



21 October 2011

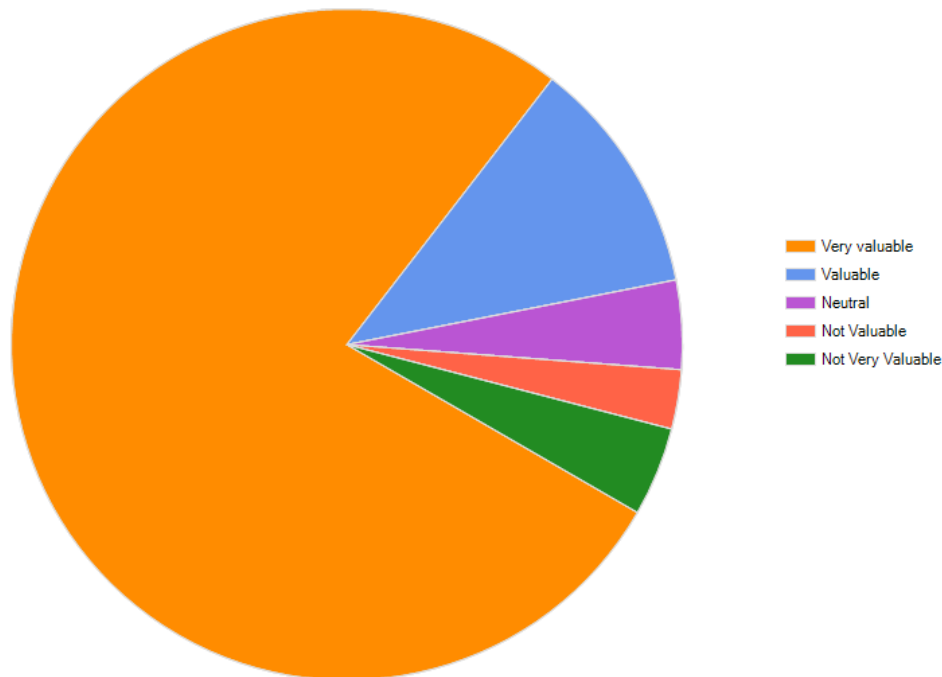
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**Re: VUW Certificate of University Preparation Programme Closure Proposal**

1. This submission on the Certificate of University Preparation Programme (CUP) Closure Proposal is made on behalf of the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA). VUWSA is the official representative body of students at Victoria University of Wellington and has been advocating on their behalf since 1899.
2. This submission is based on feedback from 70 CUP Class Representatives and students from a number of CUP and degree programme courses. As a result of this consultation VUWSA strongly opposes the proposed closure to CUP at Victoria for the reasons outlined below.
3. VUWSA has a strong concern that the closure of the CUP will significantly deter many students from higher education.
4. Our consultation with students showed overwhelmingly that the CUP provides a valuable contribution to Victoria. This chart graphically illustrates the responses:

What value do you think the CUP programme is for Victoria students?



- From the 70 submissions we received, 67 students provided comments to support their opinion. In general the comments focused on four main areas: The advantages of the CUP program as a smooth transition to university requirements for studying; the varied skills taught; the opportunity to have a 'second chance' at education and how this provides fairer access for many people. Finally, there were many comments regarding the emotional benefits of the CUP programme including instilling confidence, a good work ethic and a desire to contribute back to the university community.
- For example:

*I did not gain NCEA level three in my last year of high school due to unforeseen circumstances. This prevented me from going to university with the majority of my friends. Doing the CUP course gave me the opportunity to go to university and prepared me for the style of work that lay ahead of me. Without the CUP course I would have been 3 years behind my friends before I could be eligible to apply for university.*

*[The CUP] provides an additional opportunity for those who didn't excel at school but decided to try again with University - this is a crucial part of ensuring we have a diverse, educated population and one that encourages learning and second chances. Also, for mature students such as my Mother who has started her first degree at the age of 53 after completing a CUP similar course - she is*

*loving the environment and the new ideas she is learning and it makes me upset to think others would be denied this experience.*

*CUP was an invaluable introduction to what is required at University. In all honesty the level of dedication from many of those entrants, who have simply come from High School, is nowhere near the standard of the students who have come from the CUP program. The work ethic and maturity level from the CUP students once entering their degree is excellent - and with some life experience, they are well aware of the importance to take this opportunity seriously.*

7. Whilst VUWSA understands that broader policy constraints limit universities in the offering of pre-degree programmes, the reality of cutting CUP altogether ignores the strong student support for CUP courses that currently exists. This risks a major shortfall in the types of students enrolling in the future. It clearly signals to prospective students that unless their secondary schooling experience has prepared them for university, or they have a degree already, higher education will simply be out of reach for them. This has the potential of creating an 'elitist' conception of university. It also has the potential of denying the many attributes that 'mature' students bring to the campus in particular. In many senses it narrows the education path of people to a predefined, rather archaic way of looking at education. It dismisses life experience, wisdom and knowledge gained through other means. Vivaly, however, this elitist model assumes that everyone has had equal access to academic knowledge and should be able to adapt 'overnight' if they enroll to study. Students for whom education opportunities have been limited (such as people with refugee backgrounds), or English as a second language, or those that are transferring their knowledge from a practical basis to an academic one will find that pursuing a university education much more daunting, and for many, impossible, without a programme such as the CUP. Victoria should not assume that creating pathways through special enrolments will mitigate potential adverse effects on students. The reality is that Victoria (along with other universities cutting pre-degree courses) risks creating a negative image amongst New Zealand's most marginalised groups. These groups should have the right to 'get amongst the best' and should not be deterred because of educational inequalities that they have experienced that may have been beyond their control.
8. We would also like to make a particular reference to an issue concerning a specific aspect of the course content, namely that of learning the information management systems used within the university. Learning and research tools such as Endnote, Blackboard, online learning and all the databases available online did not exist twenty years ago. Many students commenting to us felt that learning these tools enabled them to step into their 100 level courses with confidence. They doubted whether a Polytechnic course would cover the tools needed at Victoria. Additionally, over time the incredible dynamic technological changes that have occurred in education have made the transition to the academic environment much more challenging for mature students. Thus we would reiterate that the course content of the CUP is much more than instruction in time management or how to write assignments. Indeed, it allowed particularly mature students to understand and familiarise themselves with these crucial learning tools.
9. There is some concern regarding the moving of the CUP course to a polytechnic environment. Our respondents expressed dismay at this option:

*Bridging courses into university mean that a diverse range of people can access university education. Moving these courses to polytechnics removes this "bridging" function. Instead it creates another barrier to accessing uni if you are not being immersed in the campus lifestyle.*

*The fact that the CUP programme is held in the university makes it even more useful because the students have access to all facilities and services offer by the university before entering in a degree. As well as familiarising with the system. In this way students will be more successful because they know beforehand what is expected.*

*CUP is an invaluable course which has assisted many people in the transition to university level. The course provides the opportunity to learn vital skills in order to flourish at university for example: studying, essay writing, time management, critical thinking skills, etc. Moving the course off campus to a polytechnic will mean the students can no longer embrace the university environment. Prospective students, CUP staff and society will be negatively affected by the disestablishment of this vital bridging course.*

**10.** VUWSA believes that allowing CUP programmes to be a Polytechnic only journey will further distance the university environment from prospective students. Being held on campus allows students to familiarise themselves with the environs and become part of the community.

**11.** VUWSA urges the university to consider alternative forms of funding this valuable programme.

VUWSA would also like to support the university in wider actions that are taken which would enable the university to communicate to New Zealand society that tertiary education is changing. University education is no longer a right for everyone – you not only have to have the money but you also have to have gone to the right school and succeeded at a qualification which even universities question the efficiency of as a predictor for university achievement. To this extent, VUWSA urges the university to not stand by and watch this closure happen but to speak out and be a vocal defendant of the right to provide opportunities for learning for everyone in our society.

Yours sincerely



Seamus Brady

**President**

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association