

Chopping and Changing

The education and training system has some great arrangements for making sure you can go from one qualification to another and from one provider to another as easily as possible. In fact, sometimes changing providers is a great thing to do. *Smart Start* reports.

TAFE to university

Many people who have finished TAFE courses can transfer 'credit' to give them a head-start in a uni degree. This is sometimes called 'advanced standing'. It's also called other stuff like 'credit transfer' or 'articulation'.

Whatever it's called, it's a great way of gaining extra skills and experience without having to repeat work.

Here's an example. You go to TAFE and gain a diploma of Blowing Noses. Then you apply to uni and they put you straight into the second year of a science degree majoring Nasal Passage Clearing.

Some people use this sort of pathway when they don't have enough marks to go to uni straight out of school; others prefer to gain a practical footing and extra experience. You'll need to contact the uni you want to study at to find out about arrangements.

Leg up to uni

TAFE pathways can help you gain entry to uni in other ways. Perhaps you need to finish your high schooling at TAFE or need to study a subject area you didn't at school. Bridging courses and tertiary preparation courses can help (see Adrian's story on page 130 for an example).

Check with your local TAFE to see what's on offer. You might gain the qualifications and marks you need, and it might also be a good way to get the study methods and skills you might be lacking. You'll also be in an environment that's quite different from either school or uni. Many universities welcome applications from students who are at TAFE studying the TPC (Tertiary Preparation Certificate) or a similar course.

TAFEs have a great range of courses that you might like to try before you go to uni or instead of going to uni. Perhaps you want to work to save up some money so you can go to a uni in another state? Maybe you can do a TAFE course part-time to keep your mind busy or to add to your skills and interests. Maybe jewellery design or auto mechanics or fine arts or public relations? Consider the options.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

You may see this term around quite a bit. Recognition of prior learning allows you to receive recognition and credit for the knowledge and skills you have gained previously, including skills gained from:

- previous study
- employment experience
- life experience.

These skills will need to meet the learning outcomes and criteria of the qualification you are looking to do. What it means is you don't have to re-learn stuff you've already learned in an informal setting.

A good example of this might be if you speak Slovene (let's say you were born in Slovenija). You'll might get RPL so you don't have to study another language which might be compulsory for your qualification in tourism. Razumeti?

Uni to TAFE

Heaps of universities have agreements with TAFEs that allow students to transfer credit from uni degrees towards TAFE qualifications. Many thousands of people go to TAFE after gaining a uni degree in order to get an industry-focused qualification. Courses might even be the requirement of an employer, or they might just give you more skills and make you more employable.

Remember, you can change between different types of providers in order to earn different qualifications, but you can also get the qualifications at the same time. You can do this simply by studying two different things at two different places – uni, TAFE, private college or whatever – at the same time.

Seeing double

DOUBLE UP

Students at some training and education providers – usually private providers and TAFEs – can achieve two qualifications in one go. They might be called something like a dual diploma.

Here's an example for someone who wants to get into tourism marketing. After a 12-month intensive study program, you can get two qualifications: a diploma of marketing management and a diploma of tourism (marketing and product development). This 'dual diploma' might provide you with the skills and knowledge to work in a marketing role in the tourism industry.

INTEGRATED QUALIFICATION

Integrated qualifications are newish and greatish. At the end of your study you will graduate with both a vocational-style qualification (maybe a diploma) and a degree.

For instance, a three-year program offered through Smart Start Campus combining university and TAFE studies. The program enables students to gain a bachelor of business studies through Sample University as well as three further nationally recognised qualifications including a diploma and advanced diploma of management and a certificate IV in business administration through Smart Start TAFE.

TAFEs or private providers usually offer these new programs in association with a partner university. Remember:

- graduation from one of the courses may be delayed until the other course is completed
- often subjects areas that have a natural combination of high-end theory with hands-on stuff work well as integrated diploma-degree programs, including stuff like IT, business and fine arts
- students can also benefit from TAFE's smaller class sizes, and practical course modules backed up by the depth of higher level theory in the last years of the uni degree, plus they can have access to a wider range of facilities and resources offered by both institutions.

If you try an integrated diploma-degree program, there may be financial savings too. Students pay the TAFE fee for the TAFE modules and the relevant uni charges for the university modules.

• For information about double degrees and double majors, see 'universities' starting on page 64

• A full list of universities that have entered into articulation arrangements is available on the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) website: www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au