Who is enrolled
in the
Australian BA?

Student uptake of the Australian BA 2001–2006

AUSTRALIAN
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DASSH
DEANS OF ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

SUMMARY REPORT 4

This summary report presents the key findings from the BA scoping project that document the trends in student uptake of programs within the field of Arts offered across Australia

About the Project

The BA scoping project commenced in March 2007. Materials and resources developed as a result of the project launched on 30 July, 2008 on the DASSH website http://www.dassh.edu.au/basp

Materials Developed

The summary reports of the scoping study are particularly intended for decision makers for the Bachelor of Arts programs: those responsible for coordinating and managing Arts programs. The summary reports can be read independently or as a set of information. The set consists of:

1   The Bachelor of Arts scoping project:
    Executive summary

2   What is the Australian BA?
    Defining and describing the nature and role of the Arts in contemporary Australia

3   Mapping the terrain:
    Trends and shared features in BA programs across Australia 2001–2008

4   Who is enrolled in the Australian BA?
    Student uptake of the Australian BA 2001–2006

5   Who is delivering the Australian BA?
    Trends in staff profiles in the BA 2001–2006

6   Future studies emerging from the BA scoping project

These summary reports are supported by resources developed as part of the project. These resources are available from the DASSH website and include:

•   Case studies

•   Data sets

•   Institutional program profiles

1.   Student backgrounds

Data informing the findings described in this summary report were gathered from a wide range of sources including the following quantitative and qualitative sources:

- DEST (now renamed DEEWR) data;
- data drawn from the Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) and Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ);
- existing institutional or centre reports of investigations into particular areas such as employability;
- an online survey of those engaged in the teaching of these programs.

1.1   Cultural background

Information on citizenship is a DEST-required data field that draws on supporting documentation. This set of information is more reliable than the self-disclosure enrolment information collected by most institutions. Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the breakdown of students enrolled in programs within the field of Arts across the period 2001 – 2006, across the different types of visas.

Key findings

1   There has been a general increase in students located offshore who are engaged in study of single degree programs. In 2001, students located offshore consisted of 0.8% of the total Arts student numbers. By 2006, the offshore student cohort had increased to 1.7% of the total Arts cohort.

2   There is a slow increase in the number of international students on student visas engaged in the Arts programs, but these still constitute a small minority of the entire cohort.

3   Double degree programs attract more Australian citizens than international students.

4   There has been an increase in the number of students located offshore completing a Bachelor of Arts program between 2001 and 2006.

Table 1: All students engaged in programs within the field of Arts by residency status

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australian/NZ	89.55%	88.83%	88.04%	87.07%	87.43%	87.36%
Permanent visa	2.29%	2.17%	2.10%	2.11%	1.81%	1.53%
Temporary visa	6.62%	7.50%	8.15%	8.56%	8.08%	7.82%
Overseas resident	1.54%	1.50%	1.71%	2.25%	2.68%	3.29%

Notes: Data includes honours programs but not double degree enrolments.

Table 2: All students engaged in Arts program by residency status

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australian/NZ	91.31%	90.61%	89.93%	89.16%	89.51%	89.59%
Permanent visa	2.17%	2.08%	2.04%	2.06%	1.78%	1.52%
Temporary visa	5.37%	6.18%	6.75%	7.11%	6.73%	6.49%
Overseas resident	1.15%	1.13%	1.28%	1.68%	1.98%	2.40%

Notes: Data includes figures for double degree programs. Temporary visas usually indicate student visas issued to international students coming to Australia to study. Data regarding country of origin was not collected. Australian and New Zealand citizens have been grouped together.

1.2   Gender

Key findings

1   DEST reports that total enrolments across all programs indicate that there are slightly fewer males than females enrolled in higher education between 2001 – 2006, with males comprising approximately 45% of the total enrolment population. Fewer males enrol in Arts related programs than in other discipline areas.

2   Using the definition of programs within the field of Arts established in this study, the majority of students in general Arts related programs are female, but there has been a steady increase of male students across the period (See Table 3). While the percentage shift appears to be insignificant (at 1%), this is an increase of 3,000 people in terms of enrolment numbers.

3   Examining the generic Bachelor of Arts programs as a subset of Arts programs, the proportion of male students has increased from approximately 31% in 2001 to approximately 38% in 2006. This increase is in line with the general increase in student numbers across the years.

4   There is no significant difference between the ratio of male and female students taking a single undergraduate Arts degree and Arts double degrees.

1.3   Age group

Programs within the field of Arts attract a wide age-range of people. During the period investigated, the youngest enrolled student identified was a 12 year old enrolled in a double Science/ Arts degree at La Trobe University in 2004. The oldest enrolled student identified was 92, studying a communications degree in Edith Cowan University in 2004. Data denoting actual age on enrolment as gathered by DEST was coded to develop age groupings to facilitate analysis.

Key findings

1   The majority of students enrolled in programs within the field of Arts are aged between 18 and 21 years old. (See Table 4)

2   Queensland has the largest number of enrolled students below the age of 18 years. Proportionately, NT has the oldest student cohort, while NSW has the largest number of students in the over 30 years of age group. (See Figure 1)

3   Regional institutions attract the highest proportion of mature aged students (over 30 years old) while GO8 institutions attract the higher proportions of students under 21 years of age. (See Figure 2)

Table 3: Gender breakdown of students enrolled in programs within the field of Arts 2001 – 2006

| Year	Total Enrolments	Numbers of Male and Female		Percentage of Male and Female	
		F	M	% F	% M
2001	99,674	68,746	30,928	68.97%	31.03%
2002	101,478	69,723	31,755	68.71%	31.29%
2003	104,984	71,932	33,052	68.52%	31.48%
2004	104,683	71,530	33,153	68.33%	31.67%
2005	104,818	71,452	33,366	68.17%	31.83%
2006	105,513	71,602	33,911	67.86%	32.14%

Notes: Data includes numbers for double degree programs. Programs within the field of Arts include programs that are not necessarily called "Bachelor of Arts". For a full definition, see Summary Report 2: What is the Australian BA?

Table 4: Age of Bachelor of Arts students by age group 2001 – 2006

| Year	Age Group									
	<18		18-21		22-25		26-30		>30	
2001	3,514	(7.8%)	17,623	(39.4%)	10,065	(22.5%)	3,942	(8.8%)	9,635	(21.5%)
2002	3,279	(7.4%)	21,552	(48.8%)	6,516	(14.8%)	3,164	(7.2%)	9,613	(21.8%)
2003	3,026	(7.1%)	21,317	(49.9%)	6,365	(14.9%)	3,535	(8.3%)	8,469	(19.8%)
2004	2,535	(6.7%)	19,121	(50.7%)	4,980	(13.2%)	3,944	(10.5%)	7,158	(19.0%)
2005	2,573	(6.9%)	18,725	(50.3%)	6,158	(16.6%)	2,897	(7.8%)	6,841	(18.4%)
2006	2,711	(7.3%)	18,827	(50.8%)	6,196	(16.7%)	2,856	(7.7%)	6,480	(17.5%)

Notes: Data excludes double degree programs and honours programs.

Figure 1: Age of Bachelor of Arts students by State/Territory as total enrolments 2001 – 2006
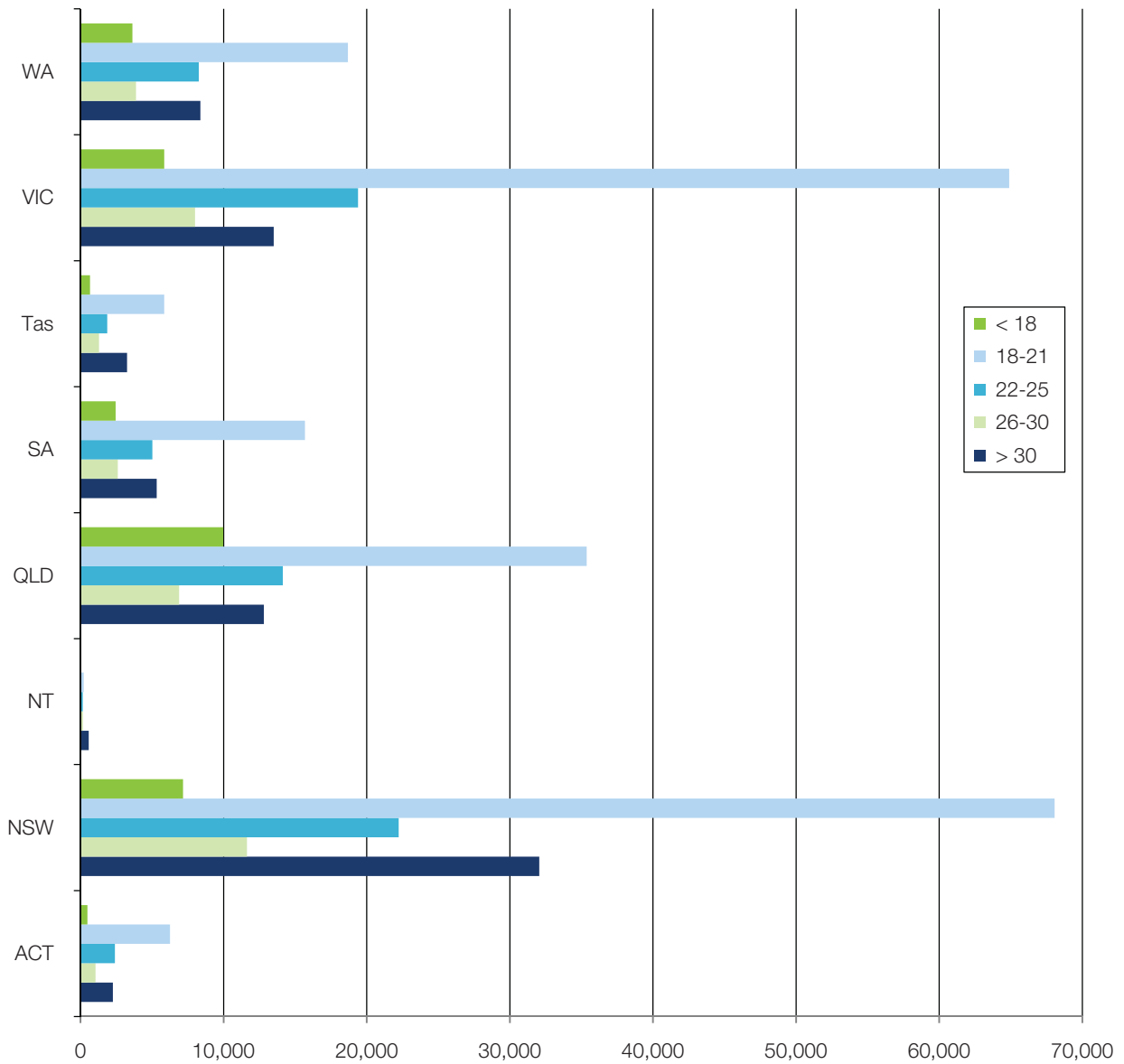
Source: DEST (DEEWR) figures 2001 – 2006

Figure 2: Age of students by type of institution as total enrolments 2001 – 2006
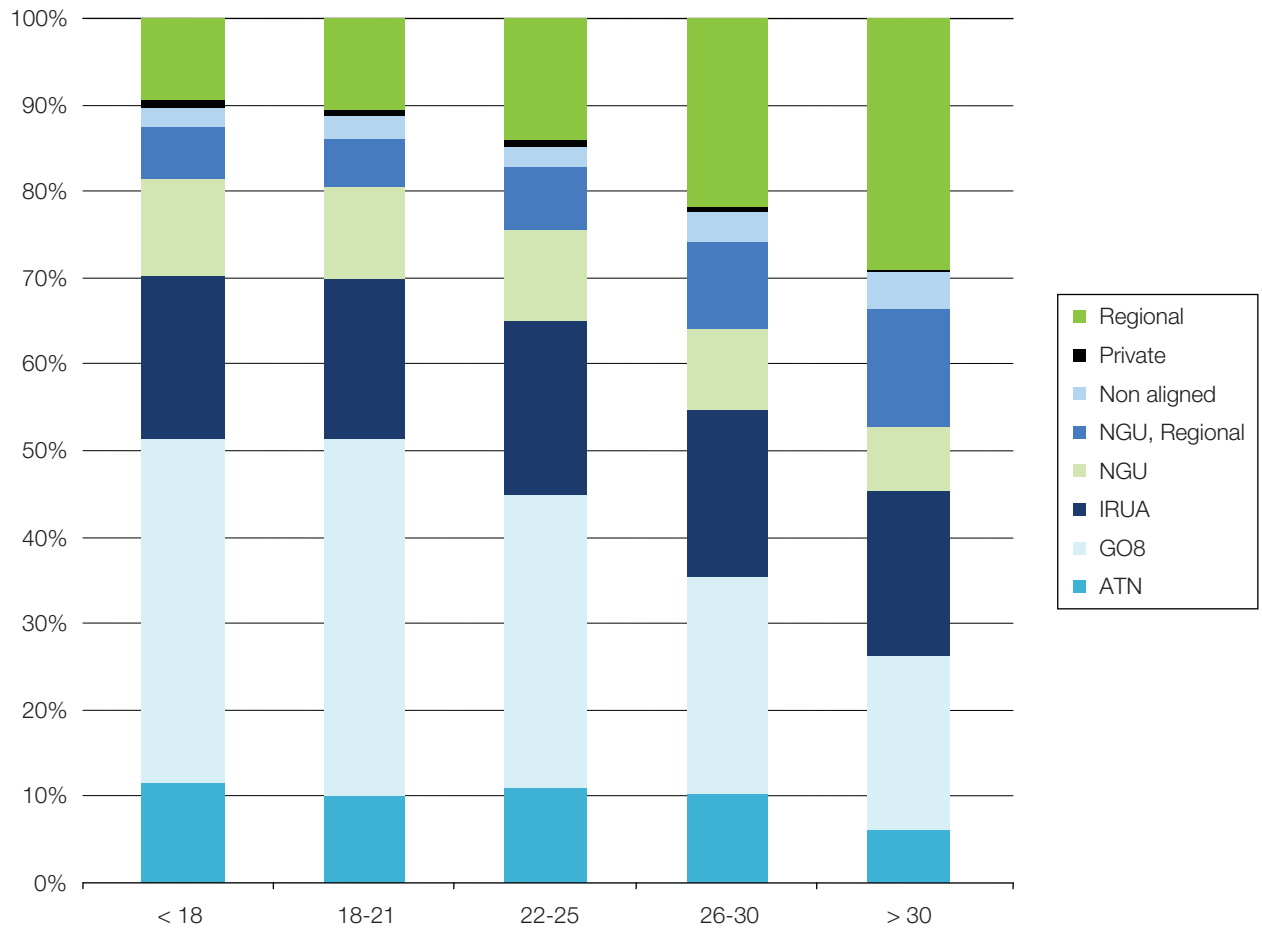
1.4   Mode of attendance

The findings from this project indicate that the part time and full time definition as used by DEST/DEEWR may be meaningless in the modern context. The DEST/DEEWR definitions are articulated in Table 5. Interviewees and round table participants frequently cited multiple meanings for full time and part time participation. These variations reflect and acknowledge the amount of time contemporary students now spend in the workplace versus the time spent engaged in study. In 'real' figures, there appears to be a decrease in part-time students over this period. This emerged as contrary to the observations expressed by project participants.

Table 5: DEST definition of type of attendance

Attendance is classified by the Higher Education Provider as being full-time or part-time based on the student load for the student aggregated across all units of study (including work experience in industry units) for all courses being undertaken by the student in the Collection Year	
Full-time	student load aggregated for all the courses being undertaken by the student in the Collection Year is 0.75 or more.
Part-time	student load aggregated for all the courses being undertaken by the student in the Collection Year is less than 0.75.

Source: http://planning.flinders.edu.au/destpac/ student/2005/section3/fb_TypeOfAttendance.htm

Key findings

1 Using the DEST/DEEWR definition described above, there is a decrease in the number of students who are enrolling as part-time students. (See Table 6)

2 The project participants report that it is common for students enrolled in a full time capacity to work on a casual basis. This observation is supported by evidence from institutional projects (such as the Griffith Workplace Project) and explored further in subsidiary studies (such as the Steven and Yashin-Shaw study of 2004). The actual hours of worked range from a few hours to amounts that could be considered as full time employment. Other studies such as the UniSA Final Year Student Survey (UniSA Career Services, 2007) report that over 70% of students consider themselves "employed" while studying, while less than 20% of them were working in an area directly related to their studies. This finding has been replicated in a number of other institutional studies. The Graduate Destination Survey only seeks to identify whether students worked part or full time in their final year, and does not elicit the percentage of time that the students are engage in study and in work.

3 On average, students are taking longer to complete their degrees. In many instances this renders the notion of the "3rd year" as the final year no longer appropriate. Project participants suggested that this is in part due to the complex structuring of the programs, which in turn require students to continue an extra year to ensure that they have a valid major to graduate.

4 There is a widely held perception that students decrease their load and shift from a full time first year load to a part-time load to meet increasing work commitments or outside interests or responsibilities. However, a comparison of load and enrolments data indicates that this is true for some institutions, but not for others.

5 A number of institutions, including Curtin University, have projects which are tracking student movement through the programs. The University of Western Australia has a project tracking student progress through humanities programs. It may be useful for other institutions to replicate the projects and report findings to the sector.

1.5   Motivations for participation

Interviews with academics participating in this study revealed that there are some commonly shared perceptions of why students enroll in BA degrees. One theme emerging from these discussions was that students choose to enroll in a BA degree because it provides a valuable introduction to university – a quasi foundational program. Another theme described by the participants entailed the possibility that students are using the program as a pathway to access another degree – to 'test the waters', to 'see whether they like the discipline' or 'because they liked the subject in school'. They also felt the program provided opportunities for students to gain confidence, to legitimate their participation in higher education. Some participants also reported that for some students a BA program and its choice of disciplines (like 'philosophy') was what 'real university' was all about. Many interviewees stated that the opportunity to design an individual course of study was an attractive option for students. Interestingly, the 15 students in the pilot focus group did not indicate any knowledge that a BA could be used in this manner.

Key findings

1 There is a sense from interviewees that students expect an immediate transferability of skills learnt into workplace situations.

2 There is a perception amongst project participants that the BA degree is particularly problematic for students' sense of identity, belonging, and experience of cohort. An opinion often expressed in the round tables and interviews was that while engineering students have a vision of selves as engineers, nursing students as nurses etc, there is no associated future vision of self that is marketed as an outcome of a BA. Participants view this as having a potentially negative influence on student engagement and motivation, and a possible underlying factor in decreasing enrolments and increasing attrition.

Table 6: Percentage of Bachelor of Arts students studying part-time

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
30.66%	28.70%	28.50%	27.90%	27.80%	27.27%

2. Student perceptions

Due to time and budget constraints and the sheer scale of this scoping exercise, the BA scoping project was not able to elicit information from students engaged in a BA degree. However, a small focus group investigation of 15 students and their experiences of studying a BA was conducted as a pilot study to inform and shape the design of this project. As the focus group was not a truly representative sample, the data gathered in this process has not been included in the summary reports other than as illustration.

2.1 Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) data

To redress the absence of the student voice, data from the CEQ data was analysed. CEQ data is gathered nationally as part of the Graduate Destinations survey administered annually to recent graduates.

2.1.1 Drawing CEQ data for the programs in the field of Arts

Data analysed from the CEQ data is from students in selected Society and Culture Fields of study (FOS). More specifically, the FOS codes included in the data presented are any FOS beginning with 900 (Society & Culture – General); 901 (Political Science & Policy Studies); 903 (Studies in Human Society); 911 (Justice & Law Enforcement); 913 (Librarianship, Info Management & Curatorial Studies; 915 (Language & Literature); 917 (Philosophy & Religious Studies); 919 (Economics & Econometrics); 999 (Other Society & Culture); and 1007 (Communication & Media Studies). However, 91105 (Police studies) was excluded as this is an area of study not related to the arts.

There is information missing from some fields of study across different years. This is due to different definitions being used for different codes. Only Society and Culture data (90000 codes) was obtained in years 2003 – 2006 and therefore Communication and Media Studies (100000 codes) were not included. In 2001 and 2002, some data was not considered part of Society and Culture or the Arts (e.g. Justice Studies, Econometrics etc.) and therefore is not included. It is also the case that when there are too few students in these categories completing the GDS in a particular year, data is not supplied.

DASSH members can access the Graduate Destination and Course Experience Questionnaire data sets from the DASSH website for further analysis http://www.dassh.edu.au/basp

2.1.2 Analysis of the CEQ data related to the smaller sub-group of Arts

Key findings

1   Across all Arts programs, students continue to rate their experience at a very high level of satisfaction for the CEQ general satisfaction item (See Table 7). This is an average that is higher than all other programs combined.

2   In the area of Generic Skill Development Arts students rated the "improving written communication" item [Q32-WC = The course improved my skills in written communication] as the highest along with "analytical skills" [Q14-AS = The course sharpened my analytic skills].

3   The lowest score Generic Skill Development items was given to the item related to team work skills [Q6-TM = The course helped me develop my ability to work as a team member].

4   The recorded sequences of study or major that scored the highest level of satisfaction were in the area of "Philosophy & Religious Studies (General)". The sequences of study that scored the lowest level of satisfaction were in the area of "Translating and Interpreting".

2.1.3 What the CEQ tells us about graduate perceptions of programs within the field of Arts

Table 7: General satisfaction of Course Experience Questionnaire by Institution *(1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree)*

Institution	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Australian Catholic University		4.29	4.24	4.04	4.33	4.10
Avondale College	4.33	4.07	4.50	4.77	4.25	4.47
Bond University	3.92	4.14		4.00	4.67	4.31
Central Queensland University		4.17	4.04	3.93	3.68	3.91
Charles Darwin University	3.94	4.03	4.43	4.08	4.00	3.88
Charles Sturt University	3.76	3.78	4.02	3.91	4.14	4.11
Curtin University of Technology	3.38	3.91	3.98	3.84	3.85	3.83
Deakin University	4.01	4.15	4.15	3.96	4.10	4.04
Edith Cowan University	3.81	4.00	3.96	3.87	3.99	4.01
Griffith University	3.78	3.74	3.86	3.92	3.85	3.78
James Cook University	4.23	4.02	4.33	4.28	4.44	4.18
La Trobe University	4.16	4.13	4.05	4.12	4.07	4.12
Macquarie University	3.96	3.83	3.85	3.89	3.90	3.87
Monash University	3.89	3.89	3.94	3.95	3.94	4.01
Murdoch University		4.19	4.20	4.10	4.27	4.22
Queensland University of Technology	3.87	3.76	3.59	3.88	3.89	3.86
RMIT University	3.38	3.49	3.74	3.80	3.97	4.06
Southern Cross University		3.90	4.04	4.04	3.97	3.90
Swinburne University of Technology	3.88	4.11	4.20	4.32	4.03	4.07
The Australian National University	4.01	4.23	4.17	4.26	4.16	4.18
The Flinders University of South Australia	4.21	4.02	4.11	4.05	3.94	3.94
The University of Adelaide	4.08	4.04	3.90	3.87	3.92	3.95
The University of Melbourne	3.99	3.99	4.05	4.01	3.99	4.07
The University of New England	4.31	4.27	4.36	4.31	4.16	4.13
The University of New South Wales	3.77	3.79	3.86	3.94	3.92	4.04
The University of Newcastle	4.00	4.08	4.03	4.01	4.22	3.97
The University of Notre Dame Australia	4.79	4.47	4.21	4.00	4.38	4.04
The University of Queensland	4.05	3.98	4.00	4.12	4.05	4.02
The University of Sydney	4.00	3.93	3.86	3.92	3.97	4.01
The University of Western Australia	4.23	4.20	4.20	4.14	4.13	4.05
University of Ballarat	4.08	3.76	4.06	4.00	4.03	3.73
University of Canberra	3.51	3.83	3.90	4.09	3.88	3.69
University of South Australia	3.78	3.69	3.76	3.83	3.68	3.65
University of Southern Queensland	4.23	3.93	4.10	4.30	4.29	4.07
University of Tasmania	4.08	3.97	4.23	3.91	3.98	4.19
University of Technology, Sydney	3.53	3.66	3.56	3.77	3.89	3.91
University of the Sunshine Coast	3.85	3.80	4.50	4.00	4.04	4.04
University of Western Sydney		3.56	3.74	3.70	3.96	3.79
University of Wollongong	3.89	4.08	4.10	4.11	4.13	4.13
Victoria University	3.90	3.85	4.11	3.93	4.09	3.89

Source: Graduate Careers Council of Australia data 2001 – 2006

3. Academic perceptions of the student experience

3.1 Qualitative data

The following findings are based on information that emerged during the interviews conducted with project participants and through the discussions at the round table meetings.

Key findings

1. The Bachelor of Arts is perceived to be the preferred program for 'first in family' students (University of Ballarat, University of Wollongong, Flinders University, University of Sunshine Coast and Edith Cowan University). This stands in contrast to education, which was perceived during the time of the CAE's in the 1980s to be the preferred program for 'first in family' students.

2. Project participants also expressed the perception that BA degrees in GO8 institutions attract a high enrolments from private school leavers; and that this is in contrast to regional centres that attract high numbers of mature aged students. While it was possible to verify age grouping in DEST data, other methods of investigation will need to be undertaken to adequately determine schooling background and enrolment.

3. There were also observations expressed at round table meetings and during interviews that there are moves to replace the BA as a general education initial degree with Law. This perception may be supported by the CEQ data for 2001 – 2006, which shows an increase in the number of students taking Law as a first degree or as part of a combination or double degree.

3.2 Careers offices

The ways in which universities frame and present the prospective employment opportunities for their Arts graduates is an interesting example of the variations in perceptions that exist about the nature of the program. To illustrate, the project team conducted a review of the career testimonials that have been published on University websites. While the testimonials are clearly for marketing purposes and seek to point students to what is possible, the project team found this to be an interesting illustration of institutional perception. While primarily an artefact of publicity departments and institutional careers offices, Table 8 lists the type of career outcomes presented as possible for successful BA graduates, and the number of institutions that mentioned them.

Table 8: Number and type of careers suggested through career testimonials from BA graduates

Type of Career	Times mentioned
Journalist/ Broadcaster	23
Writer/ Author	17
Postgraduate Student	13
Diplomat	11
University Employee (non-academic)	8
Academic	7
Editor	7
Teacher	6
Marketing Manager	5
Performer (Actor/ Comedian)	5
Research Fellow/ Officer	5
Film/ TV Producer	4
IT Consultant	4
Librarian	4
Performance Group Manager/ Employee	4
Senior Policy Advisor (Gov)	4
Politician	3
Historian	2
Museum Employee	2
Publications Manager	2

4. Studies potentially impacting Arts programs

4.1 Internal projects

Discussion at round tables revealed that institutional marketing departments often conduct surveys of first year students after the censuses date. These surveys gather information about students' expectations in comparison to their actual experience of University. Collated nationally, this information has the potential to inform the whole sector about student expectations and experiences. The cross-institutional pooling and sharing of this kind of internal data would be a valuable resource in raising institutional awareness. However, it may be the case that data of this kind is viewed as too sensitive to share between institutions competing for the same group of students.

4.2 ACER "Five year out" graduate survey

A new study funded by DEEWR aims to identify:

- employment outcomes in the first five years following graduation,
- links between education, further training and work,
- career pathways and transitions for different fields of education.

This study will have implications for, and provide valuable information about, Arts programs.

For details visit the Projects dataset on the DASSH website http://www.dassh.edu.au/basp

5. References

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