



Decision time looms for students

Pressure's building for Year 12s as VTAC application deadline nears

OLIVIA SHYING

YOU'VE been to the open days, flipped through the glossy course guide books and been asked a million times: what are you going to do next year?

Now the time has come to make the life-defining decision of what degree to study.

Hundreds of the region's Year 12 students will be deliberating over their course applications as the closing date for timely VTAC applications looms.

VTAC spokeswoman Suzanne Connolly said students could change their preferences after the early application deadline of September 28 — however they must log some kind of application by this date to avoid paying extra fees.

"Students should consider their own interests when applying for courses and not be swayed by others, including their peers, their school or their parents," Ms Connolly said.

Melbourne University graduate school of education lecturer Dr Chelsea Hyde acknowledged it was a really stressful time for young people "to nail down preferences and decide and prioritise exactly what they want to do".

"My advice for young people is to make those appointments about the options. Being fully informed is really important for Year 12s at this point and can actually relieve some of the anxieties," Dr Hyde said.

Because entry to a course is

so dependent on an ATAR score that students have not yet obtained, Dr Hyde said students should list a broad range of preferences with varying ATAR scores.

"I encourage students to think what are the things that they really enjoy in life and to not just restrict themselves to one pathway," Dr Hyde said.

"Young people often have a certain course and university in mind — they need to a plan A, B, C and D."

Entry scores required for the same courses at different institutions can vary greatly. The clearly-in 2016 ATAR to study a Bachelor of Arts was 89.3 at Melbourne University, 85.05 at Monash University, 55.9 at Deakin Waurn Ponds Campus, 60.25 at Swinburne Hawthorn and 50 at La Trobe Melbourne.

While making these decisions is difficult, stressful and time consuming Dr Hyde said Year 12 students must maintain a balanced lifestyle.

"It's an incredibly important time of life, but students must understand that life is going to continue after Year 12," Dr Hyde said.

She said parents could help by encouraging their children to study, providing good healthy meals and giving support when needed.

Year 12 students can change their VTAC preferences until noon on December 20.

MARK THE DATE

University places will be offered over five rounds:

Round 1: January 16

Round 2: February 2

Round 3: February 12

Round 4: February 19

Round 5: February 26

HOLLEY GAWNE

**Swinburne University,
Hawthorn
Bachelor of Arts
(majoring in journalism)
Finished Year 12 in 2013**

I really wanted to branch out and go to university outside of Geelong. I put down RMIT as my first preference, but didn't quite make it — Swinburne was my second preference. Even though it was my

second preference I was really happy to go there because the degree is really hands-on rather than theory-based. Studying journalism is definitely not for the faint-hearted, however if you're passionate about it, it's great. There are so many options out there and always different pathways to get to where you want to go. I put a lot of pressure on myself but now I realise I could've relaxed a little bit.



As the current crop of Year 12 students trawl through the minefield of university courses, four current university students have provided some words of wisdom.

Lionel Baker

**Deakin University,
Warrnambool
Bachelor of
Communications
majoring in journalism
Finished Year 12 in 2014**

I felt a lot of pressure to choose the right course the first time round. Initially I

was offered a place at RMIT studying fine arts – but I was worried about the career prospects. I realised that I was also passionate about journalism and there were more career opportunities in the communications field so I changed my preferences and went to Deakin. While there are

days when I'd love to be doing art, I haven't regretted my choice. I chose Deakin because I live in the area and wanted to stay here and I've enjoyed so many opportunities – like internships. My advice would be – don't stress and take time to figure out what you really want to do.



Will Hogan

**Monash University
Bachelor of Business,
Bachelor of Journalism
Finished Year 12 in 2013**

This was my first preference. It was fun looking at all the different

types of degrees on offer but I knew I wanted to do a broad degree so it was easy to make my preference. My career advisers had a big influence on me and really helped me work out what I wanted to do. I chose Monash University because of the degree, the fact that

I could do a double degree and also the flexibility it could provide. My advice would be talk to your career advisers and take up any opportunities, such as work experience, that you can while you're at uni.



Louise McDonald

**University of Melbourne
Bachelor of Agriculture
Lives on campus at St
Hilda's College
Finished Year 12 in 2016**

I wanted to do something that would give me a job, I didn't want to do a really

generalist degree with no job prospects. Melbourne University had always appealed to me because it has such a great reputation. I hadn't really thought about agriculture until a teacher suggested it to me. I have always enjoyed visiting the family farm and I am able to study agriculture and major in

economics. It's such a small course and so far I've had so many hands-on opportunities including field trips to the farm campus at Dookie. Living on campus has made it really easy to meet friends and embrace uni life. Do what you're passionate about, otherwise it's really hard to be motivated.





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BRANCHING OUT: Holley
Gawne was keen to attend
a university in another city.
Picture: ALISON WYND