

# all Australian Learning Lecture

**What are the essential skills and knowledge with which young people should leave secondary school in order to enhance their lifetime career prospects whilst meeting Australia's future workforce needs? Whose job is it to make sure they acquire them?**

The Australian Learning Lecture recently published a position paper: *Beyond ATAR: a proposal for change*. The paper outlined three proposals designed to transform the transition from school to higher education, life and work. The paper defined success as including:

**Multiple skills and attributes:**

- essential foundational skills (literacy, numeracy, digital literacy)
- higher level cognitive skills (critical thinking, problem solving capacity to apply knowledge).
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**A sense of agency and self knowledge**

- students have gained a sense of self knowledge and agency about their capacities, interests and potential future avenues.

The paper makes explicit the need for action by curriculum authorities, schools and education providers across the country to position young people better for a changing future. However, parents and employers also have a major role to play in supporting and driving change.

**How can we help students make better decisions about learning pathways within school?**

**A phased approach to education**

- See the period when young people are aged 15-19 as a distinct phase of education. This would include helping students to map a pathway. The phase would recognise and build on young people's individual interests and aspirations, and provide career guidance to help young people make informed choices about the skills they need for the future.

**A universal learner profile**

- Create a universal learner profile (similar to the education passport identified in the article *New thinking needed to help students navigate the future* by Peter Shergold.) Young people need to have the breadth of their success recognised. We need to develop a broader measure that captures the knowledge, skills and capabilities of young people and moves beyond reducing 13 years of schooling to a single, ranked number.
- Learner profiles are used increasingly internationally, including in Hong Kong and at Harvard University, to help young people understand their strengths and developmental needs, and to plan a pathway into higher education and work aligned with their skills and ambitions.
- Introduce the Learner Profile in year 9 to assist in developing student agency, self-knowledge and awareness/acquisition of the skills and attributes he or she needs for life and work.

- The introduction of a Learner profile would allow the student to seek career advice and teacher input to ensure their individual development to make better pathway decisions.
- Thinking about careers exposure needs to start well before students leave school. Some children unconsciously narrow their options whilst still at primary school. Middle to lower secondary school is the ideal time to actively explore a range of possibilities, while developing the deeper foundations and learning capabilities that will support long term achievement.

### **How can we support young people to make better decisions about their post-school pathways?**

Around a third of school leaver applicants are now accepted to university through a pathway that does not solely rely on the ATAR. Most universities offer Special Entry Access Schemes or Education Access Schemes which enable students who have experienced disadvantage to add bonus points to their ATAR, or to complete pathways programs and articulate into degree programs. Many students currently undertake and change courses multiple times, leave university or find they are not suited to their chosen occupation upon graduation.

ALL suggests:

- That tertiary education providers adopt broader, more transparent entry criteria and pathways that align with learner's aspirations and abilities. Despite a myriad of pathways, tertiary education entry can be complex and confusing. Many providers have established alternatives or additional entry requirements to the ATAR, but the lack of consistency makes it difficult for young people to understand what they need to do.
- That tertiary providers work together to devise a common tertiary education framework to guide entry to tertiary education. This would enable learners to understand and plan their studies around requirements, and for providers to set requirements aimed at supporting student success.
- We believe that a broader and more transparent admissions system would support the development of a common framework within which approaches to tertiary entry are developed: providing greater certainty and transparency for students; reducing the burden of establishing selection criteria from individual education providers, while respecting institutional autonomy, and encouraging coherence, transparency and evidence-based decision-making across the whole tertiary sector.
- Given the raft of diverse entry mechanisms currently used by tertiary providers across the country, the framework would enable students to more readily understand and meet the requirements for tertiary entry.
- It would make more visible the range of opportunities and avenues for tertiary entry, rather than students needing to individually discuss alternative pathways with each tertiary provider. This visibility would assist schools and careers guidance practitioners to locate pathways for students, particularly those students who do not qualify for direct entry to their chosen course.

**How can we make sure opportunities are available and support is tailored to the needs of all young people?**

- A learner profile would be a positive developmental tool for young people as well as provide a recognition of attainment in the final years.
- A learner profile could be a way to provide a rich and detailed summary of what a student has learned, which is both flexible but enables comparison between students.
- Using evidence from the learner's time in school, it would showcase their strengths, passions, patterns of capability and attainments.
- Students' strengths can be highlighted, whether its maths, literature, hospitality skills, entrepreneurship or caring.
- A system which more accurately reflects student achievement and captures their breadth and depth of learning could pave the way for a more equitable future as young people navigate life after high school.
- A Learner Profile is also important to guarantee issues of equity. Not all students have the opportunity to do out of school extra activities or have a job. The school will need to help the student develop ways to show their enterprise and capacity to work in teams that will serve them well in life and future work requirements.
- The learner profile provides an opportunity for tertiary providers to draw on a richer dataset when selecting applicants – a common framework would support this to occur in a systematic manner. Providers could specify the capabilities needed to complete a course, including and beyond traditional academic measures, and use these as a basis of selecting applicants.

<https://www.all-learning.org.au/programs/beyond-ATAR-proposal-change>