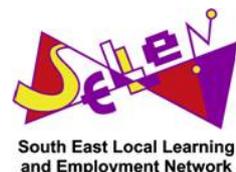


The challenges of transition between secondary school, VET and university: insights from students and educators.

FINAL REPORT

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Research collaboration between Monash University, Chisholm Institute and the South East Local Learning and Employment Network (SE LLEN).



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was conducted to explore student perceptions, aspirations and experiences of transition between secondary school, TAFE and university in the outer south-east region of Melbourne. This research was conducted with academic and practical applications in mind; to further knowledge in the field of transition, and to address the challenges faced by students in accessing and participating in post-secondary studies in the region.

This exploratory research utilised semi-structured focus groups to gain an in depth understanding of the attitudes and experiences of students in regards to vocational and tertiary education. Findings were validated through comparison of perspectives from students and educators across three settings; secondary school, TAFE and university. Overall, 10 focus groups were conducted with 80 students, teachers and support staff.

Findings from secondary schools highlighted the prevailing stereotypes and dichotomised, hierarchical perceptions of TAFE and university study; many of which may be unintentionally perpetuated and reinforced by teachers, family, and broader social networks. It is therefore vital that career guidance programs in secondary schools place greater emphasis on the value of various educational pathways; countering the notions of “failure” and “success” attached to TAFE and university study respectively.

Findings from TAFE students and educators highlighted the critical role that the TAFE environment plays in increasing students’ confidence in their ability to undertake post-secondary studies, and their capacity to pursue a career that they had previously regarded as unattainable. The more flexible and personalised nature of TAFE study was regarded by students and staff as vital to student development. However, this teaching approach was regarded as a double edged sword, with negatively geared terms such as “spoon feeding” and “hand holding” used frequently by both staff and students. TAFE staff expressed concern that they were setting students up for failure, due to the differences in teaching styles and the learning skills required between TAFE and university.

University students who had transitioned from TAFE study reinforced the latter perspective; indicating that they indeed felt unprepared for university learning and assessment. It is therefore critical, as educational pathway options increase and become more popular, that compulsory TAFE to university transition programs are implemented to support students in this process. The “T2U” transition program implemented at Monash University offers one such program that has been appraised by staff and participating students as highly beneficial. Further research is needed, however, to identify the optimal timing, duration and content of such programs to assist student transition, and well as the implementation of “refresher” programs during their first year of study.

Based on findings from this research, a series of recommendations for future transition support strategies and research are presented at the end of this

report. The findings from this research will be disseminated to both academic and professional communities. Findings will be presented at relevant forums and a paper will be submitted for publication in an academic journal. This stakeholder report will be made available online for public access. We hope that the insights gained from this research may be used to inform strategies within secondary schools, TAFEs and universities, to support student access to, and successful participation in higher education.

2. RESEARCH TEAM

The following people have contributed to the design, implementation and write-up of this research study:

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4. APPROVALS

This research was conducted with approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee, Chisholm Institute Ethics Committee and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

5. INTRODUCTION

5.1. Background

The traditional route to university through the completion of secondary school studies is evolving considerably, with an increasing number of students now

being admitted to university on the basis of a complete/incomplete TAFE award course (Watson, 2006).

In spite of the Commonwealth and State governments having generated policies to promote articulation and credit transfer between VET and HE sectors, implementing cross-sectoral linkages and credit transfers between the two education systems has proved to be challenging (Harreveld, 2005). The Bradley Review noted there has been “limited success, due to structural rigidities as well as to differences in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment” (Bradley et al., 2008).

Furthermore, research shows that the transition pathway from VET to university is fraught with a range of problems and challenges for many students (Harris, Sumner & Rainey, 2005; Spencer, 2005; Watson, 2006; Australian Department of Industry, 2009; Australian Productivity Commission, 2011). Dickson, Fleet and Watt (2000) identified six recurring variables in the Australian research literature that impact on TAFE graduates’ transition experiences at university: i) the theoretical knowledge expected at university in contrast to the applied and vocational knowledge required at TAFE; ii) differences in teaching and learning styles at TAFE and university; iii) higher academic standards and uncertainties of the level of expectations; iv) repetition of TAFE content; v) contrasts in staff-student interactions and relationships; and vi) time management difficulties in combining study and other demands such as paid work and family responsibilities.

Carnegie (2000) completed a report on VET-HE cross-sectoral qualifications linkages and identified eight possible barriers that adversely impact on cross-sectoral articulation and linkage arrangements between the two education sectors: i) cultural differences; ii) educational differences; iii) sector focus and integrity; iv) institutional autonomy; v) diversity of content across different qualifications in each sector and the continual change in course content; vi) resource constraints; vii) government policies (e.g., competition policy, different operational, administrative, regulatory and industrial arrangements for each sector); and viii) role of professional associations (Carnegie, 2000). Byrnes et al. (2010) completed a project investigating the issues of articulation and credit transfer between the VET and HE sectors in Queensland. Representatives from 10 universities, 12 TAFE institutes and 10 VET private providers in Queensland were interviewed. Respondents in the study identified several issues related to students’ transition from the TAFE/VET sector to university. These included: i) ‘transition shock’ due to the fact that “culturally and administratively the sectors are quite different and can be difficult for students transitioning from one sector to another”; ii) English language proficiency issues, which were not only a problem for international students but also local students; iii) issues about finances and the cost of HE study; and iv) lack of commonality in fees between HE and VET.

Byrnes and colleagues reported that “the majority of HE respondents cited a diverse array of programs that they are using to address transition issues,

including bridging programs, counselling, one on one support, workshops targeted at transitioning students, or help being available only if sought by students” (Byrnes et al., 2010, p.6). However 30% of HE respondents indicated that they had received no transition programs or strategies. Byrnes et al. (2010, p.6) go on to state that “there seems to be a movement toward more transition programs, but at this stage it is fragmentary, ad hoc and limited in scope...[there is a] lack of co-ordinated, specific and purposive transition strategies to assist VET students to comfortably make the transition to the HE environment”. Therefore identifying features from a variety of audiences of what constitutes an ‘optimal VET-TE transition for students’ would be innovative, timely, and useful.

Traditionally the VET and university sectors were distinct education providers each with their own mandates and foci. With the incorporation of Colleges of Advanced Education into the university system in the late 1980s and early 90s, the emergence of blended vocational and higher education systems and the evolution of dual-sector institutions has arisen, and subsequently the *transition pathways* for students have become confusing and blurred for them. As noted by Watson (2006): “Sectoral differences in approaches to learning and teaching, course delivery and curriculum and assessment means that many VET Diploma students are not adequately prepared to undertake studies in HE. Lack of understanding of the VET system by teaching staff in universities compounds the difficulties VET graduates face in making the transition...many students find the transition difficult due to sectoral differences in teaching and learning, and the failure of teaching staff in both sectors to recognise and accommodate them” (Watson, 2006, p.1).

Just how VET educators regard their value and place in the dual sector system of education provision in Australia may significantly impact on the intentions of their students to consider a place in a university course upon graduating from TAFE. For example, while it is suggested that university teaching staff often view the VET sector as an inferior alternative to HE, recent research suggests that VET educators are equally as dismissive of HE, with both views often based on decades-old perceptions rather than present-day realities (Ross, 2009). Therefore, it is important to investigate what factors facilitate and promote the positive articulation arrangements for students to transition from the VET sector to HE.

5.2 Aims and objectives

This study was specifically designed to explore student perceptions, aspirations and experiences of transition between secondary school, VET and HE in the outer south-east region of Melbourne. This research was conducted with both academic and practical applications in mind; to further knowledge in the field of transition, and to address the challenges faced by students in accessing, participating in and successfully adapting to post-secondary studies in the region.

Students in the outer south-east have notably lower rates of Year 12 completion compared to Melbourne metropolitan averages (SELLEN, 2013). Statistics indicated that there is also a growing number of secondary school aged students who are choosing to complete the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) or Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) instead of completion of VCE in a formal schooling environment (SELLEN, 2013).

The outer south-east region of Melbourne is also characterised by a notably high population of students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds; particularly in the Cities of Casey and Greater Dandenong. This poses additional challenges to students in terms of adaptation to new social and educational environments and practices, language difficulties, and differing views regarding education and employment (SELLEN, 2013).

Monash University and Chisholm Institute are the major HE and VET providers in this geographical region, and have formed a strategic partnership to facilitate student transition between the two sectors. They are ideally positioned to undertake collaborative research that will enable a better understanding of the issues in student transition in this region, and the strategies that can be adopted to support students in their pursuit of higher education.

6. METHOD

6.1 Research design

This qualitative research utilised semi-structured focus groups to explore student perceptions, aspirations and experiences relating to TAFE and university study and the perceptions of teachers and support staff from the secondary schools, TAFE and university settings in which the students participated.

6.2 Participants

A series of 10 focus groups were conducted with 80 students, teachers and support staff from secondary school, TAFE and university settings in the outer south-east region of Melbourne (refer Table 1). Additional participant details are presented in the results section below.

These participant groups were consulted as a means of data triangulation; to add validity to the research findings by comparing perceptions and experiences from multiple relevant perspectives.

Table 1. Focus group participants

Focus group	Participant cohort	Sample size (n)
	University (n=28)	
1	University academic skills and counselling support staff	7
2	University students who had transitioned from TAFE	5
3	University students who had transitioned from TAFE	10
4	University teaching staff	6
	TAFE (n=22)	
5	TAFE students	17
6	TAFE teaching staff	5
	Secondary school (n=30)	
7	Year 11 students	10
8	Year 11 students	10
9	Secondary school teaching and career guidance staff	5
10	Secondary school teaching and career guidance staff	5

6.3 Procedure

Potential participants were invited to join the study via global emails and flyers at their educational institution. Interested individuals were provided with written information about the study, including a detailed explanatory statement and consent form, prior to participation in the study.

Participants each attended a single semi-structured focus group at their educational institution. Focus groups lasted for between approximately 40 to 80 minutes in duration and were co-facilitated by multiple members of the research team.

Focus group schedules were based around two main research questions:

- 1) What influences a student's decision to transition to higher education?
- 2) What specific factors facilitate and/or inhibit students' successful transition to university education?

Student participants were asked open-ended questions regarding: their perceptions of TAFE and university study; their plans and aspirations for further study and work; and when relevant, the challenges of commencing, adjusting to, and completing TAFE and university study, and thoughts on what may assist them and other students on this journey.

Staff participants were asked a corresponding series of questions regarding their experiences in teaching and supporting students who are either (a) attending university or TAFE, or (b) considering/ planning to attend TAFE or university.

The focus groups were loosely guided by a set of pre-established questions relating to the study aims, enabling participants to guide the discussions to some extent. The facilitator(s) worked to identify and focus on salient points raised by participants; to seek elaboration, clarification, consensus and/or alternate opinions within the group.

Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to text. Content analysis was performed by several members of the research team to identify key themes and trends in the data. The researchers met to discuss and reach consensus on the salient findings for this project. The research fellow then performed further analysis to validate and add detail to the key findings identified by the group.

7. RESULTS

Key themes from the focus groups are presented in a linear progression from secondary school to TAFE and university.

7.1 Secondary school students and staff

Year 11 students and teachers were engaged from two government secondary schools in the outer south-east region of Melbourne. One school was heavily geared towards vocational (VCAL) studies, with 914 of their 940 year 10, 11 and 12 students enrolled in vocational courses in 2012. In contrast, the second school had a smaller population of senior students (n= 392 in year 10, 11 and 12) and offered VCE only. Students who wished to enroll in vocational courses were required to attend another school. In 2012, only 42 students from this school were enrolled in vocational courses.

The sample of students (n=20) who participated in this study comprised 11 males and 9 females who were currently completing their year 11 studies.

The staff participants (n=10) comprised nine females and one male who were employed at the two schools to provide teaching and/or careers guidance and support to year 11 students. The staff had varied amounts of exposure to TAFE environments. Whilst some had exposure only to university via their undergraduate training, others had also either studied and/or taught at TAFE.

Key findings from the students and staff are presented in the sub-sections below.

Success and failure: the misperceptions of TAFE and university study

It was readily apparent from both focus groups that students held a strongly hierarchical view of higher education. Students typically regarded university study as an option only for students who are successful in their schooling. Conversely, TAFE was regarded as an option for those who are struggling with secondary schooling.

“TAFE is where you go when you stuff up. Uni is where you go when you're successful” – Year 11 student.

“Everyone just thinks TAFE is easier” – Year 11 student.

“Like the kids who drop out of high school and go to TAFE, it's sort of associated – Year 11 student.

“... a lot of people drop out in high school because they think VCE is too hard and they get bored with VCAL so they drop out and they go to TAFE and maybe those kids are the reason why we see TAFE as easy. Because we just think like we're here working really hard to get a good VCE score and they're dropping out and going to TAFE” – Year 11 student.

This pervasive hierarchical perception of higher education options seemed to originate from various sources, including family, peers and social media.

“Facilitator: So what's reported on social networks about TAFE?

Student: Memes. It's almost associated with high school drop outs... people [who] couldn't really finish VCE and they have to go to TAFE” – Year 11 student.

On this point, other students indicated that this perception of TAFE was perpetuated at school:

“ That's the impression the school gives as well” – Year 11 student.

“The school says you can't do VCE so do TAFE...” – Year 11 student.

During the focus groups several teaching staff expressed the view that TAFE and university study are valid and valuable options when matched to a student's abilities and preferences. However, as highlighted in the quotes above, this did not appear to translate to student views on the value of TAFE study. Notably, only one participating student vocalised his active preference to undertake TAFE study as a pathway to his chosen career.

Despite saying otherwise, inherent in the language of some teaching staff was the dichotic notion of success and failure attached to university and TAFE study. TAFE was referred to as the option for students who are not succeeding at school. For example:

“... a lot of one-on-one meetings with kids. And they've got their results of course and see how they are going in year 10 and what they look like and if they're succeeding and going to do VCE. There is always a grey area of kids who want to do the VCE who we think aren't capable and so we try and steer them towards one way or the other” – Secondary school staff.

Teachers further reinforced this point, indicating that students typically do not consider TAFE pathway options until they encounter problems with their schooling. This was also reflected by students:

"I'd only consider TAFE to do like back door to get to uni if I didn't get a score I needed. There is nothing I really want to do at TAFE" – Year 11 student.

Life after school: plans and pressures

Unsurprisingly, many students expressed uncertainty about their future educational and career choices. Several indicated that they "couldn't picture" their future, nor formulate specific plans that they could work towards. This uncertainty, paired with a strong sense of pressure to commit to a plan for study and career, placed students under considerable stress. Whilst some of this pressure was felt from family and school, some students identified this pressure as coming from within themselves. Students typically had a strong sense of permanency attached to the decisions they make now with regard to work and study:

"You do this and that's it. There is no other option, you choose a subject, you choose a science school, you graduate in Medicine. Finished" – Year 11 student.

"There's way too much pressure" – Year 11 student.

Participating students from the school that offered VCE only were very focused towards university study, with only one student indicating a specific desire to attend TAFE. Students tended to be focused more on the short term goals of university study, rather than specific career outcomes. Students tended to perceive study, rather than career, as the "destination point". When asked about their plans for 5 years from now, most commented on the completion or absence of study, rather than a specific goal for work.

"I want to go to uni, and I know what I want to do in uni, but I don't know what I want to do after uni. I know what sort of courses I want to do at uni but after that I don't know what kind of career" – Year 11 student.

"I just want to do a business course and then do units like what I am doing at school because I enjoy that, but I don't know where I want to go with my business course" – Year 11 student.

Inherent in student discussions was a sense of uncertainty about *why* they would choose to undertake further study. Higher education was more typically regarded as an automatic option that they should pursue after secondary school; rather than a strategic plan towards a specific chosen career.

Despite this pervasive sense of uncertainty, there were, however, a sizeable minority of students who had identified more specific career plans that they were working towards. These plans were typically based around activities or units that they found enjoyable and interesting, as well as perceptions about their own personal strengths and weaknesses.

“ I want to Police Force so when I finish I probably will end up at TAFE and do the Justice Certificate. I don't want to go to Uni. I want to go to the Police School..... I get bored very easy and my attention span is not the greatest so like with the police every days a new day and every day it's going to change...” Year 11 student.

One participating student was noticeably more focused, specific, and passionate about his career and study plans than his peers. As highlighted in the focus group excerpt below, this student's plans were driven by multiple factors, including his own personal interests, an awareness of his capabilities, volunteer experience in the field he wished to enter, and a willingness to seek advice from others.

“Student: Why TAFE? It is more practical, hands on whereas I am not so strong with theoretical components. I want to do something practical.

Facilitator: What's the job that you want?

Student: I'd like to get into Aircraft Maintenance.

Facilitator: Why aircraft? Where did that come from?

Student: A strong passion with cars and bikes and things and I thought okay, I'll do this for a career and I started talking to people and they said don't waste your time with cars and bikes; you will get sick of it. And I said what else can I do? I thought aeroplanes, I'll give that a go.

Facilitator: What people?

Student: Like my dad and people who I volunteer with.

Facilitator: Volunteer with?

Student: Yeah I volunteer at the Moorabbin Air Museum. We do lots of aircraft restoration and things like that down there” – Year 11 student.

Informing student decisions about future study

“In the end it's you... like I know everyone's different but ultimately you have the power” – Year 11 student.

Students typically perceived themselves as the primary decision-maker regarding their study and career choices. These choices were informed to varying extents by their school, family, peers and broader social networks.

As noted earlier, the majority of students did not have clear and specific plans for their future; those who did were in the minority. Broader cultural views and stereotypes about TAFE and university study appeared to have a strong impact on student's feelings about undertaking further study. Students gave an

impression that they did not receive *enough* information about study and career pathways to overcome these stereotypes.

In particular, students felt that they received insufficient information from their school.

“Facilitator: What do you guys know about TAFEs and uni’s?”

Student: Very minute amounts.

Student: They [teachers] only tell us what they want us to know. And the good things as well” – Year 11 students.

“The school does a bit and then it’s up to the student when they want to pursue it other than waste their time on students who aren’t interested....So they just give us the basics and we have to follow up with it” – Year 11 student.

Students also felt that they did not receive the *type* of information they needed from planned university visits. They regarded university visits as more of a marketing exercise for the university, rather than a process in which students can learn about the benefits and outcomes of university study. As one point in the focus group discussions the facilitator summarised and reflected this back to the students, and was met with much agreement by students.

“Facilitator: Okay. So they [universities] are more promoting their own programs rather than talking about why you go to university?”

“Students: Yeah (unanimously)” – Year 11 students.

Parents and broader family appeared to have a variable impact on student’s knowledge, attitudes and decisions about attending university or TAFE. However, perceptions of parental influence and expectations varied across participants. Whilst one teacher believed that the majority of parents want their children to attend university, another teacher felt that a lot of parents were “apathetic” to their children pursuing higher education.

Parental hopes and expectations for their children’s study and career were attributed by teaching staff to two main factors: the cultural background of the family, and whether parents or other family members had experienced higher education.

“A lot of our parents haven’t been through university themselves so it’s not a conscious thing for them that their children go to university or that. Even if it is that, it’s not something that they have to be very proactive about. There is a lot of apathy amongst the parents” - Secondary school staff.

On discussing English as a Second Language (ESL) students, one teacher indicated that “there’s a lot of pressure” on students from their parents. The

following two quotes highlight the hierarchical perceptions of university and TAFE amongst some CALD families, and the perceived impact on student aspirations:

“For some, and I think I am speaking about ESL students. Students have high aspirations, parents have high expectations, but the supports aren't in place for these kids. It's more the subtle perception of the pressure that these kids have to get into uni” – Secondary school staff.

“... in the ESL community particularly or the EAL community there's a very big problem as often the student will say my father will not let me go to TAFE, we're not allowed to say the word TAFE” – Secondary school staff.

Breaking down the walls

A key finding from this research is the critical need to address pervasive stereotypes and misconceptions of TAFE and university study; and to better arm students and families with information about educational pathways for their chosen career paths.

Students indicated skepticism towards information received via universities as they regarded it as a marketing exercise by institutions. However, students do need accurate and straightforward information about the various options available to them. Perhaps more importantly, students need to be armed with realistic perceptions and a more grounded understanding of the non-linear pathways that adults take throughout their study, career and broader life. It is nothing new to learn that students feel immense pressure regarding decisions about study and career paths. However, it is important to consider the linear nature with which students perceive their future, and the relatively black and white perceptions and they have towards TAFE and university study.

Findings from the focus groups also indicated that students need “warm contact” rather than “cold information” when it comes to career and study advice. Students need to hear about the options available, and the experiences of adults who have taken these options; including those who have taken non-traditional or newer pathways to a selected career.

There is also a critical need for students to receive positive information about TAFE studies; the courses on offer, articulation agreements between TAFES and universities, the careers available following study, including information about employment outcomes, and the success stories of people who have studied at TAFE.

Furthermore, it is essential that this information is imparted to parents, so that students have familial support network to assist them in their decision making, as highlighted below:

“A lot of parents don't believe you when they see there's that pathway [via TAFE]. And also trying to teach parents that TAFE have degrees as well. That's a new concept and I don't think the students understand that very well” – Secondary school staff.

7.2 TAFE students and staff

TAFE students and teaching staff were recruited from one campus of the Chisholm Institute of TAFE. This TAFE has a principal catchment around outer south and south-east Melbourne, with residents in these locations representing more than 70% of the TAFE enrollments. The average age of students is 30 years. The ages range from under 15 years of age through to over 65 years, however, with nearly half of students are aged between 15 and 24 years. Two thirds of the students have completed year 10 or above, with the majority having completed years 11 and 12. Thirty-six percent of students are from CALD backgrounds and 32% are classified as low SES. Three quarters of the students are employed, with almost half in full-time employment. Student gender is skewed towards males (61%).

For this study, we recruited 17 students (15 female, 2 male) who were currently enrolled at the TAFE. Students were enrolled in either nursing or youth work courses. The large majority of students had come to TAFE after a period of employment and/or raising children. Less than a third had come directly from secondary school or VCAL completion at a TAFE.

Five teaching staff (4 female, 1 male) participated in a focus group. Their areas of teaching included early childhood development, sport and recreation and youth work. Three participants had completed their own studies at both TAFE and university, whilst two participants had completed TAFE diplomas.

The TAFE focus groups provided valuable insights into students' experiences of TAFE study, as well as student and staff perceptions the preparedness of students to transition from a TAFE to university environment.

Plans and pathways

The large majority of participating TAFE students indicated that they were considering or planning to undertake university study. Most regarded university as a logical next step in their studies and career; a perception that was typically reinforced by teaching staff.

Notably, several students had felt incapable of, and had never considered attending university, until they built up their confidence at TAFE. This pivotal finding is discussed in further detail in the sections below.

Student perceptions of TAFE and university study

On the whole, students regarded TAFE and university as very different learning environments. Table 2 below provides a summary of the prevailing beliefs that students hold about university and TAFE study.

Table 2. Student perceptions of TAFE and university studies

TAFE	UNI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to get in, easy to complete • Quicker qualification and employment • More student support: ‘Spoon feeding’ and ‘hand holding’ • Flexible and accommodating of diverse learning styles and skills • TAFE is a stepping stone to uni • TAFE prepares them well for uni • TAFE course provides a ‘taster’ or insight to a career path before committing to full uni degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to get in, hard to complete • Longer to obtain qualification & job • Students are smarter • Requires self-reliance, self-motivation, independence • A lot of books/reading • Stricter with assessments • Seems big, impersonal, scary • More expensive • Vital step for job advancement <p>Note: TAFE students were largely unaware of academic skill requirements of university.</p>

There was a pervading opinion within the focus groups that TAFE offers a second tier education experience to universities. This view was shared by TAFE students and teachers alike. Many of our student participants regarded TAFE as the provider one enrolls with when one has not done well enough in school to gain entry to a university.

Students regarded TAFE as much easier to gain entry and to complete than university. TAFE students believed that university students are “smarter”, and need to be capable of independent, self-motivated study.

Many of the students perceived TAFE as an excellent stepping stone to university study. Perhaps most importantly, students felt that it was a less daunting and more *achievable* step to take, often after a long period away from schooling, or following a difficult secondary schooling experience.

Mature age TAFE students, returning to education, often regarded TAFE as a testing ground for their readiness to pursue education in a university. As such, TAFE was regarded as valuable stepping stone – a place in which students could gain confidence in their ability to study.

“I like that after being at home, being a mum for so long, doing year 12, working, having kids, you're not using your brain, then coming back here and you start using it, you realise that you want to keep using it. You want to learn and you're eager for more knowledge. At

the start I didn't think of uni, I didn't want to hear the word uni. I wanted nothing to do with it" – TAFE student.

"TAFE seemed like the dumbed down version of it [further study] that I might be able to handle. It's turning up and thinking I really can do this. It is definitely within my....it wasn't out of reach any more" – TAFE student.

The second statement strongly highlights the hierarchical perception that students hold towards TAFE and university. Students were inclined to regard one as "better" or "smarter" than the other, rather than regarding TAFE and university as offering different and valuable forms of education and training suited to specific career paths.

Of the many perceived benefits to TAFE studies, some students felt that their TAFE studies provided them with valuable insight into a given career path. More than one student noted that a TAFE course offered the student a 'taste' of the discipline/trade/industry they were training to enter, before committing to a full degree investment of time and money.

"So we'll have a bigger advantage than those who just came out of high school because we know a lot about the industry already" – TAFE student.

Some students also valued the faster track to a qualification and employment that TAFE affords. However, some students regarded university study was a vital step for job advancement. This was particularly evident in this group of participants; many of whom were nursing students who wished to have a role as a Registered Nurse (RN), as opposed to an Enrolled Nurse (EN).

There was a prevailing belief among participating students that the TAFE environment was more accommodating, flexible and supportive than university. Students believed university study to be less flexible and supportive, much more independent, and more academically challenging than TAFE study. This was a source of anxiety for many of the students, who held concerns about their ability to study and learn independently, complete assessments, and undertake work placements.

During both recorded and unrecorded discussions after the focus group, several students indicated that they found the prospect of university study quite frightening. This was particularly evident among mature aged female participants who were concerned about juggling the demands of raising their family with the demands of university study. University placements were a big issue, with several students noting that they were very concerned about managing full-time placements whilst caring for children.

TAFE experience: confidence building or disenfranchising?

One of the key themes arising from the student and staff focus groups was the tension between notions of TAFE as a supportive, nurturing and confidence-building learning environment versus a disempowering process of “spoon feeding” and avoidance of failure that may set students up for further challenges at university.

Though TAFE students applauded their teachers’ readiness to ‘hand hold’ them through their studies, teaching staff worried that too much of this ‘hand-holding’ set the students up for failure in university and in working life in their chosen industry.

By “hand-holding”, participants referred to teachers taking an active role and interest in the student’s progress through the course, often allowing them multiple opportunities to pass a given assessment. The term also implies the teachers’ readiness to repeat instruction until the student understands the lesson, and to be very flexible in the content delivery according to the individual student’s needs.

Many students and staff repeatedly noted that TAFE provided students with the opportunity to build their confidence in a supportive environment. Importantly, many students felt much more confident and well-prepared for university than they did prior to their TAFE studies:

“ [I] didn't think I would ever be able to reach uni because they always say you need to get this enter score to be able get into uni otherwise you have no chance.....TAFE has given me the confidence to be able to think that if I actually apply myself I can reach my goal”.

Teachers also perceived themselves as playing an important role in fighting stigmas about TAFE and empowering students. This was reflected by the students, who spoke of incidences in which a teacher had offered them vital support and encouragement for their current or future studies.

“I spoke to one of my teachers and they said that the course that we are doing now, the diploma, is harder than what we would be doing at university” – TAFE student.

“I was looking at dropping out and I spoke to him [teacher] and he turned around and he’s saying “You’ve got it, you’ve got what it takes ... keep going. We’re all here for you””. – TAFE student

The fact that students are recalling these moments indicates how powerful this form of support can be for a student who is questioning their abilities and/or path of study and career.

However, on the flipside, undermining terms such as “spoon feeding”, “hand holding” and “babying” were used repeatedly in both the student and staff focus groups with reference to how students were taught. Sometimes these references were made in a negative light, and others in a more positive light. For example:

“Facilitator: Where have these perceptions come from?”

Student 1: From our teacher who says “If you think this is hard wait till you get to university”.

Student 2: I think because we've been spoon fed and they are always saying you can sit there and ask us to repeat the questions. [At university] we are going to be in a tute where it's just like “Here's your information”, a lecture whatever it is.

Facilitator: What makes you think you're being spoon fed - is that what you're being told?

Student 2: That was the exact words, being spoon fed”

– TAFE students.

“...we were kind of really babied by the teachers. They really guide you really, really well. If you don't get something you put your hand up and they go over it. I know you don't get that sort of environment at uni from what I've heard” – TAFE student.

These and many more comments highlight the prevailing perception of TAFE as offering a supportive, and perhaps “over-supportive” culture of teaching and learning. This can of course be a double-edged sword. Some staff and students believed that this nurturing environment may set students up for greater difficulties down the track when they are negotiating the new challenges of university study. This point is best highlighted in the following sections of the transcript:

“Staff: I think you get more chances at TAFE. If you don't pass that assignment you get another. You don't at uni.

Staff: You can't fail a student unless they don't hand in any work...

Staff: It's about skills and knowledge, so if they can demonstrate that. It's not always about being able to write and articulate it.

Staff: And sometimes if they can't articulate themselves in a written version, they get the opportunity to resubmit or demonstrate in a verbal.

Staff: I think that sometimes sets them up to fail” – TAFE teaching staff.

“ It's just something we struggle with. Do we sometimes support our students too much? Not giving them the independence or making them use the initiative which they are going to require at university and we struggle with that sometimes. We need to pull back in some areas” – TAFE teaching staff.

Students appeared to have a more generalised sense of concern about the increased complexity or difficulty level of university study:

“Everyone warns us that it's a bit harder over there with it” – TAFE student.

However, most students seem largely unprepared for the specific academic skill requirements of university. Academic writing style was a big unknown to students, who were mostly unaware of the skills that they would need.

“Facilitator: What kind of academic skills do you think you will need?”

Student: What we've learned here.

Facilitator: So do you think you're fairly well prepared to go on to university?”

[Students]: Lots of yeahs

Student: We don't know till we get there” – TAFE students.

How does perception affect transition, once the student has engaged university study?

Participating TAFE students typically believed that their TAFE course prepared them for university life. This confident attitude was at odds with the perceptions of university students once the reality of the demands of academic skills were experienced.

Previous internal studies at Chisholm revealed that TAFE students gaining credit into the second year of a university Bachelor program experienced significant transfer shock – which included their inability to cope with the demands of independent study on their personal time, the complex demands of the academic writing discipline with which they were completely unfamiliar with and the degree of independence expected of them regarding out of class study and administration of their program.

The question needs to be posed “How could TAFE better identify those intending to transition into higher education and how could they be better informed and prepared?”

How do student perceptions influence their education pathway decisions?

Many TAFE students believed their VET program increased their confidence levels in regard to one day tackling university courses of study. The perception that TAFE had prepared them for the rigours of university study appeared to be almost universal. Many had decided to consider engaging with a university program, either the following year, or in the near future, citing their time in TAFE a deciding factor.

Regardless of an unawareness of the specific academic writing expectations, their perception of university, gained from friends, teachers and their general TAFE experience, did influence their decisions to engage in higher education.

These decisions were typically not made without a general awareness that the university workload would be greater than that experienced at TAFE.

Conversely, though difficult to make a positive observation on the strength of such small focus groups, and without specific questioning, it could be interpreted that a small number of TAFE students made decisions 'not' to enter university on the strength of statements by TAFE teachers that 'if they were struggling in their TAFE course, they would have no hope in university'.

Overall, there is great variation in the decisions made as a result of TAFE student perceptions of university. Some were dismissive of their chances as a product of these perceptions but many were optimistic.

7.3 University students and staff

Students, teaching staff, and academic skills support and counseling staff were recruited from two campuses of Monash University in the outer southern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. At these two campuses in 2013, less than 60% of domestic commencing undergraduate students are school leavers. The average age of enrolled students at each campus is 23 and 25. Student gender at both campuses is skewed towards females (66% and 81% respectively).

Our student sample for this study comprised 15 females who were (1) currently studying at university and (2) had previously studied at a TAFE institution. Students were enrolled in nursing and social welfare degrees. The large majority of participants had articulated directly from the TAFE Diploma of Nursing to the university Bachelor of Nursing. Only two students reported having enrolled at university following a period of paid employment or raising family. No participants reported any past experience with university studies.

The university staff sample (n=13) comprised seven males and six females. They included: teaching staff from nursing, accounting, and business law and taxation; library academic support staff; and counseling support staff. The teaching staff were equally divided between those who had a university-only background, and those who had additional past experience with TAFE environments (either as a student or teacher).

Overall, there were strong consistencies between the staff and student data, lending strength to the key themes identified from the data, as presented below.

The advantageous path from TAFE to university

University students and teaching staff identified several clear advantages to studying at TAFE prior to commencing university study.

Students reported feeling a sense of achievement from gaining a TAFE qualification; which in turn provided them with the confidence to apply for

university study. This was strongly consistent with the TAFE students' focus group findings.

"I always knew I wanted come to university but I didn't have the confidence"- University student.

Several students also indicated that the presence of an articulation agreement between TAFE and university encouraged them to apply for university study. Some felt that it made university study seem more accessible, and also made the application process easier.

"I didn't realise that there was that link [articulation agreement between Monash University and Chisholm TAFE] until application time for uni. There were six of us in the same class that all applied. I don't think we applied anywhere else because of that connection. So not a lot of talk say from the teachers [about university study] but mainly from the other students and how to get there" – university student.

"Student: Knowing that you're going to get in as well, like after being at school for fifteen or twenty years going to uni and being guaranteed a place.

Student: It helped a lot. It actually helped with your decision, it was a bit of a spur as well.

Student: Yes, definitely. The fact that we knew we were going to get in" – University students.

These findings lend strong support to the establishment of articulation agreements between VET and HE, to encourage and support student access to higher education when appropriate to their chosen career path.

Participating students also felt that they had the edge over school leavers in several ways. Firstly, they believed they had obtained valuable insight to, and experience in, their selected career path. Many agreed that this offered them a stronger sense of clarity about their career path, and in turn, a greater commitment to their studies. This is again consistent with comments made by participants that were currently studying at TAFE.

"You've gained all that understanding. You already know. One thing we gained prior to doing Div 2 prior to doing Div 1 is that we already know we like the job; whereas the Div 1 can do three years of uni and finish and go oh, do I like this? It's not really what I want to do. Obviously, we've already done the Div 2 and some of us have work experience, we've done our placements doing Div 2, we already know hey yeah, this is something I want to pursue further. I really enjoy it. So I think that's a great advantage" - University student.

"I had a girlfriend who is a nurse Div 1 and she suggested... why don't you do your Div 2 [TAFE] first and if you like it then you can go on. It is a bit of an easier, you know you want to do it; you're not doing three years and then going "oh yeah, I'm not sure""- University student.

"...they [TAFE-leavers] are generally very motivated students. They are already working in the industry and they know this is what they want to do, they are mature aged and they are not here to waste their time and money, so they get through" – University teaching staff.

Both students and staff believed that TAFE-leavers had a stronger applied knowledge and clinical skills than their school-leaver counterparts. As a result, these students believed they were more confident and more willing to practice whilst on clinical placement; thus enhancing their learning experience.

"You've already had eight weeks [of clinical placement] at TAFE. Like you've got that bit of experience under your belt, where the first years have one two week placement. So I felt that TAFE really prepared us well for that" – University student.

"Yeah, it was definitely helpful. In our first placement here our teacher was worried that we would be bored because there was such a difference from the first year nursing students compared to TAFE students. We just have so much more experience I felt than what they do" – university student.

"They [TAFE- articulated students] do have clinical skills, which the lecturers comment are very good" -University staff.

Hurdles in the road: Challenges of the TAFE to university transition

Notably, there was considerable consistency between the challenges *anticipated* by current TAFE students', and the *actual* challenges experienced by university students who had been through this transition.

The challenges of adaptation to a different learning environment were identified by both TAFE and university students. University students perceived university as bigger and more overwhelming than TAFE. Whilst TAFE was regarded by students as a more personal and supportive learning environment, university was regarded as more impersonal place that requires students to be independent in their learning and coping. Students also noted the larger class sizes and less frequent one-on-one contact time with teaching staff, leading students to feel less connected to staff and less able to ask questions and seek assistance. University students perceived there to be less direct support than they had previously experienced in their TAFE studies.

Notably, this major shift in students' experience from TAFE to university occurs at a critical time when students are often coping with other big life changes. Many students indicated that their university study had a big impact on their family and home life, their capacity to undertake paid employment (and therefore finances), and their general lifestyle.

University clinical placements further compounded these challenges; creating significant difficulties for many students, particularly mature age, who found it very difficult to juggle the ever present demands of family, home, work and other commitments with extended periods of full-time clinical placement. Whilst participating university students acknowledged the value and importance of their clinical placements, they highlighted that the current system fails to accommodate student circumstance, including geographical location and child care. Students experienced significant stress associated with long distance travel to placements (with some renting accommodation closer to their placement site), and the short notice with which they needed to make alternate arrangements for child care and employment. Students also commented repeatedly on the inflexibility of placement hours/shifts and inability of the current placement system to accommodate students with significant and insurmountable family, work and other commitments.

"When I know there's placements coming up I am always freaking out. I never know how because of child care. Usually placements for nursing you start at seven [am] so sometimes you have to be leaving home at six [am]. There's no child care at that time, so then I usually beg and plead with my mother. Can you please help me out. Like it's two weeks or it's four weeks, I've only got one more year to go. That's probably the most difficult thing for me, finances and child care" – University student.

"You get what you're given, so it's a real waiting game" – University student.

"I don't really have family support that live in Melbourne so I am looking at paying air fares to bring my mum over to watch my daughter" – University student.

Some participants indicated that they had considered discontinuing their course of study as a result of these difficulties, whilst others also indicated that they knew students who had withdrawn due to the inability to complete clinical placements. These findings correspond closely with the anxieties that some mature aged TAFE students felt about finding the time and resources to juggle clinical placements with family and work commitments. Clinical placements were directly identified by some as a prohibitive to attending university.

University teaching staff who participated in the focus groups also acknowledged the difficulties they had observed amongst some students in managing clinical

placements. This recognition was discussed by staff in context of the challenges that universities face in securing quality clinical placements for students. As a result, staff felt that they could only reiterate to students that they are expected to complete the placements that are available to them.

“They are told to be available then so they will get told maybe 6 – 10 weeks beforehand. But they won't get a roster sometimes till they rock up on the day depending on the place they are going to and that's up to them. That can be really hard. We are quite firm about that because we need to look after our relationships with our clinical placements as well. It can be tough, but they seem to be okay with it. They whinge about it a little bit but they do it” – University staff member.

However, the extent of the difficulties expressed by students, and staff, with regarding to managing and coping with clinical placements cannot be ignored. Findings from this study highlight the necessity of affording additional support and flexibility to students who are experiencing significant difficulty in undertaking intense periods of full-time clinical placement, often at a distance and/or at difficult hours of the day. This is particularly pertinent for Bachelor of Nursing degrees, which have high ratios of female and mature aged students with parenting responsibilities.

“You hear a lot about especially those with children. [They ask] “When am I going on placement, I need to organise childcare”. Especially with single parents, that can be really difficult...” – University staff member.

“In 2nd year they do a lot of placements, they do 12 weeks in total for the year, that's a lot of placement, that's half the time you're at university. Often it will be January or December and we can't tell you exactly but it will be a whole lot of blocks. You could be one of any of those 8 weeks.... So those sorts of things I think they struggle with because they need to take time off work. And travelling as well which is always a problem because it's really hard to get clinical placements it's always difficult” – University staff member.

Another critical issue identified by university students was the large leap in academic skill requirements, including: writing essays and reports; identifying, using and referencing literature; and completing assessments. Students indicated that they struggled to meet the required skills; something they hadn't necessarily been aware of prior to university study. University students and staff discussed this challenge in detail, indicating that many students went through a difficult process of experiencing and coping with “failure”, i.e., a poor mark on an assessment, and having to pick themselves up again and build their academic skills. Early education about university academic skill requirements are

therefore essential in supporting students in their first year of university, as discussed later in this report.

"... as far as the academic writing and things [university is] absolutely nothing like in the capacity TAFE is.... the academic language, the discourse, the referencing, the structure, the formatting totally blew me away and it still does. I am still learning. It is so different. TAFE is nothing like university at all, I feel" – University student.

Whilst TAFE-articulated students were regarded as having an advantage in terms of clinical skills, several teaching staff believed that TAFE students were coming in to 2nd year university degrees with less depth of knowledge and understanding than students who were completing the full degree from 1st year:

".. our[university students'] depth of understanding is probably a lot deeper and the expectations of their understanding is a lot deeper at university; whereas at TAFE it's probably a little bit more superficial. So we could talk about someone coming to 2nd year, they might have the same skills as our 1st year nursing students but our 1st year nursing students know it on a deeper level" – University teaching staff.

" They can still do the skill but they don't have that depth of understanding that we want them to have" – University teaching staff.

Some students were in agreement:

"I actually think it [articulation to second year] made it so much harder... you know everything that TAFE taught you, but going into second year, there are some subjects particularly.... one subject...which I think is exceedingly difficult" – University student.

This is a critical issue for any course of study in which a TAFE-university articulation program exists. The discrepancies in knowledge, clinical experience and academic skills pose significant challenges to teaching staff and students alike. Specific strategies are required to "even out the playing field" and ensure that students engaging in second year university studies have relatively equivalent knowledge and realistic expectations regarding their studies and academic skill requirements.

"...it gets difficult with their [students'] expectations. Their expectation is by coming here that they're pretty much going to breeze through like they've done at TAFE" – University teaching staff.

Supporting student transition to university

Participating university staff and students identified and discussed several strategies to support those articulating from TAFE to university study.

1. Student "Tool Box"

University staff emphasised the need to equip new students with a "tool box" of information and strategies to assist them in navigating the new world of university life and study. They believed it is essential to raise student awareness of the services and resources available on and off campus to support students, including *what* the services and resources are, *where* and *when* they can be accessed, and *who* can access them. Staff also believed it to be important to emphasise the *accessibility* of these resources; to encourage students to seek assistance at critical times when help is needed.

Importantly, students also indicated that this information about resources and services needs to be advertised widely to students throughout the year, when they need it most. Several noted that orientation week "went by in a blur" and they did not retain sufficient information about the services and resources they were (or in some cases, were not) introduced to.

University staff believed this "tool box" should provide students with information about the "nuts and bolts" of academic skills, and academic skills support services, as well as broader university coping skills including time management, social support and building confidence. University student participants similarly indicated the importance of skills such as time management. They also highlighted the importance of students establishing realistic expectations of university life and study, as the transition to university was a "culture shock" to many participants.

2. Academic skills preparation

Both staff and student participants believed academic skills preparation to be a crucial aspect of successful transition to, and participation in, university study. Academic skills mentioned by students included essay writing, literature reviews, identifying and locating literature, and referencing.

Some students and staff believed this preparation should begin at TAFE and/or prior to commencement of university study.

"They need to introduce that [academic writing] more at TAFE if you're going to have half a chance" – University student.

However, students also indicated that academic skills support is crucial throughout semester. Whilst some students favoured up front preparation, others wished to learn about academic skills on a "need to know basis" (i.e., during semester when assessments are being completed).

"Even just a one day academic essay writing workshop, I would come to that mid-year. We've all done two [essays] by then, one was group but one was individual so then you had a bit of feedback and you'd really be able to get the benefit of it I think (lots of "yeahs" agreement from other students)" – University student.

3. Encouraging student peer/study groups

Several students discussed the vital importance of their peer network in adjusting to, managing, and succeeding in their university studies. Several nursing students who had articulated together indicated that their peer group was essential for both social and academic support. Other participating students strongly agreed with this view.

“There were a few of us that said to each other if it wasn't the support of the friends we would have dropped out. If we were on our own we couldn't have done it” – University student.

“We bounced the information and collaborated together. You would ring them up and say have you checked this, this and this and you say no, I didn't even know that existed. So you're sort of bringing each other along” – University student.

These findings highlight the importance of supporting new students to develop peer groups early on in the year, via transition preparation programs. Furthermore, university teaching staff are encouraged to provide ongoing opportunities for students to interact socially and academically; to form networks that will carry them through their university studies.

4. Transition to university preparation programs

Students and staff were asked about their experiences and perceptions of the “T2U” program offered to students articulating from TAFE to the 2nd year Bachelor of Nursing. At the time of data collection, this T2U program had been offered to one intake of students at the commencement of 2012. The program was designed to provide new students with information about academic skills and assessments, university services and resources, refresher content specific to the bachelor of nursing, and opportunities for peer networking and development of friendships.

Both students and staff provided very positive feedback about this program; supporting the ongoing provision of T2U in future years. Students who participated in the program felt more prepared for university life and equipped to seek assistance when needed throughout the year. Several students who had not attended T2U were not aware of the program at the time, and felt at a disadvantage to students who had attended.

This program was offered early in the year prior to commencement of semester 1. Both students and staff regarded this as an optimal time to undertake the program; preparing students soon before beginning their studies.

Notably, university and TAFE students also believed it would be worthwhile to offer TAFE students a “taster” of university life; for example, arranging for TAFE students to tour the university and sit in on lectures and tutorials. Participants believed this would provide students with further insight into the university

learning environment and culture and assist their decision-making regarding further study.

5. *Enhancing equity in student access and participation*

As discussed earlier, a repeated theme in the university data was recognition of the significant challenges faced by mature age students who have family and employment responsibilities that compete with their university study and completion of clinical placements. These challenges were acknowledged by staff in context of the challenges that universities face in securing quality student clinical placements.

However, the extent of the difficulties expressed by students with regarding to managing and coping with clinical placements cannot be ignored. Findings from this study highlight the necessity of affording additional support and flexibility to students who are experiencing significant difficulty in undertaking intense periods of full-time clinical placement, often at a distance and/or at difficult hours of the day. This is particularly pertinent for Bachelor of Nursing degrees, which have high ratios of female and mature aged students with parenting responsibilities.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Findings from this study offer valuable insight into the perceptions, aspirations and experiences of students in regards to vocational and tertiary education. These insights are validated through comparison of perspectives from students and educators across three settings; secondary school, TAFE and university.

Findings from secondary schools highlighted the prevailing stereotypes and dichotomised, hierarchical perceptions of TAFE and university study; many of which may be unintentionally perpetuated and reinforced by teachers, family, and broader social networks. It is therefore vital that career guidance programs in secondary schools place greater emphasis on highlighting the value of various educational pathways; countering the notions of “failure” and “success” attached to TAFE and university study respectively.

Findings from TAFE students and educators highlighted the critical role that the TAFE environment plays in increasing students’ confidence in their ability to undertake post-secondary studies, and their capacity to pursue a career that they had previously regarded as unattainable. The more flexible and personalised nature of TAFE study was at once regarded by students and staff as vital to student development, but also potentially detrimental in terms of “setting students up for failure” should they pursue university study.

University students who had transitioned from TAFE study reinforced the latter perspective; indicating that they indeed felt academically unprepared for university learning and assessment. It is therefore critical, as educational pathway options increase and become more popular, that compulsory TAFE to university transition programs are implemented to support students in this

process. The “T2U” transition program implemented at Monash University offers one such program that has been appraised by staff and participating students as highly beneficial. Further research is needed, however, to identify the optimal timing, duration and content of such programs to assist student transition, and well as the implementation of “refresher” programs during their first year of study.

It is important to acknowledge here, that the large majority of participating TAFE and university students were studying nursing (either Diploma or Bachelors). These participants were purposively recruited because of the presence of an articulation from the TAFE diploma to the university Bachelors degree. Thus, some of the issues identified in the focus groups are notably discipline specific, e.g., nursing clinical placements. Further research is recommended to further explore student transition across disciplines.

The findings from this research will be disseminated to both academic and professional communities. Findings will be presented at relevant forums and a paper will be submitted for publication in an academic journal. This stakeholder report will be made available online for public access. We hope that the insights gained from this research may be used to inform strategies within secondary schools, TAFEs and universities, to support student access to, and successful participation in higher education.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this research, we recommend that:

1. Secondary schools work towards inclusion of additional strategies in their career guidance programs to counter ingrained perceptions of “failure” and “success” attached to TAFE and university study. There is a need to provide students and their families with further information about opportunities, costs and benefits provided by various educational pathways.
2. TAFEs offer pre-transition support for students who are planning to undertake university study. Key areas identified in the focus groups include: raising student awareness about the academic skills required at university; providing resources and opportunities for students to develop these academic skills; and offering students opportunities to become familiar with university environments and teaching styles (e.g., visiting university sites and observing lectures and tutorials).
3. Universities offer specific TAFE-to-university transition programs prior to commencement of the first semester, with a refresher “update” later in the semester.
4. Universities evaluate student transition programs, to identify the most effective features of such programs for students articulating from TAFE.
5. Universities provide relevant and timely reminders to students of the academic and personal support services and resources available to them, giving regard to the particular needs of TAFE articulating students; for example, their concentration in courses with substantial placement components.

6. Universities, TAFEs and schools explore the development of student peer mentoring schemes to facilitate better understanding of different education pathways and support students' transitions through these.
7. Universities actively plan for TAFE transition cohorts entering the second year of Bachelor programs, including implementing an awareness program for teaching staff to acquaint them with the strengths of transition students and also of the gaps that they may experience and strategies for addressing these through pedagogy and curriculum.

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