

How prepared are you for Tertiary Study?

You may not know that:

- Only 4.5 percent of New Zealand's population (over the age of 15) is currently enrolled at a university.
- Just 30 percent of all school leavers go on to study at University.
- Only 1/3 of one of New Zealand's University's intake is from Year 13.

Last year the NZ Herald featured an article entitled "Top Brains only- varsities cut class sizes". It is an interesting read, one that could make you concerned, even fearful. If our home educated children do go down the exam path, they may well find that if universities restrict placements to the number of students for which they are funded and increase entry level standards (i.e. if places are only allocated to students with the highest exam results), then both school students and home educated students are going to be disadvantaged!

You may already be aware that the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) instigated a review of University Entrance (UE) in 2010. Their comprehensive report has just been released (May 2011) and you can read their findings at www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/qualifications-and-standards-Awards-University-Entrance-Review-of-UE-2010-summary . The proposed changes, if accepted, will come into effect at the commencement of 2014.

So, is academic excellence the quintessential achievement?

Not according to Michelle Jordan-Tong, Head of Student and Academic Services at the University of Waikato. "Proven" academic excellence may be one criterion, but so is an individual's motivation, self-discipline, time management skills and their own support network.

My meeting with Michelle in May 2011 was an extremely positive one. She is one of the most passionate, sincere, forward-thinking and proactive people I have met in the field of tertiary education (I acknowledge that my database is small, as I'm sure there are many other "Michelle's" out there).

I spent a delightful 1 ½ hours with Michelle and here are some of the salient points that came out of our discussion:

1. The University of Waikato is:-

- Proud of their student centeredness
- Proud of their connection to Maori
- Proud to be part of the Waikato Region

2. They will seriously consider applications from home educated students for Undergraduate study, where the student has not necessarily chosen to go down the formal qualification path.

3. **Certificate of University Preparation (CUP)** (information extrapolated from www.waikato.ac.nz/study): The University of Waikato and Wintec jointly offer this full-time, one semester, qualification. It is for students who don't initially meet the entry requirements for study at a New Zealand university, or who need additional academic preparation. This Certificate programme can help you make the transition into degree-level study.

There are a number of optional papers that you can choose from, plus two compulsory papers – Study Skills and Critical Thought and Expression.

After successfully completing the Certificate, you can then apply for a degree course.

4. **Discretionary Entrance**

This option is available for HE students under 20yrs of age who do not have UE.

A CV, a portfolio of work completed by the HE student, and an interview with the Head of Student and Academic Services would be necessary.

5. Special Admission

This option is available for New Zealand citizens and permanent residents who do not have UE and are 20yrs and over at the commencement of their University study. Your eligibility will be assessed on the basis of your life and work experience, indications of your academic ability and your readiness for University study.

Some HE students are granted entry through Special Admission with a waiver of the age requirement.

The Ministry of Education is examining the Special Admission Scheme as part of the NZQA review and the good news is that no legislative changes are envisaged in the short to medium term.

6. Being Prepared for University

Going to University can be a daunting experience for many. In a recent survey of Waikato University students, 54% identified themselves as being the first in their families to attend University.

It can be daunting enough for a student who has been part of a large school environment to enter the University scene, let alone a home educated student. Imagine, for example, on your first day walking into a lecture theatre and taking your place along with 350 other tertiary students.

As Michelle said, "... it is critical from the University's point of view to understand how prepared a home educated student is to cope in the University environment."

The good news is that in the same survey mentioned above, 67% of the students said that the greatest help to them in adjusting to study was the support of family and friends and, as we know, there's no shortage of that in home education families!

So, in addressing the issue "Are you ready for Tertiary Study?", at least one University (and hopefully several more) will be assessing you on a basis other than whether you followed a formal path of qualifications.

For those of you contemplating a tertiary education, start investigating at least **a year out** from going to University. Talk to University Personnel, in particular Student Advisors and the Head of Student and Academic Services about what is required to support your application for undergraduate study.

By Audrey Wells