



Choosing tertiary courses in Queensland

The term 'tertiary' refers to diploma, advanced diploma, associate degree, degree and postgraduate courses.

Many institutions, both government funded and private, offer tertiary courses.

The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) processes applications for courses offered by:

- All government funded universities in Queensland and Northern New South Wales and the Australian Maritime College in Tasmania
- Queensland TAFE institutes for full-time advanced diploma, diploma and selected certificate courses
- Private institutions such as the Australian College of Natural Medicine, Bond University, QANTM, the Queensland Institute of Business and Technology and the SAE Institute.

Refer to the current *QTAC Guide* for information about specific courses processed by QTAC.

Accredited tertiary level courses are also available at other private providers not mentioned above. Applications for these courses are made directly to each of these institutions.

Applying through QTAC

When completing your QTAC application, you are able to apply for up to six courses. These must be strictly in your order of preference.

It is important you be aware that some universities offer courses that can be undertaken on either a Commonwealth supported basis (CSP) or a full fee-paying basis (Dfee). The difference in course costs per year can be up to three times greater for Dfee courses. Indicative costs per year for CSP courses are included in Section 1 of the *QTAC Guide*. Institution specific CSP and Dfee course costs are included in the specific course descriptions in Section 3 of the *QTAC Guide*.

TAFE tuition fees vary between institutes. The current government subsidised tuition fee is \$1003.35 per year. Non-subsidised, fee-based courses have higher costs. You will need to check with the relevant institute/s for current course costs.

The majority of successful QTAC applicants will be given **one** offer only. Applicants, who have applied for courses that are offered on a full-fee basis by an institution that also offers the same courses on a Commonwealth supported basis, may be given more than one offer. In this situation, the applicant must decide on his/her preferred course as **only one** offer can be accepted. Consequently, it is important to consider your selection of courses carefully.

Here is a suggested approach to the task of course selection:

Task 1 Put your career preferences in order of interest

Consider your possible career options. Think about jobs that have always attracted you, your interests and aptitudes and your aspirations.

Task 2 List all possible courses related to these careers

For assistance with this task consult the *QTAC Guide*, *Job Guide*, QSA's *Career Information Service (CIS)* @ <http://www.cis.qsa.qld.edu.au>, the *myfuture* website and your guidance officer or careers counsellor.

Task 3 Find out more about these courses and their outcomes

- Read information brochures, handbooks and the *QTAC Guide*.
- Visit the websites of institutions that offer the courses.
- Attend open days and career markets.
- Talk to people in the jobs that interest you, those who have done the course, and those who attend the institution in which you are interested.

Task 4 Draw up a shortlist of courses that best meet your interest requirements

Think carefully about your skills, interests and aptitudes. Also consider your preferred learning style. Are you ready for academic study, or do you prefer a practical, hands-on approach?

Some locations will seem more attractive than others because of such factors as course content, location, facilities, etc.

Task 5 Arrange these courses in order of your own preference

Consider the following questions:

- What are the major areas of study?
- How interesting and enjoyable does the course seem?
- What proportion of theory and practice is there?
- What are the entrance requirements, e.g. subject prerequisites, results needed in particular subject(s),

folio or audition requirements, fixed early closing dates, etc?

- What were the OP/rank cut-offs in past years?
- Can you keep a range of career options open, or do you specialise immediately or early in the course?
- Is the course offered on a full-time, part-time, distance education or flexible delivery basis?
- How many years of study are involved?
- Is it a set course or is there a choice of subjects?
- Is it a degree, associate degree, advanced diploma, diploma or certificate level course?
- What recognition is given to this course by professional associations?
- What costs are associated with doing this particular course?
- What financial assistance is available?

If you are finding it difficult to choose between two courses more detailed information may be required. You could find out the names of all the subjects in the course and what each subject covers by reading handbooks, visiting the websites of institutions that offer the courses and contacting each institution directly.

Task 6 Look closely at the institution

Consider the following about the institutions offering the courses you have listed:

- Where is it located?
- What travel and accommodation requirements will there be?
- Is there accommodation nearby?
- What is the cost of the accommodation?
- Is the transport frequent and reliable?
- What is its 'atmosphere' or working and social environment like?
- What are the graduate outcomes? What percentage of graduates is gaining full-time work and is the work related to their course of study?

At this stage you may reject certain courses because of considerations other than career choice. For example, you may live in Brisbane and want to become a primary teacher but not want to consider a tertiary institution like Townsville, Rockhampton or Toowoomba, for example.

In this case, the critical question is not 'Do you want to live in another city eg Townsville, Rockhampton or Toowoomba?' but 'If you missed out on all other primary teaching courses, would you then consider moving to Townsville, Rockhampton or Toowoomba?'

You are then forced to think about how much you want to become a primary teacher in the long term rather than where you want to live in the short term.

The cost of living will be higher if living away from home. Those who are eligible can apply for Youth Allowance.

Other costs involved in attending a particular institution and in doing a specific course or level of course must also be considered.

All courses have fees. Most undergraduate courses at government funded universities are available through a

Commonwealth Supported Place. This means you pay a portion of your tertiary education. Student Contribution Costs vary from institution to institution. These can be paid upfront or deferred until you are earning a certain income, depending on your citizenship and/or visa classification.

Some courses at government funded universities, institutes of TAFE and private institutions are offered on a full-fee basis. In general fees are paid upfront either per subject, per semester, per year or in total. Fee-HELP may apply. The *QTAC Guide* clearly indicates the courses where full-fees apply. For more information, contact the institution directly.

TAFE Standard offer (SO) courses, while subsidised by the government, still incur some fees (up to \$1003.35 per year). Other charges may also occur. Contact the relevant institute to find out the cost of any courses in which you are interested. TAFE fees are reduced if you are eligible for a Health Care Card.

Task 7 Consider other factors

Do not reject courses just because you don't think your school results will be high enough. Nor should you put these courses lower down the preference list. They should be placed in strict order of your preference.

OPs or ranks and the course cut-offs cannot be accurately predicted. Therefore it is difficult to assess your chances of gaining entry to a course. In December when you receive your Year 12 results you will have a better idea by comparing your score with that of cut-offs over the last few years.. Even if you think your chances are only slim it is worth trying for one or two 'ideal' courses in which you are very interested.

On the other hand it would be very foolish to have only a slim chance of gaining entry to all six courses you list as preferences. Ensure that you list a couple of realistic preferences.

Task 8 Eliminate wasted preferences

Make sure you are not wasting any preferences. You will waste preferences if you list a course in which:

- you would not accept an offer
- you have absolutely no chance at all of being offered a place
- you do not meet the subject prerequisites
- you satisfy the minimum entry requirements for higher listed preferences, and the cut-off of the lower preference in question is certain to be much higher than cut-offs for those higher preferences.

Task 9 Include a 'foot-in-the-door' preference

Include at least one preference for a course in which your chances of gaining entry are very reasonable, and which you are prepared to do if you miss your higher preferences.

Look at all your preferences. If there are no courses about which you are confident of receiving an offer, then it could happen that you get no offer at all. In this case, you should think seriously about putting down as your last couple of preferences other courses where

your chances of an offer are much better. Investigate your chosen careers and courses again. Find out if there are any courses with a lower level of entry and which are:

- at a tertiary institution which you have not yet considered, or
- in an interest area related to those you have already applied for, or
- at a different level (e.g. associate degree, advanced diploma/diploma or certificate) than those for which you have already applied.

Ensure that the courses that you list are ones that you would accept if offered a place.

Task 10 Look closely at each preference

It is necessary to consider the order of each preference you list on the application form. Many students think carefully about which preference they place first. However, some do not give the same degree of attention to courses lower on their preference list.

This is not wise, because you cannot be assured of getting your first preference. It is possible to receive an offer in any one of your preferences. The order in which you place your fourth and fifth preferences, for example, may determine which course you are offered. Therefore it is necessary to consider carefully which preference is placed fourth, which is placed fifth and so on. It is important to find out just as much information about your last preference as you have about your first.

This process requires much information gathering, discussion and thought.

Applying directly

Institutions and registered training organisations that offer tertiary courses and are not part of the QTAC system accept direct applications. Contact private providers and other registered training organisations for information and application forms or see your guidance officer or careers counsellor for more information.

To find out about private providers that are not listed in the QTAC Guide, talk to your Guidance Officer, and check out the Yellow Pages and advertisements in the local media (newspapers, television and radio stations).

Applications to **part-time** diploma and advanced diploma courses and most certificate courses at institutes of TAFE are made directly to the relevant institute.

How can I get information?

There are many resources available:

1. School guidance officers and careers counsellors
2. QTAC Guide/QTAC Website

- booklet distributed to all Year 12 students by QTAC, which has summary information on university and TAFE tertiary level courses. <http://www.qtac.edu.au>
- 3. QSA Career Information Service
 - <http://www.cis.qsa.qld.edu.au>
- 4. TAFE course information <http://www.trainandemploy.qld.gov.au>
- 5. Tertiary institution handbooks, DVDs and information leaflets, and websites
 - detailed information on the courses, their structure, and the subjects within the courses. Your guidance officer or careers counsellor should have copies for your perusal.
 - institutions' website addresses are provided in Section 2 of the QTAC Guide.
- 6. Job Guide
 - each job description lists courses which lead towards the respective occupation. <http://jobguide.dest.gov.au/>
- 7. myfuture
 - the National Career Information Service located at <http://www.myfuture.edu.au>
- 8. The institution itself
 - arrange a visit to check facilities
 - use the Careers market schedule which details Open days and Tertiary information sessions. It's available on the QSA's Career Information Service - News and Events at <http://www.cis.qsa.qld.edu.au/news/index.html>
 - arrange an interview with the counselling services of the institution, or a lecturer from the department in which you are interested.
- 9. Internet sites
 - a useful list of internet sites titled, *Useful Internet sites for career planning*, can be downloaded from <http://education.qld.gov.au/students/service/career/pdfs/useful-internet-sites.pdf>

Many of the resources listed above are available in schools and career information centres. The QTAC Guide is a very useful book that will help you to identify some of your courses of interest. However, it should be used as a starting point only. It is wise to use some of the other resources listed. Use only the most recent information. Check if in doubt.

Finally

It is not recommended that courses be chosen by the name and reputation of the course and the institution only. Nor should you simply follow what your friends choose to do. This often results in disillusionment and unhappiness. Choosing tertiary courses is an important but complex process. It requires considerable time and effort. Students are advised to seek further help if in doubt about courses or procedures referred to in this document.

Choosing tertiary courses in Queensland:



Student Checklist

DECISION MAKING – PART 1

Most students would agree that selecting tertiary courses requires making some critical decisions. If you want to increase your chances of making the best decision possible at this time, a process like the one below is suggested.

Circle 'Yes' or 'No' for each step.

1. YES / NO Have you identified the field/s of study you are interested in (e.g. teaching, engineering, business)?
2. YES / NO Have you identified the tertiary courses available in the field/s in which you are interested?
3. YES / NO Are you able to identify the particular type/s of career/s that interest you most in the field/s of study (e.g. preschool teaching, civil engineering technician level, accounting)?
4. YES / NO Have you read the *Job Guide* or visited the *myfuture* website for a description of these careers?
5. YES / NO Have you sought assistance with steps 1-4?
6. YES / NO Have you listed the specific courses that lead to your preferred occupation/s and where they are available?
7. YES / NO Have you checked that you have studied the Senior subjects that may be prerequisites for entry to these courses?
8. YES / NO Have you looked at the course outlines for each course in the relevant institutions' handbooks or website?
9. YES / NO Have you investigated which careers relate to these courses?
10. YES / NO Have you found out who would employ graduates from these courses? What sort of work would these courses lead to in 5 or 10 years time?
11. YES / NO Have you gathered information about steps 5-9?
12. YES / NO Have you talked to your parents or carers about steps 3-11?
13. YES / NO Have you talked to employers and graduates from these courses who are now employed?
Have you found out:
 - a) What the current job prospects are for graduates of these courses?
 - b) If employers prefer graduates from one course or institution over those from other courses or institutions, and possible reasons for this?
14. YES / NO Are you able to identify the most suitable course/s for you?
15. YES / NO Have you investigated accommodation available at the institution/s which offer your preferred course/s and when applications have to be made for accommodation?
16. YES / NO Have you investigated your eligibility for Youth Allowance?
17. YES / NO Have you investigated special access programs and scholarships to the courses and institutions you are applying for e.g. Q-STEP, regional preference schemes, etc?
18. YES / NO Have you considered factors that will restrict your choice of course and/or institution (e.g. financial limitations, accommodation, transport, or proximity to relatives)?
19. YES / NO Have you discussed your decisions so far with relevant people?
20. YES / NO Have you talked to your parents or carers about steps 13-19?
21. YES / NO Have you decided on the order of your course preferences?
 - a) Ensure the course you most want to gain entry to (after considering steps 1-20) is listed as your first preference, the course you next want is second, and so on.
 - b) It is wise, in case of a lower than expected Year 12 result, to list as your last 2 preferences, courses that have had low cut-offs in recent years (provided, of course, you are prepared to accept a place in these if offered).

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Student Checklist

DECISION MAKING – PART 2

If you responded 'No' to any of the steps in Part 1 of this checklist, it is suggested that you carry out the following activities.

JG = Job Guide **M** = myfuture **QG** = QTAC Guide

1. Refer to JG, M and to QG and any career programs provided at school. Then arrange to see the guidance officer or counsellor.
2. Refer to JG, M, QG, and the Careers market schedule.
3. Seek help from the guidance officer or careers counsellor.
4. Read the relevant entries in JG and visit the *myfuture* website.
5. Make an appointment with the guidance officer or careers counsellor.
6. Refer to QG.
7. Refer to QG.
8. Read the relevant course descriptions in the institutions' handbooks or websites.
9. Seek information collected via institutions' graduate destination surveys. Attend open days and evenings at institutions. If still uncertain, see the guidance officer or careers counsellor.
10. Refer to JG and M. Locate local potential employers in the telephone directory. Attend a careers market and/or TSXPO and talk to employers. Refer to graduate destination surveys.
11. Make an appointment with the guidance officer or careers counsellor.
12. Arrange a suitable time with your parents or carers to discuss these. Have your list of courses available. Have available any notes you have about positive and negative aspects of these courses/careers. Have a copy of JG, QG and photocopies of course outlines for them to read (i.e. help them be informed). You may need to discuss possible financial arrangements.
13. Locate possible local employers in the telephone directory, business directories, etc. Arrange to talk to several, if possible. Attend a careers market.
14. Go back to steps 1-5.
15. Seek this information from the guidance officer or careers counsellor or use the Internet.
16. As for 15.
17. Check QG, the Internet and discuss with the guidance officer or counsellor.
18. List any such factors and discuss them with your parents or carers.
19. Make an appointment with the guidance officer or careers counsellor.
20. Arrange a suitable time. Have all relevant information available for them to consider.