

What I Wish I Knew podcast transcript



Title: What I Wish I Knew

Episode 1: About Choosing the Right Course – and Uni

Creator: Swinburne Marketing

Year: 2024

[Intro music up]

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:27:07

Sam

Hi everyone, and welcome to What I Wish I Knew, Swinburne's VTAC podcast for Year 12's. Today we will be covering insider knowledge, common mistakes, tips and tricks that you might not know but wish you did about applying to university. I'm your host, Sam Eddy. I'm a schools recruitment specialist here at Swinburne, and today I'm really lucky to be joined by one of our current students, Samuel, and also two VTAC experts.

00:00:27:08 - 00:00:44:07

Sam

I've got Elise from VTAC herself and also Amanda from one of our schools. So it's really great to have you all here and to share your knowledge and wisdom with us all about getting into uni and that application process. If you want to find out more about anything we mentioned in today's episode, you can find all the links in the show notes.

00:00:44:09 - 00:01:03:13

Sam

So we are here today to put all of your minds at ease and set you on the right track. Because let's be honest, between getting through exams and arranging your preferences, navigating the VTAC process can be daunting. So let's get into it. I'm going to throw to you, Sam. Obviously, I'll get you to introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about what you are studying at Swinburne.

00:01:03:15 - 00:01:23:18

Samuel

Hi, guys. My name is Samuel. I am a final year here at Swinburne University, and, I'm currently studying, Bachelor of Business and Design. I'm majoring in, UX design, which is user experience design. And co majoring in business entrepreneurship and innovation.

00:01:23:20 - 00:01:32:10

Sam

Yeah. Great. So I'm going to ask you to, jump back maybe four years or so now and think about when you were sitting in Year 12 at this time, coming up to exams.

00:01:32:10 - 00:01:38:05

Sam

And what is one thing you wish that someone had told you about applying or starting university?

00:01:38:10 - 00:01:53:07

Samuel

Oh, I wish that I knew how VTAC worked. I didn't know that there would be way more options out there, than just going straight to a bachelor's degree.

00:01:53:08 - 00:01:59:01

Sam

All right. I'm going to throw across to you, Amanda. Now, if you could tell us a little bit about what your position is and how you help students.

00:01:59:01 - 00:02:20:07

Amanda

Yeah, sure. So my name is Amanda. I work at, a school in Kew called Carey Baptist Grammar School, and I've been doing careers for 15 years. So I'm a high school teacher who then decided to move into careers advising, which I absolutely love because I don't think when I was in school, I got particularly good support, in what I wanted to do after school.

00:02:20:07 - 00:02:47:12

Amanda

And so I'm super passionate about making that really different for the students that I work with. So my bread and butter day to day is meeting with students and really talking to them about what they want to do beyond school, helping them do their research, helping them make decisions, and really giving them the support so that they can make really confident decisions about what they want to do that, that they've done the research themselves and they feel really good about what that next step is, which is great.

00:02:47:14 - 00:02:57:19

Sam

And that brings us to Elise, lovely Elise from VTAC. Welcome. Tell me a little bit about what you're doing because you're now in a new role. So tell us about your role at VTAC and how you support Year 12s.

00:02:57:20 - 00:03:02:23

Elise

Yeah. I am, so, yeah, my name is Elise. I'm the Engagement Manager at VTAC. It's a new role at VTAC.

00:03:02:23 - 00:03:23:22

Elise

I've been for a few months. Yeah. I guess my role is making sure that students are getting the right information and, much help as they need in terms of their application. And all of the things that go alongside with that. So making sure any special consideration applications are submitted for students who are eligible and that they have the right information on how to do that, that students are submitting applications for scholarships.

00:03:23:22 - 00:03:29:06

Elise

And yeah, and just in general, making sure they understand the process and how best to get the best outcomes for them.

00:03:29:12 - 00:03:48:01

Sam

Yeah, absolutely. Sam, I wanted to have a chat to you about when you were back in year 12 and approaching exam time. What was some advice that, oh, some good advice that somebody gave you or do you wish someone had have given you about heading into that exam period, knowing now that it's not always a numbers game?

00:03:48:01 - 00:03:49:23

Sam

Did that change things for you?

00:03:50:00 - 00:04:23:14

Samuel

Oh, I think one of my biggest regrets, when I was going into year 12, I was going through some, family situations, which made studying really difficult. But on top of all that, there was such a big pressure for me to perform really well. And like you guys said, to achieve a certain number, all of the courses I wanted, and I think if I would do it again, I would of, I guess paced myself a lot more, scheduled times to actually do hang out with friends and take a little bit of a breather.

00:04:23:14 - 00:04:54:09

Samuel

Because ultimately, when I did try to cram in as much as possible, maybe get that extra 10 minutes or 20 minutes of studying, in the sacrifice of sleep or, those important social times that it wasn't ultimately worth it. I had a lot more, downsides in terms of like potentially getting sick or not being fully there when I was, doing the exams.

00:04:54:09 - 00:05:08:11

Samuel

So I think if I would do it again, I would pace myself and, find a more consistent schedule. I think it's not the effort, it's more of the consistency. That's, is super important.

00:05:08:13 - 00:05:16:20

Sam

You definitely not the first person I've heard give similar advice on having a good study plan and actually sticking to it. I've heard other students say, like they do really well.

00:05:16:20 - 00:05:34:18

Sam

If they actually schedule their study into their calendar, like put in an actual allocation of time. You talked about like, you know, wishing you had have paced yourself. But now let's fast forward to the end of that very last exam. Do you remember putting that final full stop on the exam? And what was that feeling like for you?

00:05:34:21 - 00:05:57:05

Samuel

It was the best feeling in the world. I think I was writing like, 3 or 4000, like word report. And when I like, did the final grammar check and spelling check and everything and then submitted that on to, Canvas I there's like a little thing where you submit and, you get a little like confetti.

00:05:57:07 - 00:06:00:22

Amanda

Yes I've seen the confetti. The confetti is a very rewarding thing.

00:06:00:22 - 00:06:14:03

Samuel

Yeah. And, I, I remember I set aside a little, like, piece of chocolate and like, a little like, piece of, like a drink and everything. So I was like, okay, this is my little reward. Yeah.

00:06:14:08 - 00:06:18:13

Sam

Yeah I will not be able to sit there and look at it and not eat that as I'm going.

00:06:18:15 - 00:06:39:14

Sam

I think I used to set aside a block of chocolate at the beginning of an assessment just to get through it. Right, exactly. Okay. So in terms of like that transition from high school into university, is there any advice that you would give up and coming students about that transition and what they can do to be successful in that, that period?

00:06:39:16 - 00:07:06:13

Samuel

Yeah. I guess with the transition, one of the big things that I've noticed going from high school to tertiary education was like the lack of formalities, I guess, when I was in high school, I was in a more structured, educational like teaching period, like would refer to our teachers as, like Miss or Miss, Mr. or sir.

00:07:06:15 - 00:07:31:19

Samuel

And you would have to start a particular time, and then study all the way up until like three (PM) or something. Whereas when I got to university, for example, it was a lot less, structured. Teachers, Lecturers and tutors, they were more of a peer, someone who had more, slightly more knowledge or actually a lot more knowledge than you that you can refer to.

00:07:31:21 - 00:07:57:03

Samuel

And, and we would just refer to everyone as the first names. No one's going to schedule your, timetables at all. So it was up to you to decide whether or not, you can balance the time to go into classes, do your assignments, and then manage all the other things around your studies, like work or, sports or other social commitments there.

00:07:57:06 - 00:08:17:05

Amanda

This is a really common thing that a lot of students talk to me about, too, in schools is that they feel really burnt out at the end of year 12, and some of them are talking to me about taking a gap year or taking some time off. And when I then explain to them that university is actually really, really different to school and the way I explain it is that school is 40 weeks.

00:08:17:05 - 00:08:39:02

Amanda

So four, ten week, essentially terms where you're there all day uni is two semesters in general, unless you decide, you know, to do a trimester or summer school or something. And those are generally 12 weeks. You're also got contact hours that are between sort of eight and ten hours a week, where you're on campus, if that. Most of your learning stuff.

00:08:39:02 - 00:08:59:07

Amanda

You know, in the old days we used to go and sit in lecture theaters. But universities have changed now and a lot of that stuff's online and you'll do canvas modules or learning modules before going to tutorials. So I think, really understanding what you're going into means that you can go into university feeling a little bit clearer about how it will be very different to school.

00:08:59:07 - 00:09:18:07

Amanda

And maybe you don't need such a long gap break, you know, maybe you are ready to study after you've had a few months off, because making sure you're productive in that time, I think is really important, especially for mental health. Making sure you not just sleeping in every day for a year and then feeling like, you know, there's no point.

00:09:18:09 - 00:09:19:08

Amanda

Yeah.

00:09:19:08 - 00:09:38:15

Sam

Amanda and I were having a chat earlier about the VTAC process when Amanda applied, and how it used to be on paper was obviously very, very different. I think, seeing that transition from when you applied to what students are going through now, what is I think if you had the most important tip that you could give year 12 students for VTAC, what would it be?

00:09:38:16 - 00:09:53:13

Amanda

My biggest tip is to, not really look at ATARs when you're applying at all. So you really just need to aim high and not, be really. I think sometimes we become too focused on the numbers and not what's the best course for me.

00:09:53:17 - 00:09:53:24

Sam

Yeah.

00:09:53:24 - 00:09:59:07

Amanda

So every year I work with students who sometimes they do a lot better than they thought they would do.

00:09:59:13 - 00:10:17:10

Amanda

And then all of a sudden they come through, come and see me, and they're like, oh, I've got to change my preferences because I did better than I thought, and now I can get into Law and I have to sit them down and have conversations where I say, well, actually, you never wanted to do Law, so just because you've got that ATAR doesn't mean now you should be changing your plan.

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Amanda

So I think sometimes the number is the thing I would least like students to focus on, and rather focus on what's really going to be the best, the next best step for them.

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Sam

Yeah, definitely.

00:10:27:22 - 00:10:36:05

Amanda

I think the best work you can do is thinking about what's the right course versus what can I get into with the number that I've got.

00:10:36:07 - 00:11:00:08

Samuel

Just to add to that, ask a lot of questions with people doing that field. If you have like a particular industry you want to get into, feel free to send an email like, they're not very scary. Like, you can talk to people who are like managers at a certain company, and they're more than willing to, like, help you and answer any questions that you have.

00:11:00:12 - 00:11:28:10

Samuel

They seem very scary, but a lot of the times they're very, like, approachable and friendly. And yeah, I wish I knew that, before, like the end of high school. And now that I have, like, I go like ask so many different questions through like, people who are working in the industry, my teachers, it's actually a huge super power that people don't utilize day to day.

00:11:28:12 - 00:11:59:08

Amanda

Just talking about Sam's experience. You know, not everybody does have guidance in their school. And and we know that that is a bit of a problem for some schools. But the best thing I could say to young people is to really take ownership of this process yourself, particularly if you're feeling really unsure, because the students that avoid me the most at school are actually the ones that feel nervous because they don't have a solid plan, and they think when they speak to people like me that they need to know what they're going to do.

00:11:59:10 - 00:12:22:05

Amanda

So the first thing I'd say is, if you're sitting in a school now and you don't know what you want to do, make an appointment to see your career's person. And if you don't have a careers person, get onto the VTAC website and start doing your own research. Start looking at things. There might be institutions that you've never heard of that are offering great courses, so make sure you take responsibility and and do some searching yourself.

00:12:22:05 - 00:12:24:22

Amanda

Don't wait for somebody to tell you what to do.

00:12:24:24 - 00:12:46:24

Sam

Great. And Amanda, I have one last question for you on this topic. It's around, different degree types and preference lists. So there's obviously a huge range of double degrees across all the institutions. But nonetheless, the advice I give with double degrees is only do them with purpose. If you're doing it because you think it's going to get you a job because it looks good on your resume.

00:12:46:24 - 00:13:02:02

Sam

I often think that's terrible advice for someone to do a double degree. So how do you approach that question or that particular situation with a student who's looking into a double? Or if they're not, have you ever suggested they do one?

00:13:02:04 - 00:13:17:07

Amanda

I think that's your point is absolutely right. You should never undertake a degree if you have no interest in it, or you think that it's going to give you something that the reality is that employers are looking for people.

00:13:17:07 - 00:13:40:22

Amanda

People with skills, people with experiences, they're not looking for specific degrees. And the degree is not necessarily going to give you success at the end of it as well. So it's what you do in your degree. It's whether you've engaged in industry based learning, whether you've done an overseas exchange, whether you've been part of a student group. You know, I always talk to my students about what are you going to do to value add when you're at uni?

00:13:41:00 - 00:14:03:05

Amanda

So, you know, looking at what what degree is best for you. And I always say to my students, start looking and comparing degrees based on what you will study, because I think the step that most students don't take is they don't then go and look at they see the name of the degree they can see the majors, what they'd study, but they don't look at actually the subjects that they would study within that degree.

00:14:03:05 - 00:14:25:02

Amanda

And I reckon that's the best point of comparison. And so looking at double degree options and looking at, well, if I do a double degree, what will what are the core subjects that I'll have to do in each degree? Am I interested in studying those things? If I'm doing a single degree, how many electives will I get? Can I actually branch out and add some things to my degree in that way?

00:14:25:04 - 00:14:47:05

Amanda

So really specifically looking at course plans and thinking about what will I actually study in that degree, and is that something that I want to study because every uni will be different. They might call it design, but at every single uni there'll be different core units, there'll be different electives, there'll be different study plans, and you are going to be paying for this degree ultimately.

00:14:47:07 - 00:15:02:12

Amanda

So you want to be thinking really carefully about where am I going to get best value for money, what's going to give me the best outcome? Not the name of the institution, but what is the degree and what skills and what, experiences am I going to get from that?

00:15:02:14 - 00:15:09:14

Sam

Speaking of experience, do you recommend students look for courses that offer professional placements as part of the degree?

00:15:09:16 - 00:15:10:09

Amanda

100%.

00:15:10:11 - 00:15:31:16

Amanda

But some unis do it better than others. And the questions that I say to students to ask are, how much support do you give in helping students find a placement? Do you already have, industry relationships with particular organizations? You know, how many of your students get placements? How many of them then keep jobs based on those placements?

00:15:31:16 - 00:15:49:19

Amanda

So ask the questions Sam said, you know, become really good at interrogating and getting the information that you need. Don't just assume because it's written in a course guide, that a little, that that will be okay, because I know at some institutions there is less help and you're expected to find those, industry placements yourself.

00:15:49:21 - 00:15:50:07

Sam

On your own, yeah.

00:15:50:07 - 00:15:56:05

Amanda

Yeah, find out the information and use that as another point of comparison to choose the right university for you.

00:15:56:05 - 00:16:13:14

Sam

Yeah, at Swinburne, we guarantee industry experience in all our bachelor degrees. So that could be like an internship, a professional placement or even an industry project. And because we partner with a lot of different organizations and businesses in all different kinds of areas, we actually help students find those opportunities, which is really great.

00:16:13:19 - 00:16:15:18

Elise

I'd just love to add on to that about Open Days.

00:16:15:18 - 00:16:36:16

Elise

And I know a lot of students say that, you know, they go to a few Open Days and they go to one institution in particular, and it just solidifies that that's the right one for them. I think you learn a lot about, you know, a place from actually going there. And I think, you know, sometimes you think, oh, but the course looks fine online, and that's probably what I want to do, but you really get a sense of, I guess, campus life and the things that you value and think that are important to you from actually going.

00:16:36:16 - 00:16:53:11

Elise

So if you're looking at visiting and institutions Open Day and it's already past, there's heaps of different ways that you can engage with them as well. So you can do things like campus tours, some of them might have other expos, or other times that you can visit the campus. So just make sure you're checking on the website to see what other opportunities there might be available to visit.

00:16:53:13 - 00:17:21:20

Amanda

And you can also use YouTube. So one of the things I do with my students is I encourage them to look up the institutions on YouTube. They all have their own YouTube channels. And then within the YouTube channel you can use the little search icon and you can look up the thing that you're wanting to study and find some really great content about that study area that will help you have an idea about what that course is about, and even some visual ideas about what the the campus or the facilities look like.

00:17:21:22 - 00:17:25:18

Samuel

Check out their social medias, Instagrams, TikToks.

00:17:25:20 - 00:17:41:16

Sam

Yeah, and really important. Read the course guide before you go to the Open Day. So that way you can, you know, ask those questions and have them written down so that when you get there, you've actually got purpose and you walk in going, today I'm here, I want to find out x, y, z.

00:17:41:18 - 00:18:07:18

Sam

And there's nothing worse than getting there and not knowing who to see and what to ask. You'll walk around in circles, so do that research, have a look at the courses you want to do, find out what the entry requirements are and start to jot down what those questions might be. Thanks, Elise, Amanda, and Samuel, some great insights into choosing a course there and to you, the listeners at home, please join us again for episode two, where we'll be covering everything you need to know about ATARs and entry requirements.

00:18:07:20 - 00:18:20:07

Sam

On Swinburne's VTAC podcast, What I Wish I Knew. See you then.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]