



IHEA Supports Nationally Consistent Higher Education Admissions Process

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Independent Higher Education Australia welcomes the COAG Education Council's agreement to establish nationally consistent messaging about higher education admissions processes for 2021 to ensure that students completing their secondary schooling in 2020 receive clear guidance on the process for transition into tertiary study.

IHEA members acknowledge the COAG Education Council's work to drive collaboration between the sector and state jurisdictions to achieve the best outcomes in terms of communication with students. Today's announcement will assure students and their families of the importance and validity of their studies towards achieving an ATAR this year and ensures there will be clarity and transparency in messaging in an unusually stressful and anxious year for Year 12 students.

IHEA members work with the Department of Education, Skills and Employment and the national regulator, TEQSA, to ensure that their admissions processes are transparent and clearly communicated to students applying for enrolment. The sector has worked hard over recent years to improve the transparency of higher education admissions and IHEA members would be disappointed to see this work undone in 2020 due to COVID circumstances.

The ATAR is only one of the measures used for assessment of student applications for entry to higher education institutions, and it is important that the value of that measure not be undermined, but students should also understand that there are many pathways to tertiary admission.

Without the same level of access to the Tertiary Admissions Centres, independent higher education providers rely on alternative pathways for admissions. Many IHEA members also offer specialised courses for which the ATAR is not a satisfactory measure of the student's suitability for the course they are applying for.

IHEA members support the message that the best way to ensure they are able to access their course of choice is to complete their Year 12 studies to the best of their abilities and to check the information provided by their higher education institution of choice.

To ensure equity and fairness for students beyond COVID, independent providers should be given equal access to the Tertiary Admissions Centres' admissions processes along with public universities. Currently, students accessing TACs for information on courses that meet their educational and career objectives can miss the opportunities provided by an independent provider who does not have equal access to TAC services.

In these difficult times for the Australian economy, it is critical that students have as much choice and flexibility in their course options as possible. Students who select the best course for them can follow their passion and are more likely to complete their qualification of choice, successfully upskill and be job-ready on graduation.

Independent higher education providers receive nation-leading QILT scores for course quality, skills development, student support and learner engagement. These are critical attributes for ensuring high levels of achievement and course completion.

IHEA also welcomes the Council's affirmation that Year 12 students experiencing particular disadvantage as a result of the impacts of the disruption caused by COVID-19 will have the opportunity to be given special consideration regarding their ATAR and admission to higher education.

All comment attributable to Simon Finn, CEO, IHEA

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