

Research Series

1999 Evaluation of stakeholder
perceptions of TEPA

information materials



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research Services would like to thank all those schools that volunteered to be a part of this evaluation. We would like to say a special thank you to those who took the time to distribute the surveys on behalf of the Authority.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority (TEPA) provides information regarding tertiary entrance procedures in Queensland and has done so since 1992. In order to provide the best possible service to the community, TEPA seeks to obtain feedback from stakeholder groups on the use and effectiveness of tertiary entrance information materials.

The evaluation reported in this document follows on from the *Evaluation of stakeholder perceptions of TEPA information materials* conducted by TEPA in 1997. Some of the recommendations of the 1997 evaluation led to changes to TEPA's information program, including the development of a new resource and significant updates to two other publications. Guidance Officers were asked to provide feedback on these new and updated resources in 1998.

The 1999 research reported here saw 55 schools from throughout Queensland participate in an extensive survey evaluation of all TEPA information resources and, for the first time, TEPA's Internet site. Survey responses were received from principals, guidance officers, teachers, students who completed Year 12 in 1998, and parents of students who completed Year 12 in 1998.

Findings

The results of the survey responses indicated that, overall, respondents were satisfied with the range and quality of information materials provided by TEPA. Along with suggestions for alterations, reformatting and additions, many respondents detailed positive comments about the entire suite of publications.

Other comments related to distribution problems, timing, and quality and quantity of information. Further suggestions included simplifying some information, providing more detail for some, and supplying additional information. Among the additional information requested was more specific subject area materials (such as visual and performing arts), school-based apprenticeships, non-OP entry, VET access, alternative post-secondary pathways, more specific and 'easy-to-follow' information regarding OP calculation, preparation for university life, subject selection, private providers, overseas study, video on calculation of OPs, alternative pathways, and dispelling myths (e.g. subject weightings).

As in the past, parents and students were more critical of the publications than other groups. As these are the groups for which the publications are mainly intended, their comments require attention.

Recommendations

Based on both the ratings and written comments, the recommendations of this evaluation were to:

1. Advertise the existence of the TEPA Internet site; for example, mailing out a flyer and/or bookmarks for students (and possibly other groups), include Internet address on all publications, correspondence, and business cards.
2. Investigate the possibility of further simplifying information regarding the calculation of OPs and FPs. Liaise with teachers, students, and parents to determine the parameters of an OP resource kit for use in schools. This kit may comprise activity sheets, questions and answers, case studies, discussion points, etc.
3. Address Frequently Asked Questions on the Internet site and monitor the success of this initiative.
4. Investigate in greater detail why parents and students tended to be less satisfied than other groups with various aspects of the publications.
5. Include in current material or publish new material covering VET, OP-ineligible and alternative pathways information.
6. Direct Year 12 students towards appropriate information material or undertake to publish appropriate information (e.g. videos, kits, links on the TEPA Internet site).
7. Improve distribution strategies for materials and information to intended client groups.

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1: INTRODUCTION

The Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority (TEPA) provides information regarding tertiary entrance procedures in Queensland and has done so since 1992. In order to provide the best possible service to the community, TEPA seeks to obtain feedback from stakeholder groups on the use and effectiveness of tertiary entrance information materials. This document reports evaluation of TEPA material by principals, guidance officers, teachers, students who completed Year 12 in 1998, and parents of students who completed Year 12 in 1998. It is envisaged that feedback from this report will provide recommendations in the form of potential areas for improvement and aspects to be maintained in relation to the provision of information services.

A review of the research literature into stakeholders' access to, and need for, tertiary entrance information found that few investigations had been undertaken on this issue, either in Australia or overseas. Prior evaluations of TEPA information materials have been conducted and the recommendations of these evaluations have been considered when developing new materials.

The initial study undertaken by TEPA resulted in the publication of *The Student Education Profile: Studies of community perceptions (Research Report No. 5)* (1993). This study found that both the Student Education Profile (SEP) and the Tertiary Entrance Statement were well received within the press. However, there appeared to be some confusion in the community about the relationships between school results, results on the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test and Overall Positions (OPs). It was suggested that students be sent further information to clarify this matter. Further findings indicated that employers made little use of school assessment results when interviewing job applicants, and that both employers and tertiary institutions held few concerns about the degree of comparability between school assessment results.

In 1995, TEPA resources were again evaluated, this time by parents and teachers. *Report on resources supplied to school communities to inform them of SEP and tertiary entrance procedures* was subsequently published (TEPA, 1995). Participants were requested to rate various aspects of seven publications/video and indicate when they had seen them, if at all. Open-ended questions were also used in the survey. This evaluation found that there was a high degree of satisfaction among respondents, with regard to the availability, accessibility and timeliness of TEPA information materials, but that the level of language and amount of information presented were areas that could be improved. The report also recommended that future research should seek to include student perceptions, as students are the main group requiring information.

In April 1997, TEPA decided to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the TEPA information materials that would seek to incorporate the views of all stakeholder groups (Whiteley & Field, 1997). Surveys were developed for principals, guidance officers, teachers, students who had completed Year 12

the previous year, and parents of students who had completed Year 12 the previous year. 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;
- whether information on tertiary entrance pathways is provided to interested stakeholder groups;
- the extent of use and perceived effectiveness of tertiary entrance information materials; and
- 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.

Respondents were requested to rank their top three important publications and then rate aspects of those three (if they had seen them). The findings indicated that, on average, the stakeholder groups were satisfied with the information materials. Some recommendations included improved distribution strategies for most of the stakeholders, providing a more comprehensible document that contains information on OPs and Field Positions (FPs), and incorporating more information on VET and pathways for OP-ineligible students.

The evaluation resulted in a policy framework that outlined the most appropriate and cost effective implementations (Field & Cornwell, 1997). Specific recommendations included changes to distribution times (time of year and year levels) of some of the material; production of a publication explaining OP calculations aimed at Year 10 students; production of a pre-service training module; and providing extra copies of TEPA material to schools for distribution to teachers. In response, a pre-service module was produced, and modifications were made to *SEP: Facts for parents* and *From Year 11 to tertiary entrance*. Further, a new document called *Calculation of OPs: The basic principles* was written to provide a more easily understood explanation of OPs and FPs. This was distributed to Year 12 students. To ensure that these changes and additions were meeting the needs of the stakeholders, feedback was requested from guidance officers in June 1998 (Whiteley, 1998). Recommendations from this survey of guidance officers included providing *From Year 11 to tertiary entrance* or a similar publication for Year 10 students; providing more information for OP-ineligible students; and re-evaluating *Calculation of OPs: The basic principles* in 1999.

2: BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

In December 1998, TEPA sent 345 Queensland senior secondary schools and 66 junior schools a fax-back survey to complete (Heirdsfield, 1999). This survey was aimed at obtaining feedback on the preferred month of distribution of eight TEPA publications and the preferred year levels to which the materials are distributed. Also included in this survey was a request for further participation by the whole school in an extensive evaluation of TEPA information material. A range of personnel, including guidance officers, career advisers, deputy principals, counsellors, heads of department, and Year 12 coordinators, responded to the survey. One hundred and three (30%) senior schools and nine (14%) junior schools returned the surveys. Fifty-five schools also indicated that they wanted to take part in the extensive evaluation.

Overall the feedback was positive and encouraging. Many of the changes that were made in relation to timing of distribution and year level as a result of previous feedback had met with approval. However, there were still suggestions from previous evaluations that were echoed in the new survey. These related to additional publications for Year 10 students and parents, more TAFE and VET information, more information on alternative pathways for OP-ineligible students, and calculation of ranks.

3: THE STUDY

3.1 Measures

The questionnaires used in this evaluation were designed using information gathered in prior evaluations of TEPA information materials. Questionnaires were specifically developed for the following groups of participants: school principals, guidance officers, teachers, students, and parents of students who had completed Year 12 in 1998.

The questionnaires contained pictorial representations of eight TEPA publications (see Appendix A) and asked all respondents to indicate which publications they had received, which publications they had read, and in cases where they had not received all eight publications, which ones they would have liked to receive. Respondents were then asked to rank (where possible) the publications in order of importance. For each of the publications respondents indicated had been read, the respondents then rated them on a five-point Likert scale, across a number of dimensions. A question relating to access to the TEPA Internet site and perceived usefulness was included in this survey. Respondents also gave an overall rating to their satisfaction with the

tertiary entrance materials received from TEPA. Additionally, students¹ and the parents of former Year 12 students provided demographic information.

3.2 Procedure

In February 1999, the 55 schools that expressed interest in participating in a more extensive evaluation were sent a survey package that included:

- one questionnaire to be completed by the principal;
- one questionnaire to be completed by the guidance officer;
- 10 questionnaires to be completed by teachers at the school;
- 10 questionnaires to be distributed to students who had completed Year 12 at the school in 1998;
- 10 questionnaires to be distributed to parents associated with the school, who had children who had completed Year 12 in 1998; and
- a detailed set of distribution instructions.

All questionnaires included a covering letter, highlighting the aims of the evaluation and the confidential nature of any responses. An optional covering letter explaining the school's further role in the evaluation of TEPA materials was also included in the package for distribution to parents and students if the principal so wished.

3.3 Sample

Schools

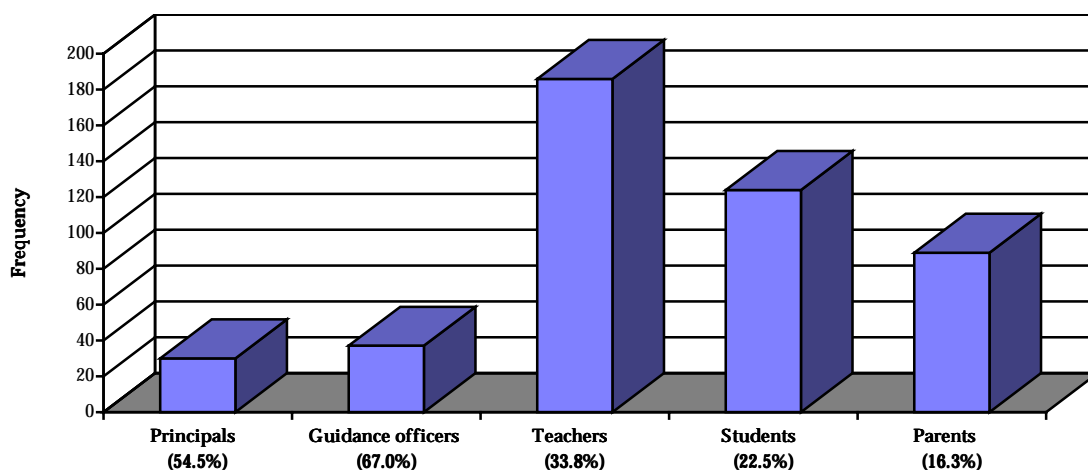
Although the emphasis of the evaluation was not between-group differences, the schools that took part were broadly representative of those in the State. There were 30 (55%) State, eight (15%) Independent schools, and 17 (31%) Catholic schools. Thirteen schools (24%) were located in the Brisbane metropolitan region, with the remaining 42 schools (76%) situated in non-metropolitan areas.

Response rates

Questionnaires were returned from 55 schools. Of the 55 questionnaires for school principals, 30 (55%) responses were received and 37 (67%) were received from school guidance officers. Approximately one-third of the teachers (186: 34%) who received a questionnaire responded. The response rate from students was 124 (23%) and from parents 89 (16%) (Figure 1).

¹ The term 'student' is used in this report to refer to those participants who were Year 12 students in 1998.

Figure 1: Response rates to questionnaires.



Students

Of the 124 students who participated in the evaluation, 40 (32%) were male and 84 (68%) female. The majority of respondents were either 17 (55%) or 18 (42%) years of age and the remainder were aged 19 years or more. Only five students (4%) indicated that they spoke a language other than English at home. These languages were Vietnamese, German, and Polynesian.

When asked to indicate if they had been eligible for an OP the majority (110: 89%) indicated that they had been. Given the high number of OP-eligible students in the sample, it is not surprising that many (85: 72%) indicated that they were currently studying. A further 12 (10%) students stated that they were studying and working, while 16 (13%) respondents said that they were working and the remainder reported that they were involved in another activity. Of those students who were not currently studying, three-quarters stated that they would be undertaking some study next year.

Seven (6%) students stated that they were not OP-eligible. Of these, six indicated that university/TAFE information was available to them. However, one student claimed the information was not available.

Parents

The majority of the 89 parents who participated in the evaluation were women (57: 66%), with only 22 (25%) male respondents. Eight respondents did not answer this question. The ages of the parents ranged from 36 years to 52 years, with a mean age of 44.6 years. As with the student sample, a minority (6: 7%) of parents indicated that they spoke a language other than English at home. These languages were Hindi, Japanese, and Hungarian. Sixty-two (70%) also stated that they had previously attended a tertiary institution.

4: RESULTS

4.1 Overall perceptions of TEPA information materials

Overall importance and satisfaction

As part of all of the surveys, respondents were asked to rank TEPA information publications in order of importance. These rankings were combined to determine the three publications most likely to have been rated as important by each group who responded to the survey (Table 1).

Table 1. TEPA information publications ranked as important.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
<i>What now?</i>	2nd		3rd	2nd	
<i>Calculating OPs: The basic principles</i>			1st	3rd	2nd
<i>Calculation of OPs and FPs</i>					
<i>SEP: Facts for parents</i>	2nd	2nd			3rd
<i>SEP</i>	1st	1st			
<i>From Year 10/11 to tertiary entrance</i>		2nd	2nd		1st
<i>Making good decisions on tertiary entrance</i>				1st	
<i>Applying for visual and performing arts courses</i>					

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 *Student Education Profile* was a highly important publication, no other group included this document in its top three. This is contrary to findings in 1997 (Whiteley & Field, 1997) when all five groups included it in their top three. Teachers, students and parents were more likely to rank *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* as an important information publication. In 1997 these groups also ranked the extended document *Calculating OPs and FPs* as the most important publication. Further, students rated *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* as the most important document, yet no other group ranked this in their top three. This document was also rated in the top three by students in 1997. *What now?* was ranked in the top three by principals, teachers and students, whereas this publication had been ranked in the top three by principals only in 1997. Based on the importance rankings,

Applying for visual and performing arts courses was least likely to be ranked as important by those who responded to the survey. This would be expected as the document has a smaller target audience.

Table 2 displays the average overall satisfaction rating of each of the groups surveyed in relation to TEPA’s information materials. This was in response to the question, “Overall, how satisfied are with the information you received about tertiary entrance from TEPA?”. For the most part, all groups were very satisfied or satisfied, with the exception of parents who were neutral. In 1997, students and parents also responded with the lowest ratings. Guidance officers have consistently responded favourably in previous evaluations.

Table 2. Average overall ratings of satisfaction with TEPA information materials.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Ratings	4.4	4.5	3.5	3.5	3.0

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

Influence of extraneous variables on satisfaction

Initial analyses were completed to determine whether there were any differences in satisfaction within groups that could be related to geographic location of school (metropolitan and non-metropolitan), type of school (Government, Catholic, and Independent), OP-eligibility, language background, age, and gender. In some instances, such as language background and OP-eligibility, subject numbers were not sufficient to allow for statistical comparisons. The only statistically significant effects to emerge when all responses were analysed related to geographic location of school and students. It was found to be the case that students from non-metropolitan schools made significantly higher satisfaction ratings than students from metropolitan schools ($F=8.31, p<.01$). A significant effect was also detected for teacher satisfaction with TEPA information and location of school; however, the sample was biased towards non-metropolitan schools. Satisfaction ratings did not appear to vary systematically in relation to any other demographic variable.

4.2 Information received, read and discussed

School principals ($n = 30$)

As can be seen from Figure 3, of the 30 school principals who responded to the survey, the majority appeared to have received all publications (with the exception of *Applying for visual and performing arts courses*), although one principal stated that he/she did not remember receiving any publications. Despite the high recognition of most of the materials, less than three-quarters of those who received *From Year 11 to tertiary entrance*, *Making good*

decisions on tertiary entrance or Applying for visual and performing arts courses had actually read the publications.

Figure 2. Number of school principals who received and read TEPA information.

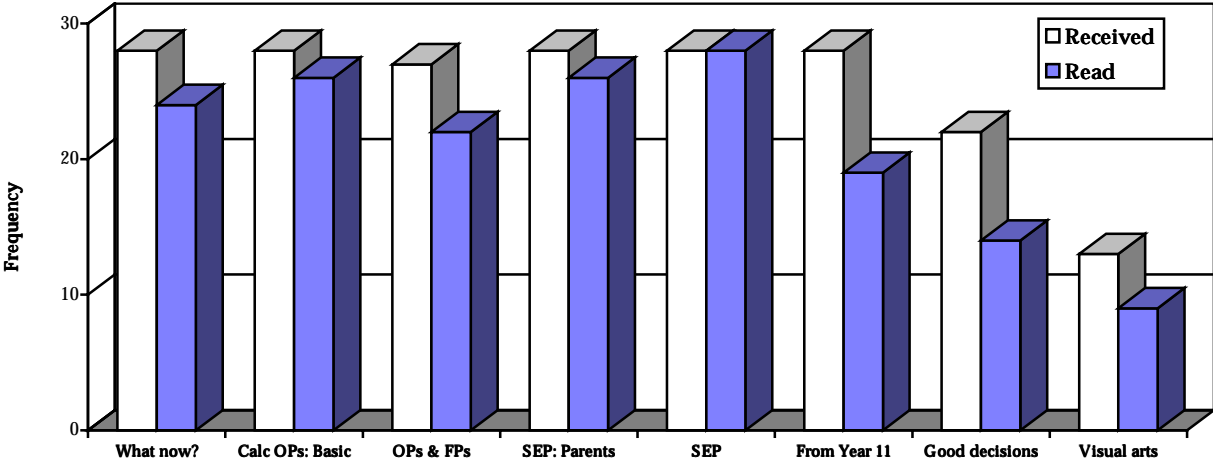
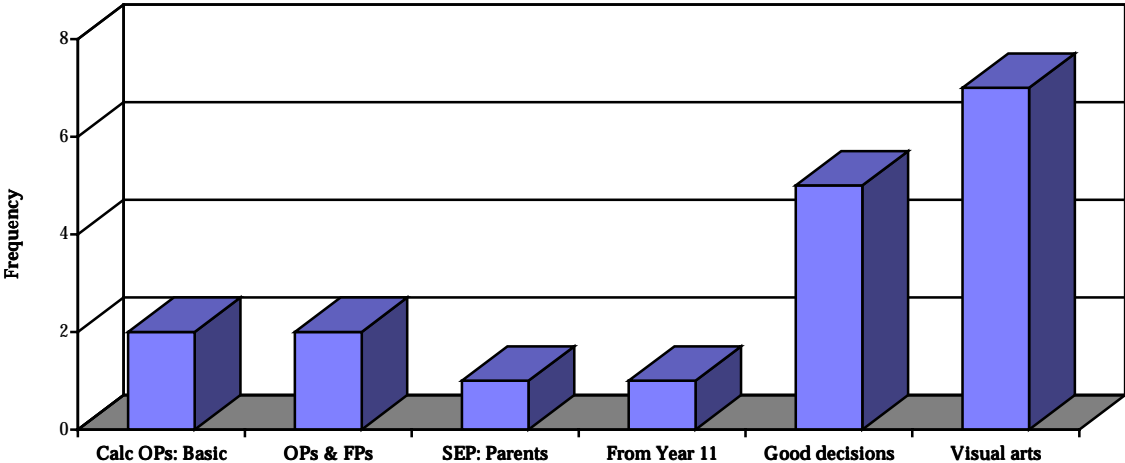


Figure 3. TEPA information materials school principals would like to have seen.



Principals were also asked whether there were any publications they had not seen, but wished they had known about. As shown in Figure 3, few principals indicated they would have liked to see other publications. As would be expected due to the limited number of principals who remembered seeing *Applying for visual and performing arts courses*, seven (23%) would have liked to see this TEPA information resource. It is very likely that the principals had not seen this publication as it is aimed at a particular group of students. *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* also received a mention. It is a little surprising that principals did not receive this publication as its target audience is all Year 12s. It could be surmised that the publication is not well remembered.

Guidance officers ($n = 37$)

Guidance officers who respond to the survey did not always receive TEPA material, possibly because it is often distributed to Year 12 coordinators or other staff, rather than guidance officers. However, they still read the material (Figure 4). As a result, the total number who read the material may outnumber those who receive it (Figure 5). In contrast, not all guidance officers who received the material actually read it. The publication that was least frequently recognised was *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* (24: 65%). This was also the case with the other groups of respondents. It is not surprising then that it was the least discussed with students (Figure 5). The materials the guidance officers regarded as the most important, *Student Education Profile* and *SEP: Facts for parents* were also the most frequently received and read. One guidance officer did not remember receiving anything.

Figure 4. Number of guidance officers who received and received as well as read TEPA information.

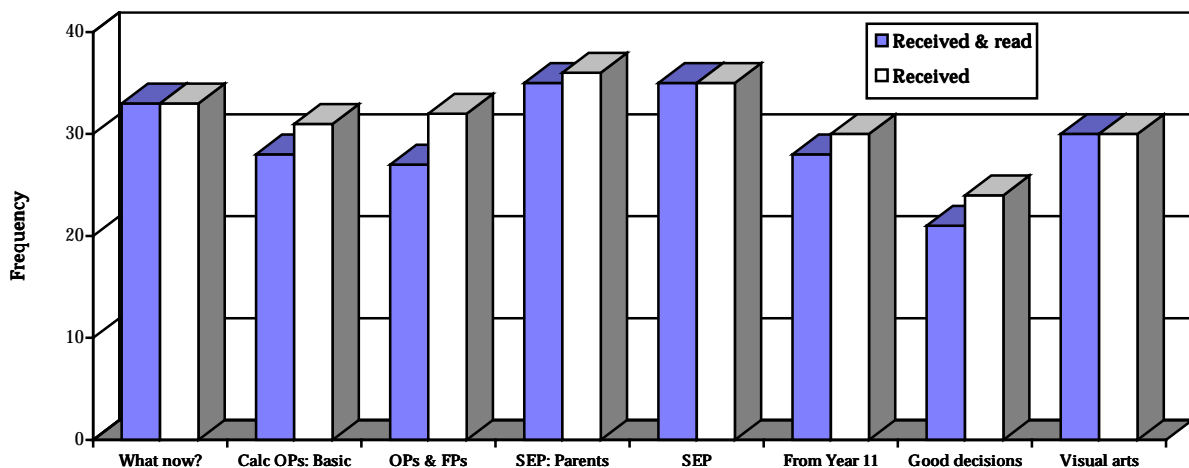
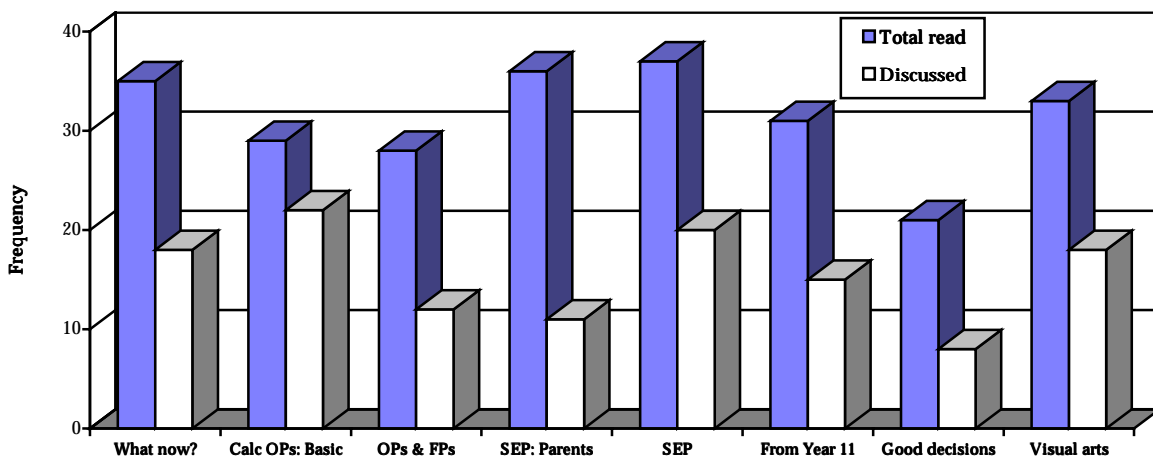
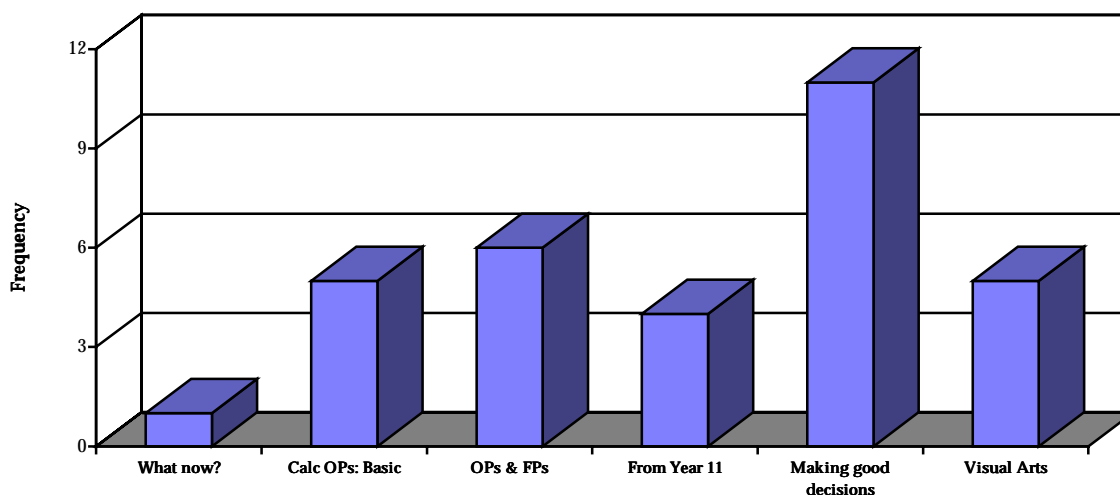


Figure 5. Number of guidance officers who read TEPA information materials and discussed them with students.



As the majority of guidance officers remembered receiving and had read the suite of TEPA information publications, very few indicated they would like to see additional TEPA information (Figure 6). However, *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* was the publication most would like to have seen (11: 29%).

Figure 6. TEPA information materials guidance officers would like to have seen.



Teachers ($n = 186$)

As can be deduced from Figure 7, many teachers who returned the questionnaire reported not receiving many of the materials. Forty (23%) teachers reported that they did not receive any TEPA resources. *SEP* was received by the highest percentage of teachers (107:58%), while *Applying for visual and performing arts courses* was received by the least (18: 10%). Overall, a lower percentage of teachers received all materials than in previous years (cf Whiteley & Field, 1997). All publications had been discussed with students, with *Calculating OPs: The basic principles, Calculation of OPs and FPs* and *Student Education Profile* being the most often discussed with students. As with other groups, *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* was recognised as being received by only a few.

As no teachers remembered seeing all the available material, it is not surprising that many responded to the question relating to publications they would like to have seen (Figure 8). All publications received a mention, particularly both publications relating to OPs. This is of particular interest as these publications were the most widely discussed with students, and were ranked by teachers as the most important publications, and by students and parents in the top three, as discussed earlier (see Table 1).

Figure 7. Number of teachers who received, read and discussed TEPA information.

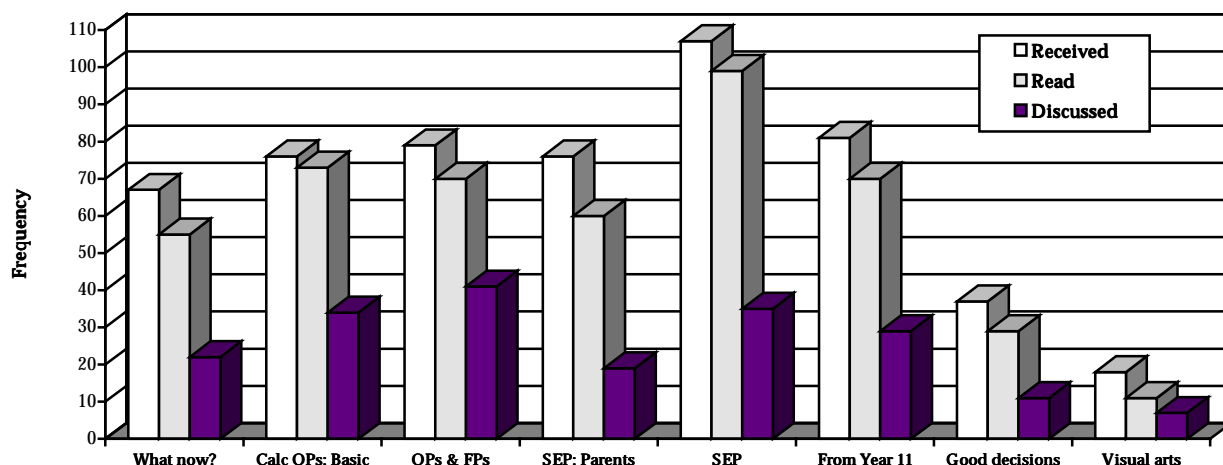
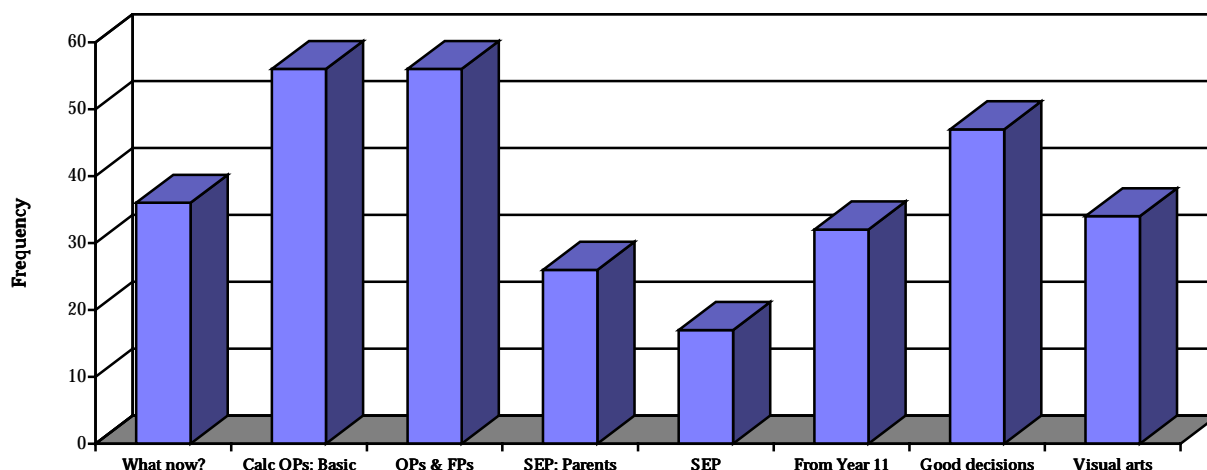


Figure 8. TEPA information materials teachers would like to have seen.



Students ($n = 124$)

From Figure 9, it is evident that student recognition of TEPA information publications varied greatly across publications. It is worthwhile to note that the majority of students who received the publications reported reading them. The publication most students remembered having received was *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* (81:65%). This was also rated in the top three important publications by students (Table 1). *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance*, which is aimed at Year 12 students, was rated as the most important document by the students (Table 1), yet it was remembered as being received by only 39 (31%). All groups reported a low recognition rate for this publication. *What now?* was reportedly received by only 48 (36%) of students, yet it was placed second in importance (Table 1). A possible reason for students' not remembering having received this publication is that it would have been distributed while they were in Year 10. Seven (6%) students reported not receiving any of the material.

Figure 9. Number of students who received and read TEPA information.

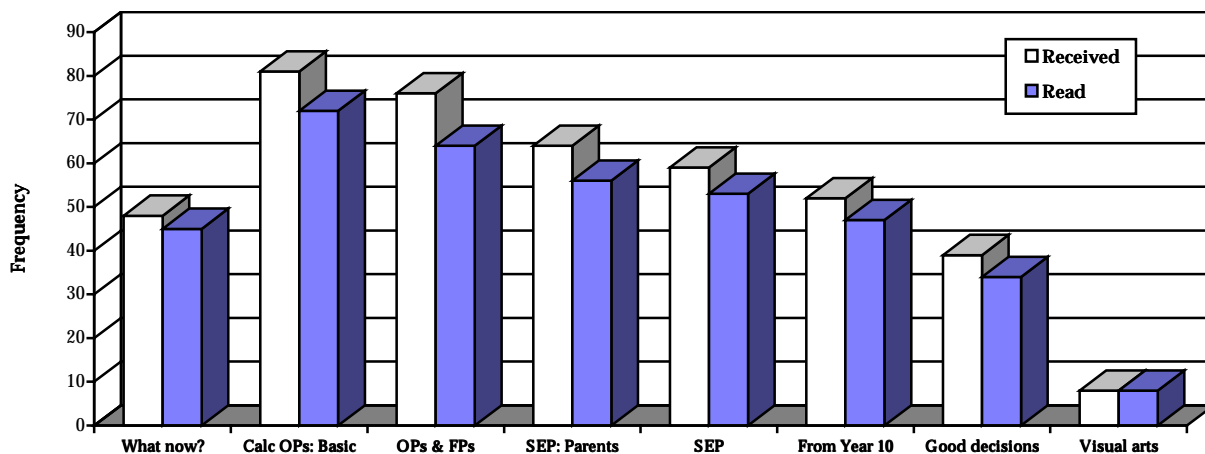
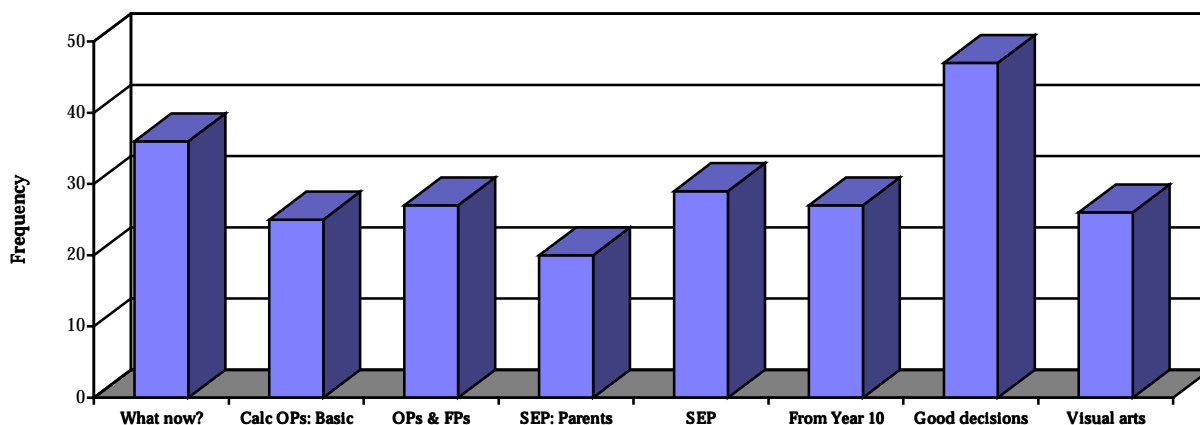


Figure 10. TEPA information materials students would like to have seen.



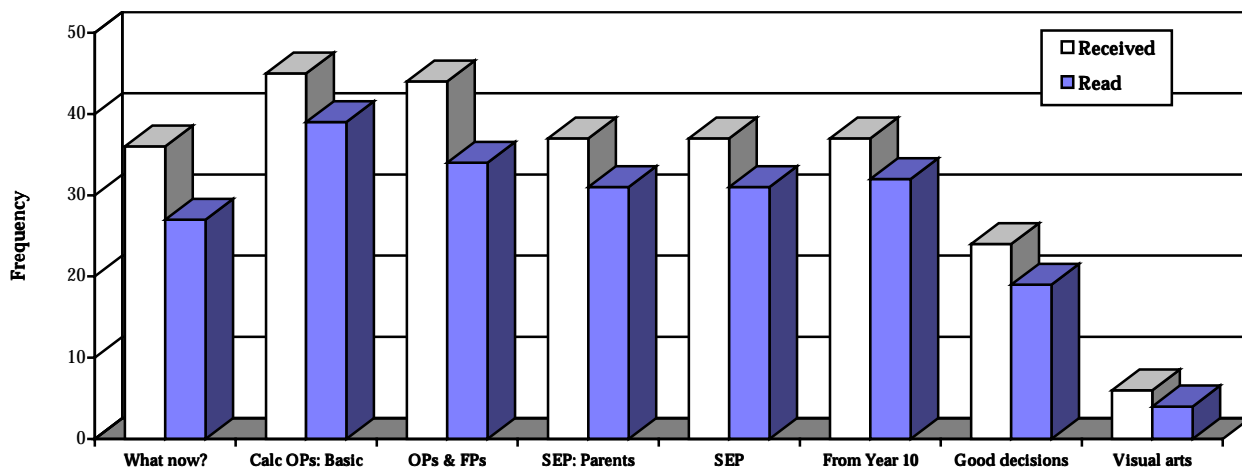
As *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* was considered a very important document and yet few remembered receiving it, it is not surprising that it was the document most students would like to have seen (47: 38%) (Figure 10). Although many students remembered receiving both publications concerning OPs, a number (25: 20% & 27: 22%) would still have liked to receive them. *What now?*, which was considered the second most important publication, was another document students would like to have seen (36: 29%). Although *Applying for visual and performing arts courses* is aimed at a smaller audience, 26 students (21%) said they would like to have received the publication.

Parents ($n = 89$)

Although *SEP: Facts for parents* was considered by parents to be an important document, it was not the material parents most frequently remembered as having received (Figure 11). Both *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* (45: 51%) and *Calculation of OPs and FPs* (44: 49%) were cited more frequently by parents as publications that they remembered receiving. *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* was also considered by the parents to be an important

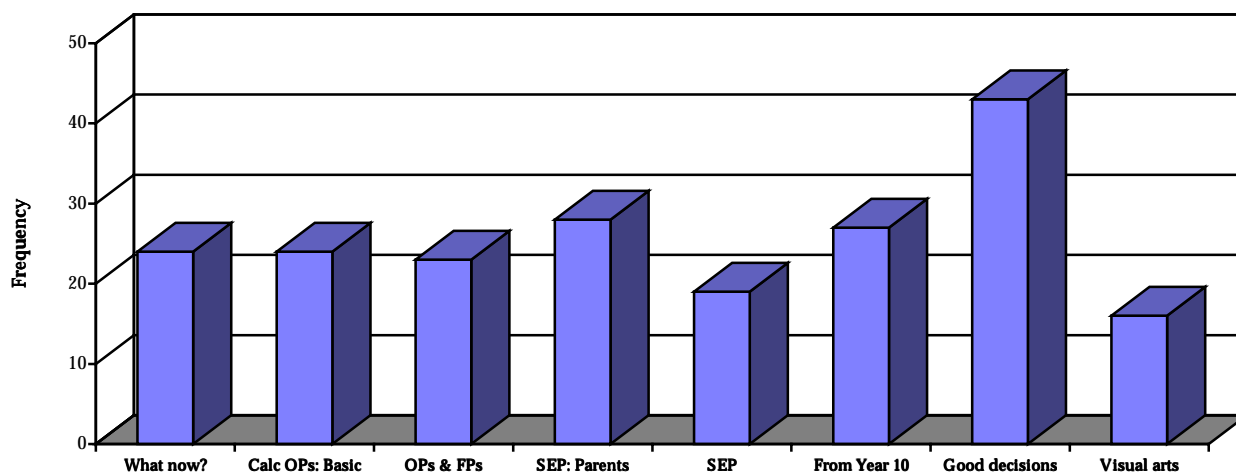
document (Table 1). Eighteen (20%) parents did not remember receiving any of the TEPA publications.

Figure 11. Number of parents who received and read TEPA information.



Many parents indicated that they would like to have seen a number of other TEPA information publications, which they did not remember receiving while their son/daughter was at school (Figure 12). The publication most parents (43: 48%) indicated that they would like to have received was *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance*.

Figure 12. TEPA information materials parents would like to have seen.



4.3 Evaluation of individual publications

What now?

What now? is a glossy brochure, intended for distribution to Year 10 students during Term 2. Twenty-four principals, 35 guidance officers, 55 teachers, 42 students and 27 parents rated the TEPA information brochure *What now?* on a number of dimensions.

As seen in Table 3, *What now?* was considered, particularly by school staff, to be an important document for students to read. Overall, the organisation and ease of understanding *What now?* were among the highest ratings reported

across all groups. Compared to other respondent groups, however, parents rated these two aspects the lowest. Students rated interest level and timeliness of the publication the lowest of all the respondents. On the whole, the ratings suggested that these stakeholder groups view the publication positively.

Table 3. Ratings of *What now?*

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Interesting	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.7
Well organised	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.8
Easy to understand	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.8
Useful in decision making	3.8	3.8	4.0	3.7	3.7
Received when needed most	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.9
Recommended students read	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.1

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

Calculating OPs: The basic principles

Calculating OPs: The basic principles is a relatively new publication (1998). It was written to supplement the more complex *Calculation of OPs and FPs*. The new publication is distributed to Year 12 students late in Term 1. Twenty-six principals, 29 guidance officers, 73 teachers, 72 students and 39 parents rated various aspects of *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* (Table 4).

Table 4. Ratings of *Calculating OPs: The basic principles*.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Interesting	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8
Well organised	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.8	3.8
Easy to understand	3.7	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.1
Useful in decision making	3.3	3.9	3.6	3.4	3.2
Received when needed most	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.5
Recommended students read	3.9	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.0

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

Parents rated ease of understanding the lowest of the respondent groups. Communicating the theory underlying OP calculations has always been a problem. As seen in Appendices B to F, several comments related to OP calculation and the need for clarification of the calculation process. Other comments suggested the colour scheme of the publications was a poor choice as it was difficult to read. When compared with the rating for ease of understanding of *Calculating OPs and FPs*, the new publication appears to be a little easier to understand according to all groups (Table 5). Some comments (Appendices B–F) also suggested that the new publication was easier to understand than *Calculation of OPs and FPs*. There was overall agreement

that *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* be recommended for student reading.

The ratings by parents and students of timeliness was a little lower than that made by the other respondent groups. In the 1998 brief evaluation of TEPA material by 103 senior schools and nine junior schools, the respondents indicated they would prefer to have this publication in February (Heirdsfield, 1999).

Calculation of OPs and FPs

Calculation of OPs and FPs is no longer automatically distributed to all schools with Year 12 students. Schools are now required to request that the publication be sent to the school. Therefore, it might be expected that fewer respondents would have received or read *Calculation of OPs and FPs* than *Calculating OPs: The basic principles*. However, this was not the case. Twenty-two principals, 28 guidance officers, 70 teachers, 64 students and 34 parents rated various aspects of this publication (similar numbers to those who rated *Calculating OPs: The basic principles*).

From Table 5 it is evident that there was very little difference in the ratings of *Calculation of OPs and FPs* across groups. All groups surveyed indicated that they found the information sheet somewhat difficult to understand, as evidenced by the low average ratings. Principals gave the lowest rating to recommending the publication for students to read. In contrast, they rated *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* higher in this regard. However, parents and students appeared to recommend both documents for student reading.

Table 5. Ratings of *Calculation of OPs and FPs*.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Interesting	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.9
Well organised	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.6	3.9
Easy to understand	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.2
Useful in decision making	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.7	3.6
Received when needed most	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.8
Recommended students read	3.2	3.6	3.6	4.1	4.1

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

SEP: Facts for parents

SEP: Facts for parents is a comprehensive information resource distributed to schools during Term 1 for the parents of Year 12 students. As part of the evaluation, 26 principals, 36 guidance officers, 60 teachers, 46 students and 33 parents rated various aspects of the TEPA publication *SEP: Facts for parents*. Students rated all aspects lower than the other groups (Table 6). In contrast parents, for whom the publication is written, were more satisfied with most aspects.

Table 6. Ratings of *SEP: Facts for parents*.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Interesting	3.9	4.0	4.2	3.4	3.9
Well organised	4.2	4.1	4.2	3.7	4.0
Easy to understand	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.8	3.9
Useful in decision making	3.4	3.7	3.9	3.3	3.7
Received when needed most	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.1	3.9
Recommended students read	3.8	4.1	4.1	3.4	4.2

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

SEP

The *SEP* brochure is produced by TEPA for Year 10 students and is distributed to schools during Term 2. As part of the evaluation, 28 principals, 37 guidance officers, 99 teachers, 52 students and 31 parents rated the TEPA publication *SEP* on a number of dimensions.

As shown in Table 7, ratings of all aspects of *SEP* were positive across most groups, particularly in relation to interest, organisation, and ease of understanding. However, students and parents tended to rate these aspects a little lower. Teachers, students and parents rated *SEP* as being less useful in decision-making than did principals and guidance officers. All groups agreed that they would recommend that students read *SEP*. This was particularly the case for guidance officers who had rated *SEP* as the most important publication (Table 1). Principals had also rated *SEP* as the most important publication (Table 1).

Table 7. Ratings of *SEP*.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Interesting	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.7	3.6
Well organised	4.4	4.7	4.3	4.0	3.8
Easy to understand	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.0	3.6
Useful in decision making	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.4	3.6
Received when needed most	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.6
Recommended students read	4.2	4.5	4.3	3.9	4.0

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

From Year 10/11 to tertiary entrance

From Year 11 to tertiary entrance is a large, detailed publication that is distributed during Term 1 for Year 11 students. This document superseded *From Year 10 to tertiary entrance* which was also intended for the Year 11

audience but, because of the title, was sometimes distributed to Year 10 students. To avoid confusion, the name was changed. As part of the evaluation, 19 principals, 31 guidance officers and 70 teachers rated a number of aspects of *From Year 11 to tertiary entrance* and 47 students and 32 parents rated aspects of *From Year 10 to tertiary entrance*.

Ratings of all aspects of *From Year 10/11 to tertiary entrance* were positive for all groups, with slightly lower average ratings made by students (Table 8). However, all groups agreed it was an important document for students to read. This was reflected in the individual group rankings of the publications (Table 1). Guidance officers, teachers, and parents included *From Year 10/11 to tertiary entrance* in their top three ranking. Students and parents were slightly less likely to indicate that the publication was useful in decision making.

A number of comments (Appendices A–F) indicated that the publication is also needed in Year 10. Schools often issue this publication to Year 10s (to coincide with subject selection) as well as to Year 11s (Heirdsfield, 1999).

Table 8. Ratings of *From Year 10/11 to tertiary entrance*.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Interesting	4.2	4.2	4.0	3.7	3.8
Well organised	4.3	4.4	4.2	3.8	4.0
Easy to understand	4.4	4.3	4.1	3.8	3.9
Useful in decision making	4.2	4.3	4.0	3.8	3.7
Received when needed most	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.2
Recommended students read	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.2

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

Making good decisions on tertiary entrance

The TEPA publication *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* is an information sheet distributed to schools in Term 2 for Year 12 students. Apart from *Applying for visual and performing arts courses* (which is aimed at a particular audience), *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* was the publication that was least remembered as received. Yet the students rated it as the most important publication. Further, it was the publication that many respondents wished they had received (see Figures 3, 6, 8, 10, 12). As part of the evaluation, 14 principals, 21 guidance officers, 29 teachers, 33 students and 19 parents rated *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* on a number of dimensions.

All groups rated most aspects favourably (Table 9). However, principals and parents rated timeliness lower than other groups. Guidance officers rated *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance* as more useful in decision making than other groups who completed the survey. Parents were somewhat less positive than other groups when asked if they received the publication when

they needed it most. Again, despite a range of ratings, all groups agreed that they would recommend that students read *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance*.

Table 9. Ratings of *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance*.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Interesting	4.0	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.9
Well organised	4.0	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.1
Easy to understand	3.9	4.1	4.0	4.1	3.8
Useful in decision making	4.2	4.3	4.0	4.3	3.9
Received when needed most	3.7	4.1	4.1	4.2	3.3
Recommended students read	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3

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

Applying for visual and performing arts courses

Applying for visual and performing arts courses is a booklet prepared by TEPA and distributed to schools for Year 12 students who have demonstrated an interest in the visual or performing arts. Therefore, it is expected that a smaller number of respondents would have received, read, and found the publication relevant. As part of the evaluation, nine principals, 33 guidance officers, 11 teachers, seven students, and four parents rated a number of aspects of the publication *Applying for visual and performing arts courses* (Table 10). It should be noted that the small numbers of ratings made in relation to this publication allow for limited comparisons to be made across groups, and averages cannot be considered meaningful in the case of parents, students and principals.

Table 10. Ratings of *Applying for visual and performing arts courses*.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Interesting	3.9	4.0	4.3	3.7	3.3
Well organised	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.1	3.3
Easy to understand	3.7	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.3
Useful in decision making	3.8	4.1	4.1	3.9	3.3
Received when needed most	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.3
Recommended students read	3.0	3.2	3.6	3.9	2.7

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

As shown in Table 10, ratings of most aspects of the publication by principals, guidance officers, teachers and students were favourable. As only four parents responded ratings by parents are not able to be generalised.

TEPA Internet site

Very few respondents indicated that they had accessed the TEPA Internet site (Table 11). Comments particularly from parents and students indicated they

were unaware of its existence (Appendices E and F). Those who had viewed the site generally agreed it was useful. There were several suggestions to advertise the site.

Table 11. Access and usefulness of TEPA Internet site.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students	Parents
Accessed	1	3	7	3	9
Useful	1	2	6	2	7

4.4

Evaluation of individual publications – comparison with the 1997 evaluation

In the 1997 evaluation (Whiteley & Field, 1997), only the ratings for publications that had been ranked in the individual respondents' top three were included in the analysis of the publication ratings across the dimensions. For comparability, only the three ranked as part of the 1999 evaluation have been included in the following analyses. Where numbers varied greatly from the 1997 evaluation, results have not been reported. This is the case for some respondent groups for some publications. This is also the case for all the respondent groups for the following publications: *Calculation of OPs and FPs, From Year 10/11 to tertiary education*, and *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance*. Further, as few respondents had ranked *Visual and performing arts courses* in their top three, the data for this publication has not been reported.

What now?

Thirteen principals, 15 guidance officers, 31 teachers, 24 students and 14 parents ranked *What now?* in their top three and rated it on a number of dimensions.

As seen in Table 12, *What now?* was considered to be an important document for students to read. When compared with the results of the 1997 evaluation, only the responses from guidance officers and students can be compared because of similar numbers responding. Student responses remain fairly consistent. Guidance officer responses indicate more satisfaction with all aspects compared with those from students.

Table 12. 1999 Ratings of *What now?*

	Guidance officers	Students
Interesting	4.0	3.6
Well organised	4.3	4.0
Easy to understand	4.1	4.0
Useful in decision making	3.9	3.8
Received when needed most	3.5	3.4
Recommended students read	4.3	4.1

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

SEP: Facts for parents

Fourteen principals, 17 guidance officers, 31 teachers, 15 students and 18 parents ranked *SEP: Facts for parents* in their top three and rated various aspects of the TEPA publication *SEP: Facts for parents*.

The students' ratings were the lowest of all the respondent groups for every aspect (Table 13). In contrast, parents for whom the publication is written were more satisfied with most aspects. Overall, the ratings are similar to those in the 1997 survey.

Table 13. 1999 Ratings of *SEP: Facts for parents*.

	Principals	Guidance officers	Teachers	Students
Interesting	3.9	3.9	4.4	3.3
Well organised	4.2	4.1	4.4	3.6
Easy to understand	4.2	4.1	4.1	3.7
Useful in decision making	3.4	3.7	4.1	3.1
Received when needed most	3.7	3.9	4.1	2.9
Recommended students read	3.9	4.1	4.3	3.3

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

SEP

Seventeen principals, 19 guidance officers, 42 teachers, 21 students and 12 parents rated the TEPA publication *SEP* on a number of dimensions.

As shown in Table 14, ratings of *SEP* were positive, with principals being particularly satisfied with the publication. In comparison with 1997 ratings, both groups indicated an increase in ratings across all aspects.

Table 14. 1999 Ratings of *SEP*.

	Principals	Teachers
Interesting	4.5	4.1
Well organised	4.7	4.4
Easy to understand	4.7	4.3
Useful in decision making	4.3	4.0
Received when needed most	4.4	3.9
Recommended students read	4.7	4.5

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

4.5 Suggestions from respondents

All groups with the exception of the principals took the time to provide relatively detailed suggestions about TEPA information materials and tertiary entrance information in general. These comments have been categorised separately for each of the groups and form Appendices B to F. Some of the comments may fall in more than one category but for the purposes of this analysis, they are presented in one category only. All groups commented on the complexity of the information and the need for improved visual appeal. Parents and students also requested more information regarding university/TAFE life (although it could be questioned whether this is part of TEPA's legislated brief).

Principals

Few principals offered suggestions for information material (Appendix B). Apart from praise for TEPA material, others indicated that they felt that students in Year 10 needed more information before subject selection, and some material is in need of modification.

Guidance officers

As with principals, guidance officers also suggested distributing *From Year 11 to tertiary entrance* to Year 10 students to help them make decisions regarding subject selection for senior schooling (Appendix C). Some guidance officers commented on the excellent quality of the material. There were also recommendations to simplify and reduce the number of the publications. As guidance officers do not necessarily receive the publications some suggested that extra copies be sent to schools for distribution to school staff specifically. Additional comments raised by guidance officers related to the need for more pathways information for students, especially with respect to OP-ineligible students and entry to tertiary institutions. Some guidance officers requested additional information on visual and performing arts courses, and other specific subject areas, private providers, and vocational education. Other recommendations included upgrading or producing videos.

Teachers

As with guidance officers, but to a greater extent, few teachers receive the materials (Appendix D). As would be anticipated, there were requests for additional copies for school staff. Comments relating to content included recommendations to present the information in a clear and concise manner, and to make it more visually appealing. Teachers also commented on the need for more information for Year 10s. Teachers requested additional information material on alternative pathways, VET access, non-OP entry, and dispelling misconceptions.

Students

Students' comments related to ease of understanding, visual appeal, and OP-ineligible pathways (Appendix E). Many students stated that the information was not accessible due to perceived distribution problems, and much of the material had not been received. As was the case with all groups, students also recommended that more material be available to students in Year 10. Students highlighted the need for further clarification of the calculation of OPs and the role of the QCS Test. Requests were made for more information in relation to university or TAFE life; for instance, costs, courses at different universities, residential accommodation, assessment, how much work is required, and what to expect. One student also suggested publishing information on every study area, similar to *Applying for visual and performing arts courses*. There were several references to the lack of awareness of the TEPA Internet site.

Parents

As was the case with other groups, parents made a number of suggestions in relation to the complexity of the content, distribution problems, and the need for more material in Year 10 (Appendix F). To overcome distribution problems, some parents suggested mailing the material directly to the parents, advertising in the school newsletter, and mailing a list of the publications to parents. Other, more general suggestions for information that should be provided to students and parents related to university, availability of scholarships, pathways, and dispelling misconceptions.

5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Perceptions of TEPA information materials

Overall, individual publication ratings made by respondents indicated they were satisfied with the range and quality of information materials provided by TEPA. Along with suggestions for alterations, reformatting and additions, many respondents detailed positive comments about the entire suite of publications. Based on both the ratings and written comments, some changes could be considered to improve future publications.

What now?

What now? was rated in the top three by principals, teachers, and students. All groups quite strongly recommend that students read the publication (Table 3). Recognition of this publication was fair across all groups. Overall, perceptions were positive, although students were most critical of timeliness. The most positive aspects overall appear to be the organisation and ease of understanding. A suggestion for improvement was the inclusion of information concerning school-based apprenticeships.

Calculating OPs: The basic principles

As seen from the comments in Appendices B to F, OP calculation is an important issue for all groups of respondents. It is not surprising then that *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* was ranked in the top three of importance by teachers, students and parents. Recognition of this publication was reasonable to high across all groups. From both the comments (Appendices B–F) and ratings (Table 4), it can be seen that perceptions indicated the importance of this publication, but also the difficulty with understanding the topic.

Calculating OPs: The basic principles replaced the more complex *Calculation of OPs and FPs* (although this publication is still available on request). Ratings indicated a general agreement that the new publication was either easier or the same to understand. Overall the new publication received higher ratings than the previous one. *Calculating OPs: The basic principles* was recognised by the majority of respondents as having been received. Some comments (Appendix D) suggested that a better choice of graphics and colour scheme be used in future publications.

Calculation of OPs and FPs

This publication was reasonably well recognised, except among teachers. All groups indicated that they did not find the material easy to understand. However, students and parents still considered it an important document for students to read (Table 4). It should be noted that literature on OP calculation has been an issue raised in a number of previous evaluations. Although TEPA endeavours to improve the situation by publishing additional and more easily understood material, further investigation in this area is warranted.

SEP: Facts for parents

SEP: Facts for parents was rated in the top three by parents, principals and guidance officers (Table 1). Overall parents ranked aspects of the publication favourably. Interestingly, students were more critical of the publication than any other group and ranked aspects very low compared with the other groups. There was one suggestion by a teacher that the language in *SEP: Facts for parents* is too difficult for parents to understand (Appendix D). Further, one guidance officer suggested that the publication is “generally too long” (Appendix C).

SEP

Many teachers reported not receiving any TEPA material (40: 22%). However, *SEP* was the publication the highest percentage of teachers remembered receiving. Both principals and guidance officers ranked the publication as the most important (Table 1).

From Year 10/11 to tertiary entrance

This publication was ranked among the top three by guidance officers, teachers, and parents. Further, all groups agreed it was an important document for students to read. Guidance officers, principals, and students particularly indicated that the publication is useful in decision making. Students and parents did not agree as strongly. Overall perceptions of the publication were positive.

Specific comments from principals and guidance officers (Appendices B and C) indicated that the publication is also useful for Year 10s. More general comments from respondents from all groups suggested that more material needs to be available for Year 10 decision making.

Making good decisions on tertiary entrance

Making good decisions on tertiary entrance was one publication a significant proportion of groups had not seen (the other one was *Applying for visual and performing arts courses*). A number of principals (8: 27%) indicated that they had not received *Making good decisions on tertiary entrance*. However, only 64 percent of those who received the publication actually read it (Figure 2). This is a little disconcerting as it was ranked as number one in importance by the students (Table 1). Looking at the ratings by all the respondent groups, those who had received and read it rated most aspects favourably. The exception was the rating of timeliness by principals and parents, particularly parents (Table 9).

One possible reason for respondents believing they did not receive the publication is that the title of the publication is actually *Information sheet*. This is printed in bold dark font and stands out as the title of the publication. The words, “Making good decisions on tertiary entrance” are printed in a smaller lighter font underneath, and are not obvious. This problem may be rectified now as the words “INFORMATION SHEET” no longer appear, and the title “MAKING GOOD DECISIONS ON TERTIARY ENTRANCE” is now prominent.

Applying for visual and performing arts courses

All groups indicated that this publication was least well recognised. As this publication is intended for a particular client group, it was not perceived as being essential or sought after by the majority of respondents. The exception was principals who indicated that this was the publication they would most liked to have seen (Figure 3).

Because of the small number of respondents who rated the publication, little can be inferred about the perceptions from the averages (Table 10). However, it appears that most respondents who have read it consider it favourably.

TEPA Internet site

Although the Internet site has been available for approximately two years, very few respondents indicated that they had accessed it or even knew of its existence. Representatives from all groups suggested advertising the existence of the site. Those who had accessed it generally agreed that it was useful.

Other comments included a suggestion for more information on the QCS Test and calculating OPs and FPs, lack of Internet access and training to access the Internet, and restriction on access within schools to the site.

5.2 General respondent comments

Overall, ratings made by all respondent groups indicated they were satisfied with the information material provided by TEPA. Some respondents documented positive comments about the entire suite of TEPA materials. Other comments related to distribution problems, timing, and quality and quantity of information. Further suggestions included simplifying some information, providing more detail for some, and supplying additional information. As in the past, parents and students were more critical of the publications than other groups. As these are the groups for which the publications are mainly intended this might require attention.

There is an ongoing problem with distribution of material to the appropriate stakeholders. Guidance officers and teachers do not necessarily receive the information material. Other school personnel, such as Year 12 coordinators, often receive the publications rather than the guidance officers. However, guidance officers still appear to make the effort to read the information, even if it is not distributed to them (Figures 4 & 5). Although many teachers reported receiving very little of the material, when they did receive the information, they tended to read it. Forty (23%) teachers indicated that they had not received any TEPA information material. Suggestions to remedy this included mailing extra copies of publications for teachers and guidance officers; distributing a brochure listing the available publications and time of distribution (similar to the one already mailed to principals) for teachers, parents, students, etc; and mailing publications directly to parents.

Some respondents suggested including additional information in the current publications or publishing additional information in new ones. Some requested additional information included more specific area materials (like visual and performing arts), school-based apprenticeships, non-OP entry, VET access, alternative post-secondary pathways, more specific and 'easy-to-follow' information regarding OP calculation, preparation for university life, subject selection, private providers, overseas study, video on calculation of OPs, more information on alternative pathways, and dispelling myths (e.g. subject weightings). Issues relating to incorporation of more material covering VET, OP-ineligible and alternative pathways, have been the basis for a range of recommendations for TEPA in previous surveys. Some of these issues may be

addressed in the new teacher training module, *The Student Education Profile and tertiary entrance: A resource for Queensland secondary school teachers*. This module will also be available for in-service training.

A number of students voiced concerns about university life. There were requests for information about university lifestyles, location of tertiary institutions (e.g. map), transition problems, expectations (e.g. workload and assessment) while at university, and a list of professional career advisers available after completing Year 12.

Timing was another issue of importance for many respondents. There were suggestions that all the material was too late, that it should be available for Year 10s as well as Year 12s, and that the material be available before students made decisions. There was even one suggestion that Year 8s should receive some of the information! Many respondents stated that more tertiary information was essential for Year 10 students before the selection of subjects for senior studies. They felt much of the material distributed to Year 12 students (e.g. relating to OP calculation) was also relevant to Year 10s. The availability of material for Year 10 distribution requires re-evaluation.

Finally, comments relating to ease of understanding tended to suggest that simpler vocabulary could be used, information was sometimes difficult to understand (by students and parents), some publications could be more visually appealing, and that some information could be more succinctly stated. In contrast, some comments suggested that some explanations need more detail. One teacher suggested that the publications should “answer the most frequently asked questions”. This is certainly worth considering, after the relevant questions are identified.

6: RECOMMENDATIONS

Although rating of the information material was positive, suggestions regarding information material detailed aspects for improvement. As TEPA is committed to providing all stakeholder groups with comprehensive and timely information on tertiary entrance procedures and processes, there are several areas for improvement which merit consideration.

1. Advertise the existence of the TEPA Internet site; for example, mailing out a flyer and/or bookmarks for students (and possibly other groups), include Internet address on all publications, correspondence, and business cards.
2. Investigate the possibility of further simplifying information regarding the calculation of OPs and FPs. Liaise with teachers, students, and parents to determine the parameters of an OP resource kit for use in schools. This kit may comprise activity sheets, questions and answers, case studies, discussion points, etc.

3. Address Frequently Asked Questions on the Internet site and monitor the success of this initiative.
4. Investigate in greater detail why parents and students tended to be less satisfied than other groups with various aspects of the publications.
5. Include in current material or publish new material covering VET, OP-ineligible and alternative pathways information.
6. Direct Year 12 students towards appropriate information material or undertake to publish appropriate information (e.g. videos, kits, links on the TEPA Internet site).
7. Improve distribution strategies for materials and information to intended client groups.

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8: APPENDICES

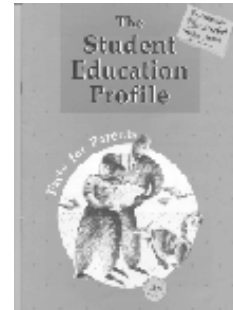
Appendix A: Publications evaluated



What now?



Calculating OPs:
The basic principles



SEP: Facts for parents



Student Education
Profiles



From Year 10 to
tertiary entrance



From Year 11 to
tertiary entrance



Making good
decisions on
tertiary entrance



Applying for
visual and
performing
arts courses



Calculation of
OPs and FPs

Appendix B: Principals' comments

Praise for TEPA publications:

- I have used all of the above to good effect.
- It's wonderful that there is so much material available for students across the spectrum. Well Done.

Content:

- Delete Publication 4 (*SEP*) — covered in 3 (*SEP: Facts for parents*) and 5 (*From Year 11 to tertiary entrance*).
- *Student Education Profile* brochure is an absolutely useless publication.
- Update video resources. The video on OPs and FPs was NOT a good one.

Distribution problems:

- Didn't receive the *Making Good Decisions on Tertiary Entrance* in 98.

Timing:

- To plan for effective use of materials, schools need to know when materials are arriving. Some simply arrive too late. A calendar of publications would be useful, and not just the month of, but the week of.
- As students select subjects for senior in Year 10 some of the information would be better then, rather than after they have chosen.
- From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance brochure received too late. Very useful in Year 10.

Additional information requested to be included in information material:

- A list of courses and previous years OP cut-offs for entry for students to use as a guide. If done over five years, trends should be visible. It would also help in counselling students and parents' sometimes unrealistic expectations.

Other:

- Doesn't suit all learners or parents. Face-to-face information/questions answered.

Appendix C: Guidance officers' comments

Praise for TEPA publications:

- The summary publications, that is *Where to now?* - are excellent for all students concerned - while the more detailed publications, for tertiary-destined students.
- I have always found the TEPA materials and resources relevant, accessible and essential in running programs for students and parents in individual sessions.
- Visual and Performing Arts - very useful for interested students.
- I think there is plenty of excellent information available for students. The difficulty is getting students to read it.

Content:

- *What Now?* is probably easily covered by the Guidance *Options after Year 10* as an OHP.
- Reduce number of publications to one or two. Parent/student information booklets - there is still too much paper.
- Making good decisions on tertiary entrance - similar information put out by OHSS (open access?).
- *SEP: Facts for Parents* is "generally too long".
- (*Calculating OPs: The Basic Principles*) Although I haven't seen this one, I think it would be extremely useful.
- *Calculating OPs and FPs*: Brain overload for many. *Basic Principles* fine.

Distribution problems:

- Perhaps one copy of all material should be expressly directed to the guidance officer.
- Would like to have received all publications.
- Additional copies of materials need to be sent to schools for staff.
- They don't come to me. They go to other departments.

Timing:

- Would prefer to use *From Year 11 to Tertiary Entrance* with Year 10 students.
- I also liked the Year 10s and parents to get the *Year 10 to Tertiary* to help decision on subject selection. Year 11 is too late.
- Please make *From Year 10 to tertiary entrance* available to students in Years 8 and 10. It would make their planning and goal setting much more effective.

Additional information requested to be included in information material:

- Explanations of pathways and calculations of ranks for non-OPs.
- May need some more specific area materials (e.g. visual arts) to include other areas.
- THE ARTS - information on private providers.
- Would like more information about visual arts, theatre, etc. earlier - especially in relation to portfolios, performance preparation, etc.
- Workshops for teachers/students/parents by TEPA personnel on aspects of SEP.
- Upgrade the videos.

- Needs flowchart type grid to show alternative pathways - open learning/trades/conversion of VETEC units. Incorporate some of Open Access University information (sent to GOs) in booklet.
- Video (like others) on calculation of OP - clearly outlining subject implications and reasons why OP estimates can't be given.
- More information on alternative pathways for students.
- Private providers - status, procedures.
- Current changes in Vocational Ed and tertiary.
- Overseas study - how to find out about it; how to apply.

Other:

- I have not found students interested in *What Now*, the *SEP*, *Making good decisions on Tertiary Entrance* or *Applying for Visual and Performing Arts courses*.
- They said that material is stored until required.
- Re question 5 (ranking in importance): "all equally important".
- This is a new high school, so all publications are of equal merit at this stage.
- Not relevant to the current survey, but has TEPA any influence on such anomaly as requiring OP 1 for Vet Science (fixing up cats and dogs), while for humans an OP 8 (Bachelor of Science) is sufficient. Intelligence only, is a poor way to select any career.
- Please maintain funding of Year 10 version of Queensland Tertiary Courses.

Appendix D: Teachers' comments

Praise for TEPA publications:

- It would appear that the materials do their best to explain to a fairly literate group an incomprehensible system.
- Tertiary entrance information materials are very good. In my experience, students find these resources of great benefit. These are also fairly teacher friendly.

Content:

- The information is excellent but it is extremely difficult to understand. I don't know how it can be simplified even further but students don't use it because of the complexity of the publication.
- Needs to be explained in more detail.
- Too small in print size. Too 'busy' for some students to read. Need to use more simple vocab for some students.
- Many students need to have the information explained to them (even in anecdotal terms) as some students are 'swamped' with information.
- Some language very difficult for students (item 8) and parents (item 3). Some information out of date (item 7) refers to 1997!
- Make more visually appealing. Be clear and concise. Answer the most frequently asked questions.
- These publications are far too detailed as general handouts to parents and students with the exception of the SEP leaflet. They certainly need to be available for those few parents and all teachers who want/need the detail, but most people just wouldn't get through them.
- I think sometimes kids get too much. I think one publication each on options, OP and FPs, and SEP and one for parents is sufficient.
- Re question 7 (*Calculating OPs: The basic principles*): information was informative, such information isn't/can't be 'interesting'.
- Re question 5: publication 8 (*SEP: Facts for parents*), some of this is too much info for many Year 10s in Semester 2.
- Re question 7 (*Calculating OPs: The basic principles*): Trying to read the printed material with the multi-coloured and patterned background got VERY tiring - I gave up several times.
- Students and parents need simple information as to how OPs are calculated. This would reduce problems when OPs are issued at the end of Yr 12.

Distribution problems:

- Students have access to adequate published materials — it remains a school concern to distribute, publicise, explain etc.
- Individual copies to teachers.
- Have not received any.
- The information reaches the school but is not always passed on to the classroom teachers who are with the students regularly and are easily accessible to answer the queries.
- Enough copies for all staff.

- The manner in which it is sent to schools for students' retrieval could be improved. Colour coded for each year would also help, e.g. Green - 1999; blue - 2000.
- Possibly lack of info is due to it not being passed on to me from the school admin or Guidance Officer.
- None of these publications have ever come to me in my 9 years of teaching (A copy of the publications would be valuable).
- As a teacher, I have not received any of the publications.
- All of items were difficult to track down in this school and there weren't enough copies for all students.
- Need to specifically target key teachers in schools e.g. Year 11–12 coordinators, senior teachers.
- The publications seem to cover a lot of areas. I would like to read these sometime.
- Insufficient copies are currently available.
- Not enough copies were received for distribution to students and teachers.
- Have not received any personally but seen them elsewhere.
- Access.
- I have very little of the relevant information.
- We have not received copies of these because the school did not get enough! More should be sent so all staff can receive copies.
- My subject area is H&PE Yr 8 to Yr 12. I have not received any information materials regarding TEPA.
- This year I teach years 8 to 10. In my 3 years in High School I have not seen the publications. I have received maybe two TEPA newsletters.
- I am not familiar with any of the attached publications.
- I would like to receive TEPA's previous publications listed above in this document. Then I might be able to comment more meaningfully.
- I have not seen most of them.
- I did not complete any of the survey questions as I have never seen any of these publications. They are not available to staff not involved in QCS preparation. I would, however, like to read and obtain a copy of same.
- You seem to produce informative literature. All staff need to receive a copy of all TEPA info given out to students.

Timing:

- I think the information is quite valid and important to the students, but it reaches them far too late. There is not much point giving students information about decision making and choices when the decisions have already been made.
- Also the earlier that the students get the information, the better.

Additional information requested to be included in information material:

- Promoting non-OP entry. VET access 1064 schedules etc.
- More information regarding presentations TEPA makes to parent groups.
- I have a lot of questions from students regarding the impact of the school/subject cohort on their individual results. This topic is shied away from as it has broader school implications, i.e. school ranking, etc.
- I think the message about alternative post-secondary pathways is still not being effectively conveyed to students. Both students and parents have a very poor understanding of OP calculation despite school and BSSSS efforts to inform.

- I would like more specific examples of how individual (& students in a class) OPs are calculated.
- Alternative pathways.
- More examples of what results turn into what OPs.
- More on relative level of usefulness of senior subjects for tertiary courses. Still large numbers of students doing maths/science courses that are relatively useless for the courses they intend to go into.
- Students need information about whether some subjects lead to better OPs and whether poorer students in their year level will cause them to receive a lower OP.
- A simple explanation of how SAI and QCST => OP. No one seems to understand at a level which can be explained to students and parents.
- Students and teachers need clear, up-to-date, reliable information on prerequisites. This area is becoming a maze of contradictions.
- Uni taste details.

Other:

- This school has a full-time Guidance Officer that handles the Year 12 applications and does an excellent job at documenting information.
- I browse through it — apply it only when dealing specifically with students when these forms are given out.
- I know how to access the material if I choose to use it.
- I believe that I have a reasonable knowledge of tertiary entrance in Queensland but do not recall reading any publications in the last couple of years. Within the school we have a careers person to handle student enquiries.
- They certainly need the detail but aren't very good at reading it. More useful would be a series of short leaflets such as the SEP one, with important data presented attractively in point form for general distribution, and overheads/teaching materials suitable for counsellors, and life skills, etc., lessons, parent evenings, etc., to be made available which convey more detail. A few booklets would then be available on request for really interested people.

Appendix E: Students' comments

Praise for TEPA publications:

- I found the information important in assisting to understand the options of tertiary entrances and helped in making pleasing options.
- The information was well put together and very helpful. Thank you for putting the effort into making the materials.
- Very useful information.
- I think that the information provided by TEPA currently is adequate.
- The information received throughout the year continuously helped to make or change decisions about future decisions in tertiary or work. Also the facts about OPs helped to understand how they are calculated. Thanks.

Content:

- Needs to be an easy to follow summary of how important OPs really are & what they are used for. Also more clearly outline the importance of picking prerequisite subjects for uni.
- There is a lot of waffle, you could condense the information a lot. It makes it more attractive to some students.
- Make it more easy to understand, and include only what needs to be included.
- Some of the information was so confusing, the info should be simpler to understand and explained in greater detail.
- It was too focused on OPs and university entrance, not fully explaining TAFE entrances and non-OP eligibility.
- Most students are not aware of what is on offer. I myself did not realise that there are courses available for people who get low OPs.
- Make information clearer and more well known (e.g. I did not know there was a TEPA web site).
- If possible, explain better the process in calculating OPs and FPs. I read it 2-3 times thoroughly and still didn't fully understand.
- I felt that there wasn't enough easy to understand information that was directed towards parents. Information that contained basic/relevant facts.
- I did not receive much information. My choices for university were thus badly made. As a result I obtained an OP of 11 but did not get any offers. I did not understand the whole process.
- Many of the students need a basic overview, perhaps printed in bold on the cover (rather than the space, consuming geometric patterns etc.) of the publication. When making a decision the least amount of distraction is needed.

Distribution problems:

- It is disappointing that the information was not distributed to everyone — OPs and tertiary entrance may have been better understood if this was the case.
- Make sure that all materials reach all schools and then to the students.
- The person/s designated to distribute information should make students aware of the importance of keeping such things (especially in Grade 10).
- I never received or was aware of the materials.
- More easily accessed.

- I didn't receive even the majority of the publications. Possibly needs a better method of getting them to the students when needed, or even earlier.
- I cannot recall any tertiary entrance information materials provided for me.
- A calendar that shows when all events occur, i.e. OPs distributed, QTAC applications sent in, etc.
- Make sure all publications are received by students.
- Most of the publications I did not receive and those I did were not very relevant at the time. It would have been useful to have had the visual and performing arts booklet before last term of 98 as well.
- Hand all out at start of school year and help students reach their desired aim. Even if they have a low OP.
- Teachers need to make students more aware that it's there and how to go about using it best.
- Unfortunately the distribution of these materials is somewhat overlooked; sure plenty are printed and plenty of those distributed but usually to schools who give them at times when perhaps it is not obvious to students that the information was relevant.
- Tertiary entrance information should be posted directly to homes.
- None of the publications looks familiar.
- Do not remember receiving.

Timing:

- Information about Year 11 & 12 should be available to interested students in Year 10 from Semester 2 onwards.
- The information should be given in Grade 10 then again in Year 12.
- Information needs to be received earlier and shown more. The full realisation of the importance was never there.
- Maybe direct references and details about specific universities need to be distributed in Year 10 (not Year 11 and 12).

Additional information requested to be included in information material:

- List of contacts of professional career advisers outside the school to help us after Year 12, as the school advisers are then of no use.
- A compulsory (for schools) handout that all students receive upon subject selection stating that 5 Board subjects must be done to go to university. Interstate students are not always told this.
- TEPA Internet site should be advertised in manuals better. My awareness of such a site was limited.
- The locations of tertiary institutions, perhaps a map indicating their whereabouts in state/country.
- I think for more satisfaction regarding the information a little inside information on the actual university lifestyles would be a good benefit, e.g. the activities one can get up to while receiving their education - it is a little daunting going into an unknown world!
- An example of an actual schedule/timetable. A video can assist this situation. A video of a student's life/study/leisure, etc.
- More guidance on choosing a career to study.
- Explain to students exactly what university is like as I found the transition intimidating.
- Give ideas about what SAIs are needed to get a certain overall position.

- I think that they need to know that it's (university) not one big party, it requires a lot of work especially if you want to do well, because before I started a lot of people told me it was so easy and all party.
- Give examples and case studies to show the students how to work out an OP if they were a teacher or from TEPA.
- The way in which people work out the ranking order 200-400 and how this will affect your OP.
- Students need to be informed about second round offers and changing preferences.
- How they are assessed in uni/tertiary education, how much work is involved.
- Perhaps contact details of specific courses/unis/TAFEs.
- People not knowing what to do or want to do ? BA, for its diversity.
- More information regarding the different universities and their relevant entry scores to various courses would have been useful.
- More information about deferment and what to expect once in university, i.e. how it differs from school routine, etc.
- More should be given to Year 10s in terms of real options after Year 12, and what subjects have to be taken or don't have to be taken in order to get into subjects (i.e. relevance of subjects to courses).
- The costs of university => not just monetary (although very important, remember to include every one) but the mental and physical costs as well. Stress that there are plenty of options available.
- More precise university course prerequisites matched in subjects taken.
- Examples of students' marks at school and QCS result with the OP they received. So students have an idea of what OP they get.
- There needs to be more information about QCS, actually getting into university, university preparation booklets, and more helpful information in general!
- More information for parents (OP, FP, etc.). My parents still didn't understand after reading the information I gave them. Perhaps this could be earlier than mid Year 12.
- Information on QTAC. Information on procedure about OPs and course information, etc.
- How many positions are available at the start of the year and lower OP levels.
- More information needs to be provided regarding actual subject selection and university activities before you begin the process.
- There is not enough information supplied to help you make the right decision the first time. It would be excellent if you had a publication on every study area (i.e. the QTAC book) and like the publication 7. QTAC doesn't supply enough information either nor do the universities.
- I think if a student has a particular area they want to know about, e.g. Tourism, there should be a hotline they could ring or something to get information sent to them whatever they want to know. NOT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO THE INTERNET!
- More information on how a student can UPGRADE if they did not or do not receive the OP they had hoped for.
- I would have liked more information about different universities and their courses. I did not think that the *Calculation of OPs and FPs* was very clear.
- I found many students still in the dark about how their results were calculated and what their best options would subsequently be.
- More easily understood information on OPs, what to expect, how calculated, how to achieve the best results, etc.
- The cost (of university).

- Prices of courses and residential accommodations. Costs need to be advertised so as to know how much needed to pay in advance.
- More information about field positions and how the students' marks and QCS really affect the OP.
- I would like to see the mathematical equations used to calculate OPs applied to prior results as a guide.
- More detailed information from the university about timetables and procedures.
- More information on tertiary entrance and decision making.
- Maybe more emphasis on what OP the students may receive. Even though it is hard to tell, it would be a great help when selecting courses or even considering TAFE. Also - what to expect in university or TAFE - to see if it could be what you want.
- More importance on the QCS and calculating OPs and FPs.

Other:

- I don't know anyone, including teachers, who understands how OPs are calculated - I don't really trust the system.
- Did not know of Internet site existence. Do not have local access.
- Information on "why I need to study/attend tertiary institutions".
- Most of my information came from teachers.
- Perhaps, on our Tertiary Entrance Statement, we could have our SAIs listed for each subject as we did not know the exact number. Also our grade for each QCS Paper would be nice.
- I did not know that I would only be offered my first preference (I thought whichever ones I was good enough for I would be offered).
- Make the material more available during 11 and 12. Have a representative come to school and explain TEPA's objectives and goals concerning informing 11 and 12 students.
- The web site was never made available to us (i.e. never given) if it had I would have looked at it.
- During my high school life, I was given very little in any assistance, that includes from guidance officers, leaflets, etc. I was very dissatisfied with the information I received, especially throughout Year 12.
- Didn't know it (TEPA Internet site) existed.
- The school at which I attended in Year 10 didn't continue on to Year 11 and 12. Could this account for the information I didn't receive?
- All the leaflets seemed the same and teachers just handed them out routinely with no reference or comment about them.
- I do think that students and parents need to receive these materials. However, it isn't enough. I found (and my parents) that the talks we were given about this important information were often vague, or hard to understand. The brochures did help clarify problems however.
- I think a more solid relationship with universities and TAFE counsellors would ensure correct, clear and concise information.
- I did not know that there was a TEPA website, other wise I would have most probably accessed it.
- More information on individual courses so that it is easier to compare and decide on the most interesting course for the individual.
- Unfortunately the school I attended had a rather strict Librarian in control of the computers, use was permitted for immediate school work only, however it is my

understanding (from hearsay) that the site (if I regard the correct one) was quite useful.

- Information that we were supplied with was limited compared to the range available. Information supplied as a video would have saved numerous amounts of paper. One video to one school of each book rather than one book to one student. One large waste.
- Obtain relevant paperwork regarding acceptance very early to facilitate preparation, welfare, etc.
- I didn't know there was an Internet site.
- While a tertiary degree does not require Maths B, students who haven't done it will be required to do a maths in first year to catch up.

Appendix F: Parents' comments

Praise for TEPA publications:

- They are in general quite satisfactory for a complicated system.

Content:

- Availability of all materials perhaps less publications and information put more succinctly.
- We found it quite difficult to follow and it must be ambiguous for teachers also because many teachers gave us differing opinions.
- The process appears too complex to be understood by the majority of parents - let alone the students.
- I feel for some of us parents some more very basic material needs to be made available. And to be put right as to whether taking any science subjects in Year 11 and 12 is advantageous or not.
- Could the material be written in simpler English with easy to follow graphs.
- We find information often too complicated to understand and collate. As parents of a 1998 Year 12 student we still find the system a minefield and feel unable to advise our children confidently.

Distribution problems:

- Parents need to be informed that these publications are available, through the school newsletter.
- It would have been nice to receive some sort of information so as to allow comment.
- Information brochures should be mailed directly to the home so student and parent can jointly discuss/analyse content and information.
- If information is circulated via students parents may never see it. The SEP that I read was via a parent conference NOT school.
- As parents much of the material that came home was not seen by us as our son saw the choice of uni courses as his. We only found out by accident that some booklet had come home.
- Make them more available.
- I feel that the students' parents should receive copies of all the publications mentioned in an envelope addressed to them. Children quite often forget or choose not to show their parents information material.
- As I have never had the opportunity to even sight the material in question I am not in a position to comment.
- I think you should improve the distribution of your information material.
- We did not feel that the materials were readily available - they were only provided on request for further information.
- Posting materials directly to parents as well as giving them to students or distribution of a comprehensive package to parents via school.
- A letter should be sent to all parents (well in advance) listing the available publications. If you don't know they exist, you don't know to ask for them. Until this survey, I knew nothing of these publications.
- Make a list of publications available. Get into all schools.

Timing:

- Provide information at the end of Year 10 onwards.
- It would be good if information was given in grade 10 instead of grade 12 when it's too late to change subject decisions.
- Students should be told about OPs in grade 10.
- I had to read the magazines when decisions regarding my son's choices and careers were too far advanced to change (if needed). Where were they when they were needed the most?
- Many of the materials were issued at the end of Year 10. For some this was applicable but others would have been of more benefit if issued at the end of Year 12, as many students misplaced or lost potentially valuable information.
- At the school my child didn't receive information on time. Whether that was the responsibility of the TEPA or the Career Guidance Officer I'm not sure.

Additional information requested to be included in information material:

- The importance of 4 semesters mark on the OP score.
- Myself and my wife did not attend any tertiary institutions and as such were at a loss when our daughter was unable to/not accepted for her desired course. Options in this type of situation would have been helpful, if such a publication exists.
- What happens with special considerations which have no feedback to students or parents re outcomes of applications!?
- Please keep dispelling myths, e.g. about subject value and supposed weightings in OP calculation to help parents avoid poor decision making on false premises.
- I think the students in general need to be made more aware of the advantages of going to e.g. TAFE and how it can help them get to university or college if their initial OP is not as high as originally thought.
- Limited information on course contents/subjects/units etc. or the cost of courses.
- Help in deciding if you are ready for tertiary education.
- Brief and to the point. More informative. Grade 10s need to be given more help. Alternatives to tertiary study need to be outlined.
- Possibility for scholarships for country students.
- Each tertiary institute has different procedures and needs to be more specific as to the subjects and their contents within a course.

Other:

- I can't remember detail in specific publications but several certainly appear familiar. Overall, I feel that the school provided ample opportunity for those who were interested to get plenty of information on Tertiary Entrance Procedures.
- I had to trust my son's decisions. His most helpful information came from a staff member at the facility he wanted to access. His sister (a third year university student) took him to Queensland University, so he could get some help.
- The information given is reasonable but I feel the whole OP set-up is a farce. There is no consistency with results, particularly in small schools. It doesn't matter what is written if in reality discrepancies occur. Intelligent students quickly realise the faults in the system.
- This survey is a bit late. I have probably read the other booklets but cannot remember the details of them to properly answer the criteria given. Thank you.

- There is so much emphasis on TE after Year 10 that students who do not intend/do not think they are able to qualify (especially boys) can become disheartened and feel school is irrelevant to real life or to them.
- Children seem to access material when needed. They tend to choose an institution initially, then a course.
- Better aptitude testing.
- Six months after the event is a bit late to ask someone to comment on the relevance of these publications etc. I cannot honestly answer any of the questions – life has gone on and it is all behind me and books like these are not something I have chosen to remember or dwell on.
- Not missing out on a university place if their OP wasn't good enough – mention about 2nd round offers or the fact that the universities lower scores to get 'backsides on seats'. Many worry unnecessarily that they'll miss out.
- Students do not give the materials a second thought. They are inundated with information from all directions. It was my job as a parent to read through and give advice as needed to my student. Mail the information directly to the parents ensuring it reaches the people who will read it. TEPA, QTAC, BSSSS everyone is known by initials, make it clearer who you are. What your role is. Nowhere on this form is your full title. I have to look at the reply paid envelope to find out. Students and parents come across these initials in the last few months of school and then never again. It is not obvious to everyone who you are and who is responsible for what. Make it clear.
- Most information assumes that you already have some idea of how tertiary study operates – parents of first children find it a minefield.
- We believe a more practical approach would assist for students in particular who are not academically high achievers, as the present system seems to have too many factors to take into account.
- Our daughter was not interested in tertiary education. She is attending a private college.
- Information materials are fine but you also need a teacher with a good knowledge of it to help the students fully understand it.
- I feel there is too much emphasis placed on entrance into university. After our son did not attain the OP he required we discovered TAFE Institutes offered some very good courses in the area he was interested in. I think TAFEs should be given more recognition.