

What's Your Preference?

CHOOSING BETWEEN VOCATIONAL & HIGHER EDUCATION

Developed by Catholic College Wodonga

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Introduction

Before you make a decision about studying after school, it is important you carefully consider your options.

You have the option of studying a vocational education course (e.g., at a TAFE) or a higher education course (e.g., at a university).

When making your decision, you will need to take into account:

- **What qualification you will need to work in your desired occupation, and**
- **What education environment will suit you best.**

Many young people go to university without really assessing if it is the right option for them and whether the course they have chosen is what they are really passionate about.

About 25% of first year university students change their course of study or drop out all together.

This resource aims to assist you to carefully consider what your next step should be:

Vocational or higher education study?

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Work out what qualification you will need

For some professions, you must have a university degree (e.g., social work, law, dentistry and physiotherapy).

For many others, you may only need a vocational qualification (i.e., gaming, building, community services work, sports coaching and children's services).

Before you decide to go to university, you should consider whether you can study your area of interest at a vocational education institute.

There are 10 levels in the Australian Qualifications Framework. Levels 1 – 6 are completed through vocational education and levels 6 – 10 through higher education.

If you complete Year 12, you will generally go into levels 4, 5, 6 or 7.



Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate IV: Have the theoretical and practical knowledge for specialised and skilled work.
Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma: Have specialised knowledge and skills for skilled/ paraprofessional work.
Level 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Diploma (e.g., TAFE) & Associate Degree (e.g., university): Have broad knowledge and skills for paraprofessional/ highly skilled work.
Level 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor Degree: Have broad and coherent knowledge and skills for professional work.

HOW TO PICK THE QUALIFICATION LEVEL

Go to www.myfuture.edu.au > Explore Careers > Browse Occupations > Search for your occupation > on the page that comes up, click on State Specific Information > click on the state you would like to study in > see what qualifications you need and where you can study.



What education environment will suit you best?

It is important for you to consider which education environment will suit you best to ensure you will be happy and engaged in your studies.

- ✓ Are you more of a hands-on learner or do you love exploring theories and attending lectures?
- ✓ Would you prefer to study in an environment where you will undertake work experience and practical activities, or would you prefer to undertake a more academic program?
- ✓ Would you prefer to undertake a shorter program, which is designed to make you 'work ready' or a longer program, which is designed to prepare you for employment but also higher level research?

Vocational Education

- Hands on, practical, designed to make you 'work ready', 6 levels of qualifications.
- Can combine with a university degree, or use it as a pathway into a degree.
- Many people who have completed university degrees, complete a vocational course to help them gain employment.



Higher Education

- Focused on theory, concepts and research. Mid and end of year exams. Can be in lectures of up to 400 people.
- Learn to think critically, question existing research and ideas. Prepares for further research.
- There some professions like teaching and social work that require you to have a higher education qualification.



Qualification level I will need

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Preferred learning environment

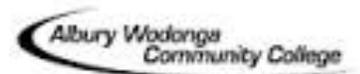
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Vocational Education

What are the qualification levels?

Certificate I Certificate II Certificate III
Certificate IV Diploma Advanced Diploma

If you have completed Year 12, you can generally go straight into a Certificate IV or Diploma.



Where can I study a vocational qualification?

You can study at a TAFE, Adult Education Centre, or a Private Provider. You can also study some vocational courses online. Costs of courses vary depending on whether your course is eligible for government funding and whether your course is at a government funded institution or a private provider.

You can also study many vocational courses through an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Key websites

You can search for courses at the following links:

Victorian courses: www.education.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway

NSW courses: www.tafensw.edu.au

Online courses: <http://oten.tafensw.edu.au>

Online courses: www.open.edu.au/open-training-institute

The following are local institutes:

Wodonga Tafe: www.wodongatafe.edu.au

Riverina Tafe (Albury): www.rit.tafensw.edu.au

Albury Wodonga Community College: www.awcc.edu.au



Vocational Study – Past student stories

Audrey Bowman

I wanted to go to university when I was in high school because it seemed like that was the only acceptable option; I wanted to keep my parents proud of me. I'd been eyeing off hotel management for about two years and it was all I ever wanted to do.

I went to university in Sydney and dropped out after a year. I am now a second year apprentice hairdresser working in the family business. I love this new direction because it's more me, it's more suited to the way I learn. I was never very good in school sitting at a desk writing all day and uni was no different.

I learn while I work and I'm working towards a qualification. There's no juggling between work and study because it's all the same. My apprenticeship is more in the work place learning, even at TAFE it's all physical learning and not a lot of sitting in a boring lecture hall or classroom. Not only are you being paid to learn your trade but you have a job basically guaranteed after you finish, and if not you have the tools and experience to go out into another work place or even start your own business.

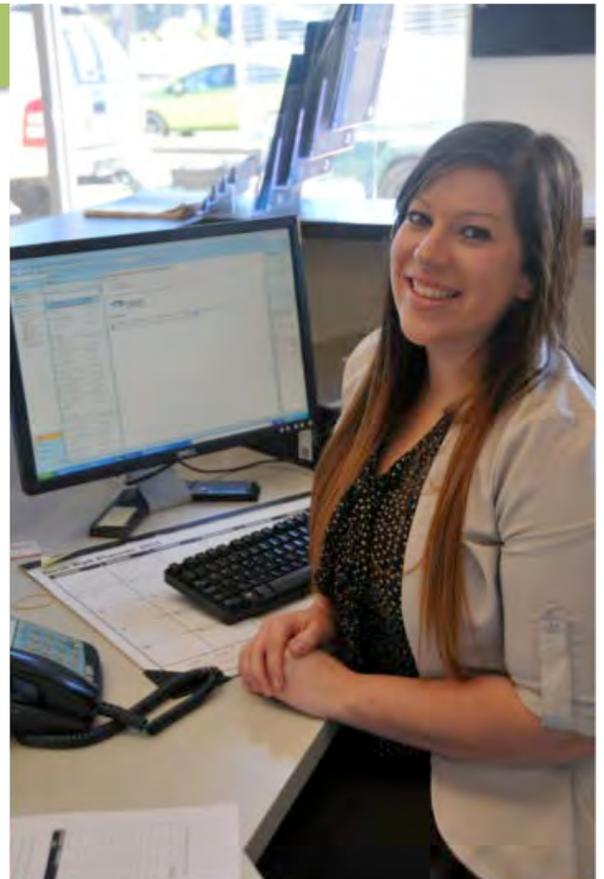


Kirstie Upton

After school, Kirstie started a Bachelor of Nursing at university. She wasn't happy in the course and exited before completing the qualification. She then undertook and completed a Certificate III in Business Sales in the Residential Construction Industry via a traineeship. She was then promoted to the position of Sales Associate in the company.

She says- "One of the greatest things about doing my traineeship, was discovering what I wanted to do with my life – design the perfect home for every client wanting to build. I discovered that doing a traineeship didn't mean that I was lowering my standards, or that I was dumb. In fact, doing a traineeship revealed just how smart I was, it's just that as a student, I learn best practically, by doing the task instead of reading about the task.

I performed well in school and thought that meant I was supposed to go to university, but in fact, doing a traineeship was the perfect education for me. I definitely recommend doing a traineeship. It allows you practical education in broad areas and to discover job roles and different industries that you may never have thought about.



Vocational Study – Past student stories

Milli Gibson

Why did you want to go to university when you were at school?

I come from a family of very high achievers who all went to university. When I graduated Year 12 there was a lot of pressure for me to go to uni so I didn't take a gap year, I went straight to uni in Melbourne.

Why did you exit from university?

I studied the first year and a half of a music business degree and then I dropped out because I really wasn't enjoying it. My family encouraged me to try a different course. I didn't feel like uni was right for me but I decided to give it a go and started a psychology degree.

I only completed the first year and then I dropped out again. By this time I had decided that uni was definitely not right for me. I explained to my family that I didn't want to keep racking up my HECS debt doing something I wasn't sure I really wanted to do. I told them I would study again when I felt ready and found something I really wanted to do.



What did you do next?

I started working full time in retail and did a night course in makeup artistry (Certificate II in Retail, Makeup and Skincare). To begin with it was just for fun but pretty soon I realised that I had a very strong passion for makeup and I was good at it.

When I finished my Certificate II I got offered a job with Napoleon Perdis at their counter in Perth city. I am now studying my Diploma in Beauty Therapy (to keep my options open and to learn some more skills) and I am still at Napoleon Perdis.

What do you love about your new direction?

I absolutely love my job. I had no idea that it was possible to wake up in the morning looking forward to going to work and I actually feel disappointed when it's my day off!!

My company is great. I am constantly learning more and there is so much room to grow and develop new skills. They really nurture their employees desire to move up through the company.

How is the learning and teaching different to university?

Makeup and beauty courses are much more hands on learning than uni. There is theory but it is always paired with practical classes which I have found much more interesting and easier to grasp.

I definitely recommend thinking hard about whether or not uni is the right path for you. If I had done that I would have saved myself a lot of time, stress and money. There is no shame in not going to uni. I truly believe that real success is loving what you do.

Higher Education

What are the qualification levels?

Associate Degree

Bachelor Degree

Graduate Certificate

Graduate Diploma

Masters

Doctorate

Most students will start at the Bachelor Degree level. This is also called an 'undergraduate degree'.



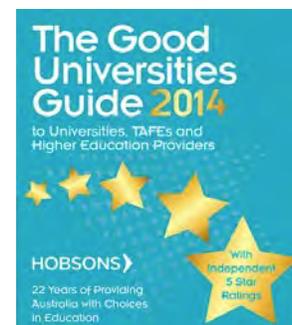
Where can I study a higher education qualification?

You can study at a government funded or private university. You can also study at a TAFE institute like Wodonga TAFE and Holmesglen Institute as they have both vocational and higher education courses.



Key websites

- **My University:** This is a website run by the Australian Government and gives information about what you can study at university and where - <http://myuniversity.gov.au/>
- **Tertiary Study Options** - This is a website run by the Australian Government and gives information about the transition to university, study costs and information about loan schemes like HECS-HELP, <http://studyassist.gov.au/sites/StudyAssist/MyTertiaryStudyOptions>
- **Hobsons Course Finder:** This website allows you to search for and compare university courses. It contains ratings from The Good Universities Guide which compares universities and university courses based on independent research which rate criteria such as entrance requirements, graduate salary, student experience and graduate satisfaction etc., www.hobsonscoursefinder.com.au/



Higher Education Study – Past student stories

Jo-Beth Merrilees

Why did you want to go to university when you were at school?

The reason why I wanted to go to university was because Charles Sturt University offered the course that I have always dreamed of as well as being conveniently close to home. Furthermore, TAFE and diploma options didn't cater for primary school teaching only early childhood; therefore university was my best option to experience both early childhood and primary teaching in one degree.

Through my time at Catholic College, I have been provided with opportunities that include planning for future careers and going to events that involved exploring different career paths and opportunities. Communicating with a variety of different speakers from universities as well as speaking to Sandie also helped to cement my decision of going to university.

Why did you want to study teaching?

Ever since I was young I have always wanted to pursue a job with children and teaching was a career that I have always dreamed of. The privilege to teach is a strong desire of mine and having opportunities to contribute to children's learning and development is an area that I am passionate about. Furthermore, I am excited to make a difference in children's lives, become a lifelong learner as well as learn from children.

What do you love about your course?

So far, I am enjoying and loving my course and I am very motivated and excited to become a teacher in the future. Through my time at university I have loved that we have had the opportunity to have professional experience to undergo the practical side of teaching.

My first placement was for four weeks with children aged 3-5 and during that time I enjoyed interacting with them and guiding their learning. I had also developed a variety of learning experiences for the children and it was rewarding to see them engage and enjoy each experience that I had prepared.

Through lectures and tutorials I have loved that I have been provided with a range of skills and knowledge to help benefit each child's learning and development for when I will become a teacher.

I have learnt how children learn, and teaching strategies as well as how theories influence our teaching.

Additionally, I love that we learn about different key learning areas such as creative arts, personal development, health and physical education and mathematics to develop an insight of the different roles of a teacher. Lastly, I love how the assessments are very practical in what we will be teaching in the future; for instance, we make lesson plans, philosophies, observations and learning stories of children in which I can implement into my own teaching.

What is the teaching and learning like?

The lecturers that I have had at CSU were generally all passionate in their teaching and this was reflected in the delivery of their lessons. Furthermore, each lecturer was willing to assist students when needed and gave up their time to organise consultation meetings to discuss the content of the subject and assessment items. They also returned assignments with helpful and detailed feedback as well as strategies to excel further.

Learning at university allows you to be organised and responsible for your own learning; unlike school, lecturers do not chase you for your assignments and if you don't attend classes. Each week, we have one lecture and tutorial for each subject. Lectures at CSU are either face-to-face or provided online and allow you to learn about the content and consolidate the readings for the week.

Tutorials provide opportunities for group discussions and group activities that assist our learning and prepare us for assignments and exams. In regards to my course, tutorials can also be hands on; for instance in creative arts we had opportunities to play with play-doh, paint and experiment with different musical instruments.



Higher Education Study – Past student stories

Stephanie Anderson

Why did you want to go to university when you were at school?

I wanted to go to university, honestly because I always thought that's what I'd do. I really didn't consider anything else. My GAP year solidified the decision. I worked 6 different jobs over that year and hated almost all of them, so I knew I wanted to get a job I liked.

Why did you want to study journalism?

I decided to study journalism because I love writing and all forms of literature. I wanted, and I still want to become a novelist, but I'm a realist and knew that I needed a job to pay the bills before I could be the next Jane Austin.



What did you love about your course?

Journalism was a natural choice. I loved everything about my course. I found it complimented my existing skills, and gave me new ones. I enjoyed the atmosphere at uni more than anything I think. It's strange to be in a place that's filled with like-minded adults, from all over Australia and the world, who are all working towards something, equally as cool as you are.

What was the learning and teaching like?

The teaching style at uni is two stage. Lectures are a lot like school, except the lecturer couldn't care less if you show up, or listen, or take notes. That side of uni is really up to you. Tutorials on the other hand, for me were like hanging out with friends talking about class, and doing some pretty cool stuff like running a radio station and TV studio.

What was your honours year like?

When I received an offer to do honours I jumped at the opportunity as I thought it would give me a leg up in the job market. For my honours I took my university experience and decided to research it. I'd noticed at uni that most young people didn't understand or care about politics. I decided to find out why that was, and what the media could do to change it. As part of my honours I built and maintained a website, had a party, did a stack of research and wrote of 15,000 word thesis.

Uni is definitely not for everyone, but for me it was a perfect fit. I had a fantastic time, with lots of study, heaps of parties, and everything in between. I'm the first person in my whole family to get a degree and now I have two. I've now permanently moved to Canberra with my boyfriend (who I met at university residence), where I have a great job, a stack of friends, most of whom I met at uni.

Uni was 4 long years that were a hard slog. I was forced to work part time for the entire time I was at uni, and time management was one of the most difficult parts. Classes had entirely different timetables so often you had multiple assignments due on the same days. However, all of the tough stuff pales into comparison to the good.

Higher Education Study – Past student stories

Meg Gleeson

Why did you want to go to university when you were at school?

When I was at school I wanted to go to university because my dream was to be a research scientist, and I knew that to achieve this dream I needed to have completed an undergraduate degree within the field.

Without it, I was told by a few research facilities, that they wouldn't let me play with all the really fun stuff, like bacteriophages and nosocomial pathogens.

There was also that recommendation given by most adults, that 'it's better to have a tertiary education to fall back on than none'. Given that when I hadn't listened to this type of advice in the past it had ended in disaster; therefore I gave this advice some weighty consideration in my decision.

But mostly I wanted the experience, I wanted to expand my knowledge in a field that I loved, whilst also establishing myself in a new stage of life, known as "young adult".

Why did you want to study Biomedical Science?

The decision to study biomedical science wasn't a straight forward process as it is for some. Some people know what they want to do for most of their life, I had decided in Year 10 I wanted to be a physiotherapist and go work for the AFL, but as I got further into my Year 12 studies, I found myself more attracted to my biology studies and less so those based in physical education.

Thus, I changed course preferences to biomedical science, as it offered a greater spectrum of study for those interested in biology. It also offered a wider variety of postgraduate studies, from research with the Heart Foundation to building 3D maps of the body's nervous system.

What did you love about your course?

There are too many things so I will just list those I can think of off the top of my head:

- Learning about every muscle in the body
- Lab's where I got to play with bacteria
- Mating flies to create rare mutants
- Dissecting a rat's testicle
- Painting nerve pathways onto a live human model
- Creating our own experiment for the effects of physical exercise on lung function
- Being able to talk to people about the latest surgical advancements without them wanting to be sick and so much more.

What was the teaching and learning like?

I studied at Monash University Clayton, and for the most part the teaching was exceptional. Teachers try to warn you in VCE that you're practically being spoon-fed in comparison to the support you will be offered in university, but once you adjust to that level of self-independence you realise there are some advantages (such as, if you turn a submission in late there is no teacher that will stand you up in class and shame you... results are all released online. Bonus.).



Higher Education Study – Past student stories

Meg Gleeson Continued

I am going to warn you now as well, that you're not going to like every teacher that you come across, and unfortunately there is not a lot you can do. Just remember to keep a level head and do the work that's required of you, then hopefully you won't have any issues.

To aid with your adjustment, I would recommend a handy stash of coloured pens, a good calendar, and a phone in which you can set many reminders. Also, always read the subject course guide, because they usually list all the due dates at the beginning of semester!

What was living on campus like?

I stayed in the residency halls at Monash Clayton for three years, my first year just as a resident, the last two years as a residential advisor. I'll never forget my first night at res. I had a rather lovely neighbour called Alex who quizzed me for a good hour while I was decorating before he called all his other returning friends from our hall to come visit 'this new girl Meg'.

I was amazed at how friendly everyone was. It didn't take long for me to form a new group of friends whom I cooked with every night for the rest of that year. A lot of those people are still close friends to this day. Most of the time living at res was just like living in a rather large house. I used to joke with my family about it being my 'other' home.

We had an array of activities to keep us all entertained, such as Toast Night's, movie marathons, onesie parties, our annual ball and of course uni night at our local watering hole. When I left res halls last year, it felt like I was moving out all over again, I knew the place so well, and the people there were my extended family. I feel so lucky to have had such an experience in my life.

Jake Curtis

Why did you want to go to university when you were at school?

I always wanted to go to uni. It took me a while to choose what for. For a long time I considered engineering, until I realised the only reason I wanted to do that was to get into business, so I took a detour and chose a commerce degree. I'm currently doing the first year of my commerce degree at the University of Melbourne and loving it.

What do you love about studying at university?

The things I love about uni are self-directed learning and choosing every subject I study. The focus is on understanding and applying knowledge/skills that are practical for a future in business, rather than memorising textbooks just to get a high score.

At uni, attendance and completion of assignments is generally optional, so you need to be self driven and interested to get through the course. I believe if you're doing something you love then uni is nowhere near as difficult as high school; rather it's a pleasure to attend.

If I could recommend one thing to students choosing their course, it's don't just choose something because you're good at it, choose something that excites you, and something that you think could lead you down an exciting path.

