

## CHAPTER 4 - EVIDENCE FOR ADMISSION

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 A key assumption is contained in the notion of devising an alternative method for allocating TERs(OE) to school-leavers with non-conventional educational histories. This is that suitable evidence will be available to make judgements on performance and potential.

4.1.2 Because of the character of the target group, the normal means in evidentiary terms of producing a TER cannot be appropriate for it. So a range of evidence needs to be discovered that reaches beyond evidence conventionally produced by schools for the purpose of calculating a TER(OE). Producing sufficient such evidence must be within the reach of the project target group.

4.1.3 This Chapter reports on the project's investigations about:

- **availability of evidence** - the range of evidence available in principle to school-leavers;
- **use of evidence** - the evidence actually drawn upon by school-leavers and others using alternatives to TERs for tertiary admission; and
- **helping applicants to find and use evidence** – the means now used to assist school-leavers to identify and put forward personally relevant evidence.

4.1.4 This Chapter takes an applicant's perspective on making an alternative admission submission. This contrasts with the perspective used in Chapter 5, which is about making admissions decisions on the evidence and the applicant – typically by administrative and/or academic staff and their institutions or QTAC.

### 4.2 INFORMATION ABOUT AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

4.2.1 A number of agencies keep records of school-leaver performance beyond those derived from conventional schooling on which the award of TERs(OE) is based - such as: schools themselves; examining boards, eg in music; youth bodies, such as Scouts; employers; and school-leavers.

4.2.2 How available is such evidence? How readily presentable is it? How useable by assessors or formula-based operations? The project considered these questions so as to form a view on the character of the range of types of possibly useful evidence apparently available, even if proffered in quite different sub-sets by individual school-leavers.

4.2.3 Four sources of information were drawn upon to identify the sorts of evidence possibly useable in an alternative means for producing TERs (OE):

- The knowledge of specialist QTAC officers who assess large numbers of applications for tertiary admission made on grounds of personal competency, or that rely on the large suite of schedules for allocating TERs (OE) to applicants aged over 18 or 21, depending on institutional policies.
- The knowledge of teachers and administrators associated with secondary schools and school-based assessment about possible evidence held in schools or in central agencies, or in the hands of students themselves.
- The knowledge accumulated by officers conducting institution-specific or course-specific admissions requiring judgements to be made about qualitative evidence.
- Evidence actually presented by school-leavers and other applicants when making submissions through various non-conventional admissions schemes conducted by individual tertiary institutions.

4.2.4 As explained in Chapter 2, the use of those sources to explore likely types of evidence sometimes occurred as part of wider enquiries into the judgemental processes used in existing institution-specific alternative admissions processes. The information is somewhat artificially separated here to enable the general matter of evidence to be considered.

4.2.5 The development of notions about the classes and types of evidence likely to be accessible to school-leavers took place progressively as the project explored the sources listed in paragraph 4.2.3. As a consequence, the open-ended consultations undertaken at different stages produced an evolving frame of reference - making consistent scope of collection somewhat difficult. This is reflected in the construction of some of the tables in this Chapter. However, findings about evidence have been able to be made at levels suitable for informing the project.

### **4.3 EVIDENCE USED IN APPLICATIONS BASED ON PERSONAL COMPETENCIES AND MATURE-AGE SCHEDULES**

4.3.1 The number of applications for Personal Competencies Assessment (PCA) has continually declined, eg from about 8,000 in 1995-96; but the use of this

route remains substantial. For example, in 1999-00, about 3,800<sup>1</sup> of the 55,000 applicants for tertiary admission through QTAC made PCAs.

- 4.3.2 Around one-third were eliminated because appropriate evidence was not presented, or the applications were otherwise not properly made.
- 4.3.3 Of the remaining 2662 that were assessed, 735 were made offers based on PCAs. Of those applicants, 232 would not have been made offers in the preference without a PCA. No offer at all would have been made to 106 of those applicants had they not submitted a PCA case.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.3.4 Although the number of Year 12 students lodging a Personal Competencies submission is minimal in 2001-02 – the proportion of non-school-leavers aged 25 and below who seek PCAs was relatively high numbering 1082 out of 3900 non TER applicants in that age range.
- 4.3.5 QTAC assessors are experienced in dealing with substantial numbers of PCAs, including applications from people close to school-leaver ages. Thus, the types of evidence they observed are likely to include at least to some degree those that might be brought to bear by school-leavers from non-conventional schooling backgrounds.
- 4.3.6 Further, the number of applicants in 1999-00 who were Queensland Year 12 applicants was just over 24,000 (44%) of a total of about 55,000 first-preference applications<sup>3</sup>, leaving about 31,000 using other than conventional means of having TERs allotted, usually through application of QTAC “mature-age” schedules.
- 4.3.7 Even though most of those allotments were made by quite mechanical use of schedules, a still substantial number required assessors to use judgement, eg in appraising achievement or levels in employment, or collections of disparate tertiary subjects.
- 4.3.8 As will be discussed in Chapter 6, there is an increasing, recent tendency for school-leavers to present alternative evidence that previously has been offered only by, and considered only for, more mature applicants.

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<sup>1</sup> Twenty-fourth Annual Report to June 2000 (Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre Ltd – Brisbane, 2000) p 124

(Precise statistics are given in the tables to be found on the page cited.)

<sup>2</sup> Davies, Hillary:

Report on QTAC’s Personal Competencies Assessment (PCA) Admissions Scheme Project

(Unpublished QTAC internal report - Brisbane, 2000) p 1.

<sup>3</sup> Twenty-fourth Annual Report to June 2000

(Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre Ltd – Brisbane, 2000) p 129.

- 4.3.9 This is seen not only as a sign that school-leavers are identifying their non-conventional achievements, in a school subject sense, as evidence relevant to tertiary admission; but also that they are marshalling and presenting it in the expectation that it will affect their prospects of receiving a preferred tertiary offer or securing employment.
- 4.3.10 Furthermore, institutions increasingly willingly admit school-leavers (as defined in para 1.1.3) on the basis of such evidence – sometimes acting on applications, sometimes responding to advice about a potentially suitable candidate identified by QTAC and brought to their notice, or via school-based reports about a specific student’s tertiary preparedness.
- 4.3.11 So it is appropriate to include that sort of evidence in the field of possible evidence for use by school-leavers. Some sorts of performance evidence to which schedules are applied are not achievable by school-leavers – through their limited life experience outside formal schooling, for example. However, particularly vocational achievement and lower level AQF certification are increasingly within the scope of evidence school-leavers might and indeed do present.
- 4.3.12 The project team and assessors reflected on their general and specialist experience, and commenced identifying the sorts of evidence that a school leaver might be able to present. This began the development of the list of evidence given in Table 4.2, achieved after progressing through the consultation and field research reported in following parts of this Chapter.
- 4.3.13 An applicant for PCA is invited to address six dimensions by producing evidence for assessment:
- Tertiary preparation.
  - Tertiary maturity.
  - Independent learning strategies.
  - Interpersonal and communication skills.
  - Achievement and experience.
  - Skills and knowledge.
- Each of these broad headings has a sub-set of specific criteria that should be addressed in preparing a PCA submission.
- 4.3.14 At a primary level, the evidence presented by PCA applicants covers most of the class D evidence from the comprehensive range of evidence relevant to

school-leavers that is listed in Table 4.2 - with the proviso that evidence about achievement and experience might draw on classes A, B, and C.

- 4.3.15 While much of the field of evidence was sketched out at this first stage, subsequent stages added to and refined the project's understanding and descriptions, and the notion of what "evidence" is.
- 4.3.16 In particular, considering the processing of PCA applications, it began to be clear that "evidence" includes not only factual records of achievement, but also demonstrated capability to describe one's own aspirations and access to information and support. Further, and above this, lies the capability to marshal and present evidence purposefully, and to make an argument using it to support one's case. These, it appeared during consultations, are seen as three different but connected levels of evidence that influence assessors. They gave rise to evidence class E in Table 4.2.
- 4.3.17 The way in which that connectedness is assessed for ranking or admissions purposes became a key consideration in examining ways in which an alternate general process for allocating TERs might work. (Chapter 5)

### **Formally Examined Study**

- 4.3.18 Formally examined study derived from the PCA applications tended to be of these types:
- TAFE units intended to be included in calculation using a Schedule constructed to provide a TER to school-leavers not eligible for award of an OP.
  - AMEB and other music or performance related accredited qualifications.
  - Other TAFE or University study not included on the Senior Certificate.
  - Subjects studied solely for prerequisite purposes.

### **Non-formal Achievements**

- 4.3.19 Non-formal achievements, in a conventional schooling sense, tended to be of these types:
- Second language proficiency.
  - Sponsored Australian schools competition subject prizes.
  - St John's Ambulance – First Aid and Resuscitation.

- Lifesaving Bronze Medallion and Bronze Star.
- Work Experience.
- Volunteer work.
- Hobbies and Interests.
- Girl Guides, Scouting and similar activities and achievements.
- Relevant skills and achievements, eg photography course applicant – exhibitions, prizes, local newspaper work.
- Sports qualifications and awards, eg for fitness instructor course.
- School responsibilities, eg Captain.
- International exchanges.
- Miscellaneous awards.

4.3.20 The actual value of such evidence tends to be situational and unique in respect of each candidate – essentially by its use for addressing the dimensions given in paragraph 4.3.19, or demonstrating readiness for a particular course.

#### **4.4 WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE? SCHOOL-BASED VIEWS**

4.4.1 In this stage a limited number of school administrators and practitioners, and members of related agencies such as TAFE staff in colleges and institutes, BSSSS, and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority, were consulted. Personal and telephone consultations were held with school principals, and guidance officers, and visits were made to six schools. The sources, fourteen in all, were located in Brisbane and in adjacent regions to north and south.

4.4.2 These consultations addressed the discovery of sorts of evidence not necessarily identified from the perspective of QTAC experience. The discussions dealt with:

- the sort of evidence that might exist in accessible form,
- from where it might be made available,
- the attitudes of those consulted to whether they might make available data held in their care, and

- perceptions on whether the data discussed would form a proper basis for awarding TERs (OE) that could stand alongside TERs.

### **Schools Keep a Broad Range of Evidence**

- 4.4.3 Schools are generally keepers of a much broader range of evidence than is conventionally considered for admission of 16-19 year olds by way of TERs.
- 4.4.4 During visits to two country schools in particular, it proved possible to secure a quite detailed idea of the sorts of student-related information held in an orderly way in student records. Fortunately, these schools creatively, and by using non-conventional means, have provided for the needs of students not attracted to the conventional upper-school program. They have done so by unconventional school based programs, with varying amounts of student participation in real vocational and other community activity. In this, the schools have been the students' "home base" and recording agency – as well as providing conventional educational elements.
- 4.4.5 This process contributed to the creation of the list of 38 types of evidence shown in Table 4.2.
- 4.4.6 One of the two schools recorded 25 of the types of evidence listed in that table, and the other 24 of the 25 types evidenced in the student achievements recorded in the first school. The types of evidence held are listed in Table 4.1, where the terms describing the list of evidence reflect that early stage of its development.
- 4.4.7 From the perspective of this project, it is remarkable and encouraging that about half the types of evidence available in the two schools are of qualitative character, drawing on appraisals made by school staff about students' competencies, and their tertiary or general study-readiness characteristics. In recording some types of evidence, school staff rely in part on the opinions of others, eg employers, or leaders in community voluntary activities.
- 4.4.8 Other schools consulted, and third-party opinion about evidence held by schools, indicated that the range of evidence recorded varies a great deal, as does the form in which data are recorded and the definitions of data elements. Schools holding to an exclusive focus on the conventional academic curriculum seem to have limited, mostly codified and numerical data.

**Table 4.1: Types of Evidence\* potentially available at Queensland Regional Secondary Schools**

Where obtained	Nature of Evidence	School A	School B
School based	TER (Overall Position)	*	*
	Field Positions	*	*
	Core Skills Test results	*	*
	Board accredited	*	*
	Board registered	*	*
	Board recorded:	*	*
	AMEB		
	TAFE/private provider	*	*
	Other		
	Completion of new apprenticeship/traineeships	*	*
	Other schooling:	*	*
	Year 10 and 11		
	Overseas Year 12		
Interstate Year 12			
Non-school based	Tertiary experience (Dip, AD, B)		
	Bridging and preparatory courses (include CATP, Unilearn)		
	Completion of new apprenticeships/traineeships		
	Completion of health related qualifications		
	Commissioned officers		
	TAFE/private provider VET		
	Short courses eg first aid		
	STAT results		
Work	Employment – period of service & nature of work	*	*
	Comments on employment-based competencies	*	*
	Recognition of prior learning using challenge testing	*	*
Other	Personal Competencies Assessment, similar assessments	*	*
	Tertiary awareness, readiness and motivation	*	*
	Written statement describing tertiary or study-specific aptitudes	*	*
	Factual/qualitative/prognostic review of school achievements	*	*
	Factual/qualitative/prognostic review of personal achievements		*
	*		
	Factual/qualitative/prognostic review of community activities		*
	Substantial informal non-school achievement eg		
	Musical expertise	*	*
	Pertinent life skills and experiences	*	*
	Professional readiness	*	*
	Reflective description of professional-course readiness	*	*
	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Schemes	*	*
UQ Link, QSTEP, Unireach, QTAC Special Consideration of Disadvantage	*	*	
Focussed high expertise in an area			
Other evidence			

\* This material was collected during the course of development of the range of types of evidence shown in Table 4.2. Some of the categories used here have been changed.

- 4.4.9 In this context, schools do appear to be willing to provide traditional written reference-type opinions in support of their school-leavers, including specific-purpose opinions. Members of the project team and co-opted, experienced QTAC assessors reviewed the over 100 applications from high-performing conventional school-leavers for selection as Dean’s Scholars in the Faculty of Science, QUT.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of applicants were clearly of very high quality, and would almost certainly have been looked upon proudly in their schools.
- 4.4.10 The references and personal reports provided by schools showed a marked separation into two categories:
- Reports written with insight into individuals’ characteristics, using example, and confident language and tone chosen to reflect that insight into particular cases.
  - Reports making considerable use of stock phrases, apparently drawn from syllabus documents, and creating the impression that the authors had comparatively less insight into the applicants.
- 4.4.11 No enquiries were made into reasons for this noticeable difference. It was disquieting, however, to see that the two categories respectively represented “non-government” and “government” schools. The project found no evidence whatever to suggest that government schools have a comparatively less sensitive appreciation of their students. Indeed, the long-term experience of project team members is that high levels of effective professional and personal care for students can be found in secondary schools in all sectors.
- 4.4.12 However, it is considered a material observation for this project, since it suggests there might be a systemic tendency in qualitative school reports, used in making the complex qualitative judgements undertaken, to disadvantage a particular set of applicants. This view is based on the project team’s personal responses to the reports and their wording.
- 4.4.13 Concerning the range of evidence generally held by schools, it was observed that the extent of data available in individual schools seems linked to the levels of community and industry networking undertaken by schools. As one example, the effect of embracing the VET-in-Schools program appears to be to expand the range of qualitative evidence held, as well as evidence of external achievement. This was seen in both government and non-government schools.

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<sup>1</sup> See paras 4.6.45-55.

- 4.4.14 Likewise, the range of evidence available in schools seems to be greater in some than in others. Data held seem to reflect the extent to which schools recognise and cater for the aptitudes and interests of their students, eg by creating for them a curriculum addressing wide and higher order overall development objectives. This appears to be so, for example:
- Where schools have effective, overriding development objectives for all students regardless of conventional academic prowess.
  - Where schools themselves conduct alternative core programs suited to deliberately selected members of their own student communities.
  - Where as a consequence the schools ready themselves to report on students and referee them in non-conventional (not solely codified academic) ways.
  - Where the schools have good extra-mural and extra-school student programs as part of the curriculum, and actively support and give validity to aspirations for direct movement into post-school vocational placement.

#### **Students Assemble Data About Themselves**

- 4.4.15 Students collect and husband data about themselves. This is directly encouraged and supported by most schools. Some of those consulted in secondary and tertiary settings commented that the impressiveness of such collections was almost invariably greatest for those students who were in any case best qualified in conventional terms.
- 4.4.16 Examination of a set of sample Year 12 student portfolios tended to confirm this view. The opinion was later reinforced by the very high quality portfolio material tendered by students, drawn almost entirely from the top three TER bands, who were competing for selection as Dean's Scholars, in the Science Faculty of the Queensland University of Technology.

#### **Schools and School Personnel are Reluctant to Provide Some Evidence**

- 4.4.17 Some schools and school personnel are reluctant to provide evidence for use in tertiary selection, especially qualitative evidence. Others, however, see supplying such evidence as a normal part of professional activity and service.
- 4.4.18 Those who display reluctance to supply evidence, or who show reticence about the alternative admissions proposal itself, appear to do so because of:

- concerns about whether school personnel should be actively or directly contributing to the decision making process for tertiary selection purposes - there were overtones of concern about the appropriateness or permissibility of working “outside” the “normal system”;
- uncertainty about whether all types of evidence from the range developed by the project are relevant for selection considerations; and
- concerns about perceived personal, legal vulnerability arising from communicating (especially opinionative) information on individual students that might not support an application, or might be supplied by a third party, eg an employer or work-experience supervisor.

#### **4.5 PROBABLE SCOPE OF USEABLE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE**

4.5.1 At this stage of reflective and field enquiry, the list of possible types of useful evidence had emerged in substantially final form. A few elements were made clearer by the further exploratory work reported in the remainder of this Chapter, leading to adjustments being made to notions of evidence. It seems appropriate to show at this stage, as Table 4.2, the list of postulated types of evidence in its most comprehensive form.

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**Table 4.2: Range of Possible Evidence for Use in Calculating an Alternate TER for School-Leavers**

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**Class of  
Evidence  
(Sources)**

**Nature of Evidence (Types)**

##### **A. School Based and Equivalent Year levels**

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| A1* | TER (Overall Position)  |
| A2  | Field positions   |
| A3  | Core Skills Test results<br>Senior Subject Results  |
| A4* | Board Accredited  |
| A5* | Board Registered  |
| A6* | Board Recorded, eg VET subjects<br>AMEB/ANZCA, Trinity College of London and similar results                              |
| A7* | Other Schooling:<br>Year 10 & Year 11<br>Overseas Year 12<br>Interstate Year 12<br>Other secondary-school subject results |
| A8* | Completion of New Apprenticeships / traineeships  |
| A9* | TAFE / private provider   |

##### **B. Non-School Based**

- B1\* External Senior
- B2\* Tertiary Experience (Dip, Adv Dip, Bachelor's degree)
- B3\* Bridging & Preparatory Courses (inc CATP, Unilearn)
- B4\* Completion of Apprenticeships/traineeships
- B5\* Completion of employment qualifications, eg health inspector,
- B6\* Employment advancement, eg commissioned officer ADF
- B7\* TAFE/Private Provider VET
- B8\* Short Courses eg First Aid
- B9\* STAT results
- B10\* UMAT results

### **C. Work-based**

- C1\* Employment - period of service & nature of work
- C2\* Comments on employment-based competencies#
- C3 Recognition of current competencies, eg by using challenge testing

### **D. Other#**

- D1\* Tertiary awareness, professional or professional-course readiness and motivation
- D2\* Description of tertiary or study-specific aptitudes
- D3\* Factual description of school, personal & community achievements
- D4\* Prognostic review of school, personal & community achievements
- D5\* Pertinent life skills and experiences
- D6\* Focussed high expertise in an area (eg arachnids, poetic writing)
- D7\* Language mastery
- D8\* Personal support systems likely to enhance tertiary success

### **E. Processing#**

#### **Personal**

- E1\* Capacity to present evidence in a way relevant to tertiary aspiration
- E2\* Capacity to mount persuasive argument above evidence presentation
- E3\* How the applicant relates aspirations and skills to chosen preferences, metacognitive insights

#### **Third-Party**

- E4 Assessed value of evidence in light of the individual applicant's situation

### **F. Special Entry Schemes**

- F1 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Schemes
- F2 UQ Link, QSTEP, Unireach, QTAC Special Consideration of Disadvantage

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**TOTAL CLASSES OF EVIDENCE: 6    TOTAL TYPES OF EVIDENCE: 36**

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\* These types of evidence are already used, in different combinations, and to various extent, for producing TERs for "mature-age" applicants using QTAC schedules, or for school-leavers, eg in PCA (para 3.34) or calculation of ranks for OP ineligible year 12 applicants (para 3.40)

# Can include cognitive, psycho-motor, and/or affective components.

#### 4.6 **ALTERNATIVE EVIDENCE USED IN FIVE CURRENT, RELEVANT, ADMISSION SCHEMES**

4.6.1 The project sought examples of the use of alternative evidence from existing admission schemes. Five types of schemes were explored:

- Schemes targeting individual cases of disadvantage.
- A main-stream university early admission scheme using some qualitative evidence.
- A regional university admission scheme addressing a recognised geographic area of special need – lower socio-economic circumstances, and low tertiary participation rate.
- A faculty-based scheme selecting from high-achieving school-leavers.
- A course-based TAFE selection process.

4.6.2 The schemes were examined to discover types of evidence presented, as a test for the project's developing assumptions about that question, and for the extent to which types of evidence were sought or presented (dealt with in this Chapter). This examination was also concerned with the manner in which evidence was used for making admissions decisions (dealt with in Chapter 5).

### Admissions Schemes Dealing with Individual Disadvantage - Evidence

- 4.6.3 Schemes of this type are illustrated by scheme titles set out in Table 4.2.
- 4.6.4 A view of the types of evidence used in such schemes was obtained by:
- drawing on the experience of QTAC officers, who assist in making judgements on individuals, or by passing applications lodged centrally to institutions for consideration; and
  - visiting central and faculty-based officers in QUT<sup>1</sup> who consider applicants in that University's QSTEP scheme for disadvantaged students.
- 4.6.5 These types of schemes are focussed essentially on making an adjustment to a TER obtained in a conventional way, to compensate for demonstrable disadvantage suffered by an individual.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the schemes do rely on presentation of and judgements about qualitative and quantitative evidence, and are therefore one vehicle for testing the worth of the assumptions and observations built into Table 4.2 concerning school-leavers.
- 4.6.6 Typically, although not entirely, the schemes are faculty or course-based. It is common for them to be operated by one or two experienced academic staff, and one or two experienced administrators. They are charged with responsibility for running the scheme, and have accumulated or developed experience in considering special admissions candidates. Sometimes, when there is a sufficient feeling of shared trust in decision making, one or two people – academic or administrative - make the special admission decisions, consulting colleagues only in marginal or unusual cases.
- 4.6.7 There is a substantial overlap in the hierarchy of importance of evidence presented and used by assessors, and the usually locally understood if not codified values frameworks within which decisions are made.
- 4.6.8 Illustrated by some comments made by university course-level officers consulted, the main evidentiary factors appear to be as follow.

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<sup>1</sup> Details given in Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> The Regional Special Admissions Scheme conducted by Griffith University at its Logan Campus is dealt with separately because, while having many of the features of the QUT schemes, is directed also at producing a cultural change generally in its local region in terms of promoting university study as an achievable aspiration.

#### 4.6.9 **Primary factors:**

- Proximity to TER cut-off or equivalent<sub>2</sub> (“Normal TER cut-off is 2, I have in mind TER of 5 or 6.” “Automatically take applicants within two TER bands of cut-off.”)
- Ability to satisfy subject prerequisites. Other indicative subject choice. School reports.
- Especially beyond “tolerable” distance from TER cut-off, rely mostly on school or teacher’s assessment of suitability for course; sometimes includes explanation of disadvantage factors.

#### 4.6.10 **Secondary factors:**

- Motivation, commitment to course, displayed by effort put into writing, relevant extra-mural achievements, course preference, prior study in related field (“look more closely at course preference” “a lot of work compiling the evidence indicates a level of commitment.”)
- Degree of hardship experienced (“the student’s statement in QSTEP application.”)
- Reasons or personal history supplied by students – but this has little weight, because not often well composed, applicants get little guidance. (“applicants have little idea about what to write”, “don’t rely much on the student’s narrative ... just increases (our) personal concern for the student”)

4.6.11 So, for school-leavers, this type of admissions process does use a small sub-set of evidence types contained in Table 4.2. They are mostly school-based quantitative and qualitative performance data, and school-based prognostic opinion, with lesser reliance on applicant explanation, and very low use of personal process factors and other qualitative data.

### **A University Main-Stream Admission Scheme using Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence.**

4.6.11 Bond University bases undergraduate admission on a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence. For school-leavers, and somewhat less so for others, that evidence is very heavily school based. The University draws applicants from a distributed national and international catchment. The University is a private, fee-paying institution; this in itself sequesters its applicant pool. An

attractive feature to many students is the opportunity the University offers them to progress comparatively speedily through a three-part, “full-duration” academic year – thereby allowing a student to complete their course in two years.

- 4.6.12 Student, school, and in some cases employer or supervisor, are guided in the presentation of admissions evidence to the University through a well structured application form to which they contribute information in terms of fact and opinion.
- 4.6.13 The scope of evidence asked for is indicated generally by this list:
- Secondary and any tertiary achievements, in codified form.
  - Profile of previous studies undertaken.
  - Profile of employment history.
  - Five brief personal expressions of opinion touching on interests and aspirations, abilities in analysis and commentary, extra-mural engagement, and metacognitive awareness of the University’s basis for making admissions decisions.
  - Ranking in school peer group in terms of academic performance (school judgment).
  - School rankings of the applicant, against the tertiary-bound peer group, on potential for university success – generally, in terms of some fields of study and on personal factors of motivation, self-discipline, leadership, self-confidence, maturity, and work self-reliance.
  - An unstructured written reference dealing with scholarly and personal qualities.
- 4.6.14 Students who would like personal help to address the requirements of the application form and process can telephone a designated person in the University; or contact dispersed, regional admissions managers. This assistance can help intending applicants to reconcile personally sourced data with application-form requests.
- 4.6.15 More importantly, applicants can form and reshape their understanding of the University’s expectations about how to compose and present qualitative evidence, and about relevant matters to deal with. In this way, candidates are helped to identify useable sorts of evidence which is thereby given recognised potential value, even if in a general way.

- 4.6.16 When considered against the field of evidence listed in Table 4.2, the evidence sought by Bond University for routine undergraduate admission appears to cover most of the types listed there. It appears not particularly to address evidence of the sort required by special entry schemes based on disadvantage, or to enable codified recognition of current competencies.
- 4.6.17 It provides, however, opportunities for applicants to present almost all types of evidence listed. Thus, there is a high level of congruency between the Table 4.2 material, and evidence sought by the University.
- 4.6.18 A notable and differentiating aspect of this application process is its invitation to supply evidence relevant to aspiration, and to general as well as scholarly tertiary readiness – alongside its firm interest in school or other scholarly achievement. Thus, as well as catering for those preferring a Bond enrolment, it also provides for competent students who do not meet contemporary TER cut-offs for courses in their local preferred institutions. In this way, Bond can be considered by applicants as an alternative provider of (fee-paying) places in a first-preference study area.

#### **A Regional Special Admissions Scheme using Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence**

- 4.6.19 Before Griffith University's commencement on its Logan Campus in 1998, it began an early admission scheme for the Logan region – intended to promote aspiration to undertake university education, and to facilitate access.
- 4.6.20 This approach addressed the University's and Commonwealth and State Governments' recognition of the Logan region as having special educational needs, arising substantially from comparatively low tertiary participation. It was intended to encourage forthcoming and recent school-leavers into Logan courses, and to help more mature people make a graduated approach to admission and university study.
- 4.6.21 The scheme has been embraced warmly by the local community and its leaders. The University considers it successful, and has recently decided to continue its development and operation. This decision has been taken in the face of comparatively high financial and in-kind costs of conducting the scheme, but also apparently in recognition of its value to the University in establishing a critical level of regional presence.
- 4.6.22 The University actively extends awareness of the scheme into the regional community. It does so in various ways for different possible students. The awareness program shows a marked emphasis on personal representation and contact. This project sees that face-to-face component of the awareness program as especially important in reaching and creating confidence in potential applicants with little family or peer history of tertiary participation;

or for whom tertiary study would be a way of achieving improved socio-economic mobility.

4.6.23 Core aspects of this scheme for generating interest among possible students in graduated engagement with the University are:

- Advertisement in larger regional newspapers, explaining ways of making enquiries and application.
- Personal promotional visits to regional schools, with follow-up visits to assist individuals to talk through options.
- Targeted mail-outs giving means of considering and actioning university enrolment.
- Campus visits by TAFE students, especially those in tertiary access programs.
- Personal follow-up to telephone enquirers from the local region.
- Numerous evening information sessions about the nature of university study and participation, about courses and careers, and about how to apply, including using the regional early admission scheme.

4.6.24 From the perspective of this project, one significant, developmental element of this scheme is its intention to create aspirations, and to make credible to individuals the possibility that they might personally carry those aspirations into effect by demonstrating valid grounds for admission.

4.6.25 This intention is made more efficacious by drawing the attention of possible applicants to:

- The provision of free transitional workshops to help newly admitted students prepare for tertiary study.
- Special funding to provide three weeks of learning assistance, development of library skills, and similar help, for students admitted under the regional scheme.

4.6.26 The early admission application form itself asks specifically for:

- reason for selecting the one chosen course;
- secondary school year-level achieved;
- post-secondary studies;

- other non-formal educational activities, qualifications, experience, references, general achievements;
- employment experience; and
- any disadvantage that should be considered.

- 4.6.27 The second and important aspect of this approach is its material role in bringing about the virtual “discovery” of personally relevant evidence – by helping applicants understand what types of evidence the university regards well and, as shown in Chapter 5, by using a process that assists applicants to identify evidence, assemble it, and shape it appropriately in presentation.
- 4.6.28 The range of evidence produced by applicants again covers most of the types listed in Table 4.2, but with quite variable incidence – both within the range of types, and between the school leaver and over-19 age groups. See Table 4.3.
- 4.6.29 The Griffith Regional Scheme has two notable differences in its procedures compared with, eg the Bond University admissions application provisions for obtaining evidence.
- 4.6.30 Applicants are exposed to a graduated series of experiences – using documents and group and individual oral communication - during which they have the opportunity to develop an understanding of what relevant evidence they personally might marshal.
- 4.6.31 Their application is presented personally to a University assessor, in documentary and oral form, and in a conversational and thus interactive setting.
- 4.6.32 During the assessment interview, held at the Logan Campus, evidence is presented by way of a written submission and in response to assessors’ questions. Further, since the assessment process is focussed on entry to a specific tertiary course, it seems that individual suites of evidence are weighted with that focus, eg in the citation of relevant work experience. See Chapter 5.

**Table 4.3: Use of Evidence\* by Applicants, Griffith University, Logan Campus, Regional Early Admission Scheme**

Nature of Evidence	Applicants under 19 years			Applicants over 19 years		
	Number of times used	Important to applicant	Important to description	Number of times used	Important to applicant	Important to description
a TER (Overall Position)	3			6	1	
b Board registered and recorded subjects	43	5	45	19	1	7
c Field Positions	0			2		
d Core skills test results	8			7		
e Tertiary experience	2		1	3	2	3
f School base subject grades	7	2		7		
g School, other education & training courses	6	2		20	6	4
h Results from formal, non-school qualifications	2			0		
i Completion of new apprenticeships/traineeships	0			4		
j Voc ed/private provider AQF certificates/diplomas	2			29	11	20
k STAT results	0			2		1
l Employment – period of service & nature of work	28	4		38	11	5
m Recognition of prior learning using challenge testing	0			1		
n comments on employment-based competencies	20	16	2	32	25	1
p Substantial informal non-school achievement eg Musical expertise	9	3		2	1	
q Focussed high expertise in an area	0			0		
r Pertinent life skills and experiences	20	13	5	32	24	7
s PCAs similar assessments	0			0		
t ATSI/UQ link performance	0			0		
u Tertiary awareness, readiness and motivation	15	8	9	24	7	4
v Written statement describing tertiary or study-specific aptitudes		3		1	7	2
w Factual/qualitative/prognostic review of school achievements	31	17	5	3	1	
x Factual/qualitative/prognostic review of personal achievements	17	13		23	12	2
y Factual/qualitative/prognostic review of community activities	19	11		19	10	1
z Professional readiness		3		7	2	1
aa Reflective description of professional-course readiness	18	10	8	27	17	4
ab Other evidence		1	1		0	
Totals	257	105	71	316	135	61

\* This material was collected during the course of development of the range of types of evidence shown in Table 4.2. Some of the categories used here have been changed.

- 4.6.33 The project team believes that this is one reason for the clear spread in incidence of use of different types of evidence.
- 4.6.34 While the pattern of citation of evidence shown in Table 4.3 is different for school-leavers and those aged over 19 years, as might be expected, the characteristics (Table 4.4) that are particularly notable for this project are:
- the considerable extent to which school-leavers were in a position to present evidence that overlapped with evidence types used by applicants aged over 19 years; and
  - the range of numbers of types of evidence presented by school-leavers, which cluster in the same two bands (4 to 9 types, in the total range of from 3 to 17 types), as for evidence presented by over 19-year-olds.
- 4.6.35 Table 4.4 shows the comparative use of types of evidence by school-leavers, and those over 19 years of age.

**Table 4.4 The Comparative Use of Types of Evidence by School-leavers, and those over 19 years of Age – Griffith University at Logan, Regional Special Admissions Schemes**

USE OF EVIDENCE	SCHOOL-LEAVERS (45) (aged 19 or below)	AGED OVER 19 (38)
Gender of applicants	7m 38 f	8 m 30 f
Total citations of different evidence types shown in Table 4.3	173	232
Average use of evidence types per applicant	3.85	5.8
Range of number of types of evidence used <sup>1</sup>		
1 – 3 types used	5	0
4 – 6	26	13
7 – 9	10	22
10 – 17	4	8
Proportionate use of types of work and life experience evidence (In Table 4.3, types l,m,n,p,r) drawn from outside formal education and training	35% (81 total citations)	31% (53 total citations)
Outcome of application:		
Successful	2	14+
conditional	27	14
unsuccessful	16	12

<sup>1</sup> Figures weighted to account for 45 school-leavers compared with 38 over-19 year-olds. Data taken from content analysis of written applications and written records of interview kept for sample of 83 studied.

- 4.6.36 Of particular interest to this project is the capacity demonstrated by school-leavers to identify evidence, other than an OP, on which to make a case for admission to a tertiary course. In fact, school-leaver applicants to the Griffith scheme make application and have interviews, and conditional offers made, at least four months before the availability of TER results.
- 4.6.37 A further notable characteristic is the high proportion of females in the sample – 84% of school-leavers, and 79% of over-19s - compared for example with QTAC applicants for PCA assessment at just over 60%.
- 4.6.38 Discussions about apparent gender imbalance were held with officers conducting the scheme, including consideration of responses made during the early contact stages of each year's procedures.
- 4.6.39 Briefly stated, observations arising from internal University inspection<sup>1</sup> of this apparent imbalance compared with like courses on other Griffith campuses close to the Logan Region, were that:
- In courses substantially chosen by women (education, nursing, environmental health), where women make up between 79% and 91% of applications/enrolments<sup>2</sup>, Logan early admissions proportions were generally higher, and in two of five cases significantly higher (95% confidence) at 14 and 29% points of difference.
  - In courses substantially chosen by men, or with about the same numbers of men and women (internet computing, financial planning, and business management), Logan early admissions proportions were generally higher for women and in three of five cases significantly higher (95% confidence) at close to 25% points of difference.
- 4.6.40 The discussions lead to the view that, compared with young men, young and mature women appear to have a heightened appreciation of the need and willingness to secure formal vocational credentials to effect personal economic and life-style changes. It is possible, too, that the graduated, personal-style approach taken by the Logan scheme is encouraging to young women.

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<sup>1</sup> Rowan, Phil: Early Admission to Logan – Review (Griffith University, Logan Campus – internal report, September 1999) pp 24-27.

<sup>2</sup> The report used application numbers for the Logan scheme, and enrolments for courses on other campuses.

- 4.6.41 While those impressions were not researched, it is interesting to note recent observations from research conducted in North Queensland indicating that young men find work more readily than women, who are aware of their need to be better qualified to secure employment.<sup>1</sup>
- 4.6.42 In Chapter 6, observations are made about the importance of encouraging vocation-related or general aspiration to tertiary studies, and pointing to ways of acting on aspiration - as a means of providing tertiary access to school-leavers with non-conventional schooling patterns. The Logan Early Admissions experience also appears to connect with comments widely made among secondary education personnel consulted concerning:
- The importance of student aspirations to successful entry to tertiary study.
  - The strong positive or negative influence of a school's labelling of a student as being destined (prepared, suitable, sufficiently able), or not destined, for tertiary study.
  - Students' apprehensions of their own personal resource capability in terms of accessing tertiary attendance – especially in remote situations.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.6.43 These issues are discussed in Chapter 6, where they form part of the collection of observations that lead to the report's findings and recommendations.

#### **A Faculty-Based Program selecting from High-Achieving School-leavers**

- 4.6.44 The Faculty of Science, Queensland University of Technology, each year offers school-leavers the opportunity to compete for places in the Dean's Scholar Program.
- 4.6.45 The Program provides for accelerated study, designed specifically for outstanding students who aspire to becoming research scientists. Course duration for the BSc is two years, including an intensive preparatory summer term. Course design is individually tailored to student needs by a mentoring academic staff member. The highest level of TER is given as the indicative entry level.

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<sup>1</sup> Alloway, Nola, Gilbert, Pam, Haupt, Patricia: Factors Associated with Participation of Male Students in Higher Education Studies at James Cook University (monograph) (School of Education, JCU – Townsville) May 2001, pp 19.

<sup>2</sup> Recognition by a person near a tertiary institution that they might be rendered remote, eg by financial, physiological, or family circumstances, in much the same way as a geographically distant person's access, can be affected by their perceptions about such circumstances personally.

- 4.6.46 The number of places awarded is expected to be in the mid-teens, but in the absence of suitably qualified applicants none need necessarily be made.
- 4.6.47 Of the 103 applications received in 1999-00 – by nomination of the appropriate code on the regular QTAC application form – 97 were from school-leavers, of which 46<sup>1</sup> submitted the additional evidence called for directly by the Faculty. The origins of applicants are given in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Year 12 Applicants and Offers# QUT Science Dean's Scholar Program 1999-00**

	<u>Total</u>	<u>SE Queensland*</u>	<u>Country Queensland</u>	<u>Elsewhere Aust &amp; NZ</u>
<u>Initial Yr-12 Applicants</u>	97 (f 49.5%)	81 (83.5%)	11 (11.3%)	5 (5.2%)
<u>Yr-12 Applicants Submitting Evidence</u>	46 (f 40.5%)	38 (82.6%)	6 (13.0%)	2 (4.3%)
<u>Yr-12 Offers</u>	17 (f 53%)	13 (76%)	4 (23%)	0

\*Region Brisbane – Gold Coast – Sunshine Coast – Toowoomba by school addresses.

# One recent-Year 12 applicant was also offered a place.

- 4.6.48 The documentary and written evidence submitted is built upon by interview, conducted face-to-face or by telephone for applicants unable to attend interview in Brisbane.
- 4.6.49 This stage of fieldwork occurred when the range of evidence progressively identified (Table 4.2) appeared to be fairly stable. The Project was permitted to work with the Faculty academic and administrative officers in developing the latter and brief documents sent direct to initial applicants inviting submission of evidence, by:
- Drawing applicants' attention to the classes and types of evidence identified in the Project, briefly stated, by indicating they might suggest to them suitable sources from which to draw material to be submitted.
  - Providing some starting points for applicants' thinking and reporting about their qualifications, drawing on

<sup>1</sup> One recent - Year 12 applicant also received a place, and was among six non-Year 12 applicants.

- the more process-oriented aspects of the list of evidence;
  - individual factors such as aspiration and ambition; and
  - information provided in consultation with Faculty officers about their approach to making judgements about the “research” worthiness of candidates.
- Providing a telephone contact for applicants wishing to have guidance on providing evidence. (No candidate sought guidance)

4.6.50 All the applications that were supplemented by the submission of evidence were reviewed by the project team to discover classes and types of evidence presented. Table 4.6 sets out the range of evidence presented by Dean’s Scholar applicants, related as far as possible to the list in Table 4.2. The table includes wider data on evidence presentation for later analytical purposes.

**Table 4.6: Applicants Presenting Various Types of Evidence - Dean’s Scholar Applicants (Year-12) 1999-00, and Griffith University Logan Early admission Scheme Applicants, (aged under 19,) 1998-99.\***

**\*(also showing categories covered by additional evidence presented by Year-12 Applicants. (paragraphs 4.26, 4.27))**

<u>Type of Evidence</u>	<u>Frequency of Presentation by Applicants</u>		
	Logan Early Admission	QUT Dean’s Scholar	Total and % of Applicants Presenting  (total cases 91) plus categories of additional evidence presented by yr-12 applicants (+) paras 4.26, 4.27
<u>School-Based</u>			
A1 TER (OP)	3	45	48 53%

<b>A2 Field Positions</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>45 49%</b>
<b>A3 Core Skills Test</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>53 58%</b>
<b>A4 BSSSS Accredited</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>75 82% +</b>
<b>A5 BSSSS Regd</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>11 12%</b>
<b>A6 BSSSS Recorded</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>12 13% +</b>
<b>A7 Other School</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>55 60% +</b>
<b>A8 Apprenticeship-Trainee</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16 18%</b>
<b>A9 TAFE, Private Provider</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3 3% +</b>
<u>Non-School Based</u>			
<b>B1 Extnl Snr</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>B2 Tert Study/Exp</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10 11% +</b>

<b>B3 Brg / Prep Courses</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1 1%</b>
<b>B4 Appr – Trainee</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>B5 Emplt Quals</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>B6 Emplt Rank</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>B7 TAFE Priv Prov</b>			<b>0 +</b>
<b>B8 Short Courses</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>4 4% +</b>
<b>B9 STAT</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>B10 UMAT</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1 1%</b>
<u>Work-Based</u>			
<b>C1 Employment</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>45 49% +</b>
<b>C2 Emplt Appraisal</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>26 29%</b>
<b>C3 RCC (RPP)</b>			<b>0</b>
<u>Other</u>			

<b>D1 Tert / Cse Readiness</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>38 42%</b>
<b>D2 Tert Aptitudes Described</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21 23%</b>
<b>D3 Achvment - Factual</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>57 63% +</b>
<b>D4 Achvment – Prognostic</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>50 55%</b>
<b>D5 Life Skills / Experience</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>8 9% +</b>
<b>D6 Focussed Expertise</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>D7 Language</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>6 7% +</b>
<b>D8 Personal Support Systems</b>			<b>+</b>
Evidence Class E not recorded at this stage.			
<u>Special Entry Schemes</u>			
<b>F1 ATSI</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>F2 Disadvantage*</b>			<b>0</b>
<b>* Noting that the Logan Early Admission Scheme is considered to be providing for disadvantage of a special needs region.</b>			

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4.6.51 The Dean's scholar applicants investigated are all school-leavers in the strictly conventional sense – they have completed Year 12 and are moving

into tertiary education. They are high achievers, and almost all appeared effectively to have collected or drawn on sources of evidence about themselves.

- 4.6.52 Most evidence presented by Dean's Scholar applicants was drawn from school or system sources dealing with formal schooling results. Modest use was made of non-school-based material. More than half drew on work-based evidence. Almost all presented quantitative and qualitative material dealing with wide ranging school, community, and personal achievements – including records of sporting, debating, community service, and similar activity, relevant extra-mural scholarly activity such as nationwide subject competitions, and referees' reports.
- 4.6.53 Again, although there were some types of evidence not reported, there is a range of about 20 types of evidence represented.
- 4.6.54 The Logan Campus applicants do not fall into the high-achiever category. The differences in scope and character of evidence presented are seen to confirm the view expressed by informed observers that there tends to be a fairly close relationship between conventional school achievements and capacity to draw on non-conventional evidence. This appears to be so despite the opportunities presented to identify and present evidence in writing, and orally. The question arises whether the difference might be related to different levels of capacity to purposively marshal and present evidence. It was not addressed in this project.

#### **A Course-focussed TAFE Selection Process.**

- 4.6.55 At the Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE in the region north of Brisbane, the project observed applications to the Certificate III in Information Technology course. The application form requires applicants to make a case for admission.

**Table 4.7: Applicants by Age & Highest Declared Level of Schooling - Certificate III in Information Technology Course, June-2000 - Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE**

Age	Number	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
15 Years	1		1		
16 Years	7		5	2	
17 Years	13		4	2	7
18 Years	12	1	1	1	9
19 Years	10	1	2		7

<b>Total</b>	43	2	13	5	23
4.6.56	Based on the applications received from 16–19 year olds, the applicant cohort at Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE (see Table 4.7) generally indicates a similar spread of evidence to the QUT and Griffith cohorts, albeit at a lower level of achievement.				
4.6.57	Comparatively, there was less evidence of ability to marshal evidence and construct a case for admission - seen mainly in lack of focus of applicants' expressed aspirations. Staff suggested a possible range of reasons for this. IT applicants are seen to have comparatively lower capabilities in formulating prose. It was suggested that Business Studies applicants would have produced a more expressive set of applications.				
4.6.58	Information about an applicant's TER was not requested on the application form. This may have been the cause of a wide-scale omission of key Year 12 evidence, some of which might have resulted in a different outcome for applicants had it been included.				
4.6.59	For example, while the QTAC data-base disclosed that 15 applicants had a TER, only three on application had declared achievement of a TER. The 12 undeclared OPs were fairly evenly spread in the range 11 to 23.				
4.6.60	The question arises whether the omission of that data is detrimental to applicants.				
4.6.61	One TER 11 applicant was allocated a place; another TER 11 applicant who failed to include the information was rejected; a TER-ineligible Year 12 applicant was offered a place.				
4.6.62	However the selectors identified other overriding matters of evidence presented by the successful applications that they said influenced their decision – see paragraph 5.3.62.				
4.6.63	Whilst the omission of TER data could be the result of its not being requested by the Institute, it could also result from the TER data being shown on the Tertiary Entrance Statement and not the Senior Certificate, to which these applicants would refer for their Senior subject results. There was a similar omission of Core Skills Test (CST) results from applications.				
4.6.64	The question also arises whether these applicants made judgements that OPs and CSTs are university- rather than TAFE-relevant. This raises the possibly				

(not investigated) that the colloquial notion of “tertiary” for the local population does not include TAFE.

4.6.65 As observed to quite varying extent with other applicant cohorts examined in this project, some applicants drop out of consideration through sparsity of information provided with the application. Again questions arise about:

- availability of guidance, eg through form design or consultation, to assist candidates to understand what is relevant evidence,
- level of applicant capacity to envisage evidence and compose it for presentation, and
- selector reliance solely on applications presented in the written medium.

#### 4.7 CURRENT USE OF ALTERNATIVE EVIDENCE BY YEAR 12 APPLICANTS TO QTAC

4.7.1 Another approach to exploring the availability of evidence was taken by examining QTAC consolidated data on actual use by Year 12 applicants of non-conventional evidence in support of applications for tertiary admission.

4.7.2 Two types of application have been referred to:

- Applications made by Year 12, TER-ineligible students, 1999-2000 admission period.
- Applications made by people aged 17 years and younger with no formal secondary qualification, 2000-01 admission period.

4.7.3 As explained in paragraph 3.38, TER-ineligible students<sup>1</sup> seeking tertiary admission rely on the use of a QTAC Schedule, and a potentially much larger range of subjects listed on the Senior Certificate than does the calculation of a TER. The method also takes notice of the Core Skills Test if taken.

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<sup>1</sup> To receive a TER based on Queensland Years 11 and 12 studies, school-leavers must have completed four semesters' study in each of five Board (BSSSS) subjects. The BSSSS records three sorts of secondary-type subjects, only Board subjects recognised for allocating school-leavers to the 25 ranks of OPs. The sorts of subjects are:

**Board subjects** – Taught State-wide to BSSSS syllabuses; school assessed using Board-administered assessment moderation procedures; results scaled using State-wide Core Skills Test taken by most, but by no means all, Year 12 students.

**Board Registered subjects** – school or system based, syllabuses appraised and recognised by the BSSSS. Shown as such on Senior Certificates, but not used for OP calculation.

**Board Recorded subjects** – subjects examined/assessed by other agencies recognised by the BSSSS, and results recorded as such on Senior certificates, eg music examination boards, VET subjects.

- 4.7.4 TER-ineligible students made up 25% (9,281) of Year 12 students in 1999. Of those students, 16% (1,493) became applicants for tertiary places. 1,232 (83% of TER-ineligible applicants) received offers. So it can be assumed that at least this number was able to rely on non-conventional evidence to obtain a TER (OE) at a level above the course cut-off. (The acceptance rate was 63%. 608 enrolled, being 41% of such applicants, or 7% of all TER-ineligible students.)
- 4.7.5 That evidence relies typically on subjects registered with the BSSSS by schools, and on VET subjects. Thus, some subjects can be included that are taken outside school, for example in a TAFE setting.
- 4.7.6 That enrolment result raises questions about the extent of immediate tertiary aspiration among non-TER-eligible school-leavers. The issue of aspiration, and factors affecting it, is considered in Chapter 6.
- 4.7.7 On the other hand, the level of enrolment outcome points to the importance of this route for non-TER-eligible people with sustained tertiary aspirations.
- 4.7.8 At another level, applications from people aged 17 years and younger with no Year 12 secondary qualification have recently become a noticeable if still small part of the school leaver applicant group. However, these people are not unqualified. Typically they have left school during or at the end of Year 11. They have no OP, have some form of qualification higher than Year 11, but are not at present able to be accommodated under QTAC schedules.
- 4.7.9 In the 2000-01 admission period, 48 such applications were received. Offers were made to 39, of which 31 were accepted, or accepted and deferred.
- 4.7.10 Their qualifications are sometimes at a post-secondary level. These applicants typically presented AQF certificates in the I – III range, Traineeships, STAT, Tertiary Preparation Programs, and independently credentialed certificates such as AMEB. In some cases, PCA-type evidence was presented. Additionally, there were seven applicants in this category with partial or completed diploma or advanced diploma level study.
- 4.7.11 These examples of the use of non-conventional evidence, although mainly but not predominantly from evidence classes A and B<sup>1</sup>, support the notion that non-conventional evidence is accessible by at least moderate numbers of school-leavers, and that it is being used effectively. It raises doubts about the continuing usefulness of common notions of “leaving school”, and these are addressed in Chapter 6.

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<sup>1</sup> See Table 4.2.

## 4.8 ANALYSIS OF FIELDWORK AND QTAC DATA

4.8.1 Most of the 38 types of evidence included in the list at Tables 4.2 and 4.6 as a result of postulation, or discovery during fieldwork, were found in use in at least one of the sets of cases considered of school-leavers using alternatives to OPs for tertiary admission.

4.8.2 Table 4.6 shows that all but 8 of the 36 types were observed presented in the PCA, Griffith-Logan Early Admissions, and QUT Dean's Scholar programs. The following observations are made about the occurrence of the other types (alpha-numeric references are to Table 4.2):

- **B1 – External Senior.** No cases observed in samples – but PCA assessors report common use of external senior results.
- **B4 – Completion of Apprenticeships, Traineeships.** Although no instances were seen among school-leavers, the increasing possession of AQF Certificates II and III by school-leavers following Traineeships undertaken as part of emerging, structured and managed vocational programs in Schools<sup>1</sup>, justifies retention in the list of this type of potential evidence.
- **B5, B6 – Employment qualifications and level of achievement.** Again, although no evidence was seen, a survey of the recently increasing number of non-TER-eligible school-leavers seeking QTAC-generated TER(OE) suggests retention of this type of potential evidence.
- **C3 – Recognition of current competencies.** No evidence found at school leaver level to justify continuing this postulation.
- **D6 – Focussed high expertise.** No evidence was found at school-leaver level to justify listing this type of potential evidence - probably able to be considered covered by other evidence types.
- **F1, F2 – ATSI, special consideration of disadvantage.** Both types seen in programs addressing disability-disadvantage, for example, in QSTEP and leading to admission to tertiary courses - thus, to be retained.

4.8.3 So it seems fair to say that there is a substantial range of potential evidence available to school-leavers. The relatively low incidence of use of some

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<sup>1</sup> For example, at Redlands College (Wellington Point, Queensland – non-government) 50 of 300 Year 12 students typically undertake a vocational education program managed by the College, involving school studies and external employment experience. Of the 50, about 60-70% usually leave school with level 1 or 2 Certificates obtained through traineeships. Many of the students taking the vocational route move eventually into courses in TAFE, and increasingly university.

evidence does not diminish the importance of recognising its potential use, since:

- The notion of providing an alternative means to give school-leavers access to a TER seems to require the recognition of quite personal, minority evidence profiles.
- The increase in opportunity for school-leavers to undertake a non-conventional senior secondary program appears likely to generated an increase in the accrual by school-leavers of alternative evidence, eg through VET and Traineeship programs, and through different sorts of part-time employment.

- 4.8.4 Concerning the capacity of school-leavers to identify appropriate evidence from their own experience, and present it in ways suited to achieving recognition towards a TER(OE), some school-leavers do appear to have difficulty recognising suitable evidence, and presenting it in the most suitably persuasive ways.
- 4.8.5 However, the experience of institutions using a variety of methods to assist applicants, reported in this Chapter, indicates that students can be very materially assisted by them to shape applications in a way that improves the identification and selection of evidence, and the way evidence is put forward. Methods include use of written advice and exemplars, including formative items in application forms, offering telephone advice on identifying and using evidence, and drawing out of evidence interactively during interview.
- 4.8.6 The capability of applicants to present evidence in persuasive ways becomes itself a second-order form of evidence able to be used in making admissions judgments. This is recognised by the inclusion of evidence class E in Table 4.2.
- 4.8.7 From examination of evidence presentation in circumstances in which assistance to shape applications has been offered, the project concludes that offering help assists those who can marshal evidence, build argument upon it, and exhibit metacognitive understanding to do so, while not seemingly to unfairly advantage those who do not intrinsically possess those capabilities.
- 4.8.8 From the general observations of the project team, it seems clear that for a considerable proportion of practitioners in secondary and tertiary education, concerns remain about what alternative evidence represents when seen against conventional schooling, eg how do AQF I-IV qualifications compare with BSSSS subjects?

4.8.9 Yet it is not easy to see why such evidence when presented by school-leavers cannot be given the same value as attributed by QTAC schedules for people only two or three years older. Evidence is evidence.

4.8.10 The incidence of evidence presented by school-leavers in domains addressed by QTAC schedules for calculating TERs can be seen as modest - except for employment, where almost half the applicants recorded in Table 4.6 record some entry. However, the modest increases in numbers of young people post Year 10 who are gaining higher non-school qualifications, the increasing flexibility in providing and recording experience and achievement for senior secondary students, and the increasing openness of tertiary institutions to overlook minimum-age constraints on use of QTAC Schedules suggest that these types of evidence can be expected to become more useable by school-leavers.

## 4.9 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT EVIDENCE

4.9.1 On the basis of the fieldwork observations and consolidated data considered in this Chapter, the project team believes that:

- There is a **wide range of evidence accessible** to school-leavers that is not conventionally used for producing TERs, but can be presented for consideration where opportunities are created for school-leavers to do so.
- The **scope and character of that evidence** is represented in general terms by the listing contained in Table 4.2.
- The **quantum of that evidence is expanding** as new formal and informal opportunities become available to 16-19 year olds to engage in new style of education and development, and to obtain vocational experience and training.
- **Some school-leavers are capable of mounting effective applications** for tertiary admission based on non-conventional evidence, especially when assisted to apprehend the relevance of evidence they can personally marshal, and ways of representing evidence.
- Some **school-leavers** in conventional educational streams **are prepared to supplement selection evidence** in the same way.
- Some **school-leavers, who are TER-ineligible, currently access tertiary study** on the basis of non-TER-based evidence.

- The way in which applicants select and present their personal evidence, and **argue their case** based on it, in itself constitutes **a form of evidence** which varies sufficiently to be taken into account in holistic, binary judgments of admissibility – provided there is sufficient certainty that this evidence is the work of the applicant.