



Tertiary Education Commission
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

INFORMATION FOR LEARNERS

**Publishing information to
inform enrolment decisions**

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

June 2014

Tertiary Education Commission
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

National Office
44 The Terrace
PO Box 27048
Wellington, New Zealand

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Chief Executive's foreword

A fully functional and outcomes-based tertiary education system is one of the most important drivers of our economy. It is essential then that good information is available to help prospective learners make sound study decisions. To make good decisions, prospective learners need access to information that will inform them about the costs and requirements of tertiary education and the likely outcomes of their study. This information needs to be accessible, fit for purpose, comparable and robust.

The Tertiary Education Commission's work on Information for Learners is about making better information available to inform enrolment choices by ensuring that tertiary education organisations (TEOs) and government agencies work together to publish good information.

We would now like to invite TEOs, learners, employers and any other stakeholders to provide feedback on what we are suggesting. This consultation document sets out the rationale behind the Information for Learners work and the proposed details of how it will be introduced and what information will be involved. We would appreciate your feedback in helping us achieve our aim of helping prospective learners to make better informed decisions on their investment in tertiary education.

Tim Fowler
Chief Executive
June 2014

Background and context

Tertiary education is a significant investment for the individual and the government. To make good decisions on their investment in tertiary education, prospective learners need appropriate information to evaluate the choices available to them.

Since 2012, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has undertaken work to assess the information needs of prospective learners when they are making tertiary education decisions as well as to consider options around how information can be published to best support those decisions. The aim of this work has been to improve the positive outcomes of tertiary education in New Zealand by both understanding and meeting the information needs of prospective learners.

Internationally, there has been a growing focus on improving the accessibility and usability of the information available to prospective learners to support enrolment decisions. Increasing emphasis is being placed on publishing information on the costs, quality and outcomes of tertiary study, both by providers and centrally. Australia¹ and the United Kingdom (UK)² have undertaken significant work to ensure prospective learners are provided with easily accessible and comparable information on such things as entry requirements, teaching quality and performance, learner satisfaction and graduate outcomes. Several countries have also undertaken research into employers' satisfaction with higher education outcomes. We will be following these developments with interest.

To make informed decisions on what and where to study, New Zealand learners need relevant and trusted information that is discoverable, accessible and easily comparable. While a range of information is currently provided by various parties,³ the Information for Learners work is about how we can strengthen the content and delivery of the information that prospective learners, their families and their advisors need to enable more informed decisions on learner investment in tertiary education.

Objectives of the Information for Learners work

The goal of the Information for Learners work is to enable prospective learners to assess for themselves the value of tertiary education and how it will contribute to their achievement of the outcomes desired. As such, this work has two main objectives:

1. to strengthen the content of the information that is available to learners to support their decisions on what and where to study; and
2. to improve the delivery of the information that is needed.

¹ Viewed at <http://myuniversity.gov.au/>.

² Viewed at <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>.

³ A range of information is provided by tertiary education organisations, secondary school career advisors, student unions and government agencies.

The Information for Learners work is aligned with the outcomes focus of the TEC's *Statement of Intent 2013/14–2015/16* and the *Government's Tertiary Education Strategy 2014–2019*, as well as the TEC's Framework for Youth and Transitions. The TEC's work also complements workstreams by other government agencies, including the Ministry of Education's Employment Outcomes of Tertiary Education work and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Occupational Outlook work.

Working group for the Information for Learners work

The TEC would like to form a working group later this year to work towards the objectives of the Information for Learners work. The working group will include representatives from key tertiary education stakeholder groups, such as learners, industry/employers and tertiary education organisation (TEO) sector representatives. The purpose of the working group will be to:

- provide input into the specifications for publishing information; and
- plan and support the publication of information by providers.

We are seeking nominations from several key tertiary education stakeholder groups for representation on the working group. Updates on the progress on the Information for Learners work will be provided on the TEC website www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Reviews-and-consultation/Information-for-learners.

Purpose of the consultation

This is an open consultation and we welcome feedback from all stakeholders in tertiary education. This includes learners, the sector, industry, other government agencies and the wider community.

The purpose of the consultation is to:

1. **Present** the TEC's view on what information should be published by TEOs to inform enrolment choices and how this information should be provided.
2. **Seek** feedback on the proposed information categories and the key information set that learners need when making decisions on tertiary education.
3. **Signal** the TEC's intention to work with key tertiary education stakeholders on:
 - a final set of key information for publication;
 - how the information should be published; and
 - implementing the delivery of 'good' information to prospective learners.

The schedule for this consultation and implementation of this work is detailed below.

Please provide feedback using the submission form included as the Appendix or through the online feedback form www.surveymonkey.com/s/informationforlearners.

Information on the consultation as well as a link to the feedback form can be found on the TEC's website www.tec.govt.nz.

Schedule for consultation

Consultation document published on TEC website	10 June 2014
Final date for submissions	22 July 2014
Specifications published on the TEC website	Late 2014 (to be confirmed)

Schedule for implementation

Publication of information by TEOs	The TEC would like information to be published by TEOs for some qualifications in 2015 with a view to ensuring that all TEOs publish the information by the beginning of 2017.
Publication of information in a central location	The TEC is exploring with relevant agencies the options for developing a central location where TEO-published information, as well as any additional information of relevance, can be accessed and compared side by side across qualifications and providers.

Principles and benefits

With good information, learners are better able to assess for themselves the value of their investment in tertiary education.

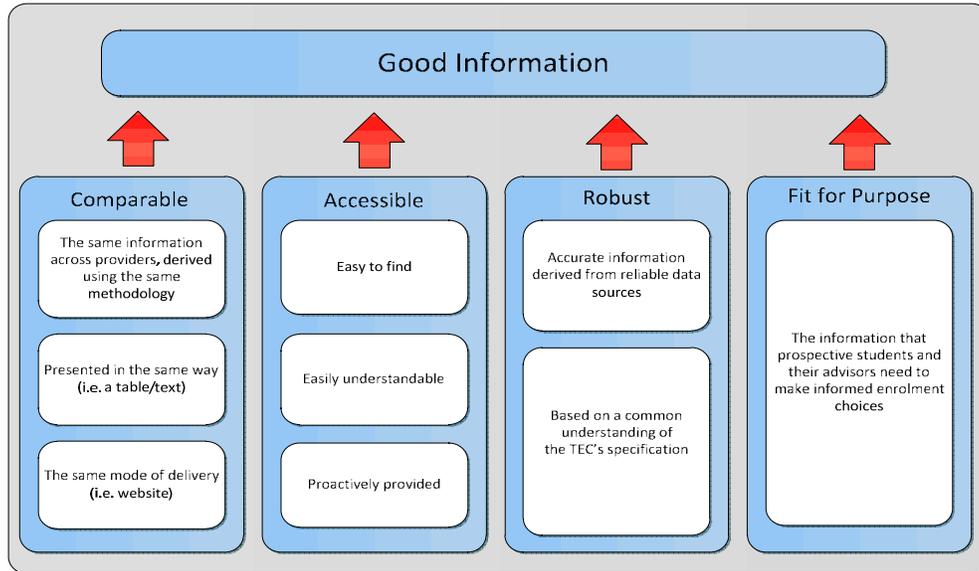
To achieve the objectives of the Information for Learners work, there is a need for good information to be made available by government and TEOs. Good information is about both the quality of the content as well as the usability, comparability and accessibility of the information presented. This section outlines a set of guiding principles for providing good information and lists the intended benefits of the Information for Learners work.

Principles of good information for learners

The TEC considers that good information to inform learners' enrolment decisions adheres to four key principles, as described below and in Figure 1. To be useful for prospective learners in determining what and/or where to study, information must be:

- **Comparable** – Information should be provided in a way that allows easy comparisons between providers and qualifications. Prospective learners need the chance to compare like information and make decisions based on the information that is important to them.
- **Accessible** – Information should be provided in an accessible way that promotes usability. There can be a number of barriers for prospective learners in terms of how easily they 'access' information. Information must be not only easy to find, but provided to the user in a way that they can easily understand and apply in their decision-making.
- **Robust** – The accuracy and timeliness of the information is important for ensuring user confidence in the information.
- **Fit for purpose** – It is important to provide information that can be used for the purpose that it is intended. Prospective learners need information that is meaningful and appropriate to inform their decisions when entering and navigating the tertiary education system.

Figure 1: Principles of good information for learners



Benefits of the Information for Learners work

Providing good information, as described above, will contribute to improving the outcomes of tertiary education in New Zealand and will thus increase the tertiary sector's contribution towards New Zealand's goals and priorities. Specific intended benefits of this work are:

- enabling learners to make real comparisons between qualifications and across providers when deciding on what and where to study;
- providing consistency on what information is published by TEOs and by government; and;
- facilitating informed enrolment choices that align with learners' desired tertiary education outcomes.

The proposed key information set

The TEC has carried out a programme of work from 2012 to understand the information needs of learners. The research has assisted in the identification of a key information set. This section provides an overview of TEC research and details the proposed key information set for publication.

TEC research on the information needs of learners

To better understand the information needs of learners, the TEC has investigated how learners make decisions on tertiary study. This investigation included a literature review, stakeholder interviews, discussions with a small group of TEO representatives on a key information set, learner workshops and a survey. The four questions asked and general findings were:

1. How do learners make decisions on tertiary study?

Reviewed literature agrees that the decision-making process for learners when they are choosing their path into tertiary study is complex and iterative. A range of factors impact on their decisions, as well there are critical transitional periods where information is likely to be more relevant, such as when they finish school, when they enter tertiary study and when they enter the workforce. The literature emphasised that learner pathways are not linear and learners continue to need and want guidance throughout their tertiary education journey.

2. What information do learners need to make decisions?

Learners use and value comparable and trusted information when making enrolment decisions. The research suggests that information learners use and value can be categorised under the broad headings of:

- access and pathways;
- costs of study;
- learner engagement and success; and
- expected outcomes of study.

3. What information is currently available in New Zealand?

In New Zealand, TEOs and government already produce and publish a significant amount of information to support enrolment decisions. The lack of easily comparable and consistent information, however, is prohibiting learners from comparing qualifications across providers. From a learner's perspective, it is difficult to know where to start and how to decipher the information presented to determine the real value of tertiary education to the individual.

4. What is the best way to disseminate information?

Research suggests that learners are most likely to seek information directly from TEO websites. Research undertaken in the UK⁴ found that many learners do not actively search out such information to support them in their decision-making. A likely explanation of this finding is the concept of ‘information overload’. A recent UK study⁵ found that too much information can lead people to disengage from the information-seeking process. While the study notes that no single solution is available for the provision of the right information for prospective learners, it does point to an adaptive and tailored information-provision system driven by the intent to better inform and empower decision-makers to make choices that satisfy their own personal goals.

In New Zealand, while an abundance of published information is available, it is not succinct and is widely dispersed, limiting both its accessibility and usefulness for informing enrolment decisions. These factors are likely contributing to a lack of use by its intended users. Interpersonal networks, such as parents, friends, families and schools, are a significant influence on learners’ decisions about tertiary study. In the New Zealand context, cultural differences can also influence where different population groups seek information and guidance on what and where to study at the tertiary level.

⁴ *Understanding the information needs of users of public information about higher education* – Report to HEFCE by Oakleigh Consulting and Staffordshire University. 2010.

⁵ *UK review of the provision of information about higher education: Advisory Study and Literature Review* – Report to the UK higher education funding bodies by CFE Research. 2014.

Development of the key information set

In 2012, the TEC identified a set of information that learners need to inform decisions on tertiary study, based on its research and review of information provided both in New Zealand and internationally, and on key stakeholder interviews.⁶

The key information set included broad categories of information on pathways, cost of tertiary education, learner engagement and success and post-study outcomes (note that the wording of these categories was subsequently refined to those tabled below).

Early discussions with a small group of sector representatives in 2012 found broad agreement with the information that the TEC had identified, and overall support for improving the availability and comparability of information to help learners make better decisions on tertiary education.

The TEC's view is that, in order to make well-informed enrolment choices, prospective learners require information falling under the broad categories of:

- **Access and pathways** – Information on how learners can get from where they are, which may be in secondary school, tertiary education, employment or unemployment, to where they want to be in terms of tertiary education and career.
- **Costs of study** – Information on the total cost of study and available financial assistance can have a significant impact on learners' decisions on what and where they study.
- **Learner engagement and success** – Information on satisfaction and success of those previously and currently in study, as well as the availability of study support, was regarded as important by prospective learners as these provide measures of the quality of the teaching and learning provided.
- **Expected outcomes of study** – Information on the post-study economic, social and cultural outcomes that learners can expect from their qualification was important to prospective learners so they can assess whether the education aligns with what they want to achieve through tertiary education.

⁶ The TEC officials undertook interviews with key stakeholders including the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations, Careers New Zealand, Careers and Transition Education Association (Aotearoa) Ltd and careers advisors from four Wellington secondary schools.

Proposed key information set for publication

The proposed key information set is intended as a starting point and does not cover all the information that prospective learners may want to inform their enrolment choices. We would like to work with the working group to develop wider guidelines for providing additional information over time. The key information set tabled below (Table 1) has been selected with consideration being given to:

- its usefulness as identified by current and prospective learners;
- the current availability of quality and robust source data;
- the Government’s focus on the outcomes of tertiary education; and
- the compliance cost to TEOs.

Table 1: Information to support enrolment decisions

Elements of information set	Type of information	Rationale
Access and pathways	Minimum entry requirements	Any entry requirements for courses and qualifications should be clearly stated. This information may be especially helpful to students in secondary school.
Costs of study	Government subsidy	This figure provides visibility of the Government’s contribution and, hence, on the total cost of an individual’s tertiary education.
	Student contribution	This enables learners to consider the total financial contribution that will be required from them to complete a particular qualification and to inform their assessment of possible return on investment.
	How to access loans and allowances	Information on loans and allowances should include specific entitlements, learner repayment obligations and the process for application.
Learner engagement and success	Retention and completion rates	Learner retention and qualification completion are considered to be measures of quality that can provide learners with an idea of their likelihood of completing a course or qualification.
Expected outcomes of study ⁷	Employment rate of graduates	Learners value information on employment outcomes, as it may indicate whether or not their qualification will lead to employment.
	Graduates progressing to further study	Progression to further study is part of the outcomes picture. It gives important context to the employment outcomes information.
	Graduate earnings	A picture of likely earnings gives learners an idea of the range of salaries they may earn following completion of their studies.

Further detail on the specific information proposed for each category is provided in Table 2.

⁷ Graduate destinations information at a national level is published by the Ministry of Education (http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary_education/looking-at-the-employment-outcomes-of-tertiary-education).

Publication and presentation of information

Both TEOs and government have a role in ensuring that good information is available in the right places to support prospective learners to make informed decisions when investing in tertiary education. The following section details the specifications for publication and presentation of information by TEOs.

Specifications for publication

To ensure that the information published is easily comparable, there needs to be a common set of publication and presentation standards developed and followed by TEOs. The information and specifications detailed in Table 2 ensure that the information published adheres to the principles of good information detailed on page 8.

WHAT information should be published

1. *The key information set published should fit the description of information, wording, data source and level of publication detailed in Table 2.*

Rationale: To ensure comparability, the information pieces, data sources, wording and level of publication all need to be consistent across qualifications.

WHERE the information should be published

2. *Information should be provided on the webpage alongside each specified qualification.*

Rationale: The key information set needs to be visible when a prospective learner navigates to the qualification-specific page on a TEO's website. This allows the prospective learner to view the information while reading about a qualification that they are interested in.

3. *Information should be presented in the standard format and structure without the inclusion of additional explanatory information, for example, as in Figure 2 (page 18).*

Rationale: The standard presentation of the key information set across qualifications and providers allows content to be clearly and consistently presented to the viewer, which enables comparability across qualifications and providers. Any additional explanatory information can be provided elsewhere on the page.

4. *Information should be prominently positioned.*

Rationale: The key information set should be published in a way that attracts those visiting the webpage. For instance, along the right or left margin or the top of the page.

WHEN the information should be updated

5. *Information should be updated as newer information becomes available. For information that is sourced directly from the TEO, any changes should be made in a timely manner. Outcomes information needs to be updated as new information is made available.*

Rationale: Information must be up to date to ensure its relevance and usefulness to decision makers.

Additional requirements

6. *It should be stated that all fields in the key information set relate to domestic learners only.*

7. *Graduate destinations information should be provided with the caveats below.*

- All graduate destinations information presented is based on historical information of past graduates. Labour market conditions change over time and this information should not be relied upon as the sole source on likely destinations, employment and earnings. Further information can be found at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's website (<http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/lmr/index.asp>) and the Careers New Zealand website (www.careers.govt.nz).
- Employment outcomes information includes both those working part-time and those working full-time. The median earnings figure may be higher for those in full-time employment. Those working may not be working in an area relevant to their qualification.

8. *Graduate cohort year should be provided for destinations information.*

Given that there may be changes to labour market supply and demand, it is important that information users can see which year's graduates the destinations information relates to.

9. *It should be explicit that destinations information relates to young domestic graduates.*

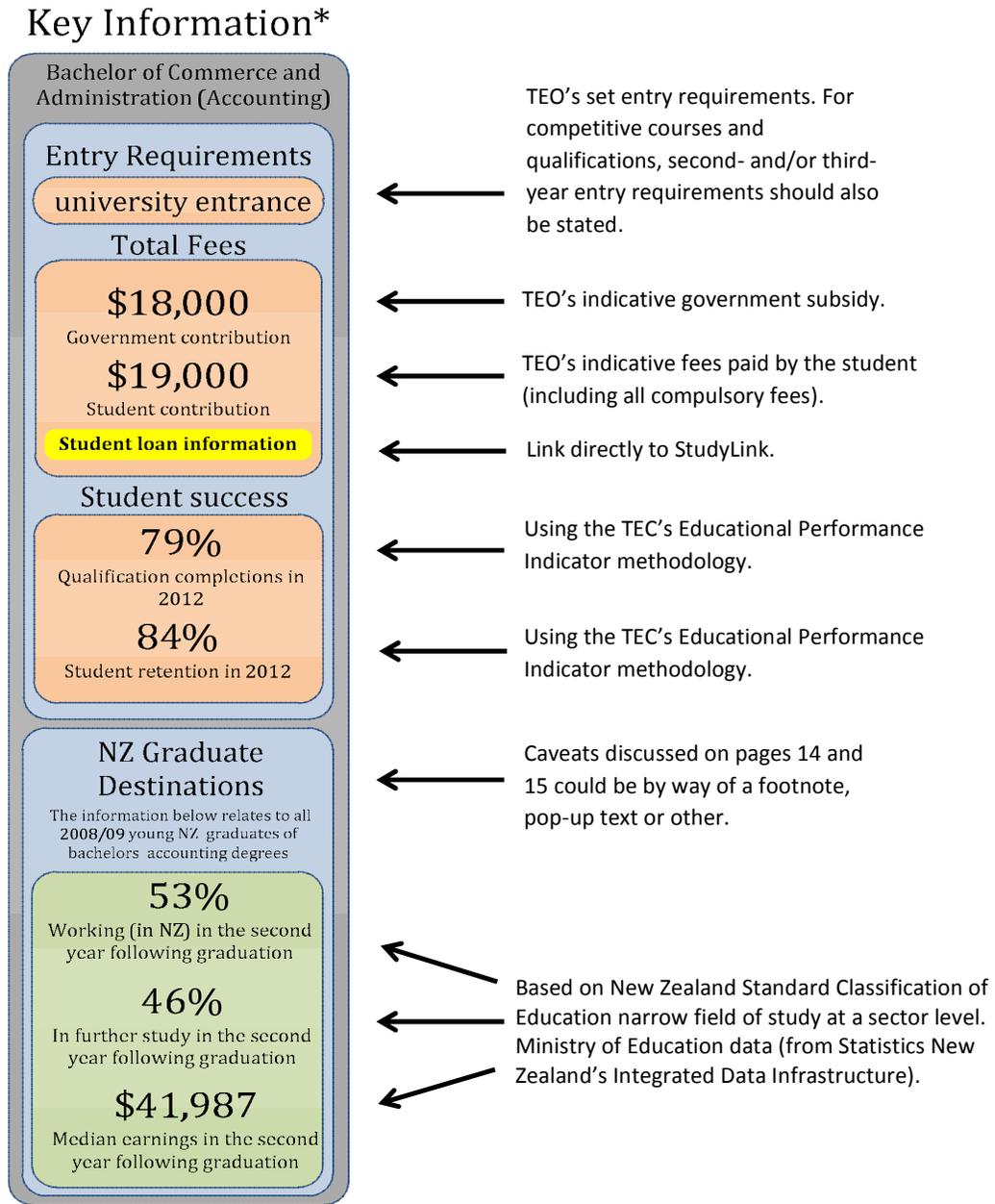
For the purposes of graduate destinations information, the Ministry of Education uses data relating to young graduates to more accurately measure the outcomes that result from tertiary education. As time goes on, a person's qualifications are complemented by their work experience, which can impact on potential outcomes. The definition of a young graduate differs for different levels of qualification. 'Young' graduates are defined as those who, on 1 July in the year they completed their qualification, were:

- 21 years or under for certificates;
- 23 years or under for diplomas;
- 24 years or under for three-year bachelor's degrees, with every year of additional study required adding a year to the age cut-off. For example, 25 years and under for four-year law degrees, 26 years and under for five-year architecture degrees and 27 years and under for six-year medical degrees;
- 26 years or under for one year of postgraduate study and graduate certificates or diplomas;
- 27 years or under for master's degrees; and
- 29 years or under for doctorate learners.

Table 2: Key information to be published

Information	Description	Wording	Data source	Level
Minimum entry requirements	Any prerequisite minimum educational achievement requirements for domestic students to be accepted into the qualification. Any entry requirement to progress through the qualification, for example, entering second-year medicine.	[insert requirement] entry requirements [insert requirement] second-year entry requirements	Each TEO's own entry requirements.	Qualification.
Government subsidy	Government contribution based on Student Achievement Component funding rates – for example, for a three-year Bachelor of Arts funded at \$6,135 per year, the government contribution would be \$18,405.	\$ [insert dollar amount] government contribution	TEOs should be able to break down fees by student contribution and government subsidy.	Qualification.
Student contribution	The total cost of fees to the student to complete a qualification, including additional fees, such as the student services levy. Course costs would be excluded.	\$ [insert dollar amount] student contribution	Each TEO's fees.	Qualification.
How to access loans and allowances	A link to information on the StudyLink website, providing a starting point for those seeking information on how to access loans and/or allowances.	[insert hyperlink] student loan information	StudyLink https://online.studylink.govt.nz/ODSAnon/login-landing.html .	Tertiary sector.
Qualification completion rate	The TEC's qualification completion Educational Performance Indicator calculated by qualification.	[insert percentage] qualification completions in [insert year]	Single Data Return – providers will calculate this by New Zealand Standard Classification of Education (NZSCED) narrow field through their workspaces, based on TEC methodology.	Qualification.
Retention rate	The TEC's retention Educational Performance Indicator calculated by qualification.	[insert percentage] student retention in [insert year]	Rules and definitions for the TEC's Educational Performance Indicators can be found at http://www.tec.govt.nz/Documents/Reports%20and%20other%20documents/EPIs-SAC-funded-TEOs-2013.pdf .	Qualification.
Employment rate of graduates	The percentage of graduates of a particular qualification in New Zealand who are in some form of employment one year after graduation. Initially, this will be at a national level by NZSCED narrow field.	[insert percentage] working (in NZ) in the second year following graduation	Ministry of Education data (from Statistics New Zealand's integrated Data Infrastructure) http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary_education/looking-at-the-employment-outcomes-of-tertiary-education .	Nationally by qualification at NZSCED narrow field of study.
Graduates progressing to further study	The percentage of graduates who are in some form of study in New Zealand one year after graduation. Initially, this will be at a national level by NZSCED narrow field.	[insert percentage] in further study in the second year following graduation		
Graduate earnings	The median earnings of graduates in New Zealand who are in some form of employment one year after graduation. Initially, this will be at a national level by NZSCED narrow field.	[insert percentage] median earnings in the second year following graduation		

Figure 2: Example of how information could appear on a TEO’s website



* Note that all information relates to domestic students only.

Appendix: Information for Learners consultation response form

The purpose of this response form is to seek feedback on the consultation document *Information for Learners: Publishing information to inform enrolment decisions*.

Specific feedback is sought on the proposed key information set that learners need when making decisions on tertiary education, and the way in which this information should be published.

This is an open consultation and we welcome feedback from all stakeholders in tertiary education. Readers are invited to respond using the form appended or through the online feedback form www.surveymonkey.com/s/informationforlearners.

Please provide your feedback no later than 22 July 2014.

Forms can be returned by:

Email: servicecentre@tec.govt.nz (please use 'Information for Learners' in the subject line)

Fax: 04 462 5400

Post: Information for Learners consultation feedback
Tertiary Education Commission
PO Box 27048
Wellington

Please note that responses will be summarised and published. Any identifiable information relating to individuals will remain confidential.

Please note that we may contact you should we have any questions regarding your responses.

1. Contact Information

Name:
Role or title:
Organisation name:
Address:
Email:
Phone:

2. Which of the following best describes either your current situation, where you work, or who you represent?

- Tertiary education representative body
- University
- Institutes of technology and polytechnic
- Wānanga
- Private training establishment
- Industry training organisation
- School (including careers advisors at schools)
- Student union
- Secondary school student
- Tertiary student
- Employer, please specify _____
- Government agency, please specify _____
- Other, please specify _____

3. Are you responding on behalf of your organisation?

- Yes
- No

Question 1

Do you agree with the two objectives of the Information for Learners work?
(refer to page 6)

Objective 1: To strengthen the information content that is available to learners to support their decisions on what and where to study.

Strongly disagree	Neutral			Strongly agree			Don't know
----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Objective 2: To improve the delivery of the information that is needed.

Strongly disagree	Neutral			Strongly agree			Don't know
----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please comment below if you think there are other objectives that need to be considered as part of this work or if you have any general comments on the objectives of this work.

<p>Comment</p>

Question 2

To make the implementation process for this work as efficient and effective as possible, please comment below if you think there are administrative or other relevant issues specific to TEO sub-sectors for the working group to consider when planning the implementation of this work.

Comment

Question 3

Do you agree with the principles of good information for learners (refer to pages 9 and 10), that to be useful for prospective learners in determining what and/or where to study, information must be comparable, accessible, robust and fit for purpose.



Please comment below if you think there are other principles that need to be considered as part of this work or if you have any general comments on the principles of good information for learners.

Comment

Question 4

Do you agree with the intended benefits of the Information for Learners work?
(refer to page 10)

Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree		Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>						

Please comment below if you think there are other benefits that need to be considered as part of this work or if you have any general comments on the benefits of the Information for Learners work.

Comment

Question 5

Do you think the TEC's key information set covers the necessary information categories to deliver on the objective of strengthening the information content? (refer to pages 14 and 18 to 19)

Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree		Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>						

Please comment below if you think there are other information areas that need to be considered as part of this work or if you have any general comments on the key information set.

Comment

Question 6

Do you think that the TEC's proposal for information to be published by TEOs and centrally fulfils the objective of improving information delivery so that it is useful and accessible to prospective learners?

Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree		Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>						

Please comment below if you think there are other considerations to be made to deliver on this objective or if you have any general comments on the delivery of information.

Comment

Question 7

Do you agree with the presentation and publication specifications of the key information set? (refer to pages 15 to 19)

Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree		Don't know
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>						

Please comment below if you think there are other considerations to be made on the presentation and publication specifications or if you have any other general comments on the presentation and publication specifications.

Comment

Question 8

Is there anything else that you would like to add? Please specify any other considerations, comments or issues you may have on this work.

<p>Comment</p>

Next steps

Thank you for taking the time to complete this response form. Once the consultation has closed, we will review and assess the feedback received.

A summary of the feedback will then be published on the TEC website.

Please visit the TEC website to see updates on the Information for Learners work.

Thank you.