

MEDIA RELEASE

For release Thursday 1 December 2005

Low ENTER scores behind 'unmet demand' for university places

The main reason that unsuccessful applicants to university miss out on a place is their lower level of academic performance, a new study released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has found.

The report focused on a group of young Australians who applied to attend university but were not offered a place. These applicants are commonly referred to as indicating 'unmet demand' for university study. The study included almost 8000 young people who were in Year 9 in 1998. Most completed Year 12 in 2001.

A relatively small proportion of the group, around 5 per cent, applied to enter university but were not offered a place. This amounted to about 10 per cent of Year 12 university applicants in 2001.

The average Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER) score of applicants who were not offered a place was 54 compared to 80 for those who enrolled at university in either 2002 or 2003. The group of unsuccessful applicants also had substantially lower scores on literacy and numeracy tests conducted when they were in Year 9.

"It would appear that, although most of these students wanted to go to university, some had been unrealistic in their expectations by applying for courses with cut-off ENTER scores well above what they had achieved or they did not perform as well in Year 12 as they had hoped," said ACER's Deputy CEO Dr John Ainley.

On average, the courses that unsuccessful applicants had chosen as their first preference had a cut-off ENTER score of 20 points above the score they had achieved.

Although they missed out on going to university, about 45 per cent were engaged in some other form of education or training two years after completing Year 12. Around 24 per cent were enrolled in a TAFE diploma course, 11 per cent in a Traineeship, 6 per cent in a TAFE Certificate course and 5 per cent in an Apprenticeship. A total of 37 per cent were working full-time.

"These relatively high levels of participation in other forms of education and training suggest that credit transfer arrangements may enable a number to enter university at a later stage of their lives, if their interests are still in that direction," Dr Ainley said.

Further information and additional findings are available in the report, *Unmet Demand? Characteristics and Activities of University Applicants Not Offered a Place* by Gary N Marks. The study is research report number 46 in the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), a program conducted jointly by ACER and the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

*****ENDS*****

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LSAY background information is available on the ACER website at www.acer.edu.au