



**PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT**

PIFS(04)FEDMA.06

**EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING**

*Apia, Samoa  
28-29 January 2004*

**AGENDA ITEM 5**

**PRE-UNIVERSITY COURSES IN THE PACIFIC**

This paper was prepared by the Forum Secretariat for the information of Ministers.



## PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

PIFS(04)FEDMA.06

### EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

*Apia, Samoa  
28-29 January 2004*

#### *Summary brief*

### PRE-UNIVERSITY COURSES IN THE PACIFIC

#### **Purpose**

To provide information on courses available for the pre-university year of the secondary school cycle in the Pacific region.

#### **Background**

2. There is a range of pre-university courses available for students in the Pacific. Some countries have developed their own courses, others use qualifications from New Zealand or the USA, others use regionally developed courses.
3. This co-existence of the various courses was raised as a concern at the last University of the South Pacific Council meeting and the last annual general meeting of the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment. A Forum member has requested that a further opportunity to discuss this issue be provided at this meeting.
4. This paper provides a summary of courses available in the region, with a particular focus on the two regional courses, the University of the South Pacific Foundation and the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment's new South Pacific Form Seven Certificate.



## PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

PIFS(04)FEDMA.06

### EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

*Apia, Samoa  
28-29 January 2004*

#### PRE-UNIVERSITY COURSES IN THE PACIFIC

##### **Purpose**

To provide information on courses available for the pre-university year of the secondary school cycle in the Pacific region.

##### **Background**

2. There is a range of pre-university courses available for students in the Pacific. Some countries have developed their own courses, others use qualifications from New Zealand or the USA, others use regionally developed courses.

3. This co-existence of the various courses was raised as a concern at the last University of the South Pacific Council meeting and the last annual general meeting of the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment. A Forum member has requested that a further opportunity to discuss this issue be provided at this meeting.

##### **Summary of Current Courses Available**

###### *University of the South Pacific foundation courses*

4. Foundation programmes in science or social science provide a pathway to degree level study. This programme was initially established because many USP member countries did not have their own equivalent course.

5. USP foundation programmes have a sound reputation and are well regarded as an entry into degree programmes. They have played a valuable role in opening up access both to school leavers and to adults who wish to pursue tertiary education. There is considerable demand for foundation courses.

6. The USP foundation programmes are available by distance and flexible learning from USP centres in USP member countries<sup>1</sup>. Enrolment may be full-time or part-time.

7. The programmes are also taught face-to-face at the Form 7 level by special arrangements in several schools in member countries. The cost per student for this arrangement is considerably lower than enrolling individually through a USP centre. Foundation courses taught by schools or with tuition at centres are referred to as 'Augmented Foundation Programmes.'

8. Member country contributions are not used to support the USP foundation programmes as they are self-supporting courses.

9. USP will be reviewing its foundation courses in 2004.

#### *South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC)*

10. The South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) was requested by its member countries<sup>2</sup> to develop a regional Form 7 examination that would follow on from the Pacific Secondary School Certificate (PSSC). The South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC) is on the lines of the New Zealand University Bursary Examination and SPBEA has worked closely with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in its development.

11. Course prescriptions, teachers' guides for assessment; rules and procedures have been developed. In addition, suitable textbooks and resources have been identified and teaching programmes to help teachers develop schemes of work have been suggested. Grading systems, fees schedules for examiners, moderators and markers all needed to be approved.

12. The New Zealand Committee of Vice Chancellors has given formal recognition to the SPSFC. The University of the South Pacific has confirmed its recognition for admission to USP. Consultation has taken place with the University of Papua New Guinea for acceptance of the SPSFC and approval has been given.

13. Eleven subjects have been developed, approved and distributed and more will be developed in 2004.

14. Eleven schools in Kiribati, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have agreed to take the SPSFC in 2004 with an estimated 600-700 students participating. In order to maintain quality, schools need to go through an accreditation process. This also applies to the PSSC.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu,

<sup>2</sup> Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

*Fiji Form Seven Examination (FFSE)*

15. This examination was developed in the early 1980s to meet the growing demand from students. It is now well established with over 3,000 students sitting 13 subjects. Some students opt to take the USP foundation courses as an alternative to the FFSE.

*University Preparatory Year at the National University of Samoa*

16. The National University of Samoa offers a University Preparatory Year for Year 13 students. Courses are offered in commerce, social science and science.

*Metropolitan Country Courses and Examinations*

17. Several Forum Island Countries follow education systems that are closely linked to countries such as New Zealand or the USA. These are often due to historical associations between countries.

*Private education providers*

18. With increasing globalisation and the commodification of education, various education providers from countries outside of the Pacific Islands are offering pre-university courses in the region. Such courses tend to be expensive and are therefore limited to those who can afford them.

**Recommendation**

19. Ministers may wish to consider noting this paper.

**Table 1 Pre-university courses taken in Forum Island Countries\***

<b>Country</b>	<b>Pr-university courses</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Cook Islands	NZ University Bursary	
Federated States of Micronesia	College of Micronesia (FSM) has its own entrance test. Some students do US exams such as TEOFL, ACT, SAT	
Fiji	Fiji Forum Seven Examination USP Foundation (by extension)	
Kiribati	USP Foundation offered in some schools.	Some schools will do SPFS at s in 2004
Nauru	USP Foundation.	
Niue	NZ University Bursary	
Palau	US examinations: TOEFL, SAT and ACT**	
Papua New Guinea	Secondary High School Certificate (Grade 12)	
Republic of Marshall Islands	USP Foundation offered in some schools as well as US exams.	
Samoa	University Preparatory Year at National University of Samoa	
Solomon Islands	USP Foundation offered in some schools.	Some schools will do SPFS at s in 2004
Tonga	USP Foundation offered in some schools.	Some schools will do SPFS at s in 2004; Senior Cambridge also being introduced.
Tuvalu	Highest exam offered has been PSSC. Tuvalu students have had to do pre-university years in Fiji, Samoa or NZ. USP Foundation will be offered in the only secondary school from 2004	Tuvalu is interested in doing SPFSC in future.
Vanuatu	USP Foundation offered in some schools.	Some schools will do SPFS at s in 2004

\* This table is based on information available at the time of writing ,but may contain errors and omissions, which are regretted.

\*\*TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language; SAT – Stanford Achievement Test; ACT- American College Testing