## Will My Child Be Able to Go to University?by Bruce McNeice

Parents sometimes ask… “Will the ‘Homeward’ Program help my child gain entry to university?”

The simple answer is … *“Yes: there are a number of pathways for home-educated students to gain entry into university courses (which we will discuss below)…and… Over the last twenty-eight years, we have had hundreds of graduates, and the vast majority of them have successfully gained entry into the university course of their choice.”*

We are continually researching and developing strategies for home-educated students to access tertiary level courses. Of course, every university will have its own unique criteria, but most universities have an ‘alternate entry’ process. This involves presenting a portfolio of achievements which show readiness for tertiary studies.

A Homeward consultant can custom design your home-education program to gain these qualifications, or bridging courses, and provide a ‘portfolio of alternate learning activities’.

**Alternative Entry Strategies:**

There are many cases of home-educated students who have only ‘non-accredited certificates’ or who have no formal academic certificate at all, and yet who still gain entrance into tertiary courses. One study showed that only 47.2% of first year university students have ‘high school certificates’ and ‘tertiary entrance ranking scores’ (such as the OP or ATAR systems). The others entered via ‘Alternate Entry’ systems. There is a new wave of students who are pushing back the barriers of what is possible to achieve, students who won’t give up in their efforts to fulfil their dreams and their destiny. If they do not initially gain successful entry to one course, they try another method or another related course. University of New England also has “Bespoke Courses” with no entry requirements, where you can design your own course. Once you are studying a university course, you can often side-step into the course of your preference in the second semester or second year.

If you do not gain entry straight away with your first try, that is not the end of the world - it does not define who you are. What you do next is most important. The question is…Will you keep preparing until your opportunity arrives?

Whether you are a home-education family using unregistered programs and methods, or your child is enrolled with an education provider, there are various ways of showing that a student has the competencies and aptitude for tertiary studies. The more of these strategies that you can use in your preparation for tertiary entrance, the more likely you are to succeed. Home-education students using alternate curricula and learning methods may gain acceptance into tertiary courses by presenting an ‘education portfolio’. To prepare such a portfolio, you would follow the strategies outlined below.

A comprehensive alternate entry strategy involving a portfolio of achievements that show diligence and readiness for further tertiary study would include the following....

i) a STAT test,
ii) ‘Senior English” (from UniLearn), plus
iii) a trial/headstart subject at a university (eg., ‘Bespoke Courses’ at University of New England; or “Foundation Studies” at Australian Catholic University)

iv) a Cert III in Year 11 and a Cert IV in Year 12

In more detail….

1. **STAT:** sit a STAT test at the nearest testing centre. Students are allowed to sit one STAT test in each year-cycle that goes from April 15 to April 14 the next year. If your Year 11 student sits the test before April 14, they will have opportunity to sit the test again as another practice in the same year and again as a final test in their final year. The universities will take the best score of two or three tests. Its ok to just sit the STAT once in the final year, but sitting a couple of practice tests will give your student a confident edge of preparation for a final test. (ACER also may have practice tests students can do at home.)
2. **SENIOR ENGLISH:** in Year 11 or 12, students can enrol in a one year 'Senior English' subject (UNL14) which gives 4 credits towards the QCE; or enrol in “Academic Literacy Skills" (UNL11) which gives 3 credits towards a QCE. These courses are at unilearn.net.au The cost of Senior English is $1,053.
3. **A TRIAL UNI SUBJECT:** In Year 11 or 12, the student could enrol in a trial online subject at a university (eg., “Bespoke Subjects” at UNE, or the "Foundation Studies" at ACU.) The ACU subject may be free, and the UNE subject may have delayed payment via FEE-HELP, while giving you credit towards a degree.
ACU claims...*"The Foundation program provides a pathway to ACU undergraduate degrees for students who wish to study at university, but do not have a recognised Year 12 qualification."*
A mathematics elective may not be essential, but Unilearn also has two Maths electives if students also want to do maths, which is helpful for entry to Science or Medicine (“Introductory Mathematics” or “Senior Mathematics” )
4. **CERT IV:** As well as a trial university subject, the ACU Foundation Studies and Senior English, it is helpful to do a Cert IV. The Cert III in Business (Records & Information Management) through opencolleges.edu.au will be useful in any career, however, the universities would want at least a Cert IV for entry selection.

Homeward Education Support will offer a range of preparation courses as an alternative to Year 10 -12. These include Cert II in Further Studies, Cert III in General Education for Adults, Cert IV in Tertiary Preparation, and Diploma of Musical Theatre.

By doing the above strategies, your student should be well prepared for university entrance and will likely still have time to pursue other areas of interest.

A different highly recommended option for a Cert IV in Tertiary Preparation, is the course at Augustine Academy. It is partly live-in and partly assignments at home (augustineacademy.com.au).

Another option would be a full Senior Secondary course through a School of Distance Ed (such as Faith SDE, ACC Moreton, Riverside, Groves, or Jubilee College) but your student would likely not have time to pursue any other areas of interest.

**Other Strategies Used by Homeschoolers**:
The following strategies are not essential, but show how some homeschoolers have prepared themselves....
• Learn how to conduct independent research and how to document this research thoroughly; then, with these skills, thoroughly research your chosen career, and integrate this research into your home-study program;

• Find out as much as you can about the tertiary course you are heading for, and even study some of the textbooks from the first year of the course;

• Gain as much work-experience as possible within a closely related field/occupation, and acquire employer references;

• Subscribe to any professional magazines and join any associations within that profession (note: many professional associations will allow an unqualified person to be an 'associate member' of the organisation);

• Some homeschoolers who had gained a 'studied' understanding of the issues within a profession, have had an article/paper published in a national magazine or newsletter;

• Try to do some 'newsworthy activity' or 'community service' in relation to this field of interest, and get an article (with photograph) about yourself published in the local newspaper. The aim of this is not 'vain-glory', but rather to build up a 'portfolio of documents' which shows your initiative, diligence, perseverance, research skills, communication ability, etc. in order to achieve a successful placement in the tertiary course of your choice.

• When you have decided to head for a specific tertiary course, then you will need to work decisively towards your goal. Carry out the following plan of action during the two-year lead-up to your application:

***PLANNING:***

The main thing is to go well prepared, well documented, and know what their program is all about. Our students don't have to be ten times better than the others, but they do have to be good. How does a student 'be good'? By preparing well for their specific area of study, of course (and not necessarily by completing a 'QCE’, ‘HSC’ or ‘VCE’). Many children can achieve very high scores on their Grade 12 Certificate, and yet not be very well prepared for their chosen career or tertiary course.

***Initial Contacts and Timeframes:***

Early in Grade 11, sit the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT). Half-way through Grade 11, send a letter to the university advising them that the child will be applying at such and such a year/date and that you will be sending a portfolio and following this, you will be arranging an interview to discuss his application. Also ask if there are any other procedures that you should be aware of. Assume that they will look at your case. Do not ask if they will accept a home-education student. Contact the admissions officer first; don’t try to sneak in through someone you know, as this will probably ‘rub the admissions officer up the wrong way’. Respect their hierarchy and protocol, but stay in charge. Do not start off with phone calls; but begin with written paperwork and include the ending...*"We look forward to your reply."* Send initial letters to the university by registered certified mail. This will mean that someone will have to be accountable for receiving the application, and so you can't be fobbed off or put in the 'too hard basket'.

• Contact your State Tertiary Application Centre for Study Application Forms (or find them online) as most States will have a special section enabling the student to apply for a 'Personal Competencies Assessment' or 'Special Cases'. (Refer to 'QTAC Personal Competencies Assessment' on the QTAC website).

• Present your 'portfolio of achievements' to the university at least six months prior to the application date. Then, at monthly or two monthly intervals, send in documents of further achievements to be included in your file. The idea is to keep your name and face before them continually so that, by the time you apply to the faculty, you seem like a familiar acquaintance to them.

## Tertiary Institutions that Have Accepted Home-School Graduates in past years.

Every year, we hear more testimonies of ex-home-schoolers who have gained successful entry into tertiary institutions. Of course, even these institutions may initially say “No. We don’t accept home-schoolers”, as the administrative staff may not know about the one or two home-schoolers out of the thousands of students; but if you keep pushing ahead and follow the strategies in this article, the doors will eventually open. Your diligence and determination will eventually be rewarded.

The Tertiary Admissions Centres also have a category of application called ‘Non-standard Year 12’, which home-educators may fit into.

Students who have graduated from home-education (either with our Senior Graduation Certificate, the A.C.E. Year 12 Certificate or independently with no certificate at all but by presenting a ‘Personal Education Portfolio’) have gained entry into a large number of Australian institutions/colleges of higher education; universities; business colleges; technical colleges; Bible Colleges, etc. In our earlier editions of this guidebook, we showed a list of these colleges. However, this list was never complete, so we dispensed with the list as more were being added each year and we haven’t been able to keep up with updating the list. Just know that many hundreds of home-educated students have successfully entered tertiary courses.

***What is the STAT?***

The Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) is a two-hour aptitude test which assists applicants to demonstrate their potential for tertiary study and helps tertiary institutions in making their selection decisions. The test is widely accepted and is used by most tertiary institutions throughout Australia.

There are a few versions of the STAT. The most popular version is made up of 70 multiple choice questions which are 50% verbal and 50% quantitative. These questions are designed to assess a range of competencies commonly considered important for successful tertiary study.

As the test itself is not designed to test your specific knowledge of certain subjects, you do not have to 'study' specific texts for the test. All the information will be given to you in the exam. The questions focus on your ability to process, analyse and understand material, which is presented in a variety of forms including graphs, prose and cartoons.

Your State's Tertiary Admissions Centre will advise you as to the correct test, and the times and venues for taking the test.

***Do I need to take the STAT?***

*“It's a good idea to sit the STAT if you don't have****any formal academic qualifications****and want to try and get into a course by using alternative pathways like employment experience. A STAT result can give you a selection rank on its own or combined with your employment experience, depending on institution policies.”*
*(Accessed 4-01-2022 from* <https://www.qtac.edu.au/special-tertiary-admissions-test/> )

Sample copies of the STAT may be obtained from ACER for a small fee ( <https://www.acer.org/au> ). These sample-tests from previous years will enable you to practice doing the test, before you sit the test.

***Further Tertiary Information Is Available from The Following:***

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| Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre Ltd<https://www.qtac.edu.au/> | Universities Admission Centre (NSW & ACT)[https://www.uac.edu.au](https://www.uac.edu.au/)  |
| Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre<https://www.vtac.edu.au> | Tertiary Institutions Service Centre Inc. (WA)[https://www.tisc.edu.au](https://www.tisc.edu.au/) |
| South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre<https://www.satac.edu.au/> | Northern Territory Tertiary Admissions Centre<https://nt.gov.au/learning/adult-education-and-training> |
| Tasmanian Tertiary Admissions Centre <https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/students/university> |

**The Homeward Alternative Graduation Program (Commencing in 2025)**

Families with students in Year 10 or younger may be interested to keep in mind our ‘Alternate Graduation’ program which will be available by 2025.

Since 2012, we have been trialling innovative courses that are nationally accredited and effectively allow high schoolers to bypass the normal school HSC system, while providing an accredited pathway to university, trades, or other careers. In 2023/24, we are temporarily taking a break from running these RTO courses; however, a non-accredited tertiary-&-vocational-preparation course can be commenced immediately, and this should articulate into national awards pending final accreditation in 2024. The proposed accredited courses for 2025 are…

* **Certificate II in Further Studies** is roughly equivalent to a Year 10 Junior High School Certificate, and can include the usual school subjects as well as vocational preparation units.
* **Certificate III in General Education** is roughly equivalent to a high scoring Grade 11 to moderate scoring Grade 12 and can include the usual senior secondary subjects. QUT, for example, advertises that “a certificate III can be used for a selection rank for entry to diploma courses”. (Accessed from [https://www.qut.edu.au/study/applying/recent-secondary-education on 17/07/2023](https://www.qut.edu.au/study/applying/recent-secondary-education%20on%2017/07/2023))
* **Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation:** a general classical education with Christian worldview studies. It can act as a tertiary preparation alternative to an ‘Academic Grade 12’; presented either as a custom-designed study course, or as ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ for previous Home-schoolers to gain credit in prerequisite subjects for entrance to many (though not all) university courses. As some degree courses have higher requirements than others- if a year 11 student knows which course they wish to apply for, it would be advisable to enquire early as to whether a Cert IV in Tertiary Preparation or Science will be sufficient preparation. For some degrees, you may also benefit from having a STAT test score/result, or an SAT result.
* **Certificate IV in Science:** is a tertiary preparation course focussing on the applied sciences and mathematics. It provides a way to gain credit for High School Senior Biology, Chemistry and Physics for University entrance.
* **Diploma Courses:** focussing on the Arts, Humanities and Christian worldview studies in preparation for a broad range of careers, professions or fields of endeavour; (also provides a tertiary entrance ranking for alternate entry into university, and occasionally may provide some credit into a university degree.)

**Benefits of these awards:**

Courses delivered by ‘Homeward’ in partnership with the Registered Training Organisation (UNET) provide the following benefits:

The courses...

* will usually provide pathways to further study (with or without a STAT test)
* supports traditional family values;
* review or train-and-assess high-school academic skills;
* train students in research and study skills to prepare for tertiary study;
* provide former home-schoolers with credit for natural learning and alternate studies;
* allow registered ‘competencies’ (ie academic skills and learning outcomes) to be accomplished through pre-set curriculum, alternate home-school curriculum, work experience and ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’;
* have assessment that caters to a variety of learning styles and temperaments (eg academic, creative and practical learners);
* make a broad range of academic and practical subjects available;
* fulfil the extended compulsory participation laws (the ‘earn or learn’ policy) in Queensland and other States.

Talk with a Homeward consultant about commencing this alternate graduation program now, in preparation for final accreditation in 2025.