

What I Wish I Knew podcast transcript



Title: What I Wish I Knew

Episode 2: About About ATARs (no calculator required)

Creator: Swinburne Marketing

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[Intro music up]

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:24:07

Sam

Hi everyone, and welcome back to episode two of What I Wish I Knew. Swinburne's VTAC podcast for year 12s. I'm your host, Sam Eddy, and I'm joined by Swinburne student Sam and two experts in everything VTAC, Elise and Amanda. In episode one, we discussed what options you have when it comes to choosing a course for uni, so please check it out if you haven't already.

00:00:24:09 - 00:00:56:03

Sam

Next up, we'll be talking about ATARs and entry requirements, as well as alternative pathways and early entry programs. So an alternative pathway. So we've got things like you know guaranteed pathways and then you've got most suitable pathways, but then you've also got early entry programs. Amanda, from a school's perspective, what advice do you give students around, including pathways on their preferences and applying for early entry programs as potentially a back up or even a first option?

00:00:56:05 - 00:00:56:24

Amanda

We say apply for everything

00:00:57:00 - 00:00:57:20

Sam

Yeah

00:00:57:22 - 00:01:27:06

Amanda

We think it's the best thing ever early entry programs and certainly for the students I work with. It takes a lot of pressure off them moving into exams, knowing that they might already have an offer for a course. It doesn't matter if it's your first preference, it might be a course that you're really happy to do, and you might have been given an early entry offer that has lowered the ATAR and then, you know, look, as long as I get that ATAR, I'm in, at Swinburne, they do, early entry

00:01:27:06 - 00:01:31:12

Amanda

And then with a school recommendation, you can get an offer with no ATAR.

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Sam

Yeah that's right.

00:01:31:21 - 00:01:48:21

Amanda

And I know lots of my students who apply, who apply for Swinburne, feel like they go into exams just a little bit more confident and a little bit less stress, knowing that no matter what, they've got that offer sitting there. So we definitely encourage students to apply for everything.

00:01:48:23 - 00:02:09:10

Amanda

And also have pathway options. So I, I make a real point of not assuming any of my students can achieve anything in particular. So the other great thing I love about the fact that I do careers and I

don't teach, is that often a student coming into me, I have no idea about their what they're doing academically, what sort of grades they're getting.

00:02:09:12 - 00:02:36:06

Amanda

So I treat every student the same. And every student who comes to see me will always put down a pathway option, at the bottom of their list, which will mean that regardless of what their ATAR is, they know that they're heading in the right direction and they'll get to where they want to go eventually. So whether that's a diploma program that then articulates into a degree or whether it's a similar course at a different institution, that everyone has a pathway.

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Sam

Yeah, I often I joke with students at expos about like pathways into university and that we've got, you know, the building and it's got the main door that everyone comes through. But if you actually just have a look around the corner, there's about 30 other doors that you can walk through, and they're all different pathways. But at the end of it, they all lead into the same place and that ends into your course.

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Sam

So if you can't get to the front door, walk around the back and have a look and see what's around there as well.

00:02:59:01 - 00:03:25:02

Amanda

And sometimes if you don't get the ATAR that you thought you might get a pathway program, via a diploma actually sets you up better for success because it's a more, gentle transition to, to academic study, and it can allow you to kind of slip into university life in a more supported way, so that then by the second year, when you articulate through to a degree, you're actually really well set up and you've done a really nice transition.

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Amanda

So, yeah, I think there's there's no losses in doing a pathway.

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Sam

Yeah. And the good thing is these days as well, most pathways don't actually add any time to your degree. So you could do a pathway and then move into the second year of the corresponding degree. So it's it's not like the old days where it added a lot of time on to if you didn't get the grade, that was kind of the end.

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Sam

So for some people, like you said, it might actually be a better option to to start with a pathway. Yeah. We have a really handy pathway planner tool on the Swinburne website where you actually can select your destination degree, and the planner will show you all the options that are available and how you can actually get there. So, listeners, you'll be able to find a link to the pathway planner in our show notes.

00:04:05:16 - 00:04:18:14

Sam

Amanda, I had a question for you around early entry programs. There's obviously so many available. How do you navigate the range of different early entry programs in suggesting them to your students?

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Amanda

When the students come in to see me, particularly in term three, when they're deciding on their preferences, if there are any courses that they're applying for, any institutions that have early entry programs, I always encourage them to apply.

00:04:31:17 - 00:04:50:04

Amanda

I think the thing that students miss out on is actually making the most of those early entry programs because they just think, oh, it's another thing I'm already busy with, you know, VCE, you know, I don't want to do another thing but you'd be surprised at how early, not how early, but how easy those programs are to apply for.

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Sam

Yeah, absolutely.

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Amanda

Often they just require a very short statement, maybe a recommendation from your school. Some of them will look at year 11 results. Some will look at what sort of things you'll be doing outside of school, whether you're a volunteer or a coach. So they're all pretty easy.

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Sam

Sam I'm going to come back to you, because I want to ask you a question about when you finished exams and maybe you got your results.

00:05:12:15 - 00:05:20:02

Sam

What considerations did you have for picking that course? How did you decide on Swinburne in the end? And yeah what were you thinking?

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Samuel

Yeah. So I think just to add to the pathways thing, I finished my exams and, I knew that I wanted to get into something creative, but I wasn't fully sure yet. So I did just do what everyone else did and just applied for bachelors, bachelors, bachelors, without really doing any research on, the pathway options available.

00:05:48:24 - 00:06:14:07

Samuel

When the results of of my ATARs came at the time, I, unfortunately didn't know anything about SEAS didn't really know, about what other options were available. So when I applied, I didn't get the ATAR that I wanted. So, I later found out that there was pathway options and I, was like, oh, what is this TAFE thing?

00:06:14:07 - 00:06:36:02

Samuel

What is a diploma? Isn't that where you learn to, apply and become a tradie or electrician? And I later found out that, they have a whole bunch of different programs. That's not just trades. And one of them was something that I really wanted to get into, which was graphic design. So I did a diploma of Graphic Design.

00:06:36:04 - 00:06:59:17

Samuel

Did that found that it was actually, very beneficial for me. It was a course that was a lot more practical. Often times in high school, you don't often get to know the why of what you're learning. Because there's just not enough time. Whereas I found in, my diploma, it was a lot more hands on.

00:06:59:17 - 00:07:29:23

Samuel

And we knew the reasons why we were studying the things that we did. And, like you said, Sam, it didn't really add much onto my time. That, certification from my diploma, did, like, take, the first

year of my, studies there. So I wasn't actually, missing out on anything. I completed my, studies the same amount of time as everyone else.

00:07:30:04 - 00:07:38:02

Sam

Speaking of things, some students might not be aware of. SEAS, Elise, can you just explain to us a little bit about SEAS and what that actually is?

00:07:38:04 - 00:07:55:04

Elise

Sure. So SEAS stands for Special Entry Access Scheme, and it's basically a program that's run through VTAC that recognize any disadvantage that a student might have experienced over their secondary studies, and basically works to give them some additional points, that reflect, you know, the disadvantage that they may have experienced.

00:07:55:07 - 00:08:14:16

Sam

Yeah. I think, you mentioning that applying for special consideration, that's probably one of the biggest regrets I had from high school. My careers teacher, I gave the poor woman a very hard time, and made her life potentially quite miserable at times because I wanted to change careers every single week. I'd go and have a meeting with her.

00:08:14:16 - 00:08:31:03

Sam

But I think in the end she was so sick of me. She wanted me just out of her life, and she never told me about SEAS, so I actually didn't even know what a SEAS application was and I, you know, as Amanda you mentioned, it shouldn't be a numbers game, but for me, it was at the time and I didn't put preferences in because I missed numbers.

00:08:31:03 - 00:08:36:17

Sam

And had I have known SEAS was available, I probably would have actually gotten the numbers I needed. So

00:08:36:17 - 00:08:51:09

Elise

Yeah, definitely. And it's not. Yeah. Not uncommon to hear often about students who later down the track hear about another student or another person they spoke to. Once they get into study that, you know, submitted a SEAS application and they weren't aware that they were, you know, eligible or they didn't, you know, see it as part of the process.

00:08:51:09 - 00:09:04:09

Elise

and didn't think it was relevant for them and didn't maybe didn't even know that they met circumstances that might have given them special consideration. So yeah, it's definitely something worthwhile for students to looking look in to. But yeah, not that everyone would have heard of it before know that they're eligible.

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Sam

And I think too, like there is the some of the conversations I have with students in my role is it seems to be a bit of a stigma around applying for special consideration.

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Sam

And what light can you shed on that? From a VTAC perspective?

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Elise

Yeah, definitely. Yeah, no I agree, I think, we we always like to say at VTAC that there's no way you'll be disadvantaged from submitting a special consideration application that the only two outcomes are either nothing or that it improves your selection rank. So it's always worthwhile. I think at the end of the day, SEAS is a reflection of a difficulty that you may have had as part of your study.

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Elise

So what it's really doing, I guess, for lack of better term, is helping level the playing field and putting you at an advantage. If you hadn't had experienced those circumstances and had that disadvantage that, you know, you may have been able to, you know, achieve a slightly higher, higher mark. So it's really just, I guess, reflecting that and making sure that it is fair and equitable and even for everyone.

00:09:52:14 - 00:10:10:05

Sam

So, Amanda, on that, I have a question for you around giving advice to students. And like, I guess it's pretty clear now that we've established right across the board that ATARs aren't the be all and end all. And, you know, it shouldn't define you and things like that. We understand that. But it is still something to consider.

00:10:10:05 - 00:10:31:01

Sam

And every single university, you know, will require ATAR for at least, you know, part of their offering. So in terms of that, what is it that you wish your students knew about ATAR? Like whether it'd be the difference between like minimal ATAR or a guaranteed ATAR? What do you do in terms of educating them about how to use their ATAR?

00:10:31:03 - 00:10:53:08

Amanda

Yeah. So the biggest thing I wish every student knew and I and I don't think they do know it, is that pretty much all ATARs are adjusted to some degree for university entry. So what that means is that the ATAR that you get when you finish school, when you apply through VTAC for courses is not necessarily the ATAR that is then used for selection.

00:10:53:14 - 00:11:15:18

Amanda

And you can actually use VTAC, VTAC is the most amazing resource. If you go into course search and you look at the courses that you're interested in, you can actually see what the adjustment criteria are. So if you have a SEAS application, we talked about SEAS before for Special Entry Access Scheme. So if you've got some form of disadvantage you'll get some bonusing added on to your ATAR.

00:11:15:18 - 00:11:29:19

Amanda

And that will mean that your ATAR will go up by a few points. But there's also heaps of, subject adjustments. Students don't realize that, if they've done certain subjects at school, they can get subject adjustments.

00:11:29:19 - 00:11:38:07

Sam

Sorry, just to clarify, are you saying that what they see on results day is not necessarily the ATAR that they will use for entry?

00:11:38:07 - 00:11:47:04

Sam

So, for example, if it says my ATAR is 75, I could still potentially get bumped up to 80 for this particular universal for this particular course.

00:11:47:04 - 00:11:47:22

Amanda

Absolutely.

00:11:47:22 - 00:11:48:16

Sam

Yeah. Okay. Right.

00:11:48:19 - 00:12:00:09

Amanda

And I'll give you a real world example. I worked with a student last year. Amazing, young person who really, really wanted to do nursing, midwifery, which is super competitive to get into.

00:12:00:11 - 00:12:19:23

Amanda

So it's a double degree. Often the ATAR is above 80. She got in the 60s and she had the back up plan of nursing. So she was set and she got nursing as a first round offer. But she had some learning needs. So she had a SEAS application and she got some adjustments. She would have got some adjustments for her medical condition.

00:12:19:23 - 00:12:46:06

Amanda

So she had ADHD, for example. She also got some subject bonusing. So she got one offer for nursing in the first round at a particular university that I think was maybe third or fourth preference. In the second round of offers, she actually got a university, a nursing offer that was a bit higher on her list. And in the third round of offers from VTAC, she got nursing, midwifery and it was the ATAR when you look at the data was in the 80s.

00:12:46:06 - 00:12:54:20

Amanda

So she went from an ATAR that was mid 60s to getting into a course that was super competitive and that would have been because of adjustment factors.

00:12:55:01 - 00:12:58:06

Sam

Yeah, I mean, if she didn't know about though, she would have just written herself off.

00:12:58:07 - 00:13:03:16

Amanda

Absolutely. And she didn't believe me. I said to her the whole time, you know, you've really got to aim high.

00:13:03:16 - 00:13:16:18

Amanda

Just leave that on your list. It doesn't matter what number preference you get into, it matters that you're aiming high, and then you've got a backup plan that you're happy with. And in the end, she got her number one preference.

00:13:16:20 - 00:13:24:13

Sam

That's fantastic Amanda, it's really great to hear how much of a difference a SEAS application and the ATAR adjustment factors can actually make.

00:13:24:15 - 00:13:47:18

Sam

If you would like more information on how SEAS could help you, please feel free to reach out to our future student advisors at Swinburne. And they'd be more than happy to give you further advice. Be sure to check the show notes for links to everything we've discussed in today's episode. In the meantime, head on over to episode three, where Swinburne's VTAC podcast What I Wish I Knew continues, and we get the scoop on VTAC applications.

00:13:47:22 - 00:14:01:22

Sam

We'll see you soon.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]