



# **Inquiry into School to Work Transition**

## **Submission to Standing Committee on Education and Employment**

**Pearson Asia Pacific**

**Monday 31 July, 2017**

### **Summary**

In our discussions with leaders in the education sector we have found a diverse range of opinions on how we should prepare young Australians for the jobs of the future.

It is our submission that this divergence of thought on the issue comes from lessons learned in recent history.

Over the years we have seen schools, universities and governments invest millions of dollars in smart boards, tablets, laptops, applications and learning management systems.

In many cases only a few years later these products are abandoned because the educators found using them too difficult, they did not change classroom practice or improve student learning, or sometimes they did not work.

As our home and working lives become more technology based, many learning environments and instructors are ill prepared for the impact these rapid changes have on best-practice teaching and learning. In some instances technology has become the destination, rather than the path to learning. And this has led to an abandoning of other efficacious tools that could enhance good teaching and learning.

There is an ongoing policy discussion about whether, as a result of huge, misplaced investment in technology in schools, Australia should go 'back to basics' in education.

When it comes to health, no one talks about the 'good old days' of medicine.

To repeat the well known analogy, a present day patient would not like to get their tonsils removed at a hospital that opened in the 1930s and has not changed since.

Therefore, Australian learners and their families surely prefer our children be educated in a modern, flexible and fit-for-purpose learning space, rather than a pre-war classroom.

We should acknowledge it: advancements in technology will result in the replacement of some jobs and occupations by algorithms or robots. This is as inevitable as the implications of the car were for the horse and carriage.

So rather than fearing the inevitable, educators should be learning how to harness the power of technology to better equip both students, teachers and society at large to adapt to a re-shaped workforce.

Education companies, like Pearson, have an important role to play in supporting educators and institutions as they grapple with these changing needs.

We believe our range of products, services and partnerships is a valuable, robust and flexible means to support the transition from school, into higher education and training, and ultimately, into fulfilling work and life.

## About Pearson

Pearson is the world's leading learning company, with about 35,000 employees in over 70 countries, including about 400 people in Australia.

We work to help people of all ages make measurable progress in their lives through learning. Pearson provides learning materials, technologies, assessments and services to teachers and students in order to help people everywhere aim higher and fulfil their potential.

## Terms of reference:

### 1. Measurements of gain in school and how this contributes to supporting students to prepare for post-school education and training;

The following are two examples of Pearson products currently in use within schools to prepare and assess students for a post-school education and employability.

#### Q Interactive - Clinical Assessment in Primary Schools

[Q-interactive](#) is a tablet-based assessment platform used by school psychologists that allows them to accurately and efficiently administer clinical assessments of areas such as intellectual ability, memory and language. Online assessment makes the presentation of tasks, recording of results, observation and note-taking easier for the clinician and more engaging for the student.

Q-interactive and its corresponding assessments play an important role in ensuring students are making progress in learning. It allows educators to better understand where a student is on key language, thinking and social-emotional skills that underpin a young learner's ability to make good decisions, to be curious, resilient lifelong learners that contribute to society and achieve lifelong goals. Clinical Assessment tools allow schools to intervene early and support individual development of the skills that will see learners succeed throughout secondary and tertiary education and in the workforce.

#### Lightbook - Australia's digital platform for high school students

[Pearson Lightbook](#) is an interactive digital platform used in Australian schools that lets teachers see how their students are learning and progressing, light years ahead of what a textbook can do.

It has a dashboard so teachers can see who in their class is understanding something, and who needs more assistance.

Although Lightbook is a new product, used by just over 30,000 Australian students, it has been designed in a way that, over time we can identify things like common misconceptions, set predictives and suggest and measure interventions.

This is based on the individual student's need - to help them grasp something that they otherwise may have missed.

Lightbook, an Australian invention, is designed to deliver personalised and differentiated learning through digital technology. Being able to follow a self-directed digital pathway is exactly what modern day jobs and universities require.

## More to do

Pearson acknowledges there is much more to do to assist children and young people prepare for the skills and jobs of the future. It is a responsibility we share with policy makers as well as the education and business sectors.

The following is an innovation that is still under development within our organisation. It has the potential to accurately determine the progress of a student - through school to complete readiness for further education, and ultimately, work.

### **Case study: Postsecondary Readiness Index (PRI)**

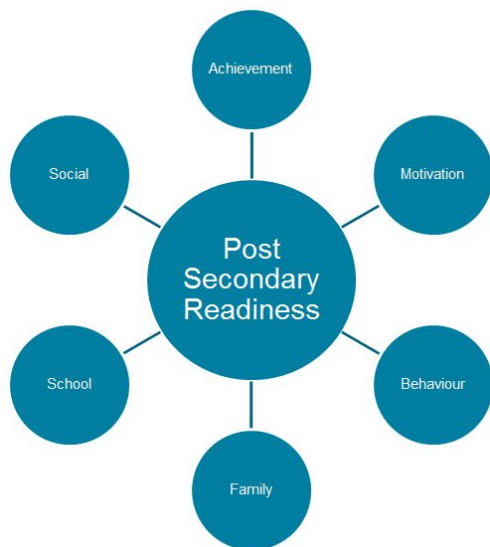
Pearson has developed an algorithm that predicts a student's likely completion of secondary school, preparedness for tertiary education, and ultimately a career.

The PRI is designed to help solve the challenge that many schools face - that teachers focus primarily on academic results, not on the whole child.

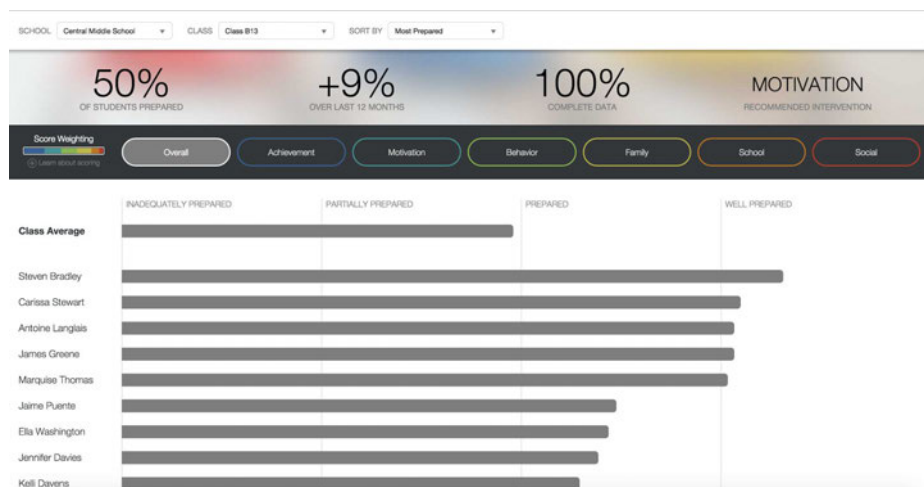
Academic assessments are one important part of tracking students' progress toward tertiary education and a career, but they do not capture several other characteristics integral to life success.

The PRI includes achievement, as well as five other indicators: motivation, behavior, social engagement, family circumstances, and school characteristics.

The aim is to provide a holistic view of student's readiness. As outlined below:



A prototype of the dashboard is below:



Pearson is exploring investment options to develop this index further, and is willing to co-create a scalable model with Government, or other interested organisations.

## 2. Opportunities to better inform and support students in relation to post-school education and training, including use of employment outcomes of students who undertake school-based vocational education or post-school tertiary pathways;

The following are two products and services, developed by Pearson, and integrated into schools and universities by educators, that support students for post school study and work.

## University Partnerships

Pearson has online program management partnerships with universities in Australia, the US and the UK. While relatively new, they are producing positive student retention and employment outcomes.

Through our partnerships with Griffith and Monash Universities, we graduated hundreds of students in 2016. These students range from professionals, to stay-at-home mothers to tradespeople. Many of them had access to such high quality institutions, through the power of online education, for the first time in their lives.

A learner in one of our six week, six terms a year courses could gain skills and support throughout their program which helps them move quickly through their qualification, gaining the skills and experiences that will set them up for success in the workplace.

### Case Study: University Partnerships' Potential

In our conversations with university, academics and administrators share our concerns regarding student employability.

Pearson is developing new courses, as part of our ongoing partnership with universities, to help ensure a smooth transition from tertiary study to a long and fulfilling career. The two main offerings which can be a compulsory or non-compulsory part of the curriculum are:

#### *Career coaching workshops*

These workshops are customised to the courses offered to online students and incorporate feedback we collect from students to further enhance the experience. They will include:

- CV building
- Cover letter writing
- Selection criteria writing
- Interview skills
- Networking and
- Personal brand development

In addition, Pearson will provide personal career advisors to students who need one-to-one support in any of the areas above. This can be facilitated through phone calls, emails and video calls.

## **Career Progression & Readiness**

Pearson incorporates its online career progression series, which is 12 hours of self-paced content designed by program industry experts and provides interactive, engaging modules for example:

- Managing Self
- Managing Culture
- Managing Task

Our career readiness program will be available to all students throughout their course, and prepares students to transition from life as a university student, to life as an employee. Career Coaches will use information such as student reflections and module activities to create additional, relevant workshops.

## **Connected Learning**

Pearson will support students' career development by recognising the relevance of work students complete in their course, and in turn, are able to support their personal career progression.

ePortfolios and digital badging will allow students to use a personal ePortfolio, integrated with a university's learning management system.

Students are able to showcase and digitally archive assignments and assessments and exhibit the evidence of learning and skills gained to connect to open career opportunities.

In addition to the benefits attained during job hunting, research indicates that students that use ePortfolios during their studies have higher results, and higher completion rates.



The digital badges students can earn throughout their studies provides students with the evidence they need to prove their skills and experience.

With the target demographic of online, it is likely that students will not want to wait until graduation to begin using education as leverage for career enhancement or changes.

By earning badges, backed by industry associations, students can easily share their achievements with potential employers, who can instantly verify their skills. Digital badges are able to mark milestones in a student's educational journey that otherwise may go unnoticed and may also be used as a recognition for prior learning. The intention is to encourage students to persist through motivation, recognition of achievements, and connecting their learning to the real-world.

Through Pearson's digital badging division, Acclaim, job seekers will be able to tell the full story of their professional, and educational lives with verifiable information. Employers can then easily evaluate and validate the qualifications of job applicants, and credentialing bodies, academic institutions and professional organisations can ensure their course's integrity online.

Acclaim has issued 8 million badges and has over one million users and are leaders in professional recognition.

Importantly, Acclaim uses data from labour markets around the world, including Australia, to match badges with employment opportunities. This uniquely positions students with the opportunity to engage in a two-way job hunt where they search for employment opportunities and employers search for prospects based on skills and badges earned.

## Vocational Qualifications

Pearson's Business, Technology and Education Council ([BTEC](#)) offers a range of professional qualifications for learners transitioning to work, progressing through their careers, or planning to enter university. Over 1 million learners around the world take a BTEC annually.

BTEC qualifications are created by working with government and private sector to define required skills and recognise qualifications to ensure that the learner is equipped with the knowledge and skills that local industry demands.

Pearson's London Chamber of Commerce ([LCCI](#)) offers job specific, short courses enabling the learner to gain relevant and employable skills quickly that may enable them gain employment early in their degree whilst continuing to study.

### **3. Other related matters that the Committee considers relevant.**

Pearson Asia Pacific is currently undertaking research into the matters that concern the



committee as subject to this inquiry, with a focus on the student.

The qualitative and quantitative research is in market throughout July and we expect the results to be finalised in September.

The research will, among other things, examine the economic and employment circumstances of a student at different stages in their life. The research pool will include:

- Current undergraduate students
- Graduates still seeking work
- Graduates who have worked but are now unemployed or are seeking a career change

Pearson would be happy to present our research to the committee at a later stage if desired.

Heather Gilmore