



EVALUATION OF STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF TEPA INFORMATION MATERIALS

As one of TEPA's responsibilities is to monitor stakeholders' access to tertiary entrance information, regular evaluations have been undertaken of its information materials. Previous TEPA evaluations have, however, been hampered by small sample sizes and an inability to access all stakeholder groups adequately. Similarly a review of the research literature into stakeholders' access to, and need for, tertiary entrance information found that few investigations had been undertaken on these issues, either in Australia or overseas.

In light of recommendations from prior research it was decided to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the TEPA information materials, which would seek to incorporate the views of all stakeholder groups. The investigation aimed to address the following issues:

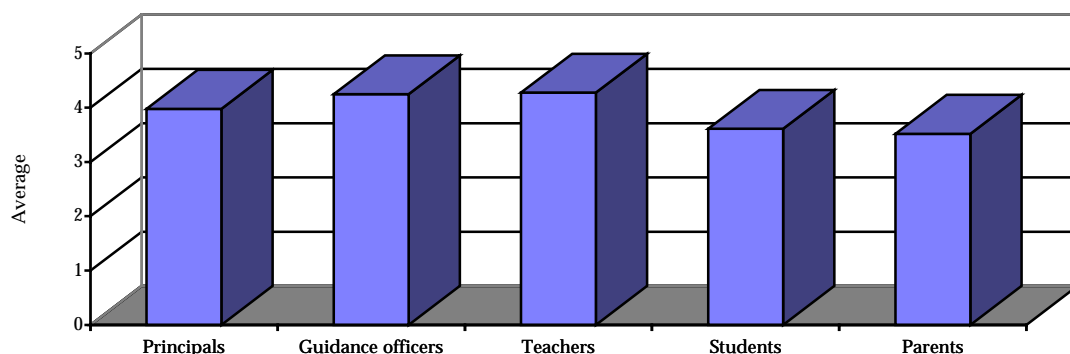
- the degree to which TEPA information materials are perceived by schools and other key stakeholders to be accessible and timely
- whether current materials are effectively meeting stakeholders' requirements and whether there are gaps in the information provided
- the extent of use and perceived effectiveness of tertiary entrance information materials
- whether the increasing use of new technologies in schools and the wider community results in the need for alterations to the provision and dissemination of tertiary entrance information.

In April 1997, all 70 schools involved in the evaluation received questionnaires to be completed by the school principal and guidance officer. In addition, 40 of the participating schools were sent a survey package with questionnaires to be completed by teachers at the school, past students of the school, and parents whose children had attended the school.

Findings

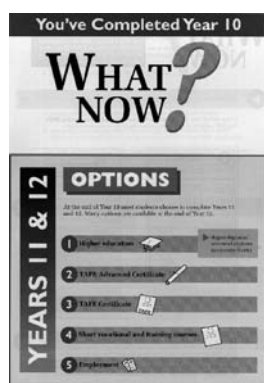
The findings of the evaluation indicate that, on average, participants were satisfied with the information materials provided by TEPA. Figure 1 displays the average overall satisfaction rating with TEPA information materials for each of the groups surveyed. Despite the fact that many teachers had not read the entire range of TEPA information materials, their overall satisfaction rating of 4.28 was higher than other groups. Students and parents recorded the lowest overall satisfaction ratings.

Figure 1. Average overall ratings of satisfaction with TEPA information materials.



Note: Ratings were made on a five-point scale, with five reflecting the most positive response.

Perceptions of TEPA information materials



Recognition of the TEPA publication *What now?* was fair across all groups when the fact that it is distributed to students during Year 10 is taken into account. Where respondents remembered receiving the brochure, they were very likely to indicate that they had read it to obtain information.

Overall perceptions of *What now?* were found to be positive across all groups, with the respondents rating the brochure as well organised and easy to understand. Principals, guidance officers, teachers, students and parents indicated that they would recommend that students or parents read the brochure, but they also felt that it had not been received when it was most needed.



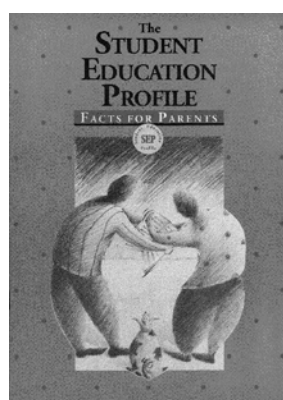
The majority of those who indicated that they had received the *SEP* brochure were also very likely to respond that they had read it for information about tertiary entrance.

On average, all groups made positive overall ratings of *SEP*, especially with regard to accuracy, ease of understanding and the organisation of the information. The majority of those surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend that students or parents read *SEP*. Problems with the timing of distribution of the *SEP* brochure were highlighted and students and parents made lower ratings than other groups in relation to the usefulness of the publication when making decisions.



While principals were slightly less likely than other groups to have read this publication, many of those who recalled receiving *From Year 10 to Tertiary Entrance* reported that they had read it to obtain information.

Overall perceptions of *From Year 10 to Tertiary Entrance* were positive and very similar across all respondent groups. The publication was seen to be well organised, easy to understand and somewhat more interesting than other TEPA information materials. Principals, guidance officers and teachers felt that *From Year 10 to Tertiary Entrance* was more useful in decision making than parents and students and almost all indicated that they had not really received the publication when they needed it most. On average, all of those surveyed indicated that they would recommend that parents or students read *From Year 10 to Tertiary Entrance*.

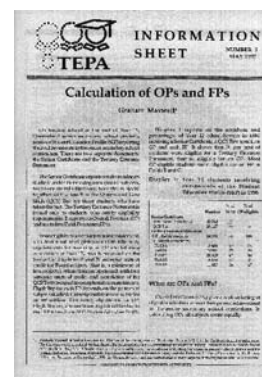


SEP: Facts for parents was one of the most widely recognised information materials in the evaluation. Aside from students, those respondents who remembered receiving this publication were also likely to indicate that they had read it to obtain information.

Average overall perceptions of *SEP: Facts for parents* were positive across all groups, with guidance officers and teachers making slightly higher ratings than students and parents. Students and parents appeared to have some difficulties understanding the content and also made lower ratings in relation to the accuracy and the usefulness of the publication when making decisions. While all groups indicated that they would recommend that students or parents read *SEP: Facts for parents*, these recommendations were slightly less positive than for other TEPA publications.

Calculation of OPs and FPs was the most widely recognised and read TEPA information publication across all groups surveyed. Overall ratings of *Calculation of OPs and FPs* were the least positive of all of the publications in the study. The information sheet received low ratings in relation to interest and ease of understanding, with many respondents detailing specific suggestions in relation to the content of the document.

Parents and students made lower ratings than other participant groups with regard to the accuracy of *Calculation of OPs and FPs*, possibly further highlighting the fact that the concepts are not very well understood and, in some cases, are obscured by commonly held misconceptions. While the publication received somewhat low ratings regarding its usefulness in decision making and the timing of distribution, all groups recommended that parents or students read *Calculation of OPs and FPs*.



Making good decisions on tertiary entrance was one of the information publications that all groups, with the exception of principals, were most likely to indicate that they had not seen and would have liked to have received. Respondents who remembered receiving the information sheet had in most cases read it to obtain information.

Overall perceptions of *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* appeared to be slightly more positive for principals and guidance officers than for teachers, students and parents. All groups rated this information sheet as well organised, but responses were somewhat mixed in relation to ease of understanding and the accuracy of the document. As with other TEPA publications, responses indicated that all groups recommended that parents or students should read the information sheet and that it was not necessarily received when it was most needed.



All groups, including guidance officers, were less likely to indicate that they had received *Applying for visual and performing arts* than any other publication. For the most part, those who remembered receiving *Applying for visual and performing arts*, indicated that they had read the booklet. This pattern of responses is not unexpected, given that TEPA recommends that the publication be distributed only to those students who have demonstrated an interest in the visual or performing arts.

Only a small number of the total respondents to the survey made ratings in relation to the *Applying for visual and performing arts* booklet, with those who did indicating a very positive overall perception of the publication. On average, the booklet was seen to be well organised, easy to understand and interesting.



From Table 1, it is evident that not all TEPA information publications are equally important to all respondents. While principals and guidance officers indicated that *From Year 10 to Tertiary Entrance* was an important publication, teachers, students, and parents were more likely to rank *Calculation of OPs and FPs* as being important. All groups of respondents appeared to regard the *SEP* brochure highly, as it was ranked as one of the most important publications across all groups. Based on their rankings, *What Now?* and *Applying for visual and performing arts* were least likely to be perceived as important by those who responded to the survey.

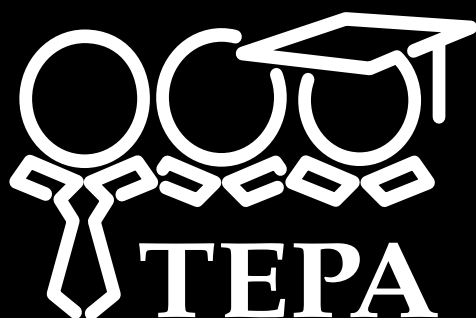
Table 1. TEPA information publications ranked as important

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
What now?	2nd				
SEP	2nd	2nd	3rd	2nd	3rd
From Year 10 to Tertiary Entrance	1st	1st	2nd		
SEP: Facts for parents		3rd			1st
Calculation of OPs and FPs			1st	1st	1st
Making good decisions on tertiary entrance		3rd		3rd	
Applying for visual and performing arts					

Recommendations

All groups surveyed found TEPA information materials to be both valuable and useful, as exemplified by the high average satisfaction ratings and the frequent recommendations that parents and students read all publications. Given that TEPA is committed to providing all stakeholder groups with comprehensive and timely information on tertiary entrance procedures and processes, there are a number of improvements to the current provision of information which could be considered. These include the timing of distribution of publications to schools, reviewing distribution strategies to parents and teachers and providing pre-service and in-service tertiary entrance information to school staff. Additional recommendations were made highlighting the need for changes to the information materials to ensure that more information about vocational education and training options is provided and a less technical explanation of the calculation of OPs and FPs is made available, in addition to the current publication.

In order to fully implement the recommendations from this evaluation, TEPA has initiated a project to investigate the implications of each of the recommendations. A report detailing the policy options available to TEPA in regard to the recommendations will be available at the end of September.



This report forms the second in a series of research briefings produced by TEPA. For further information about either the Authority or the study, please contact:

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