

Research Series

TEPA resource feedback:

1998 new and updated

publications



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1: BACKGROUND

Introduction

In response to feedback from Principals, Guidance Officers, teachers, students and parents received as part of the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority's 1997 evaluation of written resources, a number of changes were made to the suite of information materials. Modifications to the content, format and timing of the distribution of *SEP: Facts for Parents* and *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* were made by the Information Team during 1998. *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles* was written to provide a simplified, user-friendly explanation of OPs and FPs, as many respondents indicated the extended publication was unnecessarily complex. These publications were mailed to all senior secondary schools during Term 1 for distribution to the relevant target groups. To ensure that these changes and additions best meet the information needs of schools, students and parents, the Research Team requested feedback from Guidance Officers in early June.

2: THE STUDY

Measures

The survey used in this study was based on information obtained from resource evaluations previously undertaken by TEPA. Additional questions aimed at determining whether the resources were perceived to be relevant for the target group and if the materials were received at the most appropriate time were also included. In the case of the new publication *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles*, additional questions were aimed at investigating if the resource was a useful addition to the suite of information materials and whether it contained all necessary information on the topic. Appendix A contains an example of the evaluation form which was distributed to all schools.

Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed in early June 1998 to all guidance officers in senior secondary schools. All participants were invited to indicate whether they wished to receive feedback about the study or would like to be placed on the research mailing list.

Response rate and sample

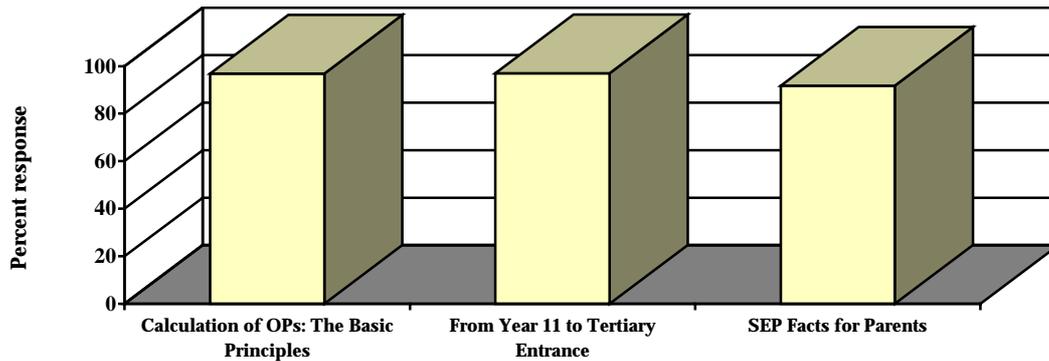
Ninety-nine (30%) responses were received from a range of school personnel including guidance officers, careers advisers, deputy principals, heads of department, and deans of students.

3: FINDINGS

Timing of distribution

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of respondents agreed that they had received *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles, From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* and *SEP: Facts for Parents* at the most appropriate time of year. The small number of participants who indicated an alternative distribution time most frequently nominated the month of February as preferable.

Figure 1. Agreement that resources were received at the most appropriate time.



To determine the extent to which the TEPA distribution schedule matched the timing of relevant events in schools, respondents were asked to indicate the months that subject selection and careers evenings were held. As can be seen from Table 1, the most popular month for both of these information sessions is August, strongly suggesting that the current TEPA policy of providing schools with all relevant resources before the end of June is appropriate.

Table 1. Months in which subject selection and careers evenings are usually held.

Month	Subject selection	Careers evening
February		12
March		11
April		3
May	2	12
June	3	3
July	22	19
August	56	45
September	26	15
October	14	13
November	1	

Note: Respondents were able to nominate more than one month per information event.

General comments made by some respondents included requests for minor changes to the times at which the information publications were sent to schools. Suggestions were also made indicating that schools would appreciate additional copies of all materials for teachers and school personnel, especially when new resources were produced.

Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles

As can be seen from Table 2, on average, *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles* was rated as interesting, well organised, relevant and easy to understand. When compared to responses to previous evaluations in relation to the extended document *Calculation of OPs and FPs*, the new, less technical version of the publication was rated as significantly easier to understand ($F=3.9$, $p<.05$). Participants in the current evaluation also agreed that *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles* was a useful addition to student information resources (mean = 4.3) and that it provided all the necessary information on this topic (mean = 4.1). Respondents also highly recommended that all Year 12 students, especially those who are OP-eligible, read the publication (mean = 4.4).

Table 2. Respondent ratings of *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles* (n=94).

	Average rating
Interesting	4.1
Well organised	4.2
Relevant	4.4
Easy to understand	3.9

Note: Ratings were made on a five-point scale with 5 reflecting the most positive response.

While many respondents made extremely positive comments in relation to the condensed information publication about OPs and FPs, a number experienced some difficulties with the format. The majority of suggestions made with regard to this publication related to the slightly overwhelming background. Some respondents also indicated that as this publication was only relevant for OP-eligible students it would be useful to have a resource detailing alternative pathways, rank information and special entry requirements (see Appendix B for comments).

From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance

The updated version of *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* was viewed very positively by respondents, as indicated by the ratings contained in Table 3. As was the case with *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles*, the publication was perceived to be interesting, well organised, relevant and easy to understand. Ratings made regarding whether the publication was interesting were significantly more positive than in previous evaluations ($F=8.1$, $p<01$), possibly resulting from the improvements to the layout of the resource as part of the recent update. Respondents also strongly agreed that all relevant students read *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* (mean = 4.5).

Table 3. Respondent ratings of *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* (n=95).

	Average rating
Interesting	4.1
Well organised	4.3
Relevant	4.4
Easy to understand	4.2

Note: Ratings were made on a five-point scale with 5 reflecting the most positive response.

Comments made by respondents (contained in Appendix B) highlighted the fact that many schools distributed *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* to Year 10 students as they believed this group require a comprehensive information resource prior to making decisions about subject selection and OP-eligibility. A number requested that an additional, detailed publication be made available for this group or that further copies of *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* be sent to schools.

SEP: Facts for Parents

Respondents ratings, on average, in relation to *SEP: Facts for Parents* were very positive with the majority finding the updated publication to be interesting, well organised, easy to understand and relevant, as can be seen from Table 4. *SEP: Facts for Parents* was also strongly recommended as a resource (mean = 4.5), a significant improvement on recommendations from previous evaluations that all parents read the publication (F=8.2, p<.01)

Table 4. Respondent ratings of *SEP: Facts for Parents* (n=96).

	Average rating
Interesting	4.1
Well organised	4.3
Relevant	4.1
Easy to understand	4.5

Note: Ratings were made on a five-point scale with 5 reflecting the most positive response.

4: RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the feedback provided by respondents in relation to the new and updated publications was extremely positive and has provided TEPA with valuable insights into the needs of schools. Comparisons made between the current and previous evaluations have revealed that changes made to TEPA's information materials have resulted in positive improvements to the resources. To ensure that the Authority continues to be responsive to feedback from stakeholder groups and maintains the quality of its resources there are a number of recommendations to be considered.

1. The current distribution schedule for *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles*, *SEP: Facts for Parents* and *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* appears to be appropriate for the vast majority of schools. It is impossible for TEPA to accommodate requests that the materials be provided during February or early in Term 1 due to the fact that information such as crucial dates, student numbers and statistical data has not been finalised. Such practicalities should be communicated through *TEPA News* to ensure that schools are aware of these issues.
2. It appears to be the case that while schools value *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* as a publication for students in secondary school, many believe that Year 10 students

require such a detailed resource prior to making subject selection and OP-eligibility decisions. The possibility of charging schools for additional copies of *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* for Year 10 students or increasing the size of *What Now?* to include additional information should be investigated.

3. As has been the case in previous evaluations, guidance officers have again requested that more detailed information be made available for those students who are OP-ineligible but still wish to pursue tertiary studies. The Information Team should investigate whether an additional publication is required or whether the relevant information can be included in existing resources.
4. As *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles* is seen by the majority to provide all necessary information on the topic for Year 12 students, the extended document on this issue should only be made available to schools on request. The most recent version of *Calculation of OPs and FPs* should also be accessible for downloading at all times on TEPA's Website.
5. The printing of *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles* should be monitored closely in 1999 and the necessary changes made to either the screens or paper stock to ensure that the background is less intrusive.

Appendix A



TEPA

All information provided in this questionnaire will be treated in the strictest confidence. TEPA guarantees your anonymity in the conduct and reporting of this survey.

TEPA Updated & New Resources Evaluation sheet for Guidance Officers

This survey asks for information on the two updated and one new resource distributed by TEPA in 1998, *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles, From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance*, and *The Student Education Profile: Facts for Parents*.

Section 1

The following questions ask you whether each of the new or updated materials were received at the most appropriate time for your school. If **NO**, please indicate in the space provided the preferred month of distribution of the resource.

	Received at the right time	If NO , please indicate the preferred month of distribution
<i>Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles</i>	YES/NO	_____
<i>Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance</i>	YES/NO	_____
<i>The Student Education Profile: Facts for Parents</i>	YES/NO	_____

Section 2

The following questions ask you to comment on your perceptions of the new TEPA publication, *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles*.

For each of the following questions, please circle one number.

Overall *Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles* was...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5
Well organised	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant	1	2	3	4	5
I recommend that all Year 12s read this resource	1	2	3	4	5
I recommend that all parents read this resource	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles</i> provides all necessary information on this topic for Year 12 students	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Calculation of OPs: The Basic Principles</i> is a useful addition to the information provided to students	1	2	3	4	5



Section 3

The following questions ask you to comment on your perceptions of the updated TEPA publication, *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance*.

For each of the following questions, please circle one number.

Overall *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* was...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5
Well organised	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant	1	2	3	4	5
I recommend that all Year 11s read this resource	1	2	3	4	5



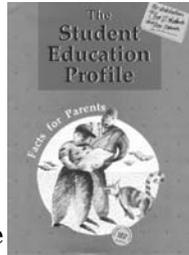
Section 4

The following questions ask you to comment on your perceptions of the updated TEPA publication, *The Student Education Profile: Facts for Parents*.

For each of the following questions, please circle one number.

Overall *The Student Education Profile: Facts for Parents* was...

	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5
Well organised	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant	1	2	3	4	5
I recommend that all parents read this resource	1	2	3	4	5



Section 5

Please use the space below to provide any comments on the new or updated TEPA resource materials, the timing of their distribution, the intended target group of each resource or any other aspect of the information program.

Section 6

Please indicate which month(s) your school usually holds:

Subject selection evenings _____

Parents/Careers evenings _____

If you would like to receive feedback about the results of this research or be placed on TEPA's research mailing list, please complete the following section:

Name: _____

School & Position: _____

Address: _____

I would like to receive feedback about the research (*Please circle one*) **YES** **NO**

I would like to be placed on TEPA's research mailing list (*Please circle one*) **YES** **NO**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Please **fax** your response to **07 3234 1508** or mail to Reply Paid 10, TEPA, PO Box 171,
BRISBANE ALBERT STREET Q 4002

Appendix B

Positive feedback about resources and information program

- ◆ New resources are interesting and well organised.
- ◆ The materials are very pertinent to students and interesting to parents.
- ◆ The provision of these materials has helped to reduce some of the fears/apprehension/uncertainty associated with the whole “OP” and tertiary entrance world. I applaud the efforts made to simplify and clarify the publications — well done!
- ◆ Material is very useful for use when explaining the tertiary entrance process to parents.
- ◆ Appears fine.
- ◆ Calculating OPs is much better.
- ◆ The changes have been an improvement on an already valuable group of resources. The Calculating OPs resource (updated) is especially appreciated.
- ◆ Please continue to provide these publications to schools.
- ◆ All publications are excellent and widely used by both students and parents.
- ◆ I find the TEPA documents useful with both students and parents.
- ◆ TEPA resources are user friendly. Not too much jargon which makes them readable by a wide range of people (students, parents). Good size, not too bulky, easy to handle.
- ◆ Very pleased with the service from TEPA.
- ◆ Quality of material is very good and does assist with communication to parents and students. Timing appropriate.
- ◆ TEPA materials are high quality, pertinent, and easily readable.
- ◆ Like the colour coding of materials.
- ◆ The new publications are much clearer in explanation and more interesting in explanation.
- ◆ Important things to remember is a good idea.
- ◆ The hardest point to deal with is the scaling and standard deviation. For some this will always be hard. The material is good, easy to read, and well timed.
- ◆ Generally good resources for students and parents — good layout and user friendly. Best versions produced so far.

Timing

- ◆ *Calculating OPs: The Basic Principles* and *SEP: Facts for Parents* would be good to be available as school resumes at the beginning of term.
- ◆ (*From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance*) Prefer end of Year 10 as current Year 11s have last year’s copy.
- ◆ I think *Calculating OPs: The Basic Principles* would be more useful in June with one semester of Year 12 completed and arrival of QTC book making for good stimuli to understand the system.
- ◆ All materials need to reach the school during 2nd term and no later as revision/preparation of programs for Year 10s and 12s are written in Term 2 to begin in the first week of Term 3.
- ◆ Calculation of OPs needs to go to Year 10s in Term 3 also.
- ◆ We hold our Year 12 Parent and Student Information Evening in early February — our understanding is that many schools might also do so. It would be most useful to distribute *Calculating OPs: The Basic Principles* and *SEP: Facts for Parents* at such a time, as the purpose of the information evening is to outline such matters as OPs, FPs, SEP, QTAC applications etc. These booklets would then be an immediate and useful resource to issue the students and parents and would be more likely to be read as the interest would be generated at that time. Calculating OPs is a complex matter and the booklet/brochure

does a good job of explaining it, but it would be better if we had it earlier so that our own session reinforces it.

Distribution

- ◆ Could TEPA publications be addressed to one person in the school, e.g. GO or Year 12 coordinator (preferably GO) I don't always receive all publications or information.
- ◆ Copies of the more comprehensive resource need to be also available.
- ◆ It would be useful to receive more copies of *Calculating OPs: The Basic Principles* to allow teachers of Year 11 and 12s to access them.
- ◆ *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* — recommend sufficient copies come into schools for staff as well.

Format

- ◆ Re *Calculating OPs: The Basic Principles* — it would be much easier if it had a plain coloured background — white or clear preferred. It is really only relevant to students and their parents contemplating tertiary study. This publication was of suitable length and detail — any longer and students will be less inclined to read it.
- ◆ *Calculating OPs: The Basic Principles* is difficult to read on the blue and white background; displays good.
- ◆ I am not sure of the blue on yellow in *Calculating OPs: The Basic Principles*.
- ◆ *Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* was the poorest publication I have seen from TEPA. It appears on first sight to be really “messy and disorganised” compared to the other excellent publications for Year 12s.

Suggestions

- ◆ It would be useful to have a well produced document for students not eligible for an OP at this time as well.
- ◆ From Year 11 — put information about ranks and university/TAFE entrance — that ranks are not on SEP or notified but how to find out your rank etc.
- ◆ Year 10s need to know this — too late after choosing Year 11 subjects (*From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance*). Year 10s must know all the relevant information contained in the above publications. Year 11 is too late!!
- ◆ In the *Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* should provide a full-page spread of the Senior Certificate and a Tertiary Entrance Statement.
- ◆ *Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* was good as it was. *Year 10 to Tertiary Entrance* was a great resource for Year 10s and their parents — before Year 11.
- ◆ The booklet *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* would be better suited to Year 10 students.
- ◆ Would like to see only one publication with all information in this.
- ◆ Case studies help to make a point.
- ◆ Maybe they are a little ‘wordy’ — could be shorter, more punchy sentences to get the message across (e.g. the long paragraph on page 11 under the heading “Is the order of preferences important?”). There are many more long paragraphs like that — could be more concise. It is hard given the nature of the information and the detail to be shared. However, I don't think long wordy paragraphs keep readers attention.
- ◆ Re: Section 2: Only Year 12 students who are eligible for an OP need to read this (and likewise their parents); not all Year 12s. It provides all the necessary information for most OP-eligible students but not all. Some students do want to know more, in which case the more detailed explanation in *Calculation of OPs and FPs* is available for them to read and discuss.
- ◆ The *SEP: Facts for Parents* may be useful for Year 11 parents as well — could there be a mini version for them?

Other

- ◆ Disappointed with the new video *OPs and Tertiary Entrance: the facts*. Used it with Year 11 students and parents and they found it uninteresting while the information is relevant. The video *You and the SEP: Partners in staff selection* got more of a positive response the year before even though not a parent video.
- ◆ In relation to the question “Easy to understand” the publications are only easy if a person sits down and spends some time reading them.