Not just for high achievers

The skinny on scholarships

Auditions, interviews and folios

How to wow the selection panel

It’s never too late

Tips on returning to study

TOMORROW WHEN YOUR WORLD BEGINS

The future looks bright for Molly Daniels

PLANS: Researching and choosing a course • Getting your preferences in order • The low-down on student services • How to cope when you’re under pressure • HELP and other money matters • How special consideration works

Flip for the VTACmag INSTITUTION SUPPLEMENT
Research courses
Use CourseSearch to browse through over 1700 courses to help you find the one that suits you best!

Get organised
Read up on the process on the VTAC website: who can apply, eligibility requirements, special consideration, scholarships and the application process.

Create an account
Ready to apply? You’ll need to create an account on the VTAC website. Once you’ve done that you can log in to apply for courses, special consideration and scholarships.

Apply for courses
You can apply for up to 8 courses. Don’t worry if you change your mind – you can change them throughout the application period.

Apply for special consideration (SEAS)
If your education has been affected by circumstances outside of your control, you can apply for special consideration through SEAS.

Apply for scholarships
There are lots of different scholarships and they are not all for academic achievement. You might be eligible for more than you think!

Meet the course requirements
Each course has its own selection criteria. Make sure you meet the requirements for your courses and complete any tasks listed.

Make changes
Log in to your VTAC account to change your preferences or update your personal information.

Find out about offers
Offers are sent to your email and released via your VTAC account at different times (known as offer rounds). Check the VTAC website for dates.

Stay updated on:
New and cancelled courses
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Connect with VTAC
2 What is VTAC?

4 Short stuff

11 Good golly, Miss Molly
   The ABC star’s creative study techniques

14 Creating your VTAC account:
   what you need to know

15 Making a course application:
   getting prepared

16 Funny boys
   Aunty Donna, the comedy trio that met at uni

18 Choices, choices
   Finding the right course

20 It’s not just the ATAR
   How institutions select applicants

22 A matter of preference
   Manage your course preference list like a pro

24 Where the road takes you
   Going the long way around can be rewarding

27 30 minute mentor
   Three students talk to industry experts

34 Stone sisters
   Stonefield’s Amy Findlay on her winning assignment

36 Under pressure
   Keeping your cool when you’re under the pump

38 The age of wisdom
   A mature age student offers some perspective

40 Your best impression
   Ace interviews, auditions and folio presentations

43 The skinny on scholarships
   They’re not just for high achievers

47 All things considered
   Understanding special consideration

50 Evidence 101: The course application

51 Evidence 102: Scholarships and SEAS

52 Life after results
   What to do after the big reveal

54 Service central
   All about student services

56 Money matters
   Course fees explained

58 The artful activist
   Margot Fink talks LGBTI issues

61 The last word – from the experts

63 Acknowledgements
If you’re in Year 12, it can sometimes be hard to see beyond the end of your last exam. To make sure you don’t miss out on any opportunities, it’s important to start making some plans early. We asked professional careers advisers for advice on figuring out which courses are a good match.

**What’s my passion?**

Some people have known since birth that they want to have a specific career – whether it’s scientist, doctor, or painter. But the majority of people aren’t that sure, so now’s the time to think about what you might enjoy doing later in life. “Consider the times in your life when you have succeeded or been proud of your achievements,” suggest Peter Craig and Mary-Anne Lewis from Geelong Grammar School. “Think about the strengths you used and consider work environments that would enable these strengths.”

If you’re finding it hard to think about your own personality and work-related interests, consider using an online tool. There are heaps of free online tools that will ask you questions and then tell you more about the types of work that might interest you. Check with the careers adviser at your school to see if they recommend a particular tool.

**Researching courses**

Even if you’ve already got a clear idea of which courses you’re going to apply for, it’s really important to take a closer look and make sure you’ll be getting what you expect. Many of the careers advisers we spoke to emphasised the importance of checking the major studies within the course to make sure you know exactly what’s involved in a prospective course. You can find the major studies listed in the course entry on VTAC CourseSearch.

Once you’ve checked the majors, you can even go a step further. “Go to the university websites to find the units of study offered within various majors,” recommends Erin Shale from Balwyn High School. “Do your research so that you get into the degree that you will love rather than simply like.”

**Going to Open Days**

Every tertiary institution has some kind of open day or other on-campus event for prospective students to get a taste of various courses and life on campus. These events can be huge, so we went straight to the source and asked the organisers how to get the most out of open days.

All of the universities that we spoke to stressed the importance of planning ahead to get the most out of an open day. Sure, you can just turn up and see what happens, but if you want to make sure you see all of the courses that might interest you, you’ll need to be prepared. Some campuses are so large you could waste half the day walking back and forth between buildings if you don’t plan a route ahead of time.

“Check out the schedules online to ensure you don’t miss out on any information sessions,” says Campbell Hulme from La Trobe University, but don’t stress about having every moment planned. “Take a break during open day to relax and hear firsthand from students about their life at on campus.”

Open days will be busy, with large crowds and lots of different activities – some related to courses and others just about student life. It can be overwhelming, so it pays to think ahead of time about what you’d like to get out of the day. “Be sure to have some questions prepared,” advises Suzana Parashis from Victoria University.
How does CourseSearch work?
When you go to CourseSearch on the VTAC website or the CourseSearch app, the first thing you will see is a text box to search for keywords. You can type more than one search term – CourseSearch will look for all of the terms separated by a space.

So searching for “economics Melbourne” will bring up results where the words “economics” and “Melbourne” are found in the parts of the course entry. As well as searching for your keywords in the course and qualification names, CourseSearch will also look in the major studies/areas of study, and even the name of the institution and campus.

You can also look for parts of words, so searching for “psych” will pick up courses which mention psychology, psychiatry, psychological, and so on.

If you search for a broad term such as “production” or “law”, you may get a large number of results, or results which don’t seem to match what you’re looking for – for example, you may be looking for audio production courses instead of agricultural production, or legal studies courses rather than food safety law. If you get a lot of unexpected results, you can refine your search by changing the terms that you look for to be more specific about your area of interest. You can also filter the results using the Advanced Search section.

Advanced Search
Opening the Advanced Search section allows you to filter your search results by institution, campus, area of interest and qualification level. You should use these filters if you are getting a large number of results, or results which don’t seem to match what you’re looking for – for example, you may be looking for audio production courses instead of agricultural production, or legal studies courses rather than food safety law. If you get a lot of unexpected results, you can refine your search by changing the terms that you look for to be more specific about your area of interest. You can also filter the results using the Advanced Search section.

Shortlist
If you’ve gone through the list of courses and find a course you are interested in, you can click on the “Add to Shortlist” button in the top right corner of the course entry. This saves the course temporarily in your browser, and you can click on “View Shortlist” to check and remove courses from your list. Once you close your browser, your list will be deleted, so if you want to hang on to the list, you can email it to yourself by typing your email address above the list and hitting Send. If you’re using the app, you can save the shortlist.

Am I eligible?
The last thing to consider when choosing from a range of different courses is making sure you’re eligible for entry. This means making sure that you meet the prerequisites, and any other selection requirements. When you’re looking at a course description on CourseSearch, you’ll see that these criteria are different for Year 12 applicants and non-Year 12 applicants. If you’re currently in Year 12, or if you’ve completed Year 12 in the past and not yet done any further study above Certificate IV level, you’ll be considered a Year 12 applicant. Check the VTAC website for more information about these categories if you’re not sure.

With so much information available about courses, it can feel a bit too hard. But the selection criteria is one area where you really do need to pay close attention. Not all requirements apply to everyone – for example, a VTAC Personal Statement might only be required from those with relevant work experience, or a requirement to take a test might only apply to mature age applicants. Read this section carefully for every course you’re applying for to make sure you’ve done everything you need to do.

Your final choice
There’s a lot to decide on, and heaps of information out there – so it can all be a bit overwhelming. But remember that no choice you make is final: there will always be opportunities to change courses, head in different career directions, or return to study much later on. Do all the research you can and follow your goals, but remember to be flexible too. As Daniel Lowinger from Yeshivah-Beth Rivkah College says, “Have a plan so you have an idea where you are going, but be ready to adjust it as circumstances require.”

“as this ensures that you will leave with all the information you need to make your course decisions.”

RECOGNISING YOUR TRUE POTENTIAL
At Monash, we know that your ATAR might not accurately reflect your ability. The Monash Guarantee can help you enter your preferred course, even if your ATAR is below the clearly-in.
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MONASH University
Emily and Jo: Psychology

Emily is a student at Goulburn Valley Grammar School, where she is studying Legal Studies, Psychology, Further Mathematics, English and Health and Human Development. She talked to Jo O’Shanessy, a recently retired psychologist with four decades of experience working with students in schools as well as clients in her private practice.

Emily: What did you find most rewarding about your job?

Jo: The thing that strikes me most is that you feel pretty privileged to go through the journey with people. Often people come to see you when they’re really struggling with some life issues. Sometimes, when I was working in schools, the kids would just be told they have to see the psych, and they didn’t want to. But I found that the older the kids got, the more they were likely to self-refer because they just wanted someone neutral, who wasn’t their mum or dad, or their teacher telling them off, but someone who just listened.

Emily: Are there many part-time job opportunities in the field, or is it more something you have to be committed to full-time? For example, if you want to go and have kids, is that doable?

Jo: There are part-time jobs and you can leave the workforce and come back. There are so many different organisations that employ psychologists. It depends on what area interests you. You might still be working on identifying that. Big companies employ psychologists to do personality assessments to see if someone is the right fit for a position. There are government jobs. A friend of mine works in the family court. She’s about to have her second child and she’s still earning a lot of money, basically writing reports.

Emily: Do you see a need for psychologists in the future? Is it a viable job?

Jo: Absolutely. It’s grown heaps, in terms of the number of people who are doing psych. Even just where I live, there are lots of private clinics that have opened up. These days a lot of GP clinics will have a psychologist as well. Not necessarily full-time, they might work across three or four different clinics. There’s now an acceptance of people with mental health issues. The need is not going to go away.

Emily: What type of patients would you deal with on an average day?

Jo: Not only in the private practice, but in schools as well, a lot of people with issues around depression. A lot of people with issues around anxiety. I liked working with people with anxiety.

Emily: When you’re working with people who have mental health issues, does it put stress on you personally? Is there a lot of stress involved?

Jo: It certainly can be. You have to look after yourself. Apart from people with depression or anxiety, I dealt with a lot of grief issues and I also coordinated emergency management for about 15 schools in the region. That means if there’s an incident in a school, a critical incident, I’d get a phone call and I’d go in, with some other people depending on the size of the incident. It might have been a car accident and a teacher or a student has been killed, a hostage situation, or a violent attack at the school. You can roll from one incident to another, but you’ve got to be mindful of your own health.

I worked out I didn’t like working with violent men. When I was in private practice, a few would get through the door before they identified that was their issue. I would refer them on because I didn’t want to work with them. You work out areas where you feel you can do good, but even though you might be doing good, you’ve still got to be really careful because you can overload.

Emily: When you worked, what was the average hours you worked per week? Were they very demanding?

Jo: It varies a lot. Initially I was full-time – at school at 8am until 4pm or 5pm, sometimes with after hours training sessions for teachers or parents. And I went to parent-teacher interviews – that was extra hours.
Amy Findlay was in the final year of her music degree when her band, Stonefield, won Triple J’s Unearthed High competition in 2010. She wrote the winning song, ‘Foreign lover’, as an assignment for her songwriting class, and recorded it with her three younger sisters – Amy on lead vocals and drums, Hannah on guitar, Sarah on keyboards and Holly on bass. It was their mum who suggested they enter the song in the competition on the final day of submissions. “We almost didn’t upload it,” says Amy, who is now 26. “It’s a weird feeling to hear your song on the radio for the first time. We were just so excited. We definitely didn’t think we would win.”

By then the four Findlay sisters had been playing in the shed on their family farm halfway between Gisborne and Whittlesea for six years. They’d played various local school and community gigs, learning their instruments from the music teacher who lived next door. But things really took off for the band after they won Unearthed, and before they had even released an album they were booked to play at the famous Glastonbury Festival in England. Since then they’ve released two EPs and a self-titled album, with a follow up, As Above So Below, due out this month.

Amy went to Whittlesea Secondary College, completing Year 12 in 2007. (Her sisters all went to school in Gisborne.) After attending her local town’s tiny primary school with about forty other kids, she had a bit of a hard time adjusting to a school with hundreds of students. “I felt like I fit in once I found music,” she says.

In Year 12, Amy studied Music by distance education, which presented some challenges. “The whole distance education thing threw me off a bit and perhaps made me focus a bit too much on one subject, because it was really hard to keep up with the workload,” she says. “When you’re in class it’s easier to get through because you have friends and teachers to talk to and ask questions.”

Still, she did well enough to get in to her first course preference – the Bachelor of Australian Popular Music at NMIT. (NMIT has since changed its name to Melbourne Polytechnic, and the course is now called the Bachelor of Music.) “It was something I always wanted to do, and it felt like the next step,” says Amy. “I knew that I wanted to go on to further study and that music

“I felt like I fit in [at high school] once I found music.”
was the thing I was passionate about. I was actually planning on doing a Dip Ed after my music degree, but then we got too busy with the band. But that’s always there for me if I want to go back and do it.”

While Stonefield’s psych-rock sound is heavily influenced by their parents’ collection of Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin and Frank Zappa records, Amy was excited to learn about a broader range of musical styles during her degree. “It covered a lot of different aspects of music and the music industry,” she says. “There was a lot of stuff about business and applying for grants, which has come in really handy. Also world music, which exposed me to Indian and Brazilian music and using different scales. I had a jazz singing teacher at one point. It wasn’t really the kind of music I sang or listened to, but it taught me a lot about being a better singer.”

Amy commuted from home for the first two years of her degree, taking a V/Line train to the city and then heading back out to Fairfield. It was a long trip – if she missed a train home she’d use the hour-long wait for the next one to do homework and listen to music – and in her final year she moved to St Kilda to make things a bit easier. But as a country girl at heart, Amy enjoyed the community vibe on the small campus. “It was nice. Peacocks flocking around, lots of trees and stuff,” she says. “It’s more intimate. You have the opportunity to get to know your teachers a lot better. It’s not as overwhelming as going to a big city campus.”

With the band suddenly getting big just as Amy was finishing her studies, the other Findlay sisters have put their own educations on hold in order to focus on recording and touring. Hannah, 23, was in Year 12 when they won Unearthed, and had to suddenly juggle a music career with assessments and exams. She started a psychology course online but dropped out to focus on the band. “Also she felt like she wanted to be going to university, experiencing all the other good things about uni apart from just doing the coursework,” says Amy. Sarah, 22, finished her Year 12 over two years to balance it out with band commitments, and Holly, 18, attempted the same thing this year but pulled out of school to focus on the music. But none of the sisters are ruling out a return to study further down the track. “Holly is a perfectionist and she was putting too much pressure on herself,” says Amy. “When the band settles down a bit she might go back. Her options are open and it’s something she’s thought about a lot. It was a really big decision.”

As long as the Findlay sisters are finding success with Stonefield, the rest can wait. “I think we may as well grasp the opportunity while we can,” says Amy. “So many bands have tried to get where we are, so I think we’re pretty fortunate to do what we do. Study will always be there if we want to do it later – right now music is our main focus.”

Stonefield’s new album As Above So Below is out on July 15. stonefield.com.au

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