

Foreword and Summary of Key QTAC Information

The Role of QTAC

QTAC provides applicant materials in the form of published course information and entry requirements. QTAC receives and processes applications for tertiary study entry with the ultimate outcome of this service being the operation of tertiary admissions offer rounds. These services are provided on behalf of participating universities, TAFE Queensland and tertiary colleges. QTAC specifically services the admissions needs of 17 institutions. QTAC also provides a valuable source of information to various interested parties including Government agencies.

QTAC is a public, not for profit, company funded mainly through institutions' contributions and applicant charges. QTAC aims to assist tertiary institutions and applicants alike.

Key Statistics for the 2004-05 Admissions Year

QTAC's annual *Statistical Report* focuses on data that will assist those parties interested in the tertiary education market. The *Report* presents a substantial amount of information regarding the applicants and offer round processes conducted on behalf of participating institutions. This material can be used by multiple parties for multiple purposes. Although one of QTAC's key outcomes is seen as tertiary offers for qualified applicants, the data provides an insight into the actual applicant pool that forms the market.

The significant trends apparent from the 2004-2005 *Statistical Report* are outlined below.

- ***Applications:*** A total of 52,233 applications were received and processed for 2005 first semester entry. This was a decrease of 4.4% on the 54,641 applications for first semester 2004. Approximately 40% of applicants were current Queensland Year 12 students. Table 1 shows summary application figures for the 2004-2005 admissions period and Table 2 gives a comparative analysis of quota applications 1976-2005 (including mid-year admissions).

In 2004-2005 the overall acceptance rate was 77.2% while the enrolment rate was 69.8% compared with an acceptance rate of 78.6% and an enrolment rate of 68.6% in 2003-2004.

- ***Queensland Year 12 Students:*** There were 39,229 students (27,912 OP eligible and 11,317 OP ineligible) reported to QTAC by the Queensland Studies Authority compared with 39,359 (28,544 OP eligible and 10,815 OP ineligible) the previous year.

20,977 (53.5%) 2004 Queensland Year 12 students applied for entry in 2004-2005 compared with 22,296 (56.6% of 2003 Year 12 students) in 2003-2004. The number of OP eligible students applying to QTAC decreased from 21,316 (74.7% of OP eligible students) in 2003-2004 to 20,077 (71.9% of OP eligible students) in 2004-2005. The number of OP ineligible students increased by 4.6% but the number applying to QTAC

decreased from 980 (9.1% of OP ineligible students) to 900 (8.0% of OP ineligible students).

QTAC is unable to report on the level of institution direct entries that augment the Year 12 tertiary applicant pool. Table 20 shows summary application figures for current Queensland Year 12 students and Table 22 gives a comparative analysis of Queensland Year 12 applications 1976-2005.

In 2004-2005 the overall acceptance rate for Queensland Year 12 applicants was 76.5% while the enrolment rate was 72.1% compared with an acceptance rate of 78.6% and an enrolment rate of 70.5% in 2003-2004.

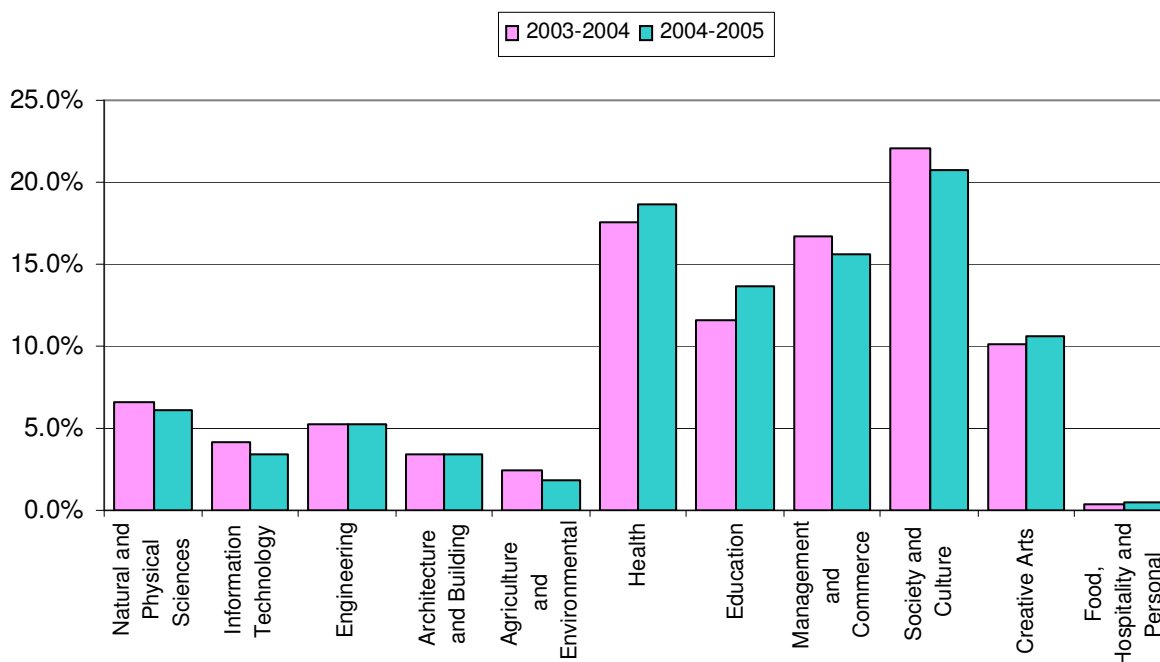
- *Demand for Courses:* 1,516 courses (an increase of 4.5% over the previous year) were offered through QTAC in 2004-2005. Supply and demand for particular courses and areas of interest varies from year to year, however, there continues to be many university and TAFE courses that are highly competitive. Gauging the real demand for a course is not reflected solely by the number of applicants to places but also by the cut-offs and medians for the course. Table 3 gives an analysis of applications by course. There were 38,749 places at Queensland universities and 8,295 at TAFE institutes.
- *Offers:* Although there were fewer applicants in 2004-2005 than in 2003-2004, there was a considerable increase in both offers and enrolments. A total of 47,199 applicants received at least one offer of a quota place, an offer rate of 90.4%, compared with 46,333 applicants receiving offers in 2003-2004 (an offer rate of 84.8%). Applicants may receive additional offers as a result of more places becoming available in preferences higher than the ones originally offered, or as a result of changing preferences for consideration in later offer rounds.
- *Enrolments:* 32,923 applicants accepted places and were enrolled at the census date. The enrolment rate overall was 69.8% in 2004-2005 compared with 68.6% in 2003-2004, representing an increase of 1,161 students enrolled in 2005 compared with 2004. The enrolment rate for current Queensland Year 12 students was 72.1% in 2004-2005 compared with 70.5% in 2003-2004.
- *Deferments:* A further 3,242 offered applicants had sought and been granted deferment of their enrolment until 2006, an increase of 549 or 20.4% from the previous year. Those applicants not permitted to defer may re-apply through QTAC the following year.
- *Gender:* The majority of applicants and enrolments were female, accounting for 31,378 (or 60.1%) of total applications and 19,730 (or 59.9%) of total enrolments. For current Queensland Year 12 students 12,122 (57.8%) applicants were female as were 8,345 (57.8%) of those enrolled. Table 4 gives an analysis of applications by gender and age group.
- *Mode of Attendance:* The number of commencing students attending classes full-time this year was 28,627 (or 87.0%). Table 5 provides further information on mode of attendance by level of course and institution.

- **Field of Education - Applications:** The most popular Field of Education was Society and Culture which was the first choice of 20.8% of applicants, followed by Health which was listed by 18.7% of applicants.

There were increases in the percentage of applicants listing Education as their first preference (13.6% in 2004-2005 compared with 11.5% in 2003-2004), Health (18.7% in 2004-2005 compared with 17.6% in 2003-2004), and Creative Arts (10.7% in 2004-2005 compared with 10.1% in 2003-2004).

There were decreases in Society and Culture (20.8% in 2004-2005 compared with 22.1% in 2003-2004), Management and Commerce (15.7% in 2004-2005 compared with 16.7% in 2003-2004), Information Technology (3.4% in 2004-2005 compared with 4.1% in 2003-2004), Natural and Physical Sciences (6.1% in 2004-2005 compared with 6.5% in 2003-2004), and Agriculture and Environmental (1.8% in 2004-2005 compared with 2.4% in 2003-2004).

Field of Education as a Percentage of Total First Preferences 2004-2005 compared with 2003-2004

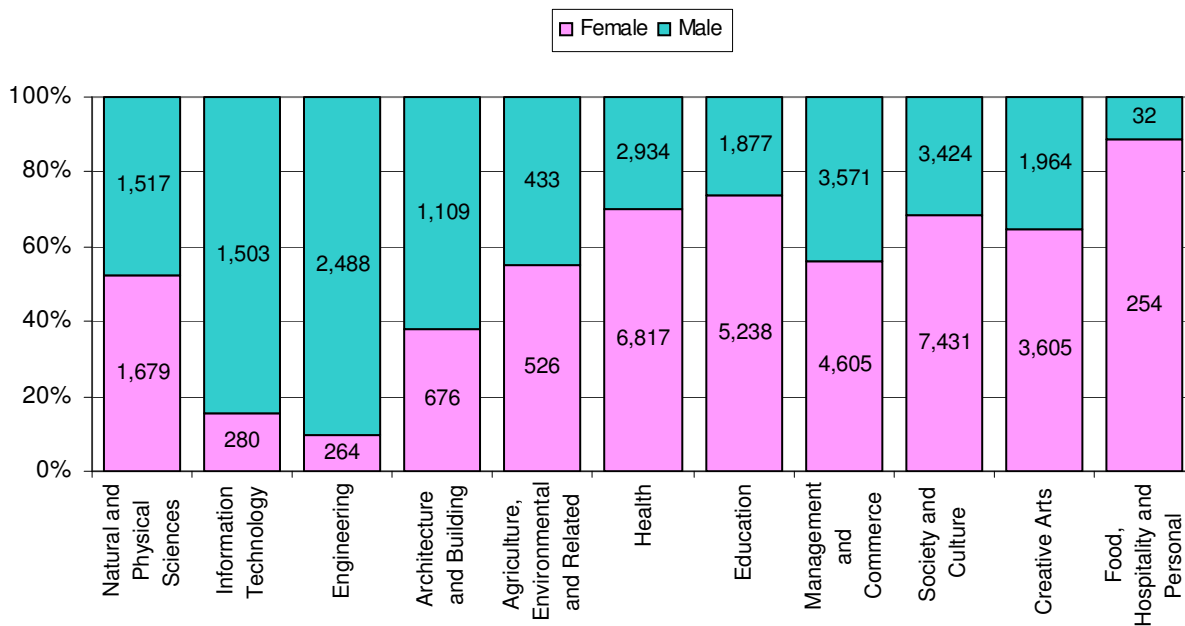


- **Field of Education – Acceptance and Enrolment Rates:** The highest acceptance rate was in Education (83%), followed by Architecture and Building and Creative Arts (both 79%), and Information Technology and Engineering (both 78%). The highest enrolment rate was in Education with an enrolment rate of 74%, followed by Creative Arts (73%) and Engineering (71%). An analysis of applications by Field of Education including acceptance and enrolment rates is shown in Table 9.

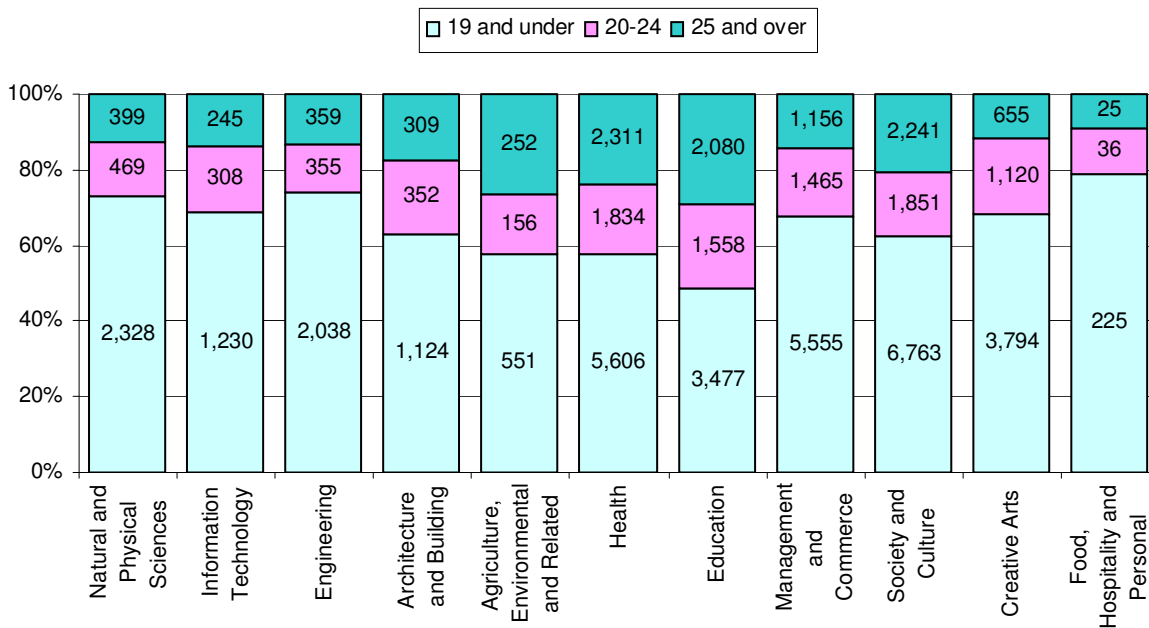
- **Field of Education – Gender and Age Group:** Females were predominant in Food, Hospitality and Personal Services (88.8%), Education (73.6%), Health (69.9%) and

Society and Culture (68.5%). Males accounted for 90.4% of Engineering first preferences, 84.3% of Information Technology first preferences and 62.1% of Architecture and Building first preferences.

Proportion by Gender of First Preference Field of Education 2004-2005



Proportion by Age Group of First Preference Field of Education 2004-2005

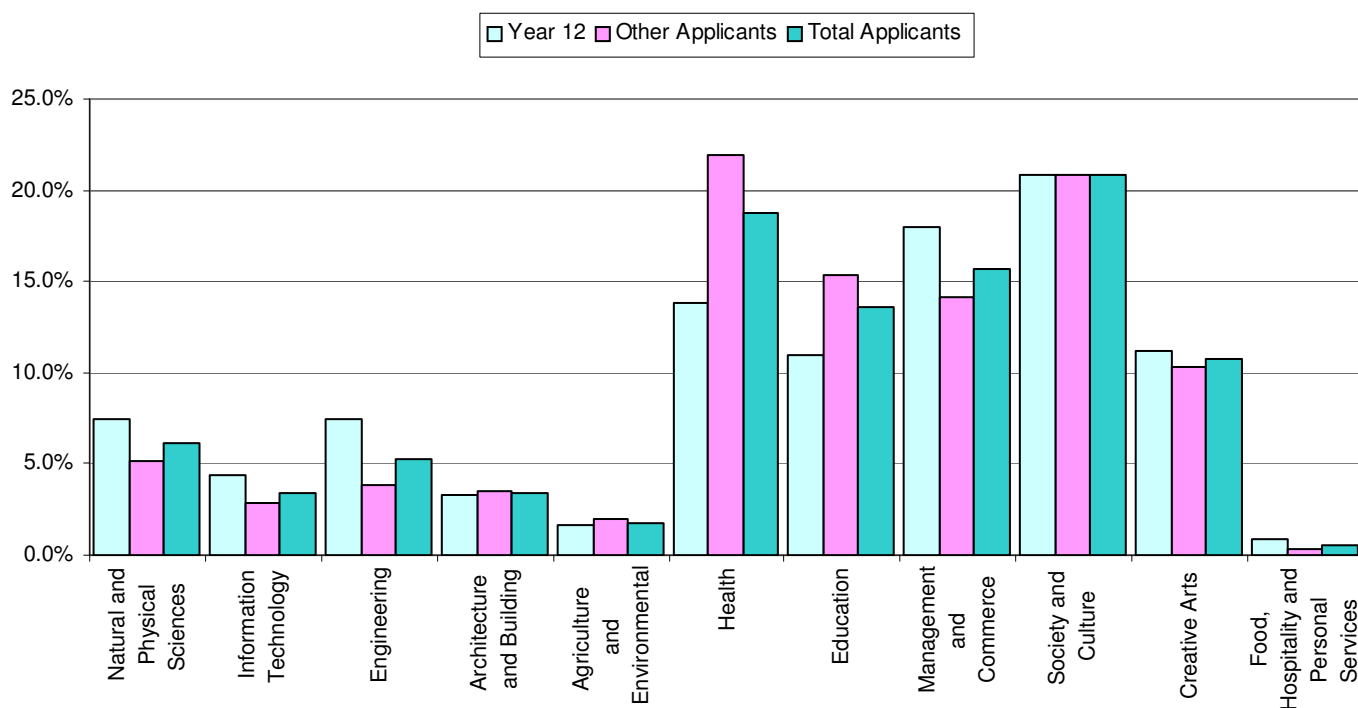


While applicants in the 19 and under and 20-24 age groups preferred Society and Culture followed by Health, those 25 and over chose Health ahead of Society and Culture. The third most popular Field of Education chosen by those 19 and under was Management and Commerce, while those 20-24 and 25 and over chose Education.

Tables 11, 12 and 13 provide additional data on applications by Field of Education by gender and age group.

- **Field of Education – Applicant Type:** Current Queensland Year 12 students were more likely to apply for Engineering, Management and Commerce, Natural and Physical Sciences, and Information Technology courses than were “other applicants”. The “other applicant” group favoured Health and Education courses. Society and Culture was equally popular with both groups.

Field of Education as a Percentage of First Preferences for Applicant Type



- **Field of Education – Queensland Year 12 Students:** Current Queensland Year 12 students preferred Society and Culture (20.7%), followed by Management and Commerce (18.0%) and Health (13.8%). The highest acceptance rate was in both Education and Natural and Physical Sciences (83%), followed by Engineering, Health and Creative Arts (all with 79%). The highest enrolment rate was in Natural and Physical Sciences (80%) and followed by Education (79%). Table 30 has an analysis of applications for Queensland Year 12 students by Field of Education including acceptance and enrolment rates.

- *Mid-Year 2004:* The number of courses being offered for mid-year admissions increased, with 623 courses offered in mid-year 2004 compared with 598 in mid-year 2003, an increase of 4.2%. Mid-year applications numbered 4,605, a decrease of 15.4%. Of these, 3,613 applicants received an offer of a place, an offer rate of 78.5% compared with 73.4% in mid 2003, and 2,680 were enrolled at 31 August 2004, representing an enrolment rate of 74.2%, compared with 71.4% the previous mid-year admissions.

Summary of Business Changes at QTAC

Each year the five operational divisions within QTAC combine to deliver the activities of the Company for institutions and applicants. Although the focus each year is the timely delivery of efficient and cost effective services, another feature of the Company's operations is the continuous investigation and implementation, where appropriate, of new initiatives and improved processes. Each QTAC division investigated a number of projects aimed at enhancing services and meeting emerging needs. A number of cross divisional process improvements were also made. The divisions of the Company are:

- Public Relations and Information Services;
- Production and Assessment Services;
- Information Technology;
- Commercial Services;
- Office of the CEO.

The main activities and initiatives covered by QTAC divisions during the 2004-2005 admissions period are outlined in each of the functional reports. It is however important to stress that the functions of each division interlink and support each other to produce the consolidated outcomes of the business.

Public Relations and Information Services

- *Higher Education Reforms:* The deregulation of student contributions and the introduction of full fee places have created some uncertainty in the marketplace about fees and have had a consequential flow-on effect on QTAC activities. The importance of clarifying the different costs for a Commonwealth Supported Place across institutions for inclusion in the *QTAC Guide* has been an ongoing challenge. On the other hand, the introduction of the *HEIMS Course Information Service* has facilitated access to approximate costs for tertiary study. The increased offering of full fee places added another dimension as some applicants incorrectly assumed that full fee meant paying the Commonwealth Supported Place upfront as opposed to deferring payment until a future date. More comprehensive published information on the costs of full fee places will reduce this problem. The introduction of Fee-Help has provided financial assistance for students at private institutions. QTAC looks forward to presenting more comprehensive information in the next *QTAC Guide*.
- *Publications:* QTAC continued to make a sizeable investment in the development of online editing for major publications. For the first time this year, the major section of

the *QTAC Guide - Section 3: Course Descriptions and Entry Requirements* - was made available to institutions for updating online. The XML program that has facilitated the electronic editing service has been a complex and difficult program to develop but one that institutions have found easy and enjoyable to use. QTAC provided a comprehensive *XML Users Manual* and training sessions for institutions. During the coming year the XML program will be expanded for use on the Year 10 *Tertiary Prerequisites* booklet.

- *Tertiary Advice And Counselling Services (TACS):* This year saw a rapid increase in the demand for workshops to assist applicants with their Personal Competencies Assessment statement as well as preparation for the Special Tertiary Admissions Test. In response to increasing demand, TACS trialled a workshop in Tertiary Preparation aimed at preparing Alternative Entry applicants for the realities and demands of tertiary study. The workshop was extremely popular and an additional session was run to cater for the demand. The Tertiary Entry workshops for school and institution personnel were heavily subscribed with additional sessions offered to cope with demand. TACS counsellors conducted 1,210 individual counselling appointments.
- *Enquiry Rates:* Staff responded to 76,944 enquiries over the year. Most enquiries were still received by phone, however email enquiries continued to grow in number.
- *Web Enhancements:* QTAC's Website has become a primary information source with 436,900 visits to the site in the past year. Currently there are approximately 1,500 pages of information on the website (including about 900 pages dedicated to institution course details). Information Services is committed to ensuring that the information is kept current and reflects the latest institution course updates. For the first time the mid-year admissions period had course details such as course outlines, fee information and career opportunities listed on the QTAC website. This is consistent with the course information presented on the website for end of year admissions and means potential applicants can now peruse more complete course information online before starting the application process. As most applications are now received electronically, the provision of information and a streamlined admissions process will continue to be a key focus for QTAC.
- *Promotion:* QTAC has played a key role in the organisation and successful outcome of the annual Tertiary Studies Expo (TSXPO) and the Adult Tertiary Entry Expo (ATEE). These events promote tertiary study to prospective applicants and provide a central venue for institutions to showcase their courses, provide information and answer questions. The Adult Tertiary Entry Expo provides a unique opportunity for mature age applicants seeking to investigate the various alternative entry pathways available for tertiary study. TACS conducted a regional seminar in Rockhampton in June providing training to Central Queensland University personnel and rural career counsellors and guidance personnel. QTAC worked closely with the media ensuring that the organisation was regularly profiled through editorial and photographs in educational features.

Production and Assessment Services

- *Enhancements to the QTAC Online Admissions System (OASys) and assessment procedures:* Incorporated into OASys (QTAC's Online Admissions System) are sophisticated computer programs called Course Rank Set Derivation Algorithms. These algorithms make use of QTAC's assessment of qualifications to automatically implement institution policies in relation to the acceptance and ordering of these assessments for applicants' individual course preferences.

During 2004 and 2005 some of these algorithms were modified and new ones created at the request of institutions to add functionality, or to effect changed institution policy. Significant efforts had been undertaken by QTAC staff to assist, and in many cases, draft the specifications leading to successful implementation of institution changes.

Some of the enhancements included: modifications to bonuses and implementation of new bonus schemes to effect specific institution outcomes; implementation of a new Forced Offer frame to both facilitate faster entry of forced offers and record the reasons for these; creation of tasks for users to check applicants to specified courses with prior Vocational Education and Training (VET) studies; modifications to the processing of the new secondary education system in New Zealand; and implementation of the new DEST Basis of Admissions codes.

- *Working Party on Common Assessment:* Many of QTAC's centralised service offerings are based on common principles of assessment or common views on qualifications being presented. The basis of determining common principles occurs through an annual process of review known as the Working Party on Common Assessment. As part of its review of assessment schedules and to keep abreast of the latest developments internationally, amendments were made to QTAC's schedules to incorporate changes to Year 12 systems in a number of countries. Significant other activities and changes included:
 - A review into the Certificate IV in Adult Tertiary Preparation in relation to the different credit transfer/recognition of prior learning processes being implemented by providers of this qualification.
 - Reviews undertaken to formulate common practices and policies relating to the assessment of TAFE Queensland academic records; tertiary results withheld because of industrial action; assessment of incomplete, supplementary and provisional results; and Diploma Mill (fake) qualifications.

Cooperative work continues to be undertaken at a national level towards a common assessment of GCE 'A' Level and International Baccalaureate qualifications.

- *Clearing House:* For the first time QTAC offered an opt-in "clearing house" service for applicants still interested in available courses after the scheduled offer rounds for 2005 admissions. A number of institutions participated in this activity with QTAC matching and sending out institution promotional materials to unsuccessful applicants nominating to receive such information.
- *Training for Institution Staff:* In addition to the timetabled regular training for institution staff in November 2004, an additional training session in the use of QTAC's Online

Admissions System was conducted for non-university institution staff in May 2005 in response to a turnover of admissions personnel at these institutions. In response to a perceived need at institutions, QTAC also conducted for the first time, specific assessment of qualifications training on a fee-for-service basis. All training sessions for institution staff continue to be very well attended, with positive feedback being received.

- *Expanded Mid-year:* In response to continued institution needs for more flexible timetabled offerings outside the traditional first and second semester commencements, QTAC again expanded mid-year. In 2005, mid-year admissions spanned the period from February to September with offer rounds in March and April (for a May intake), June and July (for the traditional second semester July intake) and August (for a September intake). Systems have been modified to take into account the overlapping of mid and end of year admissions at both ends of the admissions cycle, and the need for OASys and applicant online services to support this overlapping across multiple databases.
- *Online Documentation for Institution Staff:* During the year QTAC staff continued development towards providing additional information to institution staff in the form of User Manuals. The main Manual supplements QTAC training for institution staff, with an online format introduced for 2006 admissions. QTAC also made substantial changes to the format of the Course Selection Methodology (CSM) documentation, again making this documentation and information associated with this important activity available electronically via QTAC's secure Corporate Website.

Information Technology

For QTAC's Information Technology Section, the 2004/2005 year focused on the consolidation and completion of major projects and enhancements introduced earlier. In total, more than 550 specific requests for enhancements and changes were completed during the year. A number of these change requests related to modifications to improve the performance and useability of the Java version of OASys, QTAC's admissions software suite, which was used for the first time in the previous year. The majority of changes however, related to changes to assessment rules, assessment processing and associated reporting functions. The year's Information Technology highlights included:

- *External Audit:* QTAC commissioned external auditors to review the operations and practices within QTAC's Information Technology Section. Whilst generally favourable, the Auditors' report highlighted some areas which needed addressing. QTAC is acting upon the Auditors' recommendations.
- *CHESSN/Student Learning Entitlement (SLE) Collection processes:* In order to comply with Commonwealth Government requirements, QTAC's IT staff added modules to its admissions software suite to support the exchange of applicant data with DEST and the subsequent collection of applicants' CHESSNs and SLE information from DEST. All data exchange processes with institutions were also modified to include the CHESSN and SLE information where permitted by the legislation.
- *QualSearch:* A number of enhancements were made to the *QualSearch* software particularly in the areas of reporting and transaction auditing.
- *Web Services:* Changes to Web services included:

- the development of publicly accessible demonstration versions of QTAC's *Apply by Web* and *Twelve to Tertiary* application services to allow potential applicants to 'trial' the application process;
 - the introduction of proxy authorisation services for applicants;
 - the development of a 'Clearing House' Service which allowed unsuccessful applicants to register their interest in specific areas where course vacancies still existed.
- **Course Information Maintenance:** Following its successful introduction in 2003/04, access to QTAC's XML-based course information maintenance software was extended to institution staff so that they could maintain their course data in QTAC's databases. The course information section of the 2006 *QTAC Guide* was generated automatically from this data.
 - **Support for the South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC):** As in previous years, QTAC IT staff provided on-going support for SATAC, licensed users of QTAC's OASys admissions software. Of particular significance was the conversion of SATAC's operations from the OpenROAD version of OASys to the Java version.
 - **Hardware and Systems Changes:** Because of space limitations in QTAC's primary high speed disk storage array, QTAC moved its low demand reference and historical statistical databases to a new storage array. The resultant free capacity should support QTAC's operations for the 2005/06 admissions period after which the situation will be reviewed. QTAC also began a process of server consolidation replacing a number of older, lower capacity servers with a single multifunctional server.

Commercial Services and the Office of the CEO

The administrative and governance functions of the organisation are managed within Commercial Services and the Office of the CEO. Functions include traditional finance and Company Secretarial activities, payroll and human resources, mail and distribution, facilities management, statistical reporting, government liaison, committees and governance. QTAC continues to pursue its three strategic themes with various activities undertaken to achieve stated aims and targets:

- **Secure and Strengthen Business/Revenue Sources:** The majority of the business activities continue to be directed at enhancement to the existing services for applicants and institutions as indicated in the sectional outlines above. Exploration of new service offerings including postgraduate services and alternative service offerings, continues. *QualSearch*, the electronic qualification validation service commenced trial operations on 30 September 2004 and broadened its scope on 30 June 2005. This service is now in its national roll out phase with the cooperation of interstate Tertiary Admissions Centres.
- **Secure and Strengthen IT Model and Facilities:** The initiatives undertaken to deliver this initiative have been highlighted above. Supporting each initiative was an independent assessment of the IT services which provided both reassurance and suggestions for strengthening the service and its security.

- *Secure and Strengthen the Governance Model:* The activities of the organisation were split into financial, Board related and organisational development.
 - Financial: As a not for profit company, finances were managed to a break even position during the 2004-05 period. This was mainly due to agreed increases in institution contributions and applicant fees. Institution contributions have returned to the 1997 levels with applicant fees being in line with some southern state fees. A focus on cost control was also effective in managing the company's resources effectively.
 - In August 2005 the Chair of the Board, Professor Paul Thomas, the Vice-Chancellor of University of the Sunshine Coast, stood down following completion of his two-year term. Dr Carol Dickenson, Registrar of the Queensland University of Technology has taken up the role based on the agreed rotation pattern of members.
 - Organisational Development: The organisation made significant efforts at improved internal communication especially between layers of management and across divisions. Joint project groups enhanced functionality and ongoing section meetings regularly highlighted areas of cooperation. The weekly briefing to all staff continued to be prepared. On the external front, QTAC has participated in a number of joint research exercises and been represented on various committees.
 - A Board of Directors appointed from member organisations, governs QTAC. As at June 2005 the Board comprised the following Directors:
 - Professor Paul Thomas, Vice-Chancellor, University of the Sunshine Coast (*Chair*)
 - Dr Carol Dickenson, Registrar, Queensland University of Technology (*incoming Chair*)
 - Professor William Lovegrove, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Southern Queensland
 - Mr Colin McAndrew, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Griffith University
 - Professor Bernard Moulden, Vice-Chancellor and President, James Cook University
 - Mr Douglas Porter, Secretary & Registrar, The University of Queensland
 - Professor John Rickard, Vice-Chancellor and President, Central Queensland University
 - Mr Ian Hawke, Director of the Office of Higher Education Queensland as the representative for the Director-General, Education Queensland.
 - Supporting the Board is a group of institution representatives who meet quarterly to discuss operational issues relevant to the Company and participants. This group is known as the Forum, with its Chair attending Board meetings as an observer for the purpose of offering additional operational information as required.
 - Given that a key function of QTAC is centralised assessment of applications to tertiary study, another key committee integral to the company's operations is the Working Party on Common Assessment. This group meets annually and is comprised of experts in institution policies and procedures. QTAC's team researches changes in qualifications, sources data and requirements, and then presents this material to institutions for their consideration. The group is pivotal to ensuring consistency of assessment. The outcomes of the group ensure that QTAC's activities are seen as fair, equitable and transparent.

In Summary

QTAC will continue to work actively to efficiently deliver its services in a rapidly changing education market. The Board recognises that continued service enhancements will be required to address institution and applicant needs. In addition, the Board recognises that the regulatory environment surrounding the education sector means that QTAC will be called on to deliver greater statistical and reporting requirements to a growing group of stakeholders.

This report has been prepared by staff of the Planning, Statistics and Research Section, namely Ms Dianne Keene and Ms Ingrid Andrews. Should you wish to provide feedback or seek assistance on matters related to this *Statistical Report*, please contact:

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Thanks is also given to the many participants at institutions, stakeholders and interested parties who contribute to the operations of QTAC on an annual basis. The Board looks forward to the future support of these entities.

It is with pleasure that I present the twenty-ninth report of the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre Ltd, entitled *Statistical Report 2004-2005*.

Dr Carol Dickenson
Chair, Board of Directors
Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre Ltd.