

## **Choosing the Right Mix – Guiding Our Students in a “Pick ‘n Mix” University System**

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This workshop draws on emerging themes from the “Millennium Graduate Project”. Millennium Graduates were asked to reflect back on their time at Otago and give some insight into their educational experiences and how they have impacted on their lives since. While data collection and analysis is on-going, one of the main issues for graduates is that of selecting degrees and courses.

About 40% of our graduates when asked what they would do differently indicated that if they were to go back and do their degree again, they would choose a different degree or different courses. If they could go back most students would do a more vocational degree (and conversely a few graduates who had taken a vocational degree suggested they would rather take courses for interest). There is a real concern about poor careers advice from schools, and also a lack of guidance once in the university system, where advice can come from many sources. Many graduates would have liked to have received professional careers advice before, during and after their higher education.

Given the cost of courses and substantial financial burden, it seems more important than ever to get it right the first time! Many students are weighing up their debt against the perceived ‘value’ of their degree and are questioning the role that the university played in getting them into their current position. Furthermore, once in the university system, there is a sense of “pick ‘n mix” in putting together a degree. Semesterisation appears to have compounded the problem with more flexible entry and exits and the possibility to fast-track degrees.

In this workshop we will explore some key questions. What is the purpose of a university education? What is the university system in the New Zealand context? What advice is provided by the institution to help students select courses?