

## EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

### SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

**Outcome:** 2

**Output Group:** 2.4 – Funding for higher education

#### **DEST Question No. E886\_04**

Senator Carr provided in writing

#### **Question:**

- a) What reports have you had from institutions about the effects of the new legislative regime – or of student perception of it – on trends in student decision-making about enrolment?
- b) Have you heard reports that a much smaller proportion of commencing students than usual have decided to defer their studies this year?
- c) Do you have information that more later-year students than expected have cut short their existing deferrals, or have decided not to defer?
- d) Have you any data or other evidence of this?
- e) What is the effect on the ground? Are universities finding that a higher percentage of offers than expected are being taken up?
- f) Have universities reported a change in deferral rates and numbers?
- g) Have universities reported to you any change in the number of students taking up, or continuing, their studies on a part-time basis? Is there a trend towards fulltime enrolment this year?
- h) Have any institutions indicated that the combined effects of these and related trends could take them over their 5% overenrolment limit?
- i) How will you deal with this problem, if it arises?
- j) Have you received information that, due to unexpected changes in student intentions, those students who might otherwise have been able to transfer from one course to another within an institution are now unable to do so, because of lack of places in the desired course?
- k) Is it the case that students who were assured, last year, that a certain academic score would guarantee them the right to change to another course are now missing out?
- l) How are universities managing this problem?
- m) Have you advised them on this? How?
- n) Are you planning to provide additional funding to cover unexpected effects of changes in student intentions?
- o) In the Additional Estimates statement released last week, you say that \$5.3 million has been set aside to allow universities to exceed their enrolment targets by 5% instead of the originally planned 2%.
- p) How have you estimated that figure? On what assumptions is it based? Would it allow all 38 universities to exceed their targets by 5%?

- q) Have you heard reports of universities having become more stringent about re-enrolment for continuing students at the end of 2003, and that this has led at some institutions to students who were tardy with their re-enrolment being excluded?
- r) Would you see a relationship between this action by universities and an uncertainty on their part about how the new legislative regime would affect the decisions made by commencing students and those made new offers for 2004?
- s) Isn't it the case that universities, in the period of selection and admissions for 2004, have faced administrative difficulties?

**Answer:**

*University admissions 2<sup>nd</sup> round offers*

- a) The Department has not received any formal reports from institutions or students about the effects of the new legislative regime on trends in student decision-making about enrolment.
- b) The Department has not received any formal reports from institutions or students stating that a much smaller proportion of commencing students than usual have decided to defer their studies this year.
- c) The Department has not received any formal reports from institutions or students stating that more later-year students than expected have cut short their existing deferrals, or have decided not to defer.
- d) We have no other data on this.
- e) Although the Department does not have information regarding the percentage of offers accepted, the information it does have from the AVCC indicates a fall in rejection rates for between 1998 and 2003. The latest AVCC estimate (2003) indicates the rejection rate for the high end UAI group to be 14 percent while the low end UAI group is 24 per cent.
- f) See response c).
- g) The Department has not received any formal reports from institutions or students regarding any change in the number of students taking up, or continuing, their studies on a part-time basis. The Department has not yet collected the data for 2004. Without the data we cannot say whether there is a trend towards fulltime enrolment this year.
- h) This issue will be discussed at Funding Agreement meetings if appropriate.
- i) The Funding Agreement negotiations begin on March 15 and continue for the following 2 months. We expect that any institution with an issue about overenrolment will discuss this at their scheduled Funding Agreement meeting.
- j) The Department has not received any formal reports from institutions or students regarding unexpected changes in student intentions and students unexpectedly transferring from one course to another within institutions.
- k) The Department has not received any formal reports from institutions or students about whether in 2003 students were assured that a certain academic score would guarantee them the right to change to another course. The Department would not normally gather such data.
- l) Universities, as independent institutions, make their own decisions on the allocation of places between various faculties and courses, and on entry standards and requirements for various programmes.
- m) The Department has not advised the Universities on this matter. See response l)

- n) The Department is not planning to provide additional funding to cover unexpected effects of changes in student intentions.
- o) The figure \$5.3 million is the fiscal expense of allowing universities to over enrol by the additional 3%.
- p) The figure is an estimate of the increased cost of extending HECS-HELP to the additional 3% of student places. The assumptions include:
- Institutions being able to exceed enrolment targets by an additional 3% from 1 January 2005;
  - Institutions over enrolling in funding clusters two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight and national priorities. These funding clusters correspond to current HECS Bands 1 and 2.
  - 60% of institutions over enrolling by the additional 3%.
- q) The Department has not received any formal reports from institutions or students regarding universities having become more stringent about re-enrolment for continuing students at the end of 2003, nor whether this has led at some institutions to students who were tardy with their re-enrolment being excluded.
- r) See response q).
- s) The Department has not received any formal reports from institutions or students regarding university administrative difficulties in the period of selection and admissions for 2004.