

Plot the way forward

Options abound for HSC graduates but choosing the right path can be tricky. **Sue White** asks the experts to explain the ins and outs of the choices ahead.

UNIVERSITY

Contrary to popular opinion, universities offer both specific and general tertiary study opportunities. If you are unsure about where your preference lies, consider starting with a general degree (such as business studies or arts) – you can always specialise later.

According to the manager of the UTS Careers Service, Malcolm McKenzie, research shows a university degree pays off.

“They improve your chances of getting a job and – once you’re in a position – the opportunities of well-paid positions are higher,” he says. “There are exceptions, of course, but statistically that’s the case.”

TAFE

With 700 courses available across the seven different colleges, the Sydney Institute of TAFE is not short on options.

“Our focus is on practical short courses providing employment skills,” a counsellor at Sydney Institute of TAFE, Julie Robinson, says. “It is actually possible to do a diploma in 12 months.”

While TAFE is ideal for those looking for quick, solid skills to help them enter the workforce, or those wanting advanced standing for university, HSC students need to consider the option early.

“A lot of our courses have an October 30 closing date. We have waiting lists, so it’s an insurance policy to look at what TAFE has to offer in your field,” she says.

SPECIALISED PRIVATE COLLEGES

Specialised private colleges offer targeted, flexible learning with diplomas in everything from business to beauty.

“Private colleges are a niche market but within each college lies great flexibility,” general manager of business and hospitality for Think Education Group, Jenny Jenkins, says. “We have small class sizes and lots of support – both



Great goals ... Robbie Dudley volunteered to gain work experience and now has a job. Photo: Domino Postiglione

Working for free can pay off in the long run

SOMETIMES getting where you want to go requires sacrifices and for students, that often means gaining experience in lieu of pay. As Robbie Dudley knows, unpaid work can often pay off.

The 21-year-old fetched coffee and did data entry for many unpaid hours at Fitness First, before the company hired him as a part-time marketing assistant.

“The volunteer aspect of it doesn’t appeal to everybody,” says Dudley, who is in his final year of a bachelor of business administration (sports management) at the International College of Management. “A lot of people come

academically and for pastoral care,” she says.

As private colleges often have schools in multiple cities, learning options can change to suit your different needs.

“We give students a lot of choice – they can study face to face, online, or move to one of our other campuses interstate,” Jenkins says.

in with the expectations they are going to find a good job straight off.”

After also gaining experience at the front desk of the fitness clubs, Dudley knew he wanted to be working behind the scenes.

When he saw a marketing internship open up on the company’s intranet, he pounced.

“The biggest message I can preach is don’t take anything for granted,” he says.

He advises to take every chance to network and learn. Even if it’s not exactly the opportunity you want, do it anyway because it will open other doors. Dudley began his degree with an interest in player

management but soon looked towards marketing with the encouragement of his professor, Martin Long.

He still doesn’t know what he will do with his qualifications but he says that’s all a part of the journey. “If people mix and match between industries, they get an idea of where they want to steer themselves,” he says. “All the experiences add up to a final decision.”

Fitness First has asked him to work full time but he has decided to stay part time and finish his degree.

Susannah Singh

APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

Whether you are keen on business administration or plumbing, apprenticeships and traineeships can be the perfect stepping stone.

“There are about 250 recognised apprenticeship and traineeship vocations, all recognised by the state government,” employment

services manager with My Gateway Adam Farmer, says.

“They provide structured learning programs, with both on and off-the-job training, so you come out with experience doing job, a referee and a recognised qualification. To apply, keep an eye out for advertisements, school visits or get proactive. Mygateway.org.

lists all apprenticeships and traineeship options."

GAP YEAR

Thousands of HSC graduates head overseas purely to travel, but a gap year can provide some surprisingly high-profile names for your resume. Disney's International College Program welcomes Australian students on their work experience programs in Orlando, Florida.

"My job was working as a concierge at one of the Magic Kingdom Deluxe resorts," university student Elise Routledge says. "It had always been a dream of mine to work for Disney, but it also served my best interests.

"They offered extensive formal training and documentation to show exactly what I had achieved and it was a unique experience to be an Australian working in Walt Disney World."

See disneyinternationalprograms.com/seasonal

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is an excellent way to test a new field. Volunteering NSW has opportunities on offer for people of all ages, while not-for-profit organisations rely heavily on their volunteer crews.

"Oxfam volunteers donate their precious time to help us with our



Good sport ... volunteer co-ordinator Emma Durkin. Photo: Danielle Smith

goal of ending world poverty," volunteer co-ordinator at Oxfam's Sydney office, Emma Durkin, says.

"Anyone over the age of 18 can volunteer and we find many university students get involved because they have a social conscience and would like work experience in the not-for-profit sector."

See volunteering.com.au, oxfam.org.au/act/volunteer-with-us