

Knox Grammar School

Careers Department

Information for Secondary Students

Transition from Secondary to Tertiary Education

What are the options after school?

So you're coming to the end of 12 years of schooling and wondering what to do next? The first step is to consider all of your options carefully. Check out the information below to find out more about [Further Study](#) , including higher education, [Employment](#) and [Gap Year](#) opportunities.

Further Study

All education beyond high school is known as post-secondary or tertiary education. Tertiary education is offered in the higher education sector (University) and vocational education and training (VET or TAFE) sector.

Tertiary education, including higher education (university courses) and VET courses are offered through [Universities](#) , [TAFE](#) institutes, and [Private providers](#) (including Registered Training Organisations - RTOs - and Registered Higher Education Providers). You can find out about the courses and facilities offered at each type of tertiary education institution below.

All tertiary education institutions also produce their own publications about their university courses and/or VET courses. The handbooks containing this information are available either directly from the institution or online from its website. You can also peruse this information at the careers office or any major public library. Tertiary institutions also hold information days (open days) where staff are available to advise prospective students and provide course information.

University

Higher education courses

Universities offer a wide range of undergraduate courses, which are also known as degrees. Some university courses lead to a specific career outcome (for example, a bachelor of business in accounting) while others offer a more general education (like the Bachelor of Arts).

The types of university qualifications available include diplomas and advanced diplomas, associate degrees, bachelor degrees, graduate certificates, graduate diplomas, master degrees and doctoral degrees. Only the first three types of university courses are available to you as you have just completed secondary education. Regardless of subject area, a bachelor degree is generally regarded as a good starting point for a professional career.

University entrance requirements centre on academic achievement in the HSC, however, cut-offs and course prerequisites do vary according to the course and university so it's worth shopping around.

Facilities

Facilities vary between universities. Many universities have recreation and sporting facilities, bookshops, medical services, career, employment and housing services, cafeterias, libraries, clubs and societies, and university media and publications. Study skills training and other academic support should also be readily available at most campuses.

TAFE

Courses

These days, TAFE institutes offer a wide range of different types of tertiary education, including Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and some higher education courses that are equivalent to university courses.

All VET courses and qualifications are developed in consultation with industry. As a result, they teach practical, 'hands-on' skills, particularly suited to students looking for career training.

Many VET courses lead to jobs in middle-level professional areas in a wide range of industries. However, VET also offers entry-level training, including apprenticeships and traineeships (you can often begin these at school), basic literacy and numeracy courses, bridging programs as preparation for further study, short courses for job skills and study skills, leisure and community courses, and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses.

Most VET courses are part of national Training Packages, which comprise of the same curriculum wherever you study them. So, if you need to move interstate during your course, you can transfer your credits to an identical program at a different TAFE institute or another tertiary institution with the same course.

Depending on the course level and subjects you choose, TAFE entrance requirements vary from the very inclusive 'no specific prerequisites' (for certificate I), to Year 12 (certificate IV), to bachelor degree and/or substantial relevant work experience (graduate certificate). Contact each institution directly for specific details.

Facilities

Facilities vary between different types of tertiary institutions and also between institutions of the same type, including TAFE institutes. Most have personal and career counseling, medical services, a library, and a cafeteria. Many have a range of other facilities including bookshops, employment and housing services, clubs and societies, and recreational and sporting facilities.

Especially at the bigger campuses, support is often available for students with disabilities and others needing academic support or help with study skills.

Private Tertiary Education Institutions

Private education and training institutions are tertiary education organisations that offer courses, but are neither universities nor TAFE institutes. They include private companies, industry bodies, secondary schools, community organisations and private colleges.

Like universities and TAFE institutes, the courses they can offer may be non-accredited (these are generally short courses which are not government accredited), or accredited courses, including higher education (just like university courses) or VET courses.

However, the funding structure of private providers is different, and all courses are generally full-fee paying. While TAFE institutes and universities attract a large proportion of their funding from government, private providers tend to generate the majority of their funding from course fees, although they can and do tender for government funding as well. So until recently, studying with a private provider often meant paying substantially greater course fees than TAFE or university students, and upfront too. But now more and more private providers are eligible to offer their students FEE-HELP loans which help them to defer part or all of their tertiary fees until they are earning an income.

Courses

Higher Education

In some states and territories, private providers offer higher education courses that are equivalent to university courses, and which recognised by the state's education department or office. These courses are displayed on the relevant state or territory Register of Accredited Courses. For further details see the AQF website at: www.aqf.edu.au/register.htm . Entrance requirements differ according to institution and course; however full-fee paying courses may have fewer academic prerequisites than their public counterparts.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

A tertiary education provider must have the status of a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in order to deliver VET courses.

Private tertiary education institutions offer courses across the full range of subjects and professional areas, with the general exception of medicine and law. There are some that are specialist institutions, such as aviation schools, photography colleges, design institutes, business colleges, or language schools.

As with higher education, entrance requirements vary according to subject, course level and institution.

Facilities

Facilities vary according to the size and type of private tertiary education institution. Larger institutes may offer similar facilities to universities and TAFE institutes, such as library, cafeteria, student counseling services, etc. At the other end of the spectrum, small specialist institutions, such as aviation schools, may offer students little more than the courses themselves.

Employment

For many students, after secondary education is over, the idea of further study through a university course is, frankly, too much to bear. Why would anyone spend 12 years perpetually gazing out of classroom windows and wriggling in their seat, only to sign up for more of the same thing?!

But, even though employment may seem a more glamorous option, with economic freedom from parents, and the potential to break away from the crowd to meet new people, it also demands varying levels of conformity, thought and effort.

How do I go about finding a job?

Firstly, identify what jobs are available. Sources of information include Centrelink touch screens, local and metropolitan newspapers, community bulletin boards, Group Training Australia, friends and associates, and school careers advisers. You can also talk to your parents or another adult, ask them who they know in different fields of work, and start making contacts.

Secondly, use relevant websites to identify job training requirements for jobs that you may be interested in. A hobby or interest can lead to employment, if school results are not your strong point. When applying for work, list your relevant experience and/or any paid casual or part-time work and present yourself as someone who is committed to the job that you are applying for. Employers may look beyond academic results for people with a positive attitude, some skills and some experience.

Lastly, volunteer for work experience to enhance your skills and show that you are willing to work. Ask for feedback from your manager to gauge whether your personality, interests and skills fit the job requirements. Written feedback (if suitable) will generally impress other potential employers.

What can you do about money while you look for a job?

Luckily, as a school leaver you may have the option of applying for Youth Allowance. For some school leavers, Youth Allowance can help to bridge the financial gaps during their job hunt. A range of factors (e.g. parental income) affect your eligibility and the amount of your entitlement so make sure you check out the rules with Centrelink. If you are under 18 and you haven't completed Year 12, you will usually be required to study full-time or undertake

an apprenticeship to get the allowance. Additional money is available if you are living away from home.

Australian Apprenticeships

If you've already had enough of study (even of the practical kind), you may wish to disregard these two options altogether. But if you're in any doubt, check out your local Australian Apprenticeships Centre office or go to www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au.

Apprenticeships and traineeships offer the means to learn a trade (in one of over 500 occupations) and earn a small wage at the same time. For many, they offer a compromise between acquiring essential skills and gaining some financial independence.

Gap Year

If you still don't know what you want to do with your life, or can't bear the thought of tertiary education or work straight after leaving secondary school, a gap year could be the right option for you. A gap year grants you time to discover yourself: like and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, for example.

But if your idea of a gap year includes tropical beaches, banana lounges and beer, think again - that's a year off! A properly planned gap year can prove a sound investment, adding real value to your curriculum vitae. Equally, a poorly-managed year out may cost you more than a hefty overdraft. Most employers will expect evidence of time well-spent, not a year's playtime.

So, if you want to plan a gap year, what are your options?

Travel

This is one of the most popular gap year choices, offering enriching, stimulating and curriculum vitae enhancing experiences. By introducing you to new cultures, religions and philosophies, travel will help broaden your horizons and encourage self-sufficiency. However, on your return, be prepared to meet employers who fear your wanderlust. Before your interview, plan a response to the question: What happens if your desire to travel strikes again?

Work abroad

For those of you who can't afford to spend a year traveling abroad but are desperate to leave Australia, work abroad could be the answer. Work abroad gives you the opportunity to enhance your curriculum vitae, spend time outside of Australia, earn some much needed cash, and become immersed in a new culture. You could try teaching in Japan or China, or spending summer as a camp organiser in America. While any type of employment abroad demonstrates initiative and adaptability, work experience in your chosen career will be regarded even more highly by prospective employers.

Work placements

This is a great option if you don't have much (or any) previous work history. There are several advantages to finding a work placement, including trying several careers before settling on one and building a wide range of new skills and contacts. But be careful! A string of work placements may be interpreted as evidence of a lack of focus by some employers and can prove very expensive unless you receive payment.

Volunteering

Volunteering looks fantastic on any curriculum vitae. It demonstrates social awareness, a sense of social responsibility, and valuable work skills. And while it is generally hard work, it's always rewarding.

The possibilities for volunteer work are endless - caring for Romanian orphans, working at your local mission or op-shop, or teaching English to refugees/asylum seekers here in Australia, for example - it's best to choose a post that will give you the most opportunities afterwards.

If you are interested in becoming a structural engineer, for example, it might be wise to volunteer on a road or school building project. This would give you the opportunity to experience ways in which structural engineers plan, implement, and monitor and manipulate projects to meet environmental conditions. In addition, working as a member of a team would help to enhance your interpersonal skills and contacts network.

Below is a list of international volunteer organisation websites where you can access further information and ideas.

GAP Activity Projects: www.gapaustralia.org

Global Volunteer Network: www.volunteer.org.nz

Raleigh International: www.raleigh.org.uk

Cross-Cultural Solutions: www.crossculturalsolutions.org

VSO: www.vso.org.uk

In conclusion

Whatever your choice after school - further study, employment or a gap year - make sure it's well considered. Good Luck!

**BE INFORMED TO MAKE AN INFORMED
DECISION**

Tony Higgins
Careers Advisor
Knox Grammar School
September 2007