both schools and universities – considered that, if a student completed a university subject, then, by implication, the student had achieved at least Year 12 standard and no further moderation was necessary. These respondents argued that the school (and thus the ACACA) should be able to automatically substitute a university unit for an analogous secondary school one. At the same time, several respondents noted that the impediment to this approach is that there is not always direct alignment between school and university subjects, and thus that direct substitution in this way is not always possible. The view was also expressed that several of the most demanding Year 12 subjects (for example within the NSW Higher School Certificate), were probably at a higher standard than some university units in the same discipline.

Table 2.1 (p.15) summarises the various ACACA positions with respect to university units appearing on student certificates. It demonstrates that there is considerable variety across Australia in this regard. In New South Wales, for example, the Board is expressly committed to ensuring that advanced students have State-wide access to university level courses, at no cost to the student, and is making provision for endorsing university courses for this purpose. Under the old (pre-2000) HSC, the Board had endorsed three Distinction courses (in philosophy, cosmology and comparative literature) delivered by two universities, designed to extend highly achieving students within the HSC. Similarly, members of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) indicated that the Authority approves extension studies for inclusion on the VCE Statement. In other States (Western Australia and Queensland), there were indications that the matter was beginning to be considered – in WA as part of a Review of Post-compulsory Education, and in Queensland, as part of a Ministerial Inquiry into School Certification aimed at extending the flexibility of the senior certificate to include all 'worthwhile learning'. At this stage, the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA) expressed some caution in relation to this issue, citing students' youth and a concern that available university courses may not be intellectually rich or different enough to genuinely extend highly achieving secondary school students.

It should be noted that some of the variation demonstrated in Table 2.1 can be ascribed to the fact that, at this point, not all ACACAs have investigated the issues with a view to developing policy. It was also clear from discussions with members of ACACA agencies that, fundamentally, these bodies tend to have adopted a reactive, rather than a proactive, position in relation to certificating credit for university study undertaken by students.

2.1.2 Credit towards university admission

At present, only two States (New South Wales and Victoria) have State-wide policies which allow university units studied at school to contribute to students' Tertiary Entrance Rank. In New South Wales, only the three Board Developed Distinction courses contribute fully to a student's tertiary entrance rank. In Victoria, a student can receive 4, 5 or 5.5 additional points on his or her ENTER aggregate depending on how

well the student did in the university subject. At this time no other Australian State/ Territory credits a university course in calculating the tertiary entrance rank.

Table 2.1 ACACA positions on university credit for school students

State/ Territory	Approx number of students	University course appears on the student's certificate	University course contributes to "high school graduation" or its equivalent
ACT	50	Yes: the graded result achieved by the students is recorded on the Year 12 Certificate	Yes: if the student meets other requirements; university study can shift course type from Major to Major-Minor and Major-Minor to Double Major
NSW: university-developed Board-endorsed courses	Due to start 2002 (approx 40)	Yes: the result is expressed as an unmoderated school assessment mark on the HSC Record of Achievement	Yes: provided the requisite number of units of Board-developed courses has been met
NSW: Board-developed Distinction courses	80	Yes: results are stated using university gradings of P, C, D, and HD	No: Distinction courses cannot be used in a student's pattern of study
NSW	150	Variable: Yes - where universities have negotiated with the Board and the unit has been endorsed, it appears on HSC Record of Achievement; No - where subjects offered by universities in direct negotiation with school(s)	No: these subjects are used in support of the school-based HSC pattern of study
NT	0		
Qld	440	No: the student's Senior certificate only records secondary studies	No: in Queensland the term 'graduation' is not used
SA	20	No: the studies do not count as one of the 22 units needed to be completed for the award of the SACE	No: not counted in the 22 unit SACE sequence - students must complete a SACE subject or SACE prerequisite subject before taking university units
Tas	70	No: TASSAB receives no official information about such study	No: subjects are considered to be of no official relevance
Vic	1100	Yes: the titles of the studies and the university are reported on the student's VCE Statement of Results	No: the studies do not count as one of the 16 units needed for satisfactory completion for the award of the VCE
WA 90		No: there is no recording by the Curriculum Council of university courses taken by school students	No: university studies as such are not accredited by the Curriculum Council (CC). However, they can be certificated, as a de facto CC accredited course, if the school guarantees that all the objectives of CC course have been achieved.

In the remaining States, there are, however, a number of other ways in which the results of a Year 12 student's university studies can be used for university admission. Any decision in this regard is taken independently by individual universities. In a few instances, students are guaranteed admission to the degree program if they have taken and passed the requisite university units while at school. This creates an admission pathway for school students who may be very talented in one area but who struggle in others. A few respondents questioned the practice of guaranteeing entry *for school leavers* (although mature age students can take this route of 'trial' or 'taster' university units and be guaranteed admission under certain conditions). Their argument is that competition amongst school leavers is 'different' and dealt with through uniform moderated assessment.

Without guaranteeing admission, there are universities which adjust the student's entry score or entry rank to recognise the university study undertaken. This has the effect, for example, of lowering the cut-off rank in a high demand program from, say, 90 to 85. One university stated that it takes the student's achievement in a university course into account in scholarship deliberations.

Overall, acknowledging university study at school within the tertiary entrance criteria proved to be quite a contentious issue. Some consider that it is unacceptable 'double dipping' for students to receive credit for the university unit when they enrol in a degree program *and*, at the same time, use the unit in calculating their entry rank position. They mostly believed that it is preferable to apply the credit to the degree program itself rather than use it for tertiary entrance purposes. Others who spoke to us do not see that this is an ethical, or other, problem and would quite comfortably see the university unit deliver credit at university *and* for entry into university. These latter maintained that, given that the major purpose of the tertiary entrance rank is to act as a predictor of a student's subsequent success at university, then arguably, one of the best predictors of person's future success at university is their present success in a university unit.

2.1.3 Credit at university

Year 12 students who pass a university unit generally receive an official academic transcript from the university whose units they passed. In principle, a school student's university transcript should be indistinguishable from that of any other student enrolled in that university unit. In fact, and unlike the student records for 'normal' university students, most universities delete from their data base the record of any school student who withdraws from, does not complete or fails a unit. While this is not always formally documented policy, universities made it clear to the Project Team that they do not want school students to be disadvantaged by having attempted university study while still at school.

It is of interest that some universities are a little hesitant about accepting the unit studied in Year 12 for full credit even where the credit was awarded by them. The language used by the respondents suggests that the university may prefer to give the student an exemption which allows them to take a higher level unit on entry but which does not diminish the number of credit points the student needs to be awarded the degree.

It is not clear from the information supplied by universities how many school students apply to accelerate their degree program. The schools we spoke to tend to believe their students are not primarily interested in acceleration. As one deputy principal put it, these are 'extra' kinds of kids – students who want to do more not less. Certainly most of the, admittedly very small, sample of school students we talked to were planning on doing a full university course. In many instances the university unit they studied at school was irrelevant to the degree course they were interested in (and therefore would not count anyhow).

A final question concerns credit transfer between universities for Year 12 students on entering university. This question is plagued by the same issues which arise in the transfer of credit between universities for any student. Universities decide on an individual basis, largely but not exclusively on the content of the unit, whether to accept it and accredit it or not. This process lacks transparency and generates a good deal of uncertainty especially because of its apparent inconsistency, but it is the way things are done: As one university administrator said:

> *It would be very hard to avoid one-to-one negotiation. Within this State there is a high level of awareness between campuses of equivalent subjects and we know that courses may bear the same title but differ widely in content. Comparison is easier in some areas than others: if it is a fairly standard course – for example, nursing and engineering it is easier. Less so for other courses.*

Some universities implied that they keep a record of the units passed by a student for their own purposes – and the student could apply for credit if they enrolled in that university – but that the information was not available to other universities. Arguably, however, a pass by a Year 12 student should be no different from a pass by any other student and, therefore, information about the result should be freely available.

2.2 The expressed motivations of schools, students and universities

2.2.1 Schools' motives

Schools invariably put 'the stimulation and challenge needed by the brightest students' at the top of their list of reasons for wanting access to university level units. This prime motive was consistent regardless of whether the school is currently involved in such an arrangement or simply would like to be. The following were typical of the comments:

> *My first priority is to provide the best educational opportunities for my students.*
>
> *We accelerate them in Year 10 and 11 because otherwise they'd be bored, the pace would be too slow. That means when they get to Year 12 if we didn't have university subjects for them, they'd face a void.*
>
> *We want to provide breadth of study. This gives students access to specialised courses they want and would achieve well in but I can't provide, like environmental biology.*
>
> *We have some bright buttons here who need to be extended.*
>
> *The idea is to strengthen the whole learning culture of the school.*

A number of the schools which contacted the Project Team had, in fact, made the initial overture to a university and subsequently persevered in helping the university think through and develop its program for school students. Some schools, particularly in New South Wales, said that they had been asking universities for some time to make units available for credit to school students.

What was notable about the schools in several States which contacted us was how many of them were new senior (that is post-compulsory) secondary schools, a 'sector' of schooling which is expanding across the country. These schools are purposely creating a more adult learning environment and intend that the school should be more permeable to the outside world. They want students to have the freedom to access rich contexts for learning which lie beyond the school gate. One deputy principal went so far as to say these young people are "different creatures" from students of a decade ago:

> *These are the children of the Internet age. They have no boundaries. It is a real, and growing, challenge for school to stay relevant to them.*

These schools (and, indeed, traditional secondary schools as well) pointed out that already many of their students leave the school grounds to take units at TAFE and to do structured work experience, including paid apprenticeships and traineeships. They argue that if students interested in vocational courses have access to resources in the community, then students who are interested in academic and intellectual pursuits should have similar access. In this sense, they see universities as the source of the knowledge these students require.

In expanding on this theme, schools mentioned three related motives:

- to help students who may be the first in their families to even think about going to university: studying a university subject while still at school gives them much greater confidence in their capacity to go down that path and schools with these students are determined to give them as much encouragement and support as they can;
- to provide additional resources: students usually get access to a range of the university facilities outside the particular subject they are taking – for example, the use of the library, the Internet portal, sporting facilities, and similar;
- to develop a more comprehensive relationship with a university: many schools see the credit programs as one aspect of a generally closer partnership. Where school teachers are involved in delivering university units, they receive considerable professional development from the university which they value greatly, and enjoy. One school described the university "giving us a total package":

  > *They are working with gifted and talented students ... They are helping our science teachers with the new HSC which contains material the teachers never studied – this helps the university, too, because they are able to 'test' modules for professional development which they hope someday to market.*

A few universities told the Project Team that they think schools are also motivated by the marketing potential if their students have access to university units. Schools deny this. They do talk to incoming students and parents about the possibility of university level study, and some do like the impression it creates of an academically-

oriented school, but the schools refrain from making it a central feature. They have a specific reason for wanting not to promote it too vigorously. They want to avoid parents looking at it as "a status thing". They are concerned that parents might start pushing their children, inappropriately, into the program if it is seen in this way:

> *It would be a difficult issue - actually one of the most difficult I can imagine - if we started appealing to the 'wrong' students or their parents.*

Which students?

Most of the schools involved in these programs have thought carefully about which students are best suited to take university level courses in Year 12. They have learned from experience that it is not simply a matter of the student being bright and capable of doing work at that level. Students have to be sincerely motivated to take on the extra workload and mature enough to cope with a different learning context, possibly requiring well-developed self-directed learning strategies. It is usually very time-consuming (particularly if travel is involved) and students who are poorly organised or whose time management skills are weak or who simply have so many other activities on their calendar are likely to stumble during the year.

> *One girl withdrew from the subject at the end of first semester because she was so over-committed with music, the school play, sport. Some of these students lead unbelievably busy lives.*

Schools find that many students who are more than capable of undertaking a university unit prefer to stay focused on their school lives.

The schools describe going through fairly elaborate selection procedures. Someone in the school sits down with each student to explore just why she or he wants to take a university unit:

> *The process starts in Year 9* [because that is when they will start accelerating]. *The principal interviews each student because each will have a unique pattern of interests and goals. Usually they self-select although sometimes a teacher suggests they should think about it. In the interviews each student is asked to explain why they want to move ahead of their cohort. Almost always the answer is that there are so many things that interest them which the normal curriculum doesn't afford. Their interests can be quite surprising. We have one kid who is determined to be a commercial airline pilot but his other fascination is geology.*
>
> *We explore with them whether they feel they are ready and, more to the point, what they want their Year 12 to look like and feel like. A lot of them want their Year 12 to be at school and not one-fifth of their time at the university.*

The university usually maintains the right to make the final decision on whom to accept. We have heard of only a few instances where a university has challenged the school's recommendation – and that typically happens with a school new to the program where the school has not had sufficient experience to understand the demands which will be placed on the student.

There is a question of whether university study is only for the most able school students who have demonstrated very high achievement or whether it is suitable for

more average students who have special interests (and meet the criterion of self-discipline). Different schools have answered the question in different ways. Some schools limit participation to their few outstanding students. Others have been less strict in terms of academic achievement and report that the students nevertheless did well in their university studies.

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's guidelines stipulate that, for the 'VCE Extension' scheme *participating students are expected to be exceptional in terms of their previous academic record and in their personal capacity to manage their time and their study program.* In terms of the scope of such programs the guidelines note that *in any one year it is likely that less than two per cent of VCE students will be eligible* [VCAA 2001]. Universities which have not traditionally attracted the highest achieving students dislike this tendency to restrict the students to a narrow high-achieving band. They argue that they are disadvantaged by any policy which limits access to university courses to a tier of high fliers. As indicated earlier, however, most States/Territories have not – or not yet – developed policy on the issue.

A number of universities have had years when the rate of school students' passing (or completing) the units taken was low, below 80 percent and in a few cases well below that. This has led some universities to conclude that only students of the highest ability should enrol. Other universities and schools have unwritten policies of providing students doing a university unit with extra support – at the very least, a watchful eye kept on them – and see this s improving the students' probability of success. It is also the case that some schools are not too worried if a student withdraws, thinking the experience has nonetheless been useful for the student. Few universities agree with that or are willing to provide units where pass rates are not very high.

2.2.2 Students' motives

In terms of their motivation to engage with university studies, the students interviewed for the purposes of this study fell into two major categories. For some, the prospect of being stimulated and stretched in an area of study which they enjoyed, in the company of other highly achieving students, and in a context where they felt special because they were gaining early experience of a university setting, was, in itself, sufficient motivation. These students tended to be unconcerned about other extrinsic rewards, such as a record on their certificate, or the possibility of inclusion in their tertiary entrance rank. In the words of one such student *"what would be the point?"*

For other students, however, the intellectual adventure alone was insufficient. The 'sweetener' for such students is seen as something – anything – that helps them gain entry into their preferred university degree program post-school. The students' preferred incentive is that the university unit studied makes a direct contribution to their tertiary entrance rank. That rank is very important to students, and seen by some as life-determining. The habits of aiming high, and of receiving explicit recognition for achievement, are deeply ingrained in these students. As one teacher put it:

> *Kids want credit. Even bright ones.*

Some universities make an upwards adjustment to the student's university entry position if the student has successfully completed a unit from the university. As indicated earlier, in Victoria there is an established policy for awarding bonus points to students' VCE results for university units passed and tied to the actual result achieved..

> *The 'reward' that a student* might *be given credit for the unit when they get to university – provided the unit is relevant in the degree program selected and that the university accepts the credit if it was initially awarded by a different university – is sufficient incentive for many students. Their extra work then at least has the potential to be recognised.*

When the university unit is being studied simultaneously with a Year 12 subject in that discipline area, the 'pay-off' of studying the university course can lie in the student getting greater insight into the subject and that, in turn, improves the student's result in the Year 12 course. Where this arrangement is possible – and in many places it is not possible – schools mentioned this being a 'bonus', even the motive, for some students to take a university accounting, chemistry and mathematics unit.

The sequence of steps in school students' choice of university study followed in the Case Story sites indicates that school students tend to choose university units on the basis of their interests and previous high achievement. They then consider the logistics of accessing the teaching location, preferences about the mode of delivery and considerations of cost before making their final decision. The name of the university does not appear to figure much in the student's choice, and their experience of study at a particular university does not appear to engender very much allegiance, on the student's part, towards that university.

Sometimes the Year 12 university experience does influence a student's subsequent choice, but the evidence suggests that the experience is only one factor (and quite a minor one) amongst a great number. This makes the provision of units in Year 12 at best a crude marketing tool for universities seeking to recruit these high achieving students. For universities, it is exceedingly important to recognise that the frame of reference students use for choosing university units (and, hence, a university) to study in Year 12 is substantially different from the frame of reference they will use in selecting a university for their degree.

2.2.3 Universities' motives

Opening up some units for school students is not an entirely new phenomenon in that universities have for many years 'lent a hand' with extraordinarily bright school students. What is new – and what effectively does make it a new phenomenon – is the increasing numbers of school students accessing units. One university reported, for example, that, without systematic promotion on its part the numbers have increased from 7 students in 1997 to 142 in 2000.

A number of the universities speculated in discussions with the Project Team on what is driving this noticeable increase. One factor cited – reflecting the 'framing' effect discussed in the first part of this chapter – is change in upper school curricula. In NSW, for example, the new HSC has reduced the availability of some higher level subjects and some universities there have felt under increased pressure from schools to provide substitutes. In Victoria, which has significantly more school students studying university units than any other State, the opportunity for students to complete VCE subjects in Year 11 might explain the wide take-up of university units in Year 12. The effect may, of course, be in the opposite direction: the early moves to create university 'places' for school students, especially by Monash and the University of Melbourne – and the

Victorian ACACA officially sanctioning these – may be what has encouraged students to accelerate their VCE course. The question of how strong the push will be to keep expanding these opportunities (whether from the supply side or the demand side) is considered in the concluding chapter of this report.

The analysis of universities' written responses to the survey instrument, and in the more open-ended interviews with member of the Project Team, revealed five major motivations at present for creating opportunities for school students to study their units. Predominantly, universities considered that providing such an opportunity could:

(1) be a mechanism for recruiting very able students;

(2) deliver a needed community service through sharing the university's intellectual resources with capable school students;

(3) create better relationships with schools;

(4) ease the eventual transition of these students to full university study;

(5) assist in the fulfilment of equity objectives and the achievement of equity targets.

In this section each of these motives is discussed as well as describing briefly some of the additional thinking which has guided a few universities in developing their programs.

Motive 1: recruitment of able students

The recruitment of able students was cited by all but three universities as a prime reason for their establishment of programs which allow secondary school students to study a university unit for credit. There are, however, some important points to be made about this motivation:

- The handful of programs where the ambition to recruit high achieving students was the over-riding – effectively the sole – motive have proved disappointing:

  > *We wanted students to taste our courses. We thought they would then come here because our teaching really is good and well appreciated by our university students. The school students liked their experience but it hasn't converted into applications. So we won't put our energies into it but work on other lines of recruitment. We won't wind the program down but we won't expand it either.*

  As noted earlier, programs for school students tend to yield unpredictable returns in recruitment – and many of those established simply as a mechanism for recruitment of the highly able have either been terminated or are being kept very modest. It is not that recruitment is a flawed motive, it is simply that it seems unwise for it to be the only motive.

- Where universities have developed programs that provide intellectual stimulation and extension for bright upper secondary school students – and providing an exemplary service is a genuine motive behind the program – universities are fairly well satisfied with the undertaking. By providing a needed service, they believe they are doing something worthwhile with their resources whether or not the students subsequently enrol at the university. As one staff member put it:

  > *I go out of my way to dissuade students from taking up my university unit. We must not interfere with the real purpose of Year 12 which is their tertiary entrance score* and *savouring their school experience. It is only if they have a real need or thirst for extension that they should take the uni option.*

It is the case, however, that if 'alarmingly' few students were subsequently to select their university, many universities would reconsider the service provision, but that is not a general concern at the moment.

- A few universities are building their school student programs into their wider strategy for student recruitment and into their broader program for outreach to the community. Paradoxically, universities which see the units for school students as only one aspect of their recruitment strategy, are generally satisfied with the recruitment return they get from the programs.

It is important to note that this recruitment motive, unlike the other thinking which prompts universities to offer units to school students, finds no match in the reasons students and schools are interested in these units. Indeed, universities that are perceived (correctly or not) to be providing programs simply out of commercial self-interest, actually appear to loose standing in schools' eyes.

Motive 2: extending and helping students

The majority of universities were quick to point out that their programs were put in place because they recognised that able secondary school students often needed more intellectual challenge than the school could provide. Many of the universities, in fact, said the initial impetus for their program was the persistent request for help from near-by schools.

Where universities open units to school students, most have thought of it as a win-win situation: good for school students, good for the university (or faculty). They report that they are motivated by the twin desires to help school students and to help themselves. They tend not to rank the two motives but when they do, they will usually place the students ahead of self-interest – as one university which undertook a thorough review of its provisions for school students recommended:

The aims of the program should be:

- to provide an enriching experience for highly gifted and/or talented Year 12 students;
- to strengthen links between the University and secondary schools; and
- to assist in attracting the best of the State's students to the University.

Motive 3 : building relationships between universities and schools

The third motive universities acknowledge is their wish to develop better relations with schools, especially with 'feeder' schools (either current or potential). Building better relationships has overtones both of the recruitment motive – generating image and presence – and the 'helping able young people' motive, but the actual tasks differ considerably.

Some universities have noted the potential benefit they may acquire from becoming the 'expert of choice' for the professional development of all teachers and other personnel in a school – i.e., providing professional development for teachers not directly involved in the university units. This is a potentially lucrative market. Schools, for their part, are generally eager to develop a wide range of linkages with universities.

Motive 4: improving students' transition to university study

The fourth motive – that these programs can ease the eventual transition of students from school to full university study – was nominated as a significant factor by about half the universities. Most had in mind that it would help the individual student when he or she arrived at university, but a few directly connected their interest in easing the transition with the university's strategies for lessening attrition in first year. Quite a number of the universities we spoke to are putting in place a suite of strategies to deal with drop-outs (and with general first year confusion, changing of degree programs, etc), and they saw the provision of university units to school students as a potentially effective element in this suite. These students would have had some experience of university, so they would know more about what to expect.

Many respondents talked about the 'university experience' school students obtain when they take a university unit – and how valuable it is. This is fine as far as it goes, but there are actually two interpretations of the term 'university experience' and people rarely identify which they mean:

(1) the university experience is first and foremost an *intellectual* one. The students, as they themselves say, study things "at more depth", "the pace is faster and there is a lot more content", "instead of jumping through hoops, it's all about asking questions", "it is so much up to you to do the work, no one is prodding you". And their school teachers often commented on how intellectually excited students were after a university class: "they come back and burst forth about all they just heard";

(2) the experience is also a social and environmental one. Again, the students recognise this, "I had no idea how to find my way around", "discovering how the system worked wasn't easy", "the freedom was great".

It may become important to distinguish the two types of experience if the simmering dispute between people who 'believe in' an on-campus experience and those who 'believe' that online or school-based learning of university level courses is just as powerful an experience ever bubbles to the surface and breaks out. On the basis of the data collected in this study, it appears that the intellectual experience is the essential aspect of all the university-level programs (regardless of mode of delivery and location of delivery). Experiencing a campus environment may be a useful add-on – and certainly many universities believe their campus is a great drawing card – but it is not the core, and demonstrably not a necessary, element for these programs to be of value to students.

Motive 5: meeting equity objectives

A concern for equity is part of the motivation at some universities and in these cases the programs have been steered towards students who might not see themselves as the university 'type' – usually because of their cultural or economic background. A number of universities have created programs specifically designed for students in schools which are under-represented in university intake. Concerns about equity have also featured in the actual design of some programs – especially in finding ways to reach students in rural and regional areas. In some cases, these

programs have been initiated and are sustained by individual academics, with a strong sense of social justice, particularly in relation to adequate provision for gifted students from low socio-economic or rural backgrounds.

In this context, an additional incentive for universities relates to the equity objectives which all are required to incorporate in their annual Profile submission to the Commonwealth. These are based on the following:

Low socioeconomicstatus students

- awareness programs, particularly those developed in partnership with other levels and sectors of education;
- targeted access programs;,
- programs offering financial and social support;
- programs designed to address ways in which the culture of higher education works to discourage or exclude such students; and
- programs which encourage such students to consider higher level courses.

Rural and isolated students

- awareness and access programs, including diverse entry modes and cooperative ventures with other organisations and sectors of education;
- encouragement to participate in bachelor degree and higher level programs; diversification of participation by field of study; the improvement of retention and success of students studying by external mode; social and financial support; and
- programs designed to address ways in which the culture of higher education works to discourage or exclude such students.

Some universities see well-designed and targeted programs as consistent with the above objectives.

Other motives

With the exception noted under the recruitment motive, where a few universities pursued these arrangements solely because of their potential to attract high achieving students, the vast majority of universities subscribe to at least two – and not infrequently all – of the preceding motives for opening university units to school students. Some universities described other reasons for their involvement. Two of these, in particular, provide some insight into the value or potential value of these programs. The programs:

- provide an intellectual and professional stimulus for school teachers as well as for school students. School teachers who are co-opted as tutors or teachers of the university unit, some of whom are required to undertake systematic professional development, find the experience interesting and valuable. Even teachers who are involved only because their students take the units report being invigorated by the excitement and ideas their students bring back from their university lectures. It is too easy to forget that most school teachers have real expertise and interest in their subject area and appreciate opportunities to further their knowledge;

- can be used to stimulate student interest in a particular discipline. Science units, especially, have been opened up (or developed) by some universities as a tactic for fostering more student interest in following careers in science.

A few universities told us that, to be completely honest, they became involved because a competitor university was establishing programs for school students. In most cases they discovered other, more helpful reasons for going down that path.

universities which do not provide units for school students

Fourteen universities among the 37 who participated in this study were not offering any formal program for school students in 2001 or 2002. There are various factors at work here:

- failure to attract the interest of students: one university did elaborate planning in 1996 to create such a program: overtures were made to attract students to these extension studies but with very little success. Another university made two small attempts but the few students who responded saw it as a 'back door' into university – they were not the industrious eager students the university had intended to attract;

- lack of interest amongst the academics: a few universities have floated the idea through Faculties and the response has been tepid with stirrings of interest only from the few departments which are finding it difficult to attract students. It does seem to be the case in a number of universities that the 'popularity' of a discipline shapes that discipline's response to the possibility of extending units to school students. Some have pointed out that the subjects their local schools expressed an interest in – IT in one case, accounting in another – were so popular, and the academic staff consequently so stretched, that those were precisely the two areas they would *not* offer units in;

- a concern that it would be a drain on university resources: one university which had done little to explore university credit for school students was adamant that any scheme would have to be fully self-funding from the start, and they doubted that criterion could be met so they had not pursued the idea.

It is interesting that most non-providers had given some thought to the possibility of finding a systematic way of sharing their units with capable secondary school students. Mostly they have made a considered decision not to – it is not a mere oversight on their part.

3 Development of Practice

3.1 Numbers of programs and students

The first programs to systematically make university units available to secondary school students for university credit were developed in Victoria in 1993. Before that universities provided special study opportunities for the exceptionally brilliant school student but they were exceptional and rare. It was only with the 1993 initiatives of three Victorian universities - Monash, Melbourne and La Trobe - that coherent, pro-active programs of university study were offered to high-achieving school students. The three started a trend towards providing these opportunities which grew gradually at first but which has been accelerating in the last few years.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate this trend by, respectively, graphing the number of programs introduced each year between 1993 and 2002 and graphing the cumulative number of programs available in any year. It needs to be appreciated that some universities provide a few different programs – usually initiated from a different part of the university. For example, QUT's mathematics program, started by a few people in mathematics in 1995, operates completely separately from the accounting program which began in another Faculty in 2001. The two are counted here as two separate programs. On the other hand, the many subject units in Monash University's Enhancement Study Program are considered part of a single program because they are conceptualised and operate as one program even though the subjects can be taught in completely different modalities.

Figure 3.1 Program initiatives by year

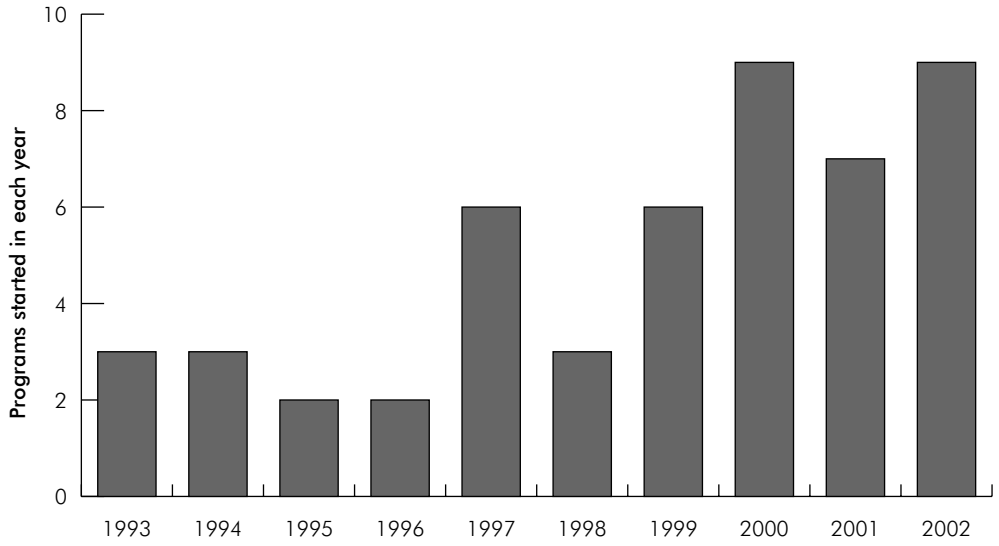
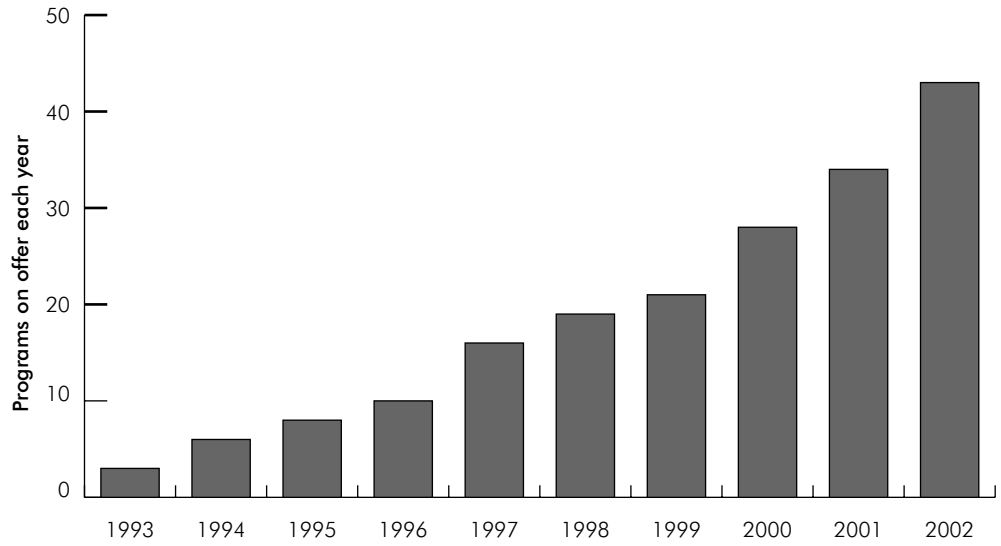


Figure 3.2, which shows the cumulative number of programs available each year, takes into account the seven programs which were started then stopped (subtracted from the total in the year they closed down). It is interesting to note that only five of the eleven programs started between 1994 and 1997 survived more than a

couple of years. Usually the problem was failure to attract sufficient students to the modest program, but sometimes external factors intervened – for example, one program was stopped while the university was extensively restructured and the program has since been re-launched. Another university pointed out that its program had 'stalled' (but not ceased) during a State-wide review of provision for students with high intellectual potential.

Figure 3.2 Number of programs available each year



Of the 37 universities which participated in the present survey (out of a possible total of 39 universities), 23 either currently are providing opportunities in which a school student can study university units for credit or have a program firmly in place for 2002. Of the remaining 14 universities:

- nine said that they had no plans to develop a program – it should be noted that one of these universities had put considerable effort into establishing a program (in 1996 including working with schools) but did not get the response from students expected and so dropped the idea. In addition, at least one (and possibly several) of the nine universities in this category canvassed academic staff about the possibility of developing a program but received a cool reaction from them. One other of the nine had a program which ran for two years with somewhat disappointing results and has decided to put its recruitment effort elsewhere;
- four do not have a program in place but say they are seriously thinking about establishing one, and one of those tried a small experiment which was not satisfactory but has gone 'back to the drawing board';
- one university, which has a TAFE arm, does not directly offer university units to school students but recognises for university credit a Certificate IV competency which school students can obtain through the university's TAFE arm.

There is great variation in the number of school students each university caters for. Some of the variation is a reflection of the age of the program. People responsible for the older programs invariably advise other universities to 'start small' and this advice has generally been followed. A few universities said they expected to expand

their offerings considerably over the next few years but most of the small programs expect – and want – to stay small. The question of future demand for these programs is considered in the concluding chapter (p 61). The current variation of program size across universities is presented in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Variation in program size

Program size	Number of programs
less than 10 students	12
10–19 students	9
20–49 students	15
50–99 students	4
100–199 students	1
200–449 students	–
450–600 students	2

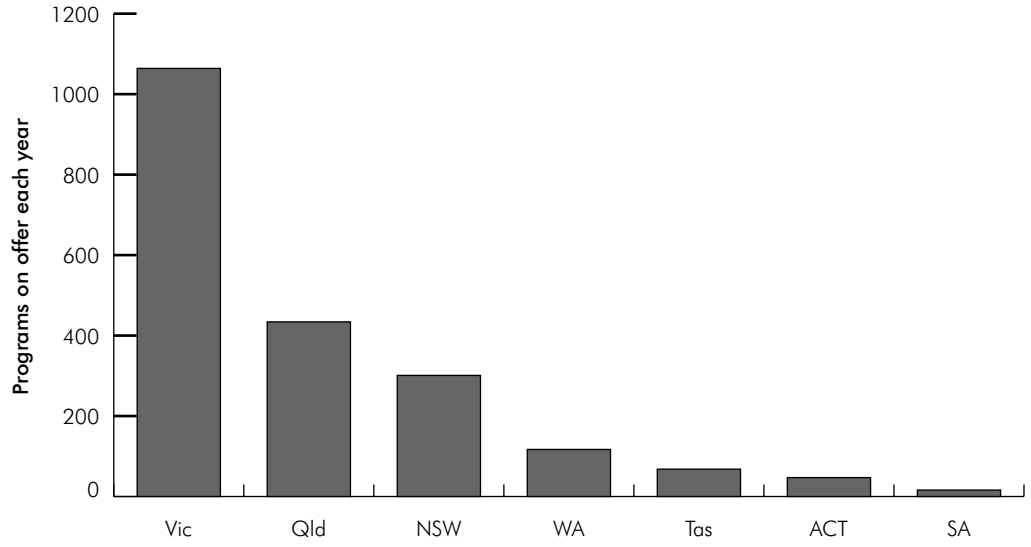
State-based variation

There is a significant variation by State/Territory in the number of school students who will study a university unit for credit in 2002. Table 3.2 estimates student numbers from the survey data. The skew is startling: the number of secondary school students in Victoria accessing university units exceeds the number of students in all the rest of Australia.

Table 3.2 Student participation by State/Territory

	Number of school students expected to participate in university units in 2002, based on 2001
Vic	1064
Qld	434
NSW	301
WA	117
Tas	68
ACT	47
SA	16
NT	0
TOTAL	**2047**

Figure 3.3 Student places by State/Territory



Part of the explanation for this distribution appears to reside in the fact that the two relevant State agencies in Victoria responded early to the universities' interest in providing programs for school students and formalised protocols to facilitate and even encourage these programs. The curriculum and assessment authority developed procedures whereby universities can gain approval for a unit to be accepted for extension study. The tertiary entrance authority established clear rules which allow students to receive some 'credit' towards their tertiary entrance rank. For their part, Victorian universities, particular the University of Melbourne and Monash University, were very keen to demonstrate their quality and attractiveness to high achieving school students.

Authorities in other States have been slower to address the issue. In New South Wales the present policy is for the Board of Studies to work towards ensuring that advanced students have state wide access to university level courses and in 2002 it introduces processes for endorsing university developed units for school study. In the past, however, only three university-developed Distinction units were available to school students. The Senior Certificate Project in Queensland is expected to explore some of these issues and is due to report by 30 June 2002.

Regional/metropolitan variation

Data on the number of places in university programs for school students according to whether they attend school in rural or urban Australia were not specifically requested in the survey instrument. However, the number of non-metropolitan students undertaking a university unit can be roughly estimated from data on the location of the university offering the unit and the mode of delivery used (see Table 3.3). The derivation of these figures needs to be appreciated:

- the 230 regional students accessing 'metropolitan university off-campus' programs are almost solely located in Victoria and, with a few exceptions, enrolled in programs provided by the two universities, Melbourne and Monash. Both universities have used off-campus delivery modes specifically to cater for

students outside Melbourne with Monash University using distance education as well as off-campus centres;

- the 195 regional students served by regional universities are not necessarily rural students. Several universities in this category – Newcastle, Wollongong and Murdoch Universities, for example – are providing university units basically to suburban school students. Similarly, other regional universities are serving populated regional centres and only a few of these are yet extending their reach to the hinterlands;
- the 60 urban students served by regional universities is the cohort of NSW students taking the Distinction units offered by Distance by two regional universities;
- the category 'outer-metropolitan' for both students and programs has been included to give recognition to these universities' specific intention to engage school students who traditionally were, almost literally, out of the reach of university education. Of the total 170 students in the category, at least 130 have been targeted on equity grounds. These universities (near Sydney and Brisbane) are not the only ones concerned with equity issues but they constitute about half the provision, as best we can judge, for students so defined.

Table 3.3 Geographic variation in student enrolments

	Number of university programs	Urban students	Outer-metropolitan students	Regional students
Metropolitan university – on-campus program	20	545		5
Metropolitan university – off-campus programs	5	835		230
Outer metropolitan university/campus	5		170	
Regional university/campus	13	60		195
Totals		**1440**	**170**	**430**

In Table 3.3, the 230 regional students who will be studying units provided off-campus by a metropolitan university are all located in Victoria. Rural students outside Victoria have very limited access to university study. It is interesting to note, however, that a significant number of regional universities are becoming involved in these programs.

Variation in subjects offered

Universities vary considerably in the range of subjects made available to school students. It is generally the case that the smaller the student numbers, the more limited the subject choice. However, there are exceptions. Murdoch University's Rockingham campus program, for example, has 40 students but a single subject, while other universities have given a small number of students almost unlimited choice (so long as the unit has no prerequisites). In reviewing its program for

school students, the Australian National University review committee has recommended that the offerings be 'well-rounded' to meet the needs of high achieving students who have different talents and interests although, like most universities, the final decision of whether a Faculty participates in the program is thought to best lie with the Faculty.

Mathematics has been an early and popular choice as a university subject to be made available to school students – in part because very able mathematics students tend to grasp the material so quickly that unless they are extended by higher level mathematics courses they literally run out of mathematics to study at school. Both school and university teachers recognised the problem early and were keen to counter it.

Some subjects are being offered as a way of encouraging greater interest in the discipline. The University of Wollongong and Caringbah High School, for example, have jointly developed a special 'science issues' unit exactly to encourage students in science by offering a broader 'take' on the field. This unit has received NSW Board of Studies endorsement as a school subject for 2002 but it is intended to have it endorsed in 2003 as a university unit.

Information Technology presents a special case. A number of schools – quite a few not yet involved in a university program – said that information technology (IT) would be the university subject they would be most interested in their students accessing partly because they have trouble getting or keeping teachers in this field. The problem is that IT (and multimedia generally) are in such demand by enrolled university students that those departments are hard pressed to meet their existing students' needs without venturing into teaching school students too. On the other hand, several universities said that expansion of their programs in the future would specifically include IT – for exactly that reason:

> *the curriculum in secondary schools in this area has not kept up with the demands of capable students who often want more stimulation.*

The two largest programs, Monash University and the University of Melbourne, offer 16 and 18 subjects respectively – but only seven of those are in common as the following chart indicates:

Monash University	University of Melbourne
Accounting	Accounting
Chinese	Chinese
Computer technology/Programming	Computer Science
History of WWI	History
Indonesian	Indonesian
Mathematics	Mathematics*
Music Performance	Music
Australian History/Politics	Arabic
Chemistry	Art History
Communications/Media Studies	Biology
Economics	French
English Literature	German
Geography	Greek
Japanese	Hebrew
Jewish Civilisation	History and Philosophy of Science
	Philosophy
	Latin
	Physics
	Psychology

*Mathematics is a very large program accounting for almost half the student enrolments

The goodness of 'fit' between the subject at the university level and at the school level was raised by a few respondents. It can help students studying a university unit if the tutor is thoroughly familiar with the material covered already (or that will be covered) in the school curriculum. This is very often the case for programs delivered in off-campus teaching centres by trained school teachers. On-campus it is sometimes possible to organise matters so the tutor the school students are assigned to has special experience with the school subject. In the Adelaide University program, for example, the students' university tutor was the Chief Examiner for one of the SACE mathematics subjects. The students mentioned this and thought it "a distinct advantage".

Overall, at this period of development of these programs for school students, the subjects offered and the number of students included is extremely variable. In part that variability goes back to the different motivation and ambitions driving the different universities, but there is also a clear difference between the States which reflects local tertiary entrance regulations and the thinking of the responsible ACACA agency.

3.2 Modes of delivery

There are four principal modes for delivering university units to secondary school students:

- on-campus
- off-campus teaching centre - normally a secondary school
- distance education
- online

These are not 'either-or' arrangements and frequently a single program will mix two (or more) modes together. Distance students often access a tutorial centre, for example; teaching-centre based students come to the campus for special holiday-period sessions; and 'on-campus' students use online communication with tutors or peers. Further, a range of specific arrangements exist within any given modality especially in regard to timetabling and other logistical issues. It is also the case that, in a single university, there will be programs using quite different modes of delivery depending on the subject and the students being targeted.

Table 3.4 Modes of delivering university units to school students

Mode of Delivery	Examples from case studies
On-campus	Queensland University of Technology: Carseldine campus Adelaide University: Headstart
Off-campus centre	University of Melbourne: MUPHAS Monash University: Enhancement Studies Program
Distance education studies	Monash University: Enhancement Studies Program
Online	Curtin University of Technology – CURTINtrack
Other	co-location: Coffs Harbour university credit for a non-university coursesummer school programs

3.2.1 On-campus programs

The most prevalent strategy universities use to 'deliver' their units to school students is for the students to attend lectures and tutorials on campus. Their reasoning is consistent:

- it gives students the opportunity to experience campus life during normal term time – and, it should be remembered, the intention to use campus life to 'sell' the university to prospective students underpins many of the programs;
- it makes it possible to 'slip' the school students into regular university classes – and so minimise the resources needed.

While the logic is sound, there are complications and it is not as easy to 'slip' school students into lectures and tutorials as might first appear.

Three considerations which need to be taken into account in providing on-campus delivery of university units for school students are described in this section. They are: timetabling, proximity and size of school student cohort.

(i) Timetabling

The issue here is that the students are full-time Year 12, or more rarely Year 11, school students – their fundamental attention and activities are expected to be directed at their school lives. In fact, it is more complex than school achievement being a priority for the individuals concerned. The students eligible for university studies are almost always the school's *best* students. They are leaders in many areas of school life and major contributors to a vibrant school culture. It would be in no-one's interest to have these students distanced from their schools. The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies also made the point, in responding to the survey, that while they support school students taking university units, they believe the underlying integrity of Years 11 and 12 needs to be maintained. The principle that university study is an addition which should not interfere unduly with school life also underpins the selection procedures for these programs.

Both the schools and the universities, mindful of this principle, try to ensure that the demands of the two do not conflict with one another. It is not easy to do this within the normal timetabling of either universities or schools. One school pointed out that it had had previous experience with allowing students to engage in university studies, but said:

> *That arrangement - which required students to attend University during set university lecture times - was very hard to manage. This year [2001] the University of Adelaide Headstart Program was much better. Essentially, the students attended University as a group for 3-4 hours after school one afternoon each week. The four lectures and two tutorials specified for study of the University Mathematics course are condensed into this block of time. The block programming is ideal because it does not interfere with the students' lives as Year 12 students including their leadership, academic, sporting and pastoral commitments within the school.*

In the Adelaide University program the students are free to also attend 'normal' lectures at the university if they wish (for example, during school vacations), but the students we spoke with said they saw "no point" in this. They do sit for the

examinations at the normal timetabled time, with all other University students – "quite an experience" in the words of one student.

The pattern where a university adapts its timetable so that units studied by school students are scheduled to meet after the normal school day is a fairly typical solution to timetabling problems. Sometimes a special session is held for the school students, as at the University of Adelaide; sometimes the alternate timeslot is open to all students in the unit so school students and 'normal' university students can be brought together. One university specifically said that showing flexibility and responsiveness to the schools' needs would – or, hopefully, would – enhance the university's reputation.

Scheduling extra sessions puts pressure on university resources – it is no longer a matter of 'slipping' school students into the university's normal routine. One university told us it dropped a program that offered a range of units which it had provided for a few years (each subject needing an alternate schedule) in favour of one which offers a single locally relevant subject to some 40 school students after school hours.

Universities harbour some grievances about the unwillingness of many schools to build flexibility into their own timetables – although they also recognise that even with the best will in the world a school with a six- or seven-day schedule, which many have, would find it impossible to match student 'free time' to the five-day university timetable.

(ii) Proximity

Any program which requires students to regularly attend a campus runs headlong into issues of geography and transport. It is simply not possible to provide weekly on-campus study of university units for students who do not have easy access to the campus. All the universities recognise this limits their ability to provide equitable opportunity for a range of 'deserving' school students and most are troubled by this constraint. In recognising that geography is imposing significant barriers to educational attainment, many universities, whether based in a metropolitan or regional centre, are in the process of establishing functional campuses in regional towns. This will help students in those towns but it still leaves rural and remote students unable to access this mode of study.

Studying on a university campus does hold a specific attraction for some students. This is illustrated by a school student in Shepparton who chose to study a university unit because it was offered at the local La Trobe campus in preference to a distance unit offered by another university which was actually more in line with his further career aspirations. He was not sorry at all that he made the choice he did – but even then he had local transport issues:

> *First semester was a problem. Mum had to pick me up at school and drive me over, and I had to miss an English class here [at school]. It was better in second semester when I had the use of the car, but also it was better because it was later in the afternoon and I had time to change from my school uniform into 'civvies'.*

There is no doubt that having the school and university campus within walking distance – sometimes by accident, sometimes as a result of deliberate co-location –

makes it easier for school students to study in university classrooms. On the other hand, while proximity helps, it does not in itself drive the arrangement. Coffs Harbour Education Campus, a joint venture of Southern Cross University, North Coast Institute of TAFE and Coffs Harbour Secondary College, has only had about four school students per year studying a university unit even though they are on the same campus. It is the case, however, that New South Wales has had a far narrower range of university courses available for credit to school students than, for example, Victoria, which may explain the low figures.

(iii) Size of cohort

On-campus attendance of school students in regular campus provision becomes increasingly difficult as the size of the student cohort grows. There is a discernible pattern, in fact, where a new program often starts with a bare handful of students and many stop on reaching 20-25 students. An exception is QUT Carseldine campus program which has expanded from 5 students from one school in 1999 to 45 students from nine schools in 2001 and is anticipating 100 students in 2002. This may make a noticeable impact on the small Carseldine campus and the coordinator of the program has a range of mechanisms in place for carefully monitoring that the scheme continues to work well for both the school students on campus, the academics teaching them and other students.

School students on campus like being mixed in with 'real' university students, as two students reported:

> *At the start of the year the lecturer announced that there was a Year 12 student in the group. I could hear people around me saying 'that person must be really brilliant'. It took me a while to get around to confessing that student was me and I'm not brilliant. But by then we'd become friends and it was okay.*
>
> *If I were asked to give advice to students doing this next year? I'd tell them to read up on the subject and align it with their other interests. Go to lectures no matter how boring. Don't be daunted and don't be scared to ask for help. But basically just get in there and figure it out – that's what the uni experience is: figuring it out for yourself.*

It was also the case that the school students in the Adelaide University program, who meet as a separate cohort and who said themselves that they have little to do with other university students, nevertheless valued the overall experience and see themselves as having gained a great advantage:

> *We've now got a good idea of what university is like – some [other] students have no idea at all, and this can be a problem.*

Universities which provide their units to school students off-campus - whether because of the size of the cohort or their distance from campus or simply as a preference - make some arrangements for students to experience on-campus learning. Melbourne and Monash school-based and distance education school students, for example, have sessions held for them on-campus in the school holidays and/or on weekends including hearing guest lecturers and having extra tutorials. The University of Queensland's school-based chemistry program invites

schools within reach to do some – typically two – of the five compulsory experiments on campus with University staff running the laboratory.

To encourage the students to feel they really are part of the university - and to give them as much flavour of the 'university experience' as possible - most of the universities give students access to campus facilities including libraries, the Intranet and sporting facilities.

3.2.2 Off-campus teaching centre

Both Monash University's Enhancement Studies Program (ESP) and Melbourne University's Program for High Achieving Students (MUPHAS) have designed their programs to be delivered at off-campus 'teaching centres' – usually secondary schools – by secondary school teachers who have received special professional development at the University. The strategy has proved to be an effective mechanism for increasing access to university units for many more students, expanding the geographic reach of the program and the number of subjects which can be offered – Monash, for example, is running more than 40 centres. A few other universities use school teaching centres for delivering one or two subjects. The model is just being introduced in NSW where the school site is referred to as a 'teaching hub'.

The school teachers we spoke with who have participated in this type of program all valued the experience. Their appreciation begins with the professional development they receive which they described as both stimulating and refreshing. The formal professional development sessions also provide an opportunity for these teachers to meet one another and many maintain contact and share ideas as they teach the university unit.

These teachers may not have any of their 'normal' school students in the university unit class – a school can be a teaching centre without any of its own students being enrolled in the subject(s) taught there – but the more interesting situation arises when the teacher teaching the university unit is also teaching some (or all) of those students their Year 12 course. This causes much less confusion than one might expect – indeed, from the teachers we spoke with it causes no confusion at all. They pointed out, for example, that:

- the workload is very different: far more content in the university course and the speed with which it has to be got through in 13 teaching weeks per semester underscores that difference;
- the orientation of the courses is often different: according to one teacher of literature, the university course is strongly theory-oriented whereas the VCE course has students responding to texts in more personal ways;
- teachers who teach the same student in the VCE subject and then in the extension subject teach very differently, as two teachers explained:

I am quite different as a teacher. More along the lines: here are the notes, let's go. I would never say, 'You'll do for homework…" although I do that when I'm teaching the same students the VCE course. You treat them as more grown up.

In the university subject class I can talk to them about the way they are learning – for example, about Vygotsky's zones of proximal development although I don't use that language. But they are keen to understand their own thinking. We explore ideas

in maths. And that leads over to other areas. It's a different relationship with them in that class.

The one drawback we detected in the off-campus teaching centre model for delivering university units is the load it can put on the school teachers involved. There was an undertone of annoyance – although 'annoyance' may be too strong a word, a 'niggle' might be more accurate – that neither the universities nor the schools realise quite how much work the teachers put into the programs. A little more support, a little more visible appreciation of their effort may be warranted.

3.2.3 Distance education mode

Distance education has been used extensively by Australian universities and many have acquired a deserved international reputation for the quality of their programs, but it is a mode that has been used in only a limited way for delivering university units to school students. In NSW, the 81 students enrolled in the Board of Studies few Distinction Courses study through distance materials provided by two regional universities in the State. Of the 81 students, in 2001 about one-quarter came from outside the Sydney metropolitan area

Monash University's Enhancement Studies Program uses distance education over a wide range of subjects. Three of the 18 subjects on offer are *only* available as a distance option (geography, media/communication studies and computer technology/ programming). Altogether Monash offers 12 subjects through the distance mode with the possibility of music also by distance if special arrangements can be made. In 2001, 27% of the school students accessing Monash units came from outside the Melbourne metropolitan area – the figure includes students attending school-based teaching centres as well as using the distance education mode.

The study materials for the Monash distance education subjects have been developed for any student taking the unit, not solely for school students. The materials are primarily print-based although, as the brochure describing the program points out, students have telephone and email access to university staff and an opportunity to attend on-campus sessions once or twice a semester. Where there are a sufficient number of students – half a dozen will suffice – a one-hour weekly tutorial session is arranged and taught either by an 'approved' school teacher or a member of the University staff. With or without tutorial support, it is required that the school assign a mentor to each distance education student.

3.2.4 Online programs

The distinction between distance education and online education causes a little confusion. Many print-based distance units use email to maintain contact between the school student and the university teacher. It is expected that distance education will increasingly use the Internet but at this stage there are too many school students without access to sufficient online capacity to conflate distance and online modes. Further local students in on-campus programs are as likely to be using online infrastructure as any distance student – although the same equipment issues surface.

Two universities are putting considerable effort into developing online capacity *in order to* engage school students in university study:

- the University of Southern Queensland is offering two web-based courses for school students through the UNISTART Program. These courses have been developed through the University's e-learning commercial arm INDELTA. The initiative has progressed to the stage where the students enroll via the web and login using usernames and passwords to access relevant sites. The high cost of videoconferencing has mitigated against the use of this high-end technology.
- the CURTINtrack program in Western Australia starts in 2002 as a pilot program offering web-based university subjects to students in four secondary schools through specially developed electronic centres constructed at each school. The initiative was conceived in 1998 as part of Curtin's Equity Plan addressing the disproportionately low representation at the University of students in the South Eastern Metropolitan Corridor (a relatively low socio-economic area). Discussions with students did reveal that their lack of interest in higher education was due to their 'distance' from universities both because of the low educational expectations held by their family, peers and community and their uncertainty about higher education in general and the specific options available to them.

Initially enrolment will occur through Curtin-based Open Learning Australia (OLA) units. Many of these are web-based, but others use a combination of distance learning print materials, audio tapes and televised programs.

Several of the universities surveyed said that they were beginning to think about online delivery of their units for school students specifically to address the issue of equitable access for students who are disadvantaged geographically and/or socio-economically. University of Technology Sydney currently has 6 pilot projects underway with the NSW Secondary Principals Council in city and country high schools, investigating the potential uses and implementation challenges of online delivery to schools. Interestingly, two of the universities which expressed an interest in going online for *school* students intend, for pedagogical and pastoral reasons, to keep their first year courses for *university* students face-to-face.

The NSW Board of Studies reported at the 2001 ACACA Conference that to ensure Statewide access to University Developed Board Endorsed Courses – which is their aim – there would need to be effective Statewide online access at all schools as well as an effective mechanism for funding access on a broad scale since government school students in NSW cannot be charged a tuition fee. Issues of access and equity to university units by school students is also discussed in Chapter Two and in the concluding chapter Future Directions.

3.2.5 Other models of delivery

In addition to the four models described, a few universities have explored other mechanisms for making university credit available to school students. The essential features of each are described here.

Co-location of university and school

The creation of senior secondary schools – already the norm in Tasmania and the ACT – is becoming more common across the country and, where it is feasible, many of these new schools are being co-located on a campus with both a university

and a TAFE college (Shoemaker, 2000). Proximity does not by itself deliver arrangements whereby school students tackle university units, as the example of Coffs Harbour showed where few students, to this point, have studied in university classes. Nonetheless, a number of new co-located schools told us they would very much like to – and expected to – develop a close and "meaningful" relationship with the co-located university including their students studying university units for credit. Four universities specifically mentioned their co-location arrangements as a potential mechanism for providing university units to school students in the future. Present experience, however, indicates that physical proximity does resolve all the logistical problems which surface when students have to travel away from school (even short distances) to study university units.

Credit for advanced school achievement

Charles Sturt University has had a pilot program in operation at three schools in which the schools teach sufficient content beyond the school syllabus in Information Technology (IT) that the students can choose to sit for the appropriate CSU examination. If they pass the examinations, they qualify for proficiency credit when they enrol at CSU without having taken a formal CSU unit in IT. The planned review of the program has not yet been completed.

A few respondents suggested that outstanding results in any advanced Year 12 subject ought to qualify retrospectively for university credit. Since 1996 the University of Newcastle has been giving advanced placement to students who have demonstrated an outstanding performance in the NSW Higher School Certificate (or equivalent). They pointed out: "In line with the NSW Board of Studies policy, the Newcastle Accelerated Bachelor of Mathematics Program recognises 4-Unit Mathematics (now a Band 4 result in Mathematics Extension 2) as the equivalent of an HSC Distinction Course which may be credited toward tertiary studies." Accordingly, eligible students are awarded 20 units of an unspecified first year course and are therefore enabled to take at least one 2000-level course in first year and potentially complete the degree in five rather than six semesters.

We specifically asked, in the interview section of the survey instrument, whether there was extensive overlap between subjects in Year 12 and first year university and, if so, did this have implications in general for awarding credit. Most respondents acknowledged that there is often an apparent similarity in content *but* that the expectations of students and the nature of the learning are sufficiently distinct that the two are not interchangeable. Most felt that outstanding achievement in school could be best utilised by allowing the student to move directly to a second year unit, not by awarding credit points for the school course.

The significant virtue in giving university credit or advanced placement on the basis of *school* achievement is that it makes the arrangement available to *any* student. On the other hand, these students are not actually gaining the experience of studying a university unit.

'Nested' VET programs

The University of Ballarat is a dual sector institution with a strong TAFE component. It offers a Certificate IV program in Food Technology to Ballarat High School as part of the VCE/VET in schools program. On completion a student can gain a full year (6 units) credit for the first year Bachelor of Applied Science at the University of Ballarat. This means that a Bachelor Degree can be completed in two years. The program has been successful and a proposal for a Certificate III course in an area such as Information Technology is being mounted. Like the Certificate IV, completion of this course will enable credit for one semester (3 units) towards a further Bachelor Degree in Information Technology. These types of programs are called 'nested' programs in that certification in one program forms part of – is 'nested' in –certification for another (in this case a university degree).

Summer and winter schools

Only one university is using the summer break as an opportunity to provide 'for credit' units to school students. The University of Sydney has started (January 2002) to deliver two new Board Endorsed courses (*Scientific Modelling and Communication* and *Mind and Morality*) through an intensive two-week summer session to be followed by three Saturday sessions in March and April before completing their final assessments for their HSC results. The students will receive 6 credit points towards their degrees in Arts or Science. Initial feedback indicates that the intensive mode of delivery worked well: it created a sort of 'school camp atmosphere' where the students interacted very well with one anther and were far less jaded by the end than the course leaders had feared.

As far as we are aware, no university is using its regular Summer or Winter School (extension) program to provide access to university units for school students. One university, in fact, has actively discouraged school students from enrolling in any first year unit made available in its Summer School on the grounds that it would be inequitable since the units are only available for a fee and thus students from poorer families would be disenfranchised.

3.3 Finance and resourcing

3.3.1 Cost to students

Each university confronts the issue of whether to charge students for studying university units and how much to charge. Legislation in some States, for example, NSW, does not allow students in government schools to be charged any tuition fee as part of their secondary studies program. In any event, as Table 3.5 indicates, most universities have decided, for the time being at least, to not collect fees from school students although the way they have chosen to describe this arrangement varies. The few universities which charge students a fee make it clear that the price is only a fraction of what a full fee-paying student would pay for the unit. Some *schools* which serve as off-campus teaching centres charge a fee (although the university does not collect this income).

Table 3.5 Fees for school students enrolled in university units

Student fees and charges	Number of universities using the arrangement
Scholarship program: students registered as non-award students; scholarship covers tuition and usually amenities/union fees	4
Fees waived: students registered as non-award students; typically students have to buy their texts and occasionally pay a nominal materials charge	14
A nominal fee charged	5

The responses from the universities make it clear that there is considerable uncertainty about the principles which might (or ought to) underpin decisions about charging school students for studying university units:

- most of the current decisions have been made on an ad hoc and temporary basis. Many respondents said that they were open to reconsidering their position – indeed, that they expected to:

  We cannot charge Australian students fees but it may be possible to charge the schools involved for this service and that may warrant further consideration.

  If we were to open the courses to all interested students, which is a possibility – rather than being highly selective – then the students or their schools would have to contribute to the costs.

  We have been calling this an exemption from fees, but it may be wiser to rebadge it as a scholarship scheme – as a way of emphasising the dollar value we are contributing towards their study.

- the actual charges and their rationale vary considerably amongst the five universities which collect fees from school students:
  - Bond University charges the HECS equivalent of $460 per semester;
  - Monash University charges $425 per semester which is clearly broken down into component costs in the brochure to students, schools and parents (see also below p 46)
  - University of Southern Queensland charges half the normal $300 online enrolment fee

- a few respondents suggested that a HECS liability be assigned if a student later enrolled at the university in a degree program *and* wanted credit for the unit taken at school. There are a few issues about this idea of a HECS liability which need to be understood:
  - all of the students currently taking university units are, as far as we can judge, outside DEST quotas – indeed, it is impossible to see how they could be anything else since the students are not enrolled in a degree program;
  - a HECS liability cannot be assigned retrospectively: to do so would be to place the student in the quota of a program for a year *already past*;
  - we would suggest that the best way to award credit for a unit studied at school is through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Going down the

RPL route means the unit does not appear on the student's university transcript - all that is recorded is the lesser number of credit points required for their degree - but by the time students have completed their degree studies, the mark received in a single first year unit is unlikely to be of much interest either to an employer or as a criterion for further study.

3.3.2 Cost to the university

All the universities which subsidise or waive school students' fees are aware that they are consequently carrying a significant financial burden. Most recognise this has an impact on their budgets but at this point it appears that most universities make commitments to these programs intuitively without detailed budgets. Few universities have thoroughly analysed the costs of providing university units to school students.

Of course, it needs to be recognised that for many universities this is still an 'experimental' phase where costs will best be understood retrospectively as the programs are subject to more formal review. Many programs start in a small way because one academic staff member is interested: the cost of time spent planning, talking to schools and colleagues, even time actually teaching or mentoring students are simply absorbed by the individual or his/her administrative unit.

For those programs which appear to be 'taking root', a fairly consistent pattern has emerged. The idea of providing units for school students spreads through the university - *not* so much by the initial champion proselytising because often that effort is hardly known outside the Department concerned - but by other Faculties or individuals 'getting' a similar idea. Frequently they 'get' the idea because school principals have strongly encouraged them to open their units to school students. This is why a single university can have three or more quite differently designed programs. The net effect, as one respondent pointed out is:

Mostly what has been done has been cheap and ad hoc and at the last minute.

Gradually the costs associated with these programs are becoming clearer. Respondents particularly drew attention to the costs of:

- publicity which includes not only advertising, production of brochures, a website but the cost of making (and maintaining) contact with schools, students and parents;
- orientation programs;
- coordination: many programs, even those with fewer than 50 students, are recognising that the task of coordinating these programs is considerable and needs to be clearly delegated and adequately factored into workloads;
- technical infrastructure;
- impact of school students using the Intranet and other campus facilities;
- student information management: one university has struggled to put a system in place that effectively acts on data about non-award non-fee-paying students.

A number of respondents pointed out that the **distribution of costs within the university** is often an issue which has been inadequately addressed – or at least not addressed in a transparent enough way to satisfy all parties. Since most universities

are not actually collecting money to pay for these programs, effectively the senior management of the University allocates grants to the administrative units responsible for various aspects of the programs. Assessing operating costs here is invariably a complex undertaking. One university concluded:

> *Because operating costs for the Departments are not directly related to the number of school students enrolled, the money has been divided roughly equally between the four disciplines, with a bias towards [...] which has the greatest numbers.*

Monash University is exceptional in presenting a breakdown of costs in its brochure to students. Of the $425 fee per student per semester:

$369 to make the subject available – including teaching at schools or on-campus; provision of teaching materials; assignment assessment; examination organisation and marking; promotion and publicity;

$30 towards school administration costs

$19 towards University's administration costs

$7 for a scholarship fund.

While these fees help off-set the cost, the University still subsidises the Enhancement Study Program. Another university which serves an average of 45 school students per semester in on-campus units has estimated that $50,000 annually would ensure the fee-free program runs effectively.

Two universities have received external funding for their programs providing university units to school students. Australian Catholic University's programs, primarily targeted at enhancing equity of access, are underwritten on a cost-recovery basis by a Catholic Education Office in New South Wales.

Curtin University's CURTINtrack program is a pilot funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST, formerly DETYA). The project funds enabled the installation of equipment in four schools in the Corridor to enable sophisticated online access primarily for Curtin students but additional provision is being made to pilot university access for five students in each school. Unresolved is the issue of who will pay for the cost of maintaining the initiative after its formative stage.

In the Curtin program such financial matters as management of the centres, opening hours, security and insurance have been addressed through a coordinating committee. A Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up: the intention is to clearly stipulate the responsibilities of all partners and the strategies for the future. Table 3.6 indicates the agreed contributions for the participating institutions during 2001, the year the program was being set up; students begin their university units in February 2002.

Table 3.6 Contributions to the CURTINtrack program

Contributions	Schools	Curtin
Building/facilities	Each school has a mandate to select its own equipment, including security measures, and fit out the electronic learning centre with the most appropriate technology*	Assistance with design requirements
Coordination of project	Through school principals	Responsible for overall project coordination; appointed an experienced manager and planner to the part-time position of Coordinator who has oversight of the pilot program and has taken hands-on role, for example participating in student selection interviews
Evaluation of project	Records kept, annual reports	Formal evaluation through a research project being coordinated through the Science and Mathematics Education Centre at the University
Technical Management	A staff member to provide technical assistance for network	A Curtin consultant has provided technical assistance
Tutors	Each school to provide tutor/ mentor for school students	Tutors for students from relevant Faculty
Marketing	Schools to market the program within their communities	Project to be marketed through media reports and network contacts
Additional resources	Books, videos and other resources	Administration expenses e.g. meetings, travel, stationary, photocopying etc.
Recurrent costs	Telecommunications costs	Telecommunications costs

* The equipment will be covered by the Western Australian Department of Education's insurance.

Overall, the respondents made it clear that resourcing is an important element in providing university units for credit to school students – as it is for any university activity. To date, partly because these are still early days for most universities, sophisticated budgeting has not been a conspicuous feature of the programs. It is worth noting that many of the early programs which were terminated after a couple of years were described by the universities concerned as 'something that seemed like a good idea so we gave it a go'. In retrospect it is clear that much of the infrastructure required to support even a small endeavour – clear objectives, available personnel, coherent marketing and resources – had not been put in place.

4 Future Directions

The information collected in this investigation on the value of secondary school students taking a university subject(s) for credit, while systematic – collected through structured questioning of 37 of Australia's 39 universities and from interviews with staff and students from 23 schools – has been fundamentally anecdotal. The respondents were asked to share their experiences and provide examples. We discussed their anecdotes, their observations and their own analysis of their programs. The strategy has produced a comprehensive and varied picture. Some programs have lived up to expectations and some have not. Taken together, however, the evidence points in a single direction. These programs can be of real benefit to students *and* to others.

The picture which emerged suggests something else, too. University study by secondary school students has some hallmarks of a new educational category. Challenging bright Year 12 (or Year 11) students intellectually and personally through university study – disturbing the equilibrium of school life – introduces a new dimension into education. At this point, the outlines are hazy and we do not want to overstate the case, but the education which students obtain from this partnership between their school and 'their' university has unique aspects to it which are *neither* 'school' *nor* 'university'.

The idea that there may be a new educational phenomenon hovering in the provision of university subjects to senior secondary school students is not an outcome anticipated at the outset of this investigation. It will come as a surprise, too, to most of the individuals – in universities and in schools – who have been engaged in developing and delivering these programs. With the exception of the two large scale programs in Victoria, most partnerships have been conceptualised as providing something of immediate local use, helping a few students who needed a bit extra. Most view their engagement as a sensible pragmatic adjustment to current practice, not the opening up (potentially) of a whole new element in the educational landscape.

This concluding chapter discusses the possibilities for further development of the provision of access to first year university units by able senior secondary school students. Such development turns on three issues:

- knowing how to design and run successful programs;
- understanding the possibilities and limits to expansion;
- determining which stakeholders will take responsibility for the future, and how.

The chapter begins by presenting practical guidelines for establishing and operating programs. The guidelines are derived from the evidence gathered and analysed during this investigation. Second, the chapter explains in more detail the possibilities and limits of these programs. Finally, the chapter makes some suggestions about the roles and responsibilities which need to be considered by various educational stakeholders if there is to be a more systematic approach to this emerging cross-sectoral educational phenomenon: 'university credit for school students'.

4.1 Guidelines for good practice

Although these are still relatively early days in the operation of most university programs for senior secondary school students, and although this investigation was not intended to be an evaluation as such, the accumulated experience of practitioners to this point nevertheless provides some indication of "good practice" in this area. The guidelines proposed here are structured to inform and assist those considering, or already involved in, setting up a university program for school students.

The position from which these guidelines have been developed is that a "successful" program is one in which the school students studying a university unit have profited from the experience. Of course, universities may have additional ambitions – for example, the hope that very capable students will select them for their degree course. A university may well decide a program is not worth continuing if it does not deliver on this outcome. And schools themselves sometimes have additional ambitions – for example, to establish a wide-ranging partnership with a university. Nonetheless, good practice means that the unit has been of value *to the students* irrespective of its value to anyone else.

If there is a single message to be distilled from the experiences of universities, schools and students in the provision of university units to school students to this point, it is that a good program requires care and attention. Of paramount importance is having the "right" people involved at both university and school level – people who care about students, are prepared to engage with the complexities of the current school-university interface, and are skilled in the area of relationship-building. The guidelines are presented in terms of five phases in planning and delivering successful programs which emerged in this investigation. In reality, these are five dimensions of 'care and attention':

1. clarify purpose
2. plan thoroughly
3. market wisely and select carefully
4. ensure students receive adequate support
5. monitor outcomes

The following discussion, under each of these dimensions, teases out some of the dilemmas which accompany each and suggests solutions.

4.1.1 Clarify purpose

First and foremost, the university or faculty needs to be clear on its purpose in designing a program for school students. *Who* is the program for and *why*?

It is not unreasonable for universities to begin by thinking about the benefits *for them* in providing such a service. Marketing the institution or discipline is a common motive and a perfectly sensible one – successful programs do raise the profile of the university in schools and with parents and students.

However, setting up these programs in the hope that bright students will choose your university for their degree study – while an understandable motive – rarely meets its objective. All the evidence from this investigation is that students choose

their 'Year 12 university' according to one set of criteria and their 'real' university post-school by another set. There are occasions when students do switch their preference to the university where they studied in Year 12 but, judging from the experiences of respondents in this investigation, it does not happen often.

There are a number of facets to the educational value of these programs. Quite apart from the value of the programs as a means of academic extension, a number of universities noted the programs are likely to make the students' – and perhaps their peers' – transition to university smoother. In addition, one university staff member noted that having school students on campus could also be "a plus" for other staff and students:

> *Uni staff enjoy having the secondary students in their class as it tends to make the other students stay on their toes. They do not want to be 'shown up' by the Whippersnappers, as the school students are affectionately known.*

It may be useful for universities mounting these programs to explore the range of educational benefits which they might strive to realise.

A number of universities, in their quest to 'clarify purpose', have looked at existing programs to see what is being done, what is possible. This is a fine strategy and a practice to be encouraged. However, we did notice that in compiling their own 'dossiers' on what other universities were doing, much of the material was out of date and, consequently, assumptions were being made that a particular approach which sounded good was working well when, in fact, it had been terminated. We are conscious that the sections of this report designed to put 'on the table' all the various approaches being taken will also have a short shelf life. There is an immense amount of activity at present: many programs have been put in place in the past couple of years, more are starting in 2002 and several are in draft form for 2003. We would suggest that any information which is more than 12 months old be rechecked with the university concerned to ensure its continued accuracy.

4.1.2 Plan thoroughly

There are many dimensions to effective planning for university programs for secondary school students. Five that have emerged as important involve the need to (i) ensure that the intent and design of the program are aligned with the stated strategic direction of the university; (ii) decide the mode(s) of delivery that best match the aims of the program; (iii) develop a close working relationship with the schools in the (potential) program; (iv) undertake a detailed risk assessment of the program; and (v) prepare a financial plan.

(i) Ensure alignment with the university's strategic direction

As is clear from the information presented in Chapter Three of this report, many of the "university credit for school students" programs which have operated to this point in Australia are best construed as essentially pilot programs. Frequently, the initiative is taken by dedicated "champions" in universities.

There are numerous instances of the university central administration (or even individual faculty administration) not actually being aware of the programs' existence. Despite the fact that, inevitably, the programs will be drawing on university and faculty

resources, the programs are not always aligned with the university or faculty strategic plans. For reasons pertaining not only to budgetary implications, but also to effective risk management [see (iv) below] and consistency of academic and philosophical directions for the university, the case for effective alignment is strong.

It is necessary to insert a caution here, however, in the interests of ensuring that individual initiative is encouraged. There is a danger, as one university respondent pointed out, that, in formalising and regularising programs, some of the original creativity and responsiveness may be lost. He recognised that one of the strengths of the several schemes operating in his university is that they have not been burdened with bureaucracy:

> *The interest and motivation among the academics has been natural – they have had control of what they were trying to do and operated largely without interference. Real bottom-up approaches with all their virtue.*

The University of Queensland's recent review of its Enhanced Studies Program provides some valuable pointers in relation to the necessity for the kind of balance needed between individual initiative and institutional alignment. The report recommends alignment with the university's strategic plan as part of the first principle of a proposed policy framework for university/school linkages, and recommends a set of aims which would frame, without undue restriction, such alignment. In addition, it reaffirms the role of the university's central structures in the administration, monitoring and evaluation of linkages, including a recommendation that all university units offered to secondary schools be submitted to the Academic Programs Review Committee for approval.

It is important to remember also that providing university units for credit to school students is only one of *many* ways a university can provide enhancement and challenge for school students and it may be that the other possibilities better match the university's interests.

(ii) Decide the mode of delivery

The models in use in Australia for delivering university units to school students are described in detail in the preceding chapter (p 34ff). The four principal modes of delivery are on campus (with variations evident in timetabling, whether special sessions are conducted for school students, choice of tutors, etc); off-campus in teaching centres usually taught by accredited school teachers; distance education; and online.

Each has strengths and weaknesses. Universities with large or multi-faceted programs often take advantage of several modes to reach students with particular needs and interests. As with the program as a whole, the mode(s) chosen should align with the university's strategic directions and strengths – for example, where the development of online learning is a key priority.

(iii) Establish a close working relationship between university and schools

Universities report that, where they are aiming at a number of schools in a particular locality, the best response (and the best outcomes) come from schools where they already have established links – a teacher who also tutors at the

university, for example. It is not always easy to know whom to approach in a large secondary school (or, from a school's point of view, a large university) and it often takes persistent effort (or inspired serendipity) to find the right contact.

As was emphasised at the outset of this section, a great deal of the success of the programs depends on relationship-building. Much negotiation is required, especially in the early stages of a program, or when there is a change of staff, or a change in the needs of the school students involved. Designing the *details* of a program is rarely a straight-forward matter. It requires a thorough understanding of the flexibilities and inflexibilities of both the schools involved and the academics providing the units:

- if the program is to be delivered on-campus, timetabling and transport are often troublesome issues which, if an acceptable compromise has not been reached, can undermine the program. It is interesting to note that, within a single university, quite significant differences can be seen in the arrangements arrived at in different discipline areas. Some provide a special tutorial for school students on the university campus. Others have been able to persuade schools to adjust timetabling so that students can all be released at a mutually convenient time. One university has provided a bus as a way of addressing transport problems;
- if the program is to be taught in off-campus centres or hubs, hiring teachers and centres, providing professional development and maintaining communication (and standards) all need to be worked through;
- programs being delivered online require a precise match of technologies and skill between the schools and university.

In addition, the role of the university coordinator is critical. At one university, both students and school liaison teachers recounted numerous instances where timetable clashes had arisen, most often when the load from school and university subjects had accumulated in a way that was difficult for the students to manage. Both the students and teachers then pointed out that it was the university's program coordinator who fixed the problem. Time and again the comment was made: *Terry's been great… Terry sorted all that out* and similar. It is clear that a single knowledgeable contact point at the university is a key feature in effective programs.

(iv) Undertake a detailed risk assessment

In providing a program for school students, there are three significant potential areas of risk for universities:

- **school students being damaged by participating in the program**

Students could be affected adversely if there are not appropriate and well-understood duty-of-care arrangements in place. In this study, all the universities surveyed considered that their existing duty-of-care arrangements sufficed also for school students coming onto campus. One administrator indicated:

> *Students who come onto the campus are expected to act in a responsible manner and are treated in the same manner as other university students. If these students come on to the campus they will be covered by the university's insurance policy.*

The need for students and schools to understand and agree to these duty-of-care arrangements and expectations is critical, however.

It would also be damaging to the students if their chances of entering a university post-school were inhibited by the school period study. Every university has a policy (in most cases unwritten) that the student record is simply expunged if the student withdraws or fails the university unit. Failure may have other repercussions, however. Psychological damage resulting from students failing to cope with not only the course content but also the whole university environment should be guarded against by careful selection (requiring both intellectual and socio-emotional maturity in students) and by counselling processes to follow up drop-outs.

Adelaide University has also addressed another risk: students might lose their 'school leaver' status in the tertiary admissions quota because they had studied a university unit. To ensure against this they negotiated with other Australian universities to establish that the students remained eligible for the "school leaver" tertiary admissions quota.

- **academic and other staff workloads blowing out in the design and delivery of the program**

As remarked earlier, many of the existing programs were started by an individual 'champion'. The passion and energy which are part and parcel of that approach are of great value. However, programs ought not remain the province of an individual for too long. The university needs to decide that if it is worth doing, even if it remains a small scale program, it should become part of normal operations, fully budgeted and factored into individual workloads. 'Succession planning' for the convenor or coordinator should also be put in place. Most of the programs which were closed down failed because the programs had been treated as an 'add-on' :

> *The program was run on a shoestring and involved too much work for too little reward.*

A number of recent university initiatives for school students have come from the Chancellery or senior management group. The task in this case is to ensure that the academics in the faculties offering the units are fully committed to the program. Some universities leave it entirely to the faculties to decide whether to participate or not. Others, wanting to ensure the program is well-rounded and offers students a real choice of subjects, appear to put some pressure on certain departments to participate – a move which needs to be very carefully managed because staff commitment is essential.

- **the reputation of the university being damaged by unsuccessful programs**

As one university put it:

> *If the quality of the unit is not what a student would expect, that could have a negative impact on our reputation.*

A number of university respondents admitted that they go out of their way to choose subjects and staff where they can be assured of the quality of the teaching and assessment. Support for students is another critical factor in delivering successful programs (and is considered separately below, p 57).

One issue considered at the outset of this project to be potentially troublesome

for universities was the possibility that students and parents would interpret the programs as meaning first year university was not significantly different from Year 12. Capable Year 12 students manage university study quite well. Indeed, it is not unusual for students in the University of Melbourne and Monash programs to top the entire first year university cohort. They have done so in accounting, French, biology and other subjects. QUT has calculated that the grade point average of the high school students is higher than that of the regular first years. Nonetheless, none of the respondents thought a university's reputation in terms of standards had been or was likely to be lowered by the school students' success.

The universities were also asked whether these programs had any implications of risk for the intellectual property of the university. No one thought there was such a risk. As one explained:

> *We are of the view that information is not learning. This line of thinking can be seen in MIT's [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] plans to put all its courseware up on the web free of charge.*

(v) Produce a detailed financial plan

There are significant costs associated with planning, marketing, delivery (including providing student support and pastoral care), general administration and monitoring of programs. Financial planning, including projections into whatever future is envisaged for the program, is thus essential. The university must assess the real costs of the proposed program, and plan either to meet these costs or to consider offering the program on a full or partial cost recovery basis. Of universities which have addressed these questions systematically, different universities have come to different, if tentative, answers about these questions (see p 65). The evidence suggests that budgeting for these programs has not, in most instances, been highly developed. This is a weakness which needs to be addressed as experience and sophistication grow.

4.1.3 Market wisely and select students carefully

Marketing:

Universities have adopted a variety of approaches to marketing, including websites, brochures and a presence at student recruitment and information events. Irrespective of the approach taken, what is needed is clear and accurate information about the possible outcomes (TER credit in cases where that is possible, automatic entry to a relevant course if that is possible, etc). Students, their parents and schools also need details of the units on offer and a full explanation of the mode of delivery especially if there is a choice. In addition, students need practical information about what is expected of them, how to apply, how to enrol if accepted, and whom to contact if they have questions.

Only some of the existing brochures and websites are fully informative and helpful. It probably is best to produce a comprehensive brochure from the start no matter the size of the program – always, of course, ensuring that the information is as concise as possible and written in the language students and parents speak, not the professional argot of educators.

It is the responsibility of the university coordinator to talk to the schools to ensure the students they nominate are appropriate for the program. The university coordinator needs to meet with prospective students *and* their parents so they understand the demands which will be made and to press home the point that it should not be taken up as a 'status thing'. Most of the universities said they made it very clear to students that their tertiary entrance rank is their first priority, not doing a university unit:

> *We go out to each high school for approximately one and a half hours initially to talk about the program expectations, commitment required, etc. Students have the opportunity to discuss this with their parents before we revisit the school. So it is two visits per year at a minimum, but more is the norm.*
>
> *You have to really work at this. It isn't a question of just setting it up.*

Student selection:

All programs offering university subjects to school students are intended for capable students who are expected to flourish through the stimulation provided in the program. Most are aimed at students who are already the highest achievers – the top two percent is often the suggested criterion. A few programs have been specifically designed to address issues of access and equity and these programs, while still seeking bright students, are not as demanding of already proven academic achievement. In either case, selection processes must be thorough and transparent. In fact, in the cases the Project Team examined closely, which included both types, the selection procedures were remarkably similar and very thorough.

Adelaide University provides a useful illustration of the eligibility and selection criteria typical of programs intended for very high achieving students. As the University's brochure details, the University requires that students:

- are completing SACE Stage 2 or International Baccalaureate at Year 12 level with less than a full year's workload;
- have scored a high grade in previous Year 12 studies [namely, for SACE Stage 2 subjects, an average score of at least 17 in any prerequisite for the university subject to be studied (with a score of 19 specified for Mathematics), and an average score of at least 15 for non-prerequisites; for IB studies, an average score of at least 6 at Standard Level and at least 5 (specified as 6-7 in Mathematics) at Higher Level];
- are recommended by their school principal, with account taken also of the practicalities of the students' attendance at classes, and of the students' study load at school, academic ability and capacity to manage the social and organisational demands.

In States where the ACACA agency has a role in approving or endorsing university units (because the units are eventually included in the students' secondary education certificate awarded by the ACACA), the agency also proposes guidelines for student selection. In Victoria, for example, the VCAA suggests that students should have a VCE study score of 41 or more in the subject at unit 3 and 4 or can realistically be expected to achieve that score. Universities do have the flexibility to determine scores that are appropriate for successful completion of their units, which is important if equity programs are to realise their aims.

Outside of delivery models designed to overcome disadvantage faced by rural students, most programs designed to address issues of access and equity target students from lower socio-economic groups or where students' families (and community) are unlikely to have attended university before. While these programs tend to define less rigid specifications of ability and achievement, nonetheless they look for eager students who will succeed in the unit(s). The new CURTINtrack program is a good example of the approach to selection taken in these programs:

> *Students submitted an initial application citing their reasons for wanting to participate, a preliminary suggestion of the courses that they might like to undertake at university, a copy of their most recent examination grades and two written references (one from a teacher at the school). From the applications the school staff determined a short list of applicants who were then interviewed. The Curtin Coordinator participated in all of the interviews in order to gauge the level of interest and to standardise the process across all four schools. Students were then notified in person by the school.*

As the examples from the Adelaide University and CURTINtrack programs indicate, schools play a critical role in the selection of students and, to effectively fulfil that role, schools need to be thoroughly familiar with the *detailed* requirements and nuances of the particular programs their students are interested in. The schools, and most universities, are well aware that intellectual capacity alone is not sufficient to succeed in these programs. They insist that students must also be good time managers and truly motivated to do this additional study, which contributes little or nothing to their tertiary entrance rank.

Schools also recognise that not all students who are both capable and well organised – that is, good candidates for studying a university unit – will want to (or should be encouraged) to take up the opportunity. Concentrating on TER is a priority for many students. Focusing on Year 12 school life is another. One important consideration is that the kinds of students most likely to be involved in these programs are precisely those who could make an important contribution to the school culture and who, by remaining focused on school activities, would be gaining important leadership skills. Schools recognise all this and say they definitely do not push students towards university study in Year 12. Indeed, the Case Story schools pointed out that they spend considerable time talking to the students who are thinking of applying. It should always be someone who is respected, such as the Principal or Director of Studies, who should probe each student's understanding of what is involved and what they hope to gain from it.

4.1.4 Ensure students receive adequate support

Some universities have attributed poor student outcomes to poor selection of students. That is doubtless true on occasion. An equally likely cause of poor outcomes, however, is that the students have received insufficient or wrongly timed support from their school or from the university. The evidence of this investigation is unambiguous: students taking a university unit need support. In one university program with nine schools, for example, the students in eight of the schools attained very satisfactory results with only three out of a total of 33 students withdrawing; in the ninth school, however, 55 percent of the students withdrew, despite having met the same entry

criteria as their peers in the other eight schools. At another university, 15 bright students enrolled in a first year unit, only eight completed it and only seven passed – a result that begs many questions, some about support.

Outcomes evidence also shows the positive side of support. Some school students have done outstandingly well in university classes – the example was cited earlier of students topping the entire first year university cohort in a range of subjects at Monash and the University of Melbourne. The explanation given is that the students in a sense have the best of both worlds: the stimulation and intellectual challenge of a university level course with the structure of school still behind them:

> *The results are so good because the harness is not as loose as it is for first year university students.*

In fact, the Project Team was given numerous examples of students who had done brilliantly in a university level course in Year 12 in Victoria, then done far less brilliantly in their first year at university – although these students returned to form in second year.

Interestingly, one of the universities which is thinking about putting some of its subjects online for school students (but, for a variety of pedagogical and pastoral care reasons, not for their own first year students) pointed out that the school students already had direct (face-to-face) support through their own teachers. Support for the students is generally considered a task for the school although the person responsible for the university program must be available and responsive to any issues which emerge.

Providing support is a subtle task because one of the reasons students like studying a university subject is the sense of independence and self-reliance it brings. One school coordinator described his experience of balancing their freedom and his duty-of-care:

> *My dream was to have a small group of students involved and to become their special tutor. I imagined I would meet with them as a group once a week and we would have this great journey together. The students sabotaged me. They made it quite clear that they didn't have time to meet with me each week – and that they didn't particularly want to. They come to see me individually, but basically they just pat me on the head and say 'we'll let you know if there's a problem'. At least they have done that when they get too many assignments all at once.*

A teacher whose students are taking their units through the distance mode said:

> *It may sound a bit heartless, but we tell the students not to expect much support from the school. We do let them use the phone so they can call the university tutor and they have access to the Internet here, but we're not going to push them. That way they get much more out of it.*

And it needs to be remembered that students do not want to be molly-coddled:

> *I especially liked being left alone. In some ways the teachers at school know you too well. I liked them not knowing me.*

One aspect of school support for students is ensuring that the normal classroom teachers of the students involved are 'on side'. Too often we heard from students (a

point corroborated by the schools) that their regular teachers made them feel terribly uncomfortable about missing a lesson or even part of a lesson to attend the university. The following comment was not unusual:

> *I had a timetable clash and the maths teacher made me feel awful. The teacher actually said, 'that's your problem'. It was stressful and I didn't know what he would do in the end.*

While teachers' conviction of the importance of their own subject is understandable – even admirable – the enthusiasm needs to be tempered. School teachers can be encouraged to think of these programs as win-win situations:

- one teacher reported the 'thrill' she gets when her students come tearing back from a university class excited to share what they had been learning – and that enthusiasm is transmitted to the 'non-university' students, too. As she put it, The whole class perks up;
- a number of partnerships with a school involve more than just the university unit for selected students but a whole package of interactions between teachers and university – for example helping teachers grapple with a new curriculum, designing a new program, providing docent roles for students in art galleries and the like). One school sent a teacher to campus with the students – the teacher was enrolled for an MBA and so had time to work on his degree while the students were in class.

Students are often very good at supporting one another and several of the students we spoke to wanted it recorded that programs, in their view, worked best when a small group of students from one school did a unit together.

4.1.5 Monitor outcomes

Once the program is operating, there need to be systems in place to ensure that the university (and schools) know whether the processes which have been put in place are working and are informed of the outcomes being achieved (both intended outcomes and unintended – possibly undesirable – outcomes). In the event of the latter, an exit strategy must be available. The university coordinator needs to be able to spot difficulties as they arise, to arrest and address any difficulties and to ensure follow-up (for example, counselling of students). One university reported that it was "having trouble identifying the few students coming to the campus who are not coping with the program" and recognised this as a serious problem.

Two universities, the University of Queensland and the Australian National University, have conducted formal reviews of their programs. Both reviews concluded that the programs were running reasonably well with satisfactory outcomes and both plan to continue the programs. On the other hand, the detailed analysis – which in one case included a forum of school principals – revealed a significant number of improvements which could be made. Both reviews recommended that detailed feedback should be collected each year not only from students but also from the academics involved.

4.2 Understanding possiblities and limits

This investigation has provided a rich description of programs and relationships between schools/school students and universities that allow Year 12 students to gain university credit. It has also identified and documented system-wide, university and school policies associated with such programs – demonstrating that policies can have both an encouraging and a discouraging effect, as shown, for example, by the distinctly different patterns of engagement in these programs by students in the various Australian States.

This section focuses on the possible outcomes and potential for growth of these programs. Although, as is clear from the terms of reference of this project, this investigation was not an evaluation of the programs, it nevertheless produced many insights into the ways in which the programs operate and function to produce positive outcomes at student, university, school and system levels. Before they can be used as a firm basis for planning, these insights need to be discussed and debated widely throughout the system, and they need to be validated and elaborated through future monitoring such as that already undertaken by the University of Queensland and the Australian National University. As suggested later in this chapter (section 4.3) all stakeholders have roles and responsibilities in relation to such discussion, debate and monitoring.

The 'possibilities and limits' which emerge from this investigation lie along four dimensions. Like two-sided coins, each dimension has the capacity to help realise the potential these programs possess but simultaneously each harbours restrictions on what can be achieved. They are discussed in detail in the following sub-sections:

4.2.1 Educational possibilities and limits

4.2.2 Scaling-up provisions: possibilities and limits

4.2.3 Equity: both a possibility and a limit

4.2.4 Funding

It is important to emphasise that the ideas put forward here are intended as a foundation – an evidence-based foundation – on which a plethora of plans can be generated and the first scrutiny of their possibilities and limits tested.

4.2.1 Educational possibilities and limits

Universities keep records of school students' final grades (and the numbers of students who withdraw) and most try to keep track of where the students enrol for their degree course. Schools, universities and the students themselves consistently said that these programs appear to them to stimulate the students' intellectual and personal growth, and that the chance for Year 12 students to study a university unit is widely appreciated. At this time, however, there have been no detailed explorations or rigorous evaluations of the educational outcomes these programs are (or might be capable of) delivering. It is also the case that, currently, most of these programs are fairly limited in their scope and ambition.

Despite the lack of sophisticated data and the generally limited reach of the programs on offer, on the basis of the survey responses and other evidence collected, the current access of school students to university courses warrants expansion because:

- students who receive suitable support generally have done well academically in the university units, sometimes extremely well, suggesting that there is a need to provide intellectually challenging units beyond the normal Year 12 curricula;
- feedback to the universities and to the research team indicates that, beyond the intellectual content, students value – and profit from – the experience of university style learning in which they are more independent and self-reliant;
- schools need the support of universities. Senior secondary schools are becoming more permeable to many sources of outside support as they broaden their view of what should be taught and how it should be taught. Universities need to be part of every school's infrastructure of support;
- the programs appear to enhance the reputation of the universities involved, at least amongst the schools and families who know of the programs; this is an opportunity – as some universities noted – for them to share their considerable assets with a particularly receptive segment of the broader community: potential students;
- at the national level, in the face of the changing global economy, the opportunity these programs deliver for students to start university at an advanced level and hence obtain a degree which is more sophisticated overall is in Australia's interest;
- programs such as those described in this report enhance universities' and schools' mutual understanding of each others' roles.

These points coalesce into a framework which identifies four roles programs enabling university credit for school students serve:

- providing challenge for academic high achievers
- improving transition for students from school to higher education
- facilitating the best use of public resources for education, and the best value from the resources currently dedicated to education
- providing, in a highly visible way, the cross-sectoral flexibility appropriate to an education system in a society which values and supports lifelong learning.

In the first instance, the limiting factors – the factors which might stop the programs from realising their educational potential – are those which cause programs to not operate effectively. The extensive guidelines described in section 4.1 provide a detailed list of the traps which undermine programs if not anticipated and effectively countered. Perhaps the most critical in regard to the four educational roles outlined immediately above is the need for school personnel and university personnel to develop close working partnerships. At the individual program level this relationship is built between individual school coordinators and university program coordinators. In the final section of this report (Section 4.3 p 67) the point is made that to realise national system-wide educational benefits, there also needs to be a close cross-sectoral working relationship at the highest levels of administration and government.

4.2.2 Scaling up provision: possibilities and limits

Each university was asked what it expected the future demand for these programs to be. Only two universities had a clear idea of the answer: Monash University and the University of Melbourne whose programs are the best established and largest, with about 500 students each, do not anticipate making any major changes to the general size or range of their programs. The other universities were much less certain of the future, which they frankly acknowledged, but seem to fall into two groups:

- a small number of programs are intending to increase the number of schools and students to whom they offer places but have no firm idea of how extensive their programs will finally be;
- the majority, still feeling their way, are unsure as to whether they will try to grow the program at all beyond the (usually small) number of schools with whom they are currently involved.

There is scope to expand – a great deal of scope. Very few students have access to these programs (see Table 3.2). Even in Victoria, which has more school students studying university units than in the rest of Australia combined, many secondary schools are not listed as participating in any of the existing programs – although that may be their choice since Monash operates through a distance mode. Outside Victoria, with the possible exception of Queensland where universities are making efforts to reach local schools, the potential scope for these programs has barely been tested. In 2002 it is expected that fewer than 250 school students in Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and the ACT *combined* will be enrolled in university subjects.

School principals in States where few programs are available responded to the notification of this investigation, contacted the Project Team and told us, sometimes with considerable passion, how much they would value access to such programs – to extend their best students in some instances; to generate aspirations in students from disadvantaged backgrounds in others. Universities report receiving increasing numbers of requests from schools, and requests of increasing urgency, that the university make available some units for these schools' students.

A number of respondents compared the potential for university studies in schools to the vast expansion of vocational education and training (VET) in schools. The number of students participating in VET in Schools programs more than doubled between 1996 and 1999 to 136,710 students (this figure includes all students taking VET in schools whether in Year 10, Year 11 or Year 12) [MCEETYA, 1999]. In the end, the respondents decided the comparison did not really stand up. VET in Schools has been designed for a 'new' cohort of students who in former times often would have left school before Year 11 or 12. VET in Schools has been designed to give these students, who often are not interested in academic (university-oriented) subjects, a quite different curriculum and pedagogy. University units, on the other hand, are primarily intended for the small 'elite' end of the student population and in many ways are a repeat of school study, albeit more intensively and independently.

One way of approaching the potential candidature for university study by school students is to assume that those students who accelerate their senior certificate study by completing a subject early might be interested in taking a university course. In NSW about one percent of the total HSC candidature accelerate by completing

an HSC subject early. Acceleration is not the only pathway to taking university units in Year 12, but the rough estimate of one percent of the Year 12 cohort would be approximately 2,000 students.

Universities in several States and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority have estimated that the programs are suitable for the top two percent of students, yielding a figure nationally of around 4,000 eligible students. The Australian Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee report, *The Education of Gifted and Talented Children* (2001), cites experts whose estimates of 'giftedness' range between 3 and 5 percent of the population and others who believe between five and ten percent of the population could be so defined. The range of students who might then profit from university study while still at school range from 6,000 students (3% of the total Year 12 cohort) to 20,000 students (10%).

Percentile boundaries may not be the relevant criterion either to define the possibility for the growth of these programs nor to define their limits. Universities particularly committed to using these programs to redress inequitable access to higher education specifically said that they do not want to be bound by arbitrary levels of achievement or 'giftedness'.

The limits to the expansion of programs providing university subjects for school students start with the schools themselves. While all the ones we spoke to were keen that these courses should be *available*, many saw the programs as always remaining small. As explained earlier, schools go out of their way to ensure students recognise the prime importance of their school experience and Tertiary Entrance Rank when considering enrolling in a university subject (see p 55).

Simple practical matters related to the different modes of delivering university units to school students mean that they will scale up differently:

- on-campus delivery runs into the apparent problem of distorting the composition of the student body. As one university respondent explained:

  > *We would put a cap on the number of students in any on-campus unit to ensure the impact on the university class and on the lecturer would not be significant.*

- off-campus teaching centres or hubs run into problems of finding enough school teachers located in the 'right' places who are interested and able to teach a university subject. Outside the metropolitan area, even with off-campus teaching centres, there can be problems if students need to travel long distances to the centres;
- online is a promising model in terms of potential reach and scale but various evaluations indicate that substantial problems still need to be overcome in relation to equipment, compatibility, bandwidth and both technical and pedagogical expertise [UTS, 2001];
- distance education delivery is less constrained by place and technology – and the basic infrastructure of Open Learning Australia (OLA) could be used and built on – but the demand for student self-reliance which this mode imposes may limit the number of Year 12 students who would choose it;
- co-located educational institutions increase the ease with which school students can access university units and there is a distinct trend to increasing the numbers of these tri-sectoral campuses.

In sum, the vast difference across Australia in the availability of university subjects to school students logically suggests that in those States and Territories (almost all) where access is small to minimal, there is room for expansion. If a defined percentage of the Year 12 cohort is considered to be the most suitable set of candidates for these programs, the very different percentages set by 'experts' leaves open, again, room for significant expansion. Further, there are many who think a percentage set on past achievement only perpetuates inequity and programs should be more open in terms of reach.

By and large the respondents did not envisage that the growth of these programs would be extensive. Each mode the universities use for delivering programs to school students comes bound by serious practical problems for scale-up. The schools themselves would often prefer to limit the numbers of students involved in such programs. They are aware of the many competing demands and opportunities for Year 12 students and would place university subjects as a valuable option, but only one among many valuable options, for bright and energetic students.

4.2.3 Equity: both a possibility and a limit

As indicated in Chapter One, equity is one of the themes which permeates the deliberations of many OECD nations with respect to education and educational change. These nations recognise the need to ensure that existing patterns of privilege and the existing gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged are not perpetuated, or worse still exaggerated, by educational changes associated with increased access to higher levels of education.

The findings of this project highlight the considerable risk that programs providing university credit for school students may increase existing societal inequities. Overall, there is a distinct impression that, if anything, the existing programs have favoured the most privileged students in the Australian community. A few programs – very few – have pushed beyond the existing limits of students' aspirations, teachers' perceptions and school ethos. Many programs have been mounted in response to demands from a particular school or small group of schools and often these have been prestigious independent schools. One university designed a program for a particular independent school *because* it wanted to attract enrolments from that school.

Geography – which is sometimes a matter of luck but often also an aspect of privilege – has played a dominant part in determining who has access to relevant programs. Being physically close to a campus or an off-campus teaching centre makes it a reasonable option for students to get to classes. The universities themselves tend to confine their interest to students in their regional 'catchment' area.

Particular risks in relation to equity have been identified in many previous Australian reports. These include:

- students from areas of low socio-economic status are disadvantaged in terms of university attendance, by their 'lack of awareness of university', 'peer disapproval', 'family disapproval', 'lack of self-confidence', 'complexity of application', absence of role models';
- students in rural and remote areas face significant disadvantage in relation to preparation for and encouragement towards university study;

- gifted students from the above backgrounds are likely to suffer particular disadvantage – as recognised by the 2001 Senate Inquiry into the Education of Gifted Children and Talented Children, although such children are found in all ethnic and socio-economic groups, *teachers are less likely to see giftedness among disadvantaged and minority groups*.

Universities themselves recognise that the programs they have put in place for school students to access first year units have not addressed equity issues on any significant scale. Even the programs which have been initiated to have an equity focus rarely meet the needs, at this point at least, of more than a few dozen students. Some universities are troubled by this pattern of engagement but feel frustrated and somewhat at a loss in seeking ways to address it. Universities' sense of frustration in this regard is not surprising, because, in practice, this is a very difficult matter to address. It is taxing enough to provide a successful program for the students who *are* enrolled; it is almost unfair to ask people to confront questions about the students to whom a program is *not* open.

It is also recognised that, in a fundamental sense, programs offering university study to school students are by nature 'exclusive'. Early entry to university study is meant to be a 'special' opportunity. It is precisely *not* 'ordinary' school but a challenge and, indeed, an acknowledgement that these students are ready for this extra challenge. To suggest that *any* form of exclusivity is unacceptable would rule out the pursuit of *all* of these initiatives. At the same time, to suggest, as one university did, that equity lies outside the hands of any individual university, is avoiding a critical issue, and is an untenable position given the reporting requirements associated with universities' annual Profile discussions with DEST.

The critical point about the equity dimension of programs which open university subjects to school students is that it is simultaneously the most powerful force for driving an expansion of these programs *and* the most significant block to their growth. If equity concerns are not addressed in developing the scale and scope of these programs, they will have no legitimate claim on public resources. The programs will necessarily remain as they are now: the resolve of individual universities acting, as many do, in their own interest.

4.2.4 Funding

With a handful of exceptions, these programs are being provided by the universities without cost to the students. Many university respondents pointed out that they could afford to do this for the 'small' student numbers they are currently serving but if the number were to expand significantly they would consider charging fees. However, 'small' meant quite different things to different universities: 12 students in one case, 100 students in another.

As described earlier, few universities have had enough experience with these programs to have developed a thorough understanding of all the costs involved nor precisely how to apportion the costs that they do recognise. Many universities simply consider the costs part of their marketing and recruitment effort and as one said:

> *As part of our overall marketing budget, covering the cost of 12 school students, or even 50 if it grew to that, is very small beer.*

Partly because of their willingness to conceptualise the costs as effectively serving ends other than the education of the school students, universities have subsidised the programs according to varying logics. Monash University publicly accounts for the $425 it charges students. Another university has estimated that it needs $50,000 annually (from the Chancellery) to provide effective management and delivery of its program which runs between 50 and 80 students a year. Whether funds for the programs come from outside the university (for example by charging a fee) or from an internal re-distribution of funds for obvious costs (the position of coordinator, for example), the resources being assigned to these programs appear to remain far from full cost recovery. Any drain on university resources imposes a limit – at this point an unknown limit – on the expansion of these programs.

Beyond the actual dollar limit to universities further developing programs for school students, lies the limit generated by the strictures of good governance. Any university or faculty program is obliged, under good governance, to meet the strategic needs of the university or faculty concerned. As accountable entities they are obliged to put their self-interest to the fore – and the guidelines proposed in this report underscored the importance of aligning action with strategy (p 51). However, so long as programs remain tied to the interests of the provider, coverage will necessarily remain uneven and access to university study by school students largely a matter of their luck or privilege.

The unavoidable conclusion is that to realise on a national (or even State-wide) scale the educational and equity possibilities this emerging educational provision appears to promise, funding from outside the universities' individual budgets is called for.

On a national basis, if the conservative estimate of one percent of the Year 12 cohort (a figure of around 2,000 students) participated and each student took only a single one semester university unit, this would create a program load of 250 EFTSU. If funded at the average rate of $11,000 per EFTSU, the program would cost of $2.75m. Alternatively if the funding were at marginal cost the program would cost $0.65m. If five percent of Year 12 students enrolled in two one-semester units, such a base would yield a program cost of between $27.5m at the average rate and $6.7m at the marginal rate.

4.3 Realising the potential: taking responsibility for the future

The fundamental question

The fundamental question revealed by this investigation is: how extensive will (or should) the opportunity for senior secondary school students to study first year university units become in Australia? At the university level, only a few universities have addressed this question, and then mainly in terms of the optimum size for their own program. At the sectoral level, however, it appears that neither the higher education nor the school education sector has engaged in systematic thinking about the question – which, of course, was part of the reason this investigation was commissioned in the first place.

While the possible answers to this fundamental question will lie along a continuum, it is useful here to focus on the two ends of that continuum. Essentially the choice becomes, at one end, to retain the status quo, and at the other end, to support the development of these programs as a national system-wide provision.

In one sense, the rationale for retaining the status quo is quite powerful. As described in this report, Australia currently has a situation in which programs of university credit for school students have evolved as a consequence of grass-roots initiatives, taken by dedicated educators, exhibiting a high degree of professionalism. Providers have demonstrated a great deal of creativity and original thinking, and have overcome bureaucratic constraints and limited resources, to achieve outcomes valued by the participating students and their teachers. Typically they have achieved all of this at no cost or minimum cost to the students.

Further, the way the programs have been conceived and the ways in which they have operated have supported valuable diversity within the Australian educational system. Individual universities have arrived at quite different conclusions about the directions to take, in accordance with their own strategic needs, and in response to the expressed needs of their own communities.

Such diversity, however, comes at a price. The price in this case is that the programs are spread very unevenly across the country with some unacceptable consequences in terms of Australia's desired goals of equitable educational provision and outcomes for young people. In addition, because, until now, there has been no obligation to share information or to provide data in relation to these programs, opportunities to learn from others have been limited, and school systems, the State authorities and the universities themselves actually know very little about what is being provided. One of the participants in this project described the situation in his State as "let a thousand flowers bloom". While the outcome of such a blossoming can be rich and colourful, past experience in other areas of education suggests that it is not a sound basis for ensuring equitable provision of education at national or even State levels.

The potentially important outcomes of the programs have been documented earlier in this chapter. These include providing educational challenge for gifted students, improving the transition from school to higher education, effective use of public resources, and flexibility within the system. These outcomes are too important to be left to chance. This is especially the case given the evidence of the increasing demand from schools for these programs, and given also the world-wide educational context within which Australia is operating.

Nationally and internationally, key economic, social, cultural and political influences are driving education in new directions, requiring different thinking about the relationships between schools and universities and leading to questioning of the predominantly linear and hierarchical concepts of knowledge, skills and credentials which currently operate in education. In this changing environment, it is envisaged that traditional educational institutions will have new roles and responsibilities for learning. It is envisaged also that clear links and pathways between schools, universities, workplaces and other agencies will be widely and equitably available.

This set of drivers and this kind of thinking lead, almost inexorably, to a considerable expansion of access to university courses by school students – exactly the kinds of programs described in this report – so their benefits can be realised by all eligible students.

Expansion, in the sense used here, means a national, system-wide provision. Expansion does not mean "more pilot programs". One can, in fact, consider the outstanding efforts of individual universities and individual champions within universities to have been effectively the pilot phase of the provision of programs for school students. As this investigation shows, a fundamental understanding of the effective operation and potential benefits (as well as pitfalls and limits) of these programs has been acquired.

Expansion into systematic provision of opportunity requires at least some central involvement. Monitoring is clearly required. Funding is also needed. The funding implications of this could be quite far-reaching, not just in terms of the actual quantum of resources required which may not be large in the overall budgets for universities and senior secondary school (p 66), but rather in terms of the need to provide workable answers to the "who pays?" question. These answers must address realistically the differential funding models under which schools and universities operate, and ensure that the incompatibilities which currently exist do not lead to acrimonious and counterproductive debate between universities and schools, and do not constitute a barrier to progress.

In summary, if the rationale for expansion of programs enabling university credit for school students is accepted, then such acceptance shifts the whole provision from the level of the individual university (and its preparedness to fund these programs) to the system level. The current arrangements tend to perpetuate inequities. If the programs are worth providing, then they must be made available fairly and equitably and must be adequately funded, at the system-wide level. This is challenging, because, in shifting some of the action to the system level, the spontaneity, responsiveness and innovation which are part of the status quo must not be lost.

Possible roles and responsibilities of stakeholders

In this concluding section of the report, some tentative suggestions are made regarding the responsibilities various stakeholder groups might take in relation to realising the potential of programs providing university credit for school students. Many of these suggestions require stakeholders to make an investment, sometimes a very small investment, sometimes an in-kind investment of time, rather than a direct investment of resources, to ensure effective outcomes.

One key to a productive future which emerged from this investigation is that sustained conversation and information sharing needs to take place within and between the higher education and school education sectors about systematically providing access to university units for capable senior secondary school students. Further, processes need to be set in place so that this 'learning conversation' takes place sooner rather than later, efficiently rather than sporadically.

Discussions should be as frank and open as possible. People in both sectors need to be able to listen to (and contribute) to the whole conversation. The process should

be designed to avoid the problem which plagued the introduction of VET in schools, and continues only slightly abated today, of a turf war over which sector is responsible for funding these programs.

Examples of possible forums for such conversations are available at many levels. At the level of formalised professional groups, such as the Association of Tertiary Education Managers, the Australian Association for Educational Research and the Australian Curriculum Studies Association there is much potential for informed debate. It could be suggested to these groups that, either at their annual conferences, or at a specially designated event, they focus on considering the issues and addressing the questions raised in this report.

In practice there are a large number of conferences and seminars at which university educators meet, where this issue could be part of the agenda. There would be a need for facilitation and/or executive support for such sessions, so that the sharing of information and the conclusions and inferences made are not lost. State departments of education or DEST could provide this service. It would also be valuable to bring school educators into these discussions.

The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) also has a role to play in fostering and contributing to these developments. This is particularly timely in the context of the AVCC's recent decision to set up ad hoc advisory groups on an "as needs" basis, rather than the former system of Standing Committees to advise on specific areas of the operation of universities.

The work of individuals and groups needs to be supported strongly by governments – both State and Commonwealth. As indicated above, Governments have a role in initiating, encouraging and facilitating conversations amongst relevant stakeholders. As also implied earlier, governments have a critical role in ensuring that the resource allocation model actually enables, rather than impedes, transfers between sectors by students according to their needs, aspirations and demonstrated achievement.

At the level of State-based organisations, the ACACAs have a key role to play in this area. The immense difference between Victoria, where many school students enrol in university subjects, and the other States/Territories, where far fewer do, seems at least partly attributable to the 'encouragement' afforded by the Victorian Curriculum and Certification Authority (VCAA) and the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) by virtue of their approving units and awarding some ENTER recognition. As pointed out in Chapter Two, policies which operate at State level actually frame what is possible for Year 12 students in relation to opportunities for university study. The ACACAs are particularly well-placed to make a major contribution to the collaborative development of policy and practice in this area, given that they are set up as statutory bodies to ensure the input of all major stakeholders into the decision-making process.

Beyond supporting discussion and helping devise a resource allocation model which engenders a spirit of cooperation, governments can explore a range of ways to contribute. For example, governments could focus on the provision of guidelines for practitioners, such as those presented earlier in this chapter. It could also focus on research and monitoring, not just of Australian programs but also of overseas developments such as the recent decision of the Blair government to provide generous funding for the setting up of new school/university linkages and the review of the Advanced Placement (AP) program in the United States.

Such research, in turn, could lead on to new initiatives and programs. For example, the provision of resources for a national "transition to tertiary" program, as suggested by one of the participants in this study, could perhaps be considered. It may also be useful to consider the potential for an advanced placement program along the lines of the US program. Slavish imitation is not appropriate, but the intentions of the Australian university programs for school students and the AP program are similar enough to demand careful attention being paid to the tactics the AP program uses in handling its current expansion in ways which maintain quality and extend equity.

Finally, this investigation has brought to the fore the relationship between programs providing university credit for school students and lifelong learning. These programs deliver some of the key features of effective systems for lifelong learning, in that they can play an important role in opening up the whole system to provide greater responsiveness to emerging community demands, flexibility for students (of all ages) to move smoothly between sectors, and challenge for individual students. Thus, the implications of this investigation for Government policy-makers reach to the very broadest levels. Both OECD and BHERT papers have emphasised the key role for governments in providing incentives for individuals and educational providers (including, of course both schools and universities) to engage actively with the concept and the practice of lifelong learning. Arguably, programs which provide "university credit for school students" are at the cutting edge of this engagement.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire to universities

Dear…..

As discussed on the phone, the attached Questionnaire is for the DETYA sponsored enquiry into university credit for school students. The research team consists of:

Professor Lesley Parker, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Curtin University of Technology

Dr Jane Figgis, Director, AAAJ Consulting Group

Professor Gordon Stanley, President, NSW Board of Studies

Ms Julie Bowden, Director, Special Projects, Curtin University of Technology

Mr Laurie Money, Principal Policy Officer, Department of Education Services WA

Collecting this information from all Australian universities is the first step in a comprehensive investigation. Once the data from the universities is analysed, schools participating in arrangements with universities will be surveyed for their perspective on the programs. Further phases of the project include discussions with school leaders, the ACACA agencies (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Agencies) and case studies of five of the most insightful university-school arrangements.

We recognise that it may not be a simple matter to track down all the arrangements within the university. Departments and Divisions sometimes create their own linkages. If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me on ……..

Thank you for your time in responding to this survey and for the interview that will follow.

Yours sincerely

University Credit for School Students

An investigation requested by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

2001

The purpose of this study is to acquire an accurate and thorough picture of cross-sectoral arrangements between universities and schools. It is designed to map the opportunities available for school students to access university courses and to quantify each type of provision, the approximate number of students involved and any outcomes data available. The study is also designed to understand the *thinking* that lies behind the arrangements.

The questionnaire has two sections:

Section 1 – consists of relevant demographic data on present, and past, programs which enable school students to access university courses or resources. This section has been formatted so the requested information can be filled in electronically and returned to the Research Team at…….

Section 2 – consists of open-ended questions. A member of the Research Team will contact you to arrange a time for interview by telephone. You are, of course, welcome to submit a written answer as well as, or instead of, a telephone interview.

Please indicate at the end of the questionnaire any other person at your institution who is involved with similar programs.

**Please note that the word “SCHOOL” refers to a Secondary School and not a University entity.

**Please note that programs especially set up for overseas fee paying students SHOULD NOT be included.

Thank you for taking the time to do this.

Signed on behalf of the Research Team:_____

SECTION 1:

University: _____

Campuses included: _____

Respondent: name: _____

Phone contact:_____

Email address: _____

The questions in this section about University-school arrangements in which school students obtain formal university credit;

The survey matrix is arranged under THREE headings:

1. **Currently operating arrangements;**
2. **Past arrangements; and**
3. **Arrangements which are currently under consideration.**

Only ONE matrix should be used for each program that the university/school conducts or has conducted. Photocopies of the matrix can be used if there is more than one program operating.

1. EXISTING UNIVERSITY - SCHOOL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FORMAL CREDIT – fill in one matrix for each program that you are involved in (please photocopy as required)

Program Title :_____

Brief description of the arrangement and how it works	
Date started	
What were the reasons for developing the program?	
Does the program target particular students, and if so who and why?	
Are conditions imposed on participation? (e.g., admissions criteria)	
What outcomes are expected from the program?	
Does the study contribute to tertiary admission scores?	
Does the study lead to university credit?	
Is the university credit transferable to other institutions?	
How are the fees paid?	
List the school/s involved in the program?*** (see over)	
Is the program offered to individual schools, clusters of schools or individual students?	
Approximate numbers of students involved	
Contact details for the person responsible for the program	
What are the constraints in conducting the program?	
Any further comment…	

*****INFORMATION REGARDING SCHOOL/S IN THE PROGRAM**

1.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

2.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

3.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

4.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

2. PAST UNIVERSITY - SCHOOL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FORMAL CREDIT (Those that have been offered in the past and are no longer in existence). Fill in one matrix for each program that you were involved in (please photocopy as required)

Program Title:_____

Brief description of the arrangement and how it worked	
Date started	
Date finished	
What were the reasons for developing the program?	
What were the reasons for ending the program?	
Did the program target particular students, and if so who and why?	
Were conditions imposed on participation? (E.g., admissions criteria)?	
What were the outcomes from the program?	
Was it a success – why or why not?	
What mechanisms operated to certify and register the student's University credit?	
Was the credit transferable?	
Who paid for the university place?	
List the school/s that were involved in the program?*** (see over)	
Approximate numbers of students involved	
Contact details for the University person who was responsible for the program	
What were the problems in conducting the program?	
Any further comment…	

*****INFORMATION REGARDING SCHOOL/S IN THE PROGRAM**

1.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

2.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

3.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

4.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

3. University-school arrangements for formal credit currently under consideration – fill in one matrix for each program

Program title: _____

Brief description of the planning arrangements	
What are the reasons for developing the program	
Will the program target particular students, and if so who? Why?	
Will conditions be imposed on participation? (E.g., admissions criteria)?	
What are the intended outcomes?	
What mechanisms will operate to certify and register the students' university credit?	
Will the student's credit be transferable to other universities?	
How will the HECs fees be paid?	
List the schools to be involved.*** (see over)	
What are the approximate numbers of students expected to be involved?	
Contact details for the University person responsible for the initiative	
Are there any problems that you can anticipate?	
Any further comment…	

*****INFORMATION REGARDING SCHOOL/S IN THE PROGRAM**

1.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

2.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

3.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

4.Name of School_____

Address_____

Contact person_____

Telephone Number_____**Email Address**_____

SECTION 2 - This section to be completed by interview

There are a host of issues which impact on the development of policies and guidelines for UNIVERSITY – SCHOOL programs. . These issues are the focus of the questions in this section.

(1) Equity:

Are you aware of any issues of equity in creating links with schools? Considerations here might include:

- Whether school students in rural or regional Australia are likely to be excluded from participation.
- Whether students from small metropolitan secondary schools are at any disadvantage in participating.
- Whether students need access to online technology for significant amounts of time?
- Whether there are specific technology requirements, which could inhibit participation?
- If entry to programs is for specific groups e.g. high achievers, how these groups are defined and identified?

(2) Duty of Care:

- Who is responsible for students when they are on the university campus?
- What arrangements are available for students to be transported to the university campus?
- How is pastoral care managed?

(3) Delivery:

- What role is (or could) online technology play in developing linkages with school students?

(4) Financial Arrangements:

- Are school students liable for HECs fee when they formally enrol at a university?
- Does the student's school defray the expense of access to university courses or resources?
- Does the University waive the fee, create a scholarship, or in some way cover the cost of placing the student?

(5) Work Load

- If academic staff are involved in the program, how is the additional impost on their workload calculated, especially if they are working with atypical students?
- Are staff compensated financially for taking on additional students?
- Is there an ongoing commitment by the university to the program?

(6) Certification:

- Have you discussed with your State Certification Authority how a university course credit translates (or might translate) into a Tertiary Entrance Rank score?
- Are there reasons for thinking that this translation will get easier or harder in the future?

(7) Transferability:

- How would you decide whether to accept the credit awarded to a school student by another university?
- Have you had to face this problem?
- What information would you expect to provide to another university, or have them provide you, to accept the credit transfer?
- Could the issue of one-to-one negotiation be avoided (i.e., through the State Certification Authority?)

(8) Intellectual property:

- What are the implications for the intellectual property if school students routinely access first year courses?
- What are the implications for the reputation of the University if school students routinely access first year courses?
- Will university studies become equated in some way with Year 12 studies?

(9) Demand:

- Do you think there will be a growing demand on universities to make provision for school students? What kind of provision? Why (or why not?)

Can you suggest the names and contacts for other personnel who are involved in such programs at your university?

Thank you for your assistance

Appendix 2: Letter to universities

22 May 2001

Dear

DETYA Evaluations and Investigations Project: ***University Credit for School Students***

In recent years, there has been increasing evidence of more direct relationships between schools and universities throughout Australia. Some of these arrangements have enabled selected school students to access university studies. In December 2000, the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, recognising that the extent and type of the latter arrangements are unknown, advertised for tenders for a project *University Credit for Schools Students*, as part of its Evaluations and Investigations Program. The following team has received a grant to conduct the project:

- Professor Lesley Parker, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Curtin University of Technology; and Chairperson, Curriculum Council of Western Australia;
- Dr Jane Figgis, Director, AAAJ Consulting Group;
- Professor Gordon Stanley, President, NSW Board of Studies;
- Ms Julie Bowden, Director, Special Projects, Curtin University of Technology;
- Mr Laurie Money, Office of Higher Education, Department of Education Services, Western Australia.

The objectives of the project are to

a) provide an historical overview of the development of current practices in this area;

b) identify and document current policies that allow or encourage students to gain university credit while still at school;

c) describe programs and relationships between schools/school students and individual universities that allow students to gain credit or complete university subjects.

The outcome of the project will be a report on current policy and practice throughout Australia in this area.

In undertaking the Project, the Project Team will need to consult with relevant personnel in your university. On behalf of the Team, I am therefore requesting your permission to approach such personnel. Pending your positive response, I would be most appreciative if you could also nominate the most appropriate person or people for us to communicate with in your university. Nomination(s) can be advised to

Dr Jane Figgis, AAAJ Consulting Group
PO Box 1020, Subiaco Western Australia 6008
Telephone: (08) 0284 7477. Fax (08) 9284 7478 Email: jfiggis@onaustralia.com.au

Many thanks and best wishes

Yours sincerely

LESLEY PARKER
On behalf of the project team

Appendix 3: Letter to ACACA agencies

17 July 2001

Dear

DETYA Evaluations and Investigations Project: ***University Credit for School Students***

In recent years, there has been increasing evidence of more direct relationships between schools and universities throughout Australia. Some of these arrangements have enabled selected school students to access university studies. In December 2000, the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, recognising that the extent and type of the latter arrangements are unknown, advertised for tenders for a project *University Credit for School Students*, as part of its Evaluations and Investigations Program. The following team has received a grant to conduct the project:

- Professor Lesley Parker, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Curtin University of Technology; and Chairperson, Curriculum Council of Western Australia;
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- Professor Gordon Stanley, President, NSW Board of Studies;
- Ms Julie Bowden, Director, Special Projects, Curtin University of Technology;
- Mr Laurie Money, Office of Higher Education, Department of Education Services, Western Australia.

The objectives of the project are to

a) provide an historical overview of the development of current practices in this area;

b) identify and document current policies that allow or encourage students to gain university credit while still at school;

c) describe programs and relationships between schools/school students and individual universities that allow students to gain credit or complete university subjects.

The outcome of the project will be a report on current policy and practice throughout Australia in this area.

In undertaking the Project, the Project Team considers it is essential to consult with Chief Executive Officers and other relevant personnel in ACACA organisations. To this end, the team will be conducting a Workshop session at the 2001 ACACA Conference in Sydney. We do hope to see you at the Workshop, and would be most appreciative if you could give consideration to the following questions before the

conference, so that all concerned can obtain maximum benefit from sharing information at the Workshop:

- Are you able to provide an estimate of the extent to which school students in your State are undertaking study of university subjects?
- If such arrangements are in place, are such university studies certificated by your ACACA in any way? If so, in what way(s)?
- Are students in your State able to count such studies towards "graduation"?
- Are students in your State able to include the results from such studies in their TER? If so, in what way(s)?
- Are there other issues about school students being awarded university credit that you foresee and/or have grappled with?

Many thanks and best wishes

Yours sincerely,

LESLEY PARKER
On behalf of the project team

Appendix 4: Letter to principals' associations

5 July 2001

Dear

There is increasing evidence of more direct relationships between schools and universities throughout Australia. Some of these arrangements have enabled selected school students to access university studies. The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, recognising that the extent and type of latter arrangements are unknown, advertised for tenders to investigate *University Credit for School Students*. The team awarded the grant to conduct the project is:

- Professor Lesley Parker, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Curtin University of Technology and Chairperson, Curriculum Council of Western Australia;
- Dr Jane Figgis, Director, AAAJ Consulting Group;
- Professor Gordon Stanley, President New South Wales Board of Studies;
- Ms Julie Bowden, Director Special Projects, Curtin University of Technology;
- Mr Laurie Money, Office of Higher education, Department of Education Services, Western Australia.

The objectives of the project are to:

(1) provide an historical overview of the development of current practices in this area

(2) identify and document current policies that allow or encourage students to gain university credit while still at school

(3) describe programs and relationships between schools/school students and individual universities that allow students to gain credit or complete university subjects.

The outcome of the project will be a report on current policy and practice throughout Australia in this area.

One key element in this project is to talk to schools about their students accessing university studies for credit. We want to hear from schools which are involved in such arrangements or have students who are *and* from schools which have thought about such arrangements but for one reason or another have not been put into practice, or not yet.

What we would like to do is to interview principals (and perhaps others involved) to understand the *thinking* that is going on about this issue, which is rather more complex than it first appears.

Is it possible, through «Company», to alert your members to this project? Indeed, we would appreciate you encouraging your members to contact us as schools' perspectives on this issue are clearly critical to our developing a complete understanding of the arrangements. We are also speaking to the universities and State accreditation/certification agencies. People who are interested in participating should contact…

Thanks for your help with this. It will be much appreciated.

Appendix 5: Letter to schools

Dear

DETYA Evaluations and Investigations Project: ***University Credit for School Students***

Please find attached a brief outline of the above DETYA-funded project, *University Credit for School Students*. As I indicated when we spoke on the telephone earlier this week, case studies of five models of school/university interaction are part of the project. The Project Team appreciates very much your willingness for your school to be one of these case studies.

Please note that our case studies are intended to be illustrative of models for university study by school students. They will not be evaluative in any way. Further, although we need to identify the university with which a school is involved for the purposes of university study by its students, our case studies will not identify individual schools, students or staff by name.

Finally, sections of the Draft Report which describe your school will be provided to you for comment, and any deletions or amendments which you request will be made.

Again, with many thanks for your willingness to participate in the project,
Yours sincerely

Project Team Member

Glossary

ACACA	Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities
ACT BSSS	ACT Board of Secondary Studies
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
CC	Curriculum Council of Western Australia
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training (Commonwealth), formerly DETYA
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Commonwealth)
ENTER	Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (Victoria)
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HSC	Higher School Certificate (NSW)
OP	Overall Position (Queensland)
OBOS	NSW Office of the Board of Studies
QBSSSS	Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
SSABSA	Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia
TASSAB	Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board
TER	Tertiary Entrance Rank
UAI	Universities Admission Index
VET	vocational education and training
VTAC	Victoria Tertiary Admissions Centre
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
WACE	Western Australian Certificate of Education

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