

Media release – Friday 4 December 2009

For immediate release

## University preference statistics for 2010 admissions

(at 30 November 2009)

- UAC provides the following information on behalf of participating institutions.
- Please call the **institutions** on the contact numbers attached for comments.

The attached table provides a summary of preference statistics for courses offered through UAC for NSW and ACT universities including:

- a comparison of preference statistics at 30 November 2009 and 28 November 2008
- the number of applicants who actually enrolled in their offered course last year – to place the figures in context in terms of the size of the institution and its anticipated intake for 2010.

The table shows similar figures to last year. There has been an overall increase in applications and a corresponding increase in the number of preferences.

### Background information

#### *Preferences – applicants' choice*

UAC applicants can include up to nine course preferences. They can include different types of courses and different institutions – it's their choice. The order in which applicants list their preferences is crucial to their application and UAC strongly advises applicants to list their preferences in the order they would most like to receive an offer.

The course they would most like to do should go first, followed by the course they would like to do second, and so on. Preferences are considered in the order in which they are listed so applicants will receive an offer to the first preference on the list for which they are both eligible and competitive enough.

#### *Preference statistics – real or a wish*

The average number of preferences per application is five.

Year 12 applicants tend to include more preferences than other applicants, with many listing the maximum nine preferences. In many cases the courses they include as their first and second preferences are 'wishes' – courses they would really like to receive an offer for, but which, in previous years, had an ATAR cut-off higher than the ATAR they expect to achieve. They include these courses because they have nothing to lose by listing them as a preference. Cut-offs do fluctuate every year and they may get into their dream course.

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For example, each year a considerable number of applicants list medicine and law courses in their higher order preferences even though their results are below – sometimes well below – the cut-offs for those courses. Some applicants also include courses in their lower preferences they do not intend to accept if they receive an offer.

Non-Year 12 applicants tend to include fewer than nine preferences, often including only two or three preferences in their application. They appear to have more focus, most likely because they have other factors to take into account when selecting their courses – work, family and/or time commitments. Some do include nine preferences.

Overall, it is reasonable to say that all types of applicants include ‘phantom’ preferences at the top and the bottom of their list of course preferences.

### ***Preference statistics – a static picture of a dynamic situation***

Applicants can change their preferences as often as they wish – and often do. The preference statistics in the attached table show the picture at 30 November 2009. The numbers change daily, and if we took a snapshot on a different day, the numbers would be different.

All applicants can change their preferences at any time until Wednesday 6 January 2010 for inclusion in Main Round offers.

Most preference changes happen after the release of the ATAR. This is when Year 12 applicants can re-evaluate their preferences for the Main Round. This year, NSW HSC students receive their ATARs on Thursday 17 December. UAC expects about 20 000 of these students to change their preferences after receiving their ATAR based on figures from previous years.

Knowing their ATAR and looking at ATAR cut-offs from previous years, they review and change their preferences based on what they would really like to do, balanced by a realistic appraisal of courses to which they may qualify for admission.

### ***First preferences – a word of caution***

For several reasons, first preference statistics should be used with caution as an indicator of demand for a particular institution:

- 1 applicants may list ‘wish’ courses in their higher-order preferences. Only the applicant knows what their ‘realistic expectation’ preference is, and whether it is the first, second or even third preference. Obviously not all applicants list ‘wish’ courses but, historically, of those applicants receiving offers, only just more than half receive an offer to their first preference. To further illustrate the shakiness of first preferences as an indicator of real demand, only 65 per cent of offers made in 2009 progressed into actual enrolments.
- 2 applicants change their preferences. UAC applicants can change their preferences as often as they wish. As previously noted, every year about 20 000 current Year 12 applicants take advantage of this option to review and change their list of preferences after they have received their ATAR.
- 3 there is a danger that overall demand for courses may be taken to indicate perceived variations in the quality of the institutions. It is important that people are aware of the many reasons applicants have for choosing particular courses and institutions – proximity to home, financial considerations, it’s the same course or institution their friends are attending, perceived prestige, etc.
- 4 specialised courses, which are often high-demand courses such as medicine, physiotherapy and law, are not offered at all institutions.
- 5 the number of preferences is meaningless without consideration of the size of the institution. The column headed ‘2009 intake through UAC’ in the attached table shows the number of applicants who actually enrolled in the course for which they received an offer through UAC last year.
- 6 some institutions also process applications through interstate tertiary admissions centres, and the figures provided by UAC may not reflect the total demand for these institutions.

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## University preference statistics for 2010 admissions (at 30 November 2009)

	2009 intake through UAC		Preference statistics for 2010 admissions (at 30 November 2009)				Preference statistics for 2009 Admissions (at 28 November 2008)			
			<i>1st preferences</i>		<i>Total preferences</i>		<i>1st preferences</i>		<i>Total preferences</i>	
	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Australian Catholic University	1,481	3.27%	2,006	2.50%	13,952	3.19%	1,888	2.43%	11,575	2.81%
Australian National University	1,519	3.35%	3,782	4.72%	17,140	3.92%	3,821	4.92%	17,881	4.35%
Charles Sturt University	1,703	3.76%	4,061	5.06%	17,055	3.90%	3,960	5.10%	17,079	4.15%
Macquarie University	4,729	10.44%	6,318	7.88%	44,354	10.15%	5,739	7.39%	43,259	10.51%
Southern Cross University	1,123	2.48%	1,823	2.27%	8,950	2.05%	1,809	2.33%	8,544	2.08%
University of Canberra	1,079	2.38%	1,871	2.33%	14,850	3.40%	1,673	2.16%	13,733	3.35%
University of New England	561	1.24%	1,215	1.51%	8,266	1.89%	1,101	1.42%	6,972	1.69%
University of New South Wales	5,247	11.58%	11,912	14.85%	61,850	14.15%	11,559	14.89%	55,765	13.55%
University of Newcastle	4,964	10.96%	8,744	10.90%	40,274	9.21%	8,401	10.82%	39,756	9.66%
University of Sydney	7,525	16.61%	15,579	19.42%	70,958	16.23%	14,948	19.26%	67,573	16.42%
University of Technology, Sydney	4,831	10.67%	9,714	12.11%	50,885	11.64%	10,040	12.94%	50,310	12.23%
University of Western Sydney	8,192	18.09%	9,579	11.94%	64,074	14.66%	9,125	11.76%	55,856	13.75%
University of Wollongong	2,341	5.17%	3,607	4.50%	24,563	5.62%	3,544	4.57%	23,174	5.63%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>45,295</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>80,211</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>437,171</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>77,608</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>411,517</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

1. Includes all applicants who apply through UAC, including international fee-paying applicants undertaking an Australian Year 12 in Australia and overseas.

2. Only NSW and ACT institutions are included. Australian Maritime College, Griffith University and La Trobe University, which process a small number of applications through UAC, are not included.

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*For further information about individual institutions, call the contacts below*

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Macquarie University	Ms Kathlyn Smart	Assistant Registrar - Coursework Studies	(02) 9850 7327
Southern Cross University	Ms Brigid Veale	Communications Manager	(02) 6659 3006 0439 680 748
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