

FACTORS LEADING TO THE NON-COMPLETION
OF UNITS AT AN A.C.T. SECONDARY COLLEGE.

BY

W.S.NEWMAN, B.Sc., Dip.Ed.

A Thesis (Type 2) submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education in the
Canberra College of Advanced Education.

July, 1987.

ABSTRACT.

This study looks at factors relating to the non-completion of units of study by students in a secondary college. It is aimed at providing information for decision-makers at Erindale College specifically in the area of course counselling. Administrators and counsellors at other colleges should also find the information of value.

The study compared a sample of students who completed all their chosen units of study in one semester with all students who did not complete all of their chosen units in that semester. The latter group consisted of those who withdrew from one or more units during the semester, those who left the college and those who were deemed "unassessable" as a result of poor attendance or non-submission of assessment items.

All 362 students in the college were asked to complete a Baseline Questionnaire during Week 3 of Semester 1, 1985. This sought background information about reasons for enrolling at college, influences on their choice of units, future intentions, preferred ways of learning and other details. Students who withdrew from, or changed units during the semester were asked to complete a Change of Unit Survey and any leavers were asked to complete a Leaver's Survey.

In Week 16 (May, 1985) all students still enrolled were asked to complete an End of Semester Questionnaire

designed to enable comparisons of attitudes between those who completed all units and those who did not.

The study looks at a number of characteristics of students and their attitudes to various aspects of learning, college life and choice of units of study. It attempts to look at factors that might affect the student's decision to complete or not complete a chosen unit of study. The factors considered were largely based upon studies of early school leavers.

FINDINGS.

1. Students who do not complete units tend to have one or more of the following characteristics (significant at the 0.05 level):

- (a) do not enrol to gain tertiary entrance qualifications
- (b) enrol to improve their chances of getting a job
- (c) are not definitely seeking a tertiary entrance score
- (d) have no definite intention of completing Year 12
- (e) have no firm intention of studying subjects in order to complete major or minor courses in them
- (f) are less likely to have a part-time job
- (g) by the end of the semester, are not happy with their marks in most units
- (h) finish the semester studying less than 3 T-units
- (i) continue into Semester 2 with 3 or more A-units and less than 3 T-units

(j) do not consider their parents' wishes an important influence on the choice of units for Semester 2.

In addition to these, one other finding of interest, with a significance of 0.055 (approx.), showed that non-completers tend to come from a socio-economic background of parents who are either managers/employers/self-employed or manual-skilled workers (i.e. not professional or non-manual/clerical).

2. No significant differences at the 0.05 level were found between males and females nor between Year 11 and Year 12 students in their tendency to complete units.

3. Students who change or withdraw from units give the following reasons (in rank order of frequency):

- they are getting poor marks
- they are unable to understand the work
- they find the class activities uninteresting
- they state that the content is not very relevant to their needs
- the unit is not suited to their career plans.

IMPLICATIONS.

The implications for administrators at Erindale College are:

1. Students should be encouraged to formulate specific goals and develop a commitment to their education.

2. Students who are "at risk" need to be identified early and given tutorial assistance in units where they are having difficulty with understanding.

3. The curriculum must be kept under review in order to provide for the needs of all students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

A number of people have helped me in various ways in the course of this study and deserve special mention as well as my grateful thanks.

Dr Cherry Collins has given me a great deal of encouragement and valuable advice, particularly in the interpretation of my results and the production of the final report. Her ability to see a broader perspective and her patience and thoroughness were greatly appreciated as they enabled me to focus on the key issues arising from the results and present them in this report.

Dr Don Williams, my original supervisor who moved to another institution in 1985, helped in the planning stages with the methodology and questionnaire design. His wise counsel in those early stages is gratefully acknowledged.

Mr Dennis Strand of the Evaluation and Research Section of the ACT Schools Office, introduced me to the version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences available on the Schools Authority's computer system and graciously taught me how to use it for the analysis of my results.

Mr Page Dixon, formerly a library research officer with the ACT Schools Authority, obtained for me copies of many of the articles on early leaving, which I was able to

read prior to commencing the study. Many of these are listed in the bibliography, and I am extremely grateful to Page for his willing and efficient help.

I am also in debt to the principal of Erindale College, Mr Fred Jones, for his agreement to allow the study to be undertaken, and to both the staff and students at the college who participated and helped in the gathering of data.

To Mr Allen Brooke, of Erindale College, I also express thanks for his help and advice in the typing and printing of this thesis using the word processing system available at the college.

Finally, I must acknowledge the support and encouragement of my wife and family. They have been extremely patient over a rather protracted period, and without their cooperation and help I would have found great difficulty in completing this thesis.

My thanks to all.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	(i)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(v)
CONTENTS	(vii)
LIST OF TABLES	(viii)
CHAPTER 1 Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2 Literature Review and Hypotheses	17
CHAPTER 3 Methodology	34
CHAPTER 4 Results of the Baseline Questionnaire and the Change of Unit Survey	58
CHAPTER 5 Results of the Leaver's Survey, the Socio-economic Status Survey and the End of Semester Questionnaire	79
CHAPTER 6 Conclusions and Discussion	99
CHAPTER 7 Implications	125
BIBLIOGRAPHY	137
APPENDICES	140

LIST OF TABLES.

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
3.1 Completers, Non-completers and Leavers by Sex and Year.	37
3.2 Total Population by Sex and Year.	38
3.3 Types of Non-completers.	46
4.1 Completers and Non-Completers by Year.	59
4.2 Completers and Non-Completers by Sex.	59
4.3 Completers and Non-Completers Enrolling "To Gain Tertiary Entrance".	60
4.4 Completers and Non-Completers Enrolling "To Improve Their Job Chances".	61
4.5 Completers and Non-Completers by Part-Time Job.	62
4.6 Completers and Non-Completers by Intention to Complete Year 12.	63
4.7 Completers and Non-Completers by Identified Careers.	64
4.8 Completers and Non-Completers by Minimum Qualifications for Careers.	65
4.9 Completers and Non-Completers by Influences on Unit Selection in Rank Order.	66
4.10 Number of T-Units Chosen by Completers and Non-Completers.	68
4.11 Number of A-Units Chosen by Completers and Non-Completers.	68
4.12 Number of R-Units Chosen by Completers and Non-Completers.	69

4.13	Completers and Non-Completers by Intention to Continue Subjects for 2 or More Semesters.	70
4.14	Completers and Non-Completers' Preferences for Learning Styles.	73
4.15	Reasons for Changing Units in Rank Order.	75
4.16	Person of Most Help in Making Decision to Change Unit(s).	77
5.1	Reasons for Leaving College.	79
5.2	College Environment Factors Related to the Decision to Leave College.	80
5.3	Reasons for Leaving Related to Students' Personal Characteristics.	81
5.4	Leavers and Continuers by Intention to Complete Year 12.	82
5.5	Leavers and Continuers by Preference for Studying Units Where Teacher Gives Notes and Handouts.	82
5.6	Leavers and Continuers by Year and by Sex.	83
5.7	Parent Occupations of Students in Sample.	85
5.8	Completers and Non-Completers by Parent Occupation (Combined Groupings).	86
5.9	Adjusted Cross-Tabulation of Completers and Non-Completers By Parent Occupation. (Combined Groupings).	87
5.10	Completers and Non-Completers by Feelings about Erindale College at End of Semester 1.	88
5.11	Completers and Non-Completers by Future Intentions as at End of Semester 1.	90

5.12 Career Changes Between Beginning and End of Semester.	91
5.13 Completers and Non-Completers by Change in Career Intention.	91
5.14 Completers and Non-Completers by Number of T-Units Being Continued.	92
5.15 Completers and Non-Completers by Number of A-Units Being Continued.	92
5.16 Completers and Non-Completers by Importance of Influences on Semester 2 Choices.	94
5.17 Completers and Non-Completers by T-Units Studied.	95
5.18 Completers and Non-Completers by A-Units Studied.	95
5.19 Completers and Non-Completers by R-Units Studied.	96
5.20 Completers and Non-Completers by Feelings About Units Being Studied.	97

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION.

THE PROBLEM.

This study seeks to answer two main questions:

1. What reasons do students give for not completing their chosen units?

2. When completers and non-completers are compared with respect to a number of variables, what underlying factors possibly lead to non-completion?

Originally there was a third aim - to look for factors common to students who leave college altogether. However, as only a small number of students (36) left, and an even smaller number (21) completed the Leaver's Survey, no reliable conclusions could be drawn about leavers. Nevertheless, a brief discussion of some indications is included in Chapter 5. For the purpose of the other two questions, leavers were regarded as non-completers.

For each of the main questions a number of subsidiary questions were posed. These then formed the basis for the questionnaires and surveys used in the study.

From question 1 above, the following were formulated:

(a) What reasons do students give for withdrawing from units?

(b) Do students who fail to complete units have some common personal and/or social characteristics which act as contributing factors to their non-completion?

(c) Do non-completers have some common attitudes to

the college environment and/or organisation?

Question 2 gave rise to the following:

(a) Is there a difference between completers and non-completers in their attitudes to learning, the college environment and/or its organisation?

(b) Is there a difference between completers and non-completers in their goals, backgrounds (socio-economic and educational) and/or their career aspirations?

With regard to both main questions, the study considers whether there are any differences between males and females and between Year 11 and Year 12 students with respect to their completion of units.

THE NEED.

At the beginning of each semester at Erindale College, students are allowed to change their chosen units. This is intended to cater for those students who decide in the first few weeks that they have not made an appropriate choice. Normally such changes are completed by Week 4. However, as the semester progresses, many students still seek to change their unit selection. This may take one of two forms:

- the student decides to study a similar unit at a different level e.g. a lower level of mathematics, or
- the student decides to withdraw from the unit without taking up another.

The total number of these changes over the semester is quite large, involving 25% of students in Semester 1,

1985. Apart from the unsettling effect on the students concerned and the classes which are involved these changes also create a considerable administrative workload. As the administrator responsible for recording these changes on the college computer records and establishing class rolls, I was concerned to find out whether there might be ways of reducing the number of changes.

The large number of changes would suggest that the college is not meeting the needs of these students. Therefore, a related reason for studying this problem is the desire to cater more adequately for the needs of all students enrolled at the college.

In 1984 the Commonwealth Department of Education initiated its Participation and Equity Program (PEP) as the main thrust of its overall framework of youth policies. Funding was made available to the ACT Schools Authority and was directed through its PEP Committee and Youth Services Advisory Committee to schools to improve the "range and quality of opportunities for youth in the ACT". In particular, these committees sought to "encourage curriculum reform and diversification projects" in ACT schools and colleges and "provide in-depth and comprehensive understanding about the needs of youth". ("Impact" March, 1984).

In its first year (1984) PEP was aimed (among other things) at "the identification of particular target groups, such as those who do not constitute the 'core' of

high school students who progress to higher education". ("Impact" March, 1984). Secondary colleges do not only attract these "core" students. Since their inception they have attracted a larger and larger percentage of the total age group so that in 1985 almost 80% of Year 10 students proceeded to college. An important function of secondary colleges is to provide expanded curriculum choices to both attract and keep non-"core" students in the secondary system.

Erindale College was one of the schools and colleges which made a successful application for PEP funding for 1985. Therefore as part of this program it was important to establish the aspects of the curriculum which were not meeting the needs of the "non-core" students in particular, and to establish just what the needs of these students are. This study seeks to throw some light on these PEP issues.

One further reason for this study relates to the on-going review of the college's pastoral care and counselling system. Students seeking to change or withdraw from units are advised to discuss the matter with the Assistant Principal (Student Welfare), the Counsellor or the Careers Adviser. This study seeks to provide some feedback which will lead to more effective counselling in this area as well as in the initial advice given when students first make their unit choices for the semester.

BACKGROUND.

Students entering Erindale College at Year 11 are given a wide range of units from which to select their study program. They are first presented with the options in the form of an enrolment selection sheet together with a handbook containing, amongst other things, a brief description of the various courses and units being offered. The descriptions are designed to state briefly the main content and objectives of each unit. Students are also advised, in the handbook, about the status of courses in terms of tertiary accreditation. The bulk of units offered are tertiary accredited although the proportion of accredited units is being increased year by year to meet the needs of students. In Semester 1, 1985, a total of 66 tertiary-accredited (T) units and 38 accredited (A) units were offered.

(Note: Tertiary accredited units are those which have been accredited as suitable preparation for future tertiary studies and are generally more academically demanding. Accredited (A) units are those not accredited as suitable preparation for future tertiary study.)

Students are encouraged to choose a minimum of 5 units in Year 11. Year 12 students tend to choose 4 or 5 units depending on the number they have successfully completed the previous year. In addition to these T and A units, students are encouraged to undertake at least 1 registered (R) unit which may be a sport or other leisure activity.

The number and nature of units chosen is related to

the requirements for tertiary entrance. The ACT Schools Accrediting Agency has established a pattern of courses and units which must be completed by any student seeking entrance to a tertiary institution. This is referred to as the "tertiary package". For Erindale College students, the tertiary package consists of:

A. 18 units of which at least

(1) 17 must be either T or A

(2) 11 must be T

B. These units must form courses in one of the following patterns:

(1) 3 major + 3 minor courses or

(2) 4 majors + 1 minor course or

(3) 5 major courses

Of these courses, at least 3 majors and 1 minor must be made up of T-units.

Since students complete their studies over 4 semesters, it is common to find students who have completed 10 units over the two semesters of Year 11 taking either 4 units in each of the two semesters in Year 12 or taking 5 units in one semester and 3 in the other, if they are seeking a tertiary package. Many other students who are not seeking tertiary entrance also choose to study 18 units and so follow a similar pattern over the two years.

Any student seeking a tertiary package must take at least 3 T-units in Semester 1 in Year 11 to meet the

requirements above. Most of these students choose 4 or 5 T-units. Year 12 students seeking a tertiary package usually take a minimum of 3 T-units in their third semester. There is therefore, a pattern of units which can be used to identify tertiary-oriented students - they will be studying 3 or more T-units. This pattern was used in the analysis of the data.

Keeping this in mind, it is vital to communicate the relevant complexities of the system to students when they come to making their choice of units to study - particularly for incoming Year 11 students. Therefore in addition to the handbook information, feeder schools are visited by the Assistant Principal in charge of student welfare, together with groups of College teachers to discuss with students questions about units which they are thinking of choosing. The members of these groups usually include teachers from each faculty area. Besides answering questions, these teachers may assist students to complete their enrolment forms and their unit selection for the following year.

Year 12 students are required to select their units for the following year in November. For them the choices are not quite as open as for the Year 11 students. Having completed 1 or 2 units of particular courses, they are confined to selecting certain units where they seek to complete a major. For example, a student wanting a major in chemistry must take the third unit which is only offered in the third semester. In general, Year 12

students tend to complete majors in at least 2 or 3 courses whether they are seeking tertiary entrance or not. In fact, most students complete a major or minor in at least 1 tertiary course.

At the beginning of the new year students are given the opportunity to revise their selection made in October or November of the previous year. A number change their selection quite radically, indicating a completely different orientation in terms of career aspirations or future education at tertiary level. In some cases it would seem that choices made at the end of Year 10 were made without a clear understanding of the whole process. This is understandable considering the amount of new information they are required to comprehend in a short space of time - especially when confronted with a choice of 5 units from a total of 104, as in Semester 1, 1985. There may be several other factors which influence the decision to change. This study aims to examine some of these factors as they affect students at Erindale College.

For both Year 11 and 12 students, the opportunity is also provided for them to change their units up to a particular time during the semester. In some cases students may withdraw from a unit up to Week 10. However, a restriction is usually placed on the late commencement of a unit. This may be Week 3 or 4, after which acceptance of a student into any unit may be considered very carefully or disallowed, depending on the student

concerned and the nature of the unit. For example, a student who is not coping well with a higher level mathematics unit may be allowed, and even encouraged to drop out of that unit and enter a lower level unit quite late in the semester. On the other hand, a student may not be allowed to commence a typing or shorthand unit after Week 4 because of the sequential nature of the unit and the need to have all students working at approximately the same rate. In this study, all students who changed or withdrew from units after Week 4 were asked to complete the Change of Unit Survey at the time of their change. It was considered that 4 weeks' experience in the class would be a reasonable time to enable the student to give meaningful answers to this survey.

In many cases, a change in one unit involving a timetable change, gives rise to secondary changes in other units. Because these secondary changes are administrative in nature, it was decided not to include them in the study - they were usually changes in class but not changes in the actual unit being studied. In general, changes considered in this study were those which resulted from the conscious decisions of students after they had experienced the content and the processes involved in studying the units concerned.

Apart from changing from one unit to another, students occasionally withdraw or drop out of one or more units without replacing these with another unit. The withdrawal may take place, as stated above, at any time up to a

specified date, without the student's being considered for assessment at the end of the unit. After this withdrawal date, students may receive a grade and a score for the unit provided that sufficient assessment items have been completed up to the time of withdrawal and that attendance has been satisfactory. If the student fails to meet these requirements, a "V" grade is given to indicate that the student has failed to meet the requirements for the award of a grade and a unit score.

Note: A student may also be awarded a "V" grade if his/her attendance has been so poor that he/she is considered unable to complete the objectives of the unit. In such cases, the student is warned and counselled before reaching the stage of being declared "unassessable" and thus being awarded a "V" grade. The "V" grade is entered on the student's computer record at the end of the semester, and this enables all "unassessable" students to be identified for later counselling. For the purposes of this study, students in this category were considered as non-completers.

LEAVERS.

Throughout the year, students may leave college altogether. This applies to students in both Years 11 and 12. In some cases the student withdraws from all units to take up a job or transfer to another institution. In other cases the student may gradually withdraw from his/her units either by officially completing the required

procedures or by becoming "unassessable" through poor attendance in so many units that he/she is deemed by the college to have left. Students who leave the college are required to complete a Leaver's Form which, in part, is used to update computer records. However, some students fail to follow this procedure for a variety of reasons, one of which is that the very fact that they are leaving means that they no longer feel constrained to carry out college requests or follow college procedures. During the data-gathering stage of this study, the Leaver's Survey was printed on the back of the Leaver's Form for leavers to complete. As stated earlier, one original aim of this study was to examine the factors leading to a student's leaving college before completing Year 12. This survey was intended to supply some of the information required.

To summarise then, after their selection of units at the beginning of a semester, students may:

- complete it and receive a unit score and grade at the end of the semester
- change from one unit to another during the semester
- withdraw from one or more units without replacing it
- obtain a "V" grade in the unit by failing to meet requirements of attendance or assessment for the unit
- leave college and thus withdraw from all units.

LEVELS WITHIN SUBJECTS.

Most faculties at Erindale College have developed

courses at different levels of difficulty in order to provide for the needs of students less advanced in their subject area as well as for students who are seeking tertiary entrance. For example, in both mathematics and the physical sciences, three levels are provided; one for students wanting to study the subject at tertiary level; one for those wanting to study related subjects at tertiary level and one for those who do not need the subject for tertiary studies but want to study it for general background. The first two levels are both tertiary-accredited while the third level is accredited. The content of these different levels provide sufficient overlap to enable students to change from a higher to lower level with minimal disadvantage, even well after Week 4 in the semester.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY.

This study was confined to Erindale College because of my familiarity with the system and the ease of access to students and records where necessary. Erindale College is also the only college in the ACT which offers units that are studied over a semester (19 weeks long). All other colleges offer units which are studied for one term (11 weeks long). The duration of units was considered to be one of the possible factors affecting the tendency of students to not complete units, although the problem is not unique to Erindale. Snowdon found that there was a high rate of incidence of students at Copland College

(which operates on a term system) who changed their unit choices after the commencement of the term. (Snowdon 1984).

The total population was used to gather data for the Baseline Questionnaire as it was not very large (362) and all non-completers were included in order to obtain large enough samples in the sub-categories of male/female and Year 11/Year 12.

DEFINITION OF TERMS.

Many of the terms used in this report have specific meaning within the context of the ACT Secondary College system and may therefore be unfamiliar to readers not acquainted with the system. For this reason a list of definitions is provided below for reference.

DEFINITIONS.

Accredited course:
(A-Course)

A course which has been approved by the ACT Schools Accrediting Agency as suitable for study by students in Years 11 and 12.

Accredited unit:
(A-unit)

A unit which forms part of an accredited course.

ACT Year 12
Certificate:

The certificate awarded by the ACT Schools Authority to all students in Year 12 who have been enrolled at a secondary college for at least 5 terms out of 6 consecutive terms and completed at least one unit of study.

<u>"At risk" student:</u>	Any student who displays those characteristics of non-completers which are likely to lead to the non-completion of a unit.
<u>Changer:</u>	A student who, between Week 4 and Week 10 of a semester, changes from one unit to another or officially withdraws from one or more units.
<u>Chosen unit:</u>	A unit which a student has chosen at the beginning of a semester.
<u>Completer:</u>	A student who gains a unit score and a grade (A,B,C,D or E) in all chosen units studied in a semester.
<u>Course:</u>	A group of 2 or more units in a particular subject. e.g. Physics is a course offering 4 units of which a student may complete 2, 3 or 4 units to make up a course.
<u>Leaver:</u>	Any student who left college between Week 4 and the end of the semester.
<u>Major course:</u>	A course which is made up of 3 or 4 units.
<u>Minor course:</u>	A course which is made up of 2 units only.
<u>Non-completer:</u>	A student who changes 1 or more chosen units after Week 4 in a semester and/or does not gain a unit score or grade in 1 or more units studied during a semester.

<u>Registered unit:</u>	A unit which has not been accredited by the ACT Schools Accrediting Agency, but has been approved by that agency to form part of the wider curriculum offered to students in Years 11 and 12. It is usually more recreational than academic.
<u>Study program:</u>	The whole package of units and courses which a student studies during Years 11 and 12.
<u>Subject:</u>	A particular discipline such as mathematics or music.
<u>Tertiary accredited course:</u> <u>(T-course)</u>	An accredited course which has been approved by the Australian National University as being suitable preparation for tertiary studies, and may be used in the calculation of a tertiary entrance score.
<u>Tertiary accredited unit:</u> <u>(T-unit)</u>	One which forms part of a tertiary accredited course.
<u>Tertiary entrance score:</u>	The score compiled from the best 3.6 major tertiary accredited course scores which is used to determine the rank order of ACT students who apply for entry to tertiary institutions.
<u>Tertiary package:</u>	The appropriate combination of units and courses which students must complete in order to meet tertiary entrance requirements. (See page 6 for details.)

Unassessable:

A student is deemed unassessable in a unit if he/she fails to submit sufficient assessment items for that unit and/or fails to maintain a satisfactory record of attendance.

Unit:

A specified portion of a course which is studied for 4 hours per week for 19 weeks (one semester).

Unit score:

A number usually between 20 and 100 awarded to a student as a combination of marks obtained by that student in all assessment items for that unit.

"V" grade:

The grade given to a student who is deemed unassessable. Such a student is not given a score in that unit and the unit does not count towards the student's package.

Withdraw:

A student who withdraws is one who discontinues his/her study of a unit without taking up another unit in its place.

CHAPTER 2.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES.

The focus of this study is quite specific to the ACT Secondary College System and to a specific aspect of it. Consequently there appears to be very little literature of direct relevance to the topic. The literature which I found useful falls into two main categories:

- A. Studies of leavers, early leavers or dropouts.
- B. Choice of subject in ACT secondary colleges.

A. STUDIES OF LEAVERS.

1.1 School Leavers Report 1979.

This category includes a number of studies of ACT school leavers as well as studies across Australia and overseas.

1. ACT SCHOOLS AUTHORITY STUDIES OF LEAVERS.

The first group of students to pass through the new secondary system completed their studies in 1977. The Schools Authority surveyed these leavers and published a report in 1979. Some of the key findings were:

(a) "Roughly equal numbers of comments indicated approval and disapproval of various aspects of the Year 12 course in terms of its preparation for their present position."

(b) "Most college students criticised the lack of information and assistance to make a selection of courses

to meet their future career needs."

(c) "Some respondents expressed a need for a course covering topics such as turning away from home, the dole, TEAS, the taxation system and hire purchase."

Finding (b) indicates a perceived need for careful counselling of students about their choice of courses. Findings (a) and (c) indicate a need to provide courses which are more relevant to the needs of students. Both of these indications lie within the scope of the present study, posing the questions:

(1) Do students at Erindale College consider they are given adequate counselling in the selection of their units of study?

(2) Are the units and courses offered at Erindale College relevant to the perceived needs of its students?

(3) To what extent do the answers to the above questions affect the decision of students to withdraw from or fail to complete their chosen units?

1.2 School Leavers Report 1981.

The survey of 1979 leavers, published in 1981, came to the following relevant conclusions:

- (a) "factors in the decision to leave school include
- being 'fed up' with school
 - wanting money
 - friends had left (very little importance)
 - inability of parents to afford costs"

(b) "Approximately half of the male Year 11 school leavers had some type of job promised to them at the time they left school."

(c) "51% of Year 10 females reported that the unavailability of suitable courses was either very important or of some importance in their decision to leave school."

(d) "76% of Year 12 school leavers indicated that the education or training available had been completely adequate or generally adequate."

From this it appears that the offer of jobs and the desire to earn money may have influenced a significant number of Year 10 and 11 students in particular to leave school. Finding (c) suggests that Year 10 females did not perceive sufficient relevance in the courses available to them at school. One can only presume that a proportion of the Year 10 female leavers included in the 51% above would have decided to discontinue schooling on the completion of Year 10 and therefore, assume that this proportion considered the courses offered at secondary college were also inadequate. Once again, the implications of this survey are relevant to the aims of the present study.

1.3 Hunt and Fordham Report.

A third study of relevance in the current context is that done by Hunt and Fordham in 1983 on "Year Ten Students' and Recent High School Leavers' Views of ACT High Schooling". While the report concentrated on the Year 10 high school situation, its findings concerning student views on a number of issues would seem reasonably general and thus applicable to the secondary college environment. In particular, the following findings suggest lines of investigation worth exploring in the present

study:

(a) Students "want teachers to use teaching methods which will engage students in tasks which they find interesting and rewarding and in which there are opportunities for them to learn to cooperate together".

(b) Students "are concerned that insufficient emphasis was placed on the practical aspects, including preparation for work and subjects more related to the everyday world and the society in which they live".

(c) "Lower achieving students tended to have fewer positive feelings and more negative feelings about school than other students. Attitudes to teachers also varied...with high achievers being most positive and low achievers being least positive".

(d) "Students want teachers who have good interpersonal skills, are patient, helpful, and treat students with respect as maturing young people".

Teaching techniques, student achievement and teacher-student relationships can therefore be seen as factors worth exploring to see how they relate to student decisions to withdraw from units or withdraw from college.

2. AUSTRALIAN STUDIES.

2.1 Rosier 1978.

Rosier carried out a longitudinal study of early school leavers in Australia, comparing the attitudes of 14 year olds (in 1970) with attitudes of the same group as 16 year olds in 1972. He studied four sets of factors associated with differences between those who were still students and those who had left school, taking samples from every state in Australia. the sets of factors were:

- (a) Family environment
- (b) School environment

(c) School-related personal characteristics at age 14

(d) School-related personal characteristics at age 16.

Because of the size of the ACT and the fact that at the time (1972) students in the ACT were part of the NSW education system, Rosier did not include the ACT in his study. However, he did find that the strongest factors influencing the decision to leave school were the personal characteristics of the student. However, in a causal model which he outlines, Rosier suggests that family environment factors strongly influence the school environment factors and the personal characteristics of the student. The family environment factors included parents, siblings, especially older ones who had decided to remain at school or to leave, and relatives. They were regarded as significant others for the young person, who influenced that person by serving as career models, and through their attitudes and activities which relate to career decisions.

The personal characteristics of the student included:

- commitment to future education
- academic achievement
- general attitude to school
- self-esteem and
- social activities.

While this study does not look at all the factors identified in Rosier's work, at least these personal characteristics are explored to some degree. In fact, Rosier suggests that future studies

"should consider the more detailed investigation of...the nature of the interaction between individual significant others and a young person with respect to the school termination decision. In particular, the influence of school guidance officers and the peer groups should be examined... Another area is concerned with those young persons whose needs are least met by the school... It would be important to examine the nature of their sense of dissatisfaction with or alienation from the content and processes of their schooling."

(Rosier, 1978, p190).

This study attempts to explore both these areas. The influence of counselling about courses (by teachers, counsellor and careers counsellor) has been examined as well as the nature of dissatisfaction of students expressed by their withdrawal from units and from college.

2.2 Poole.

A second work of significance here is that by Poole "School Leavers in Australia - A Review and Analysis of Australian Research". In it she points out that analyses of the process of decision-taking to leave are generally lacking, and that there is a need for developing a theory about the subject of early leaving. She states that

"Until substantial predictions can be made or the complex interplay of various factors understood, prospective early leavers will not be identified and counselled in any systematic way."

(Poole,1981, p157).

From the various studies examined, Poole has drawn up a profile of early leavers which include the following characteristics relevant to this study:

- come from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- are disenchanted with school - bored, fed-up, disinterested
- see school as irrelevant to future job plans
- perceive they have restricted choices which are not catering to their future needs
- dislike authoritarian teachers, regimentation of school and the impersonality of relationships
- have experienced school failure and poor grades and are unwilling or unable to cope with the academic demands of school.

It should be recognised that in the ACT system, students are given a wider choice than in most state education systems, but as indicated in the reports on ACT school leavers, there are still areas of need which are perceived as not being met. e.g. practical living skills.

The general philosophy of the ACT secondary colleges de-emphasises authoritarianism and regimentation. There is a much more friendly atmosphere and good personal relationships are frequently established between students and teachers. This is borne out in studies such as that of Anderson et al "Schools to Grow In - An Evaluation of Secondary Colleges" 1980:

"College students have more favourable perceptions of their teachers, their desire for change is less strong and their general satisfaction is greater". (p86)

This statement was drawing a comparison with students of similar age who were studying in the Year 7-12 high school system prior to the establishment of the secondary colleges, three years before the study.

Apart from the comments from the work of Anderson et al, it is expected that in the current study, some of the characteristics of leavers identified by Poole, will also be evident in those students who do not complete their chosen units.

2.3 Collins et al.

The third work of particular relevance to this study is that by Collins et al "Looking Backwards" (1980). In this study, recent school leavers (19 and 20 year olds), and those who work with them, were surveyed on their views of schooling. One of the findings was that many of these young people, particularly those who had not continued to tertiary study, saw many of the academic subjects they were offered as being irrelevant to them and over-emphasised by the school. Many also regarded their teachers as uncaring or unfriendly. It is significant that the report states:

"The personal relationships teachers form with students stands out in our study as crucial, as the aspect of school life which sparkles or dulls all else." (p110)

Thus, in addition to the findings in other research about the perceived irrelevance of school subjects, this study highlights student-teacher relationships as a

significant factor which affects students' attitude to school and their decision to leave. This aspect has been included in the present study in seeking an answer to the question "Do students withdraw from units because of poor relationships with their teachers?"

3. OVERSEAS STUDIES.

An overview of the literature concerned with dropout studies in America shows numerous pieces of research into the characteristics of dropouts which are supported by Australian studies such as that of Rosier (1978).

3.1 Beck and Muia.

Beck and Muia (1980) summarise these characteristics in similar groupings to Rosier's. However, the characteristics which have significance for this study are:

(a) The greater proportion of dropouts come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This means that they are disadvantaged in the education system which upholds mostly middle-class values and does not provide the learning techniques, strategies, and programs that would compensate for handicaps arising out of their status.

(b) Dropouts are influenced by their peers - either by those who have dropped (or are in the process of dropping) out, or by those who exert pressure to conform in terms of material possessions, leisure pursuits or other social activities. Dropping out is seen as the way to cope with these pressures.

(c) Dropouts generally have a history of academic failure. In fact a sequence of stages is identified; loss of interest, lower grades, skipping class, dropping out of school.

This study attempts to study these characteristics to test their influence on the decisions of students to withdraw from units and from college. It seeks to find out more about the way the content and teaching strategies may influence students to withdraw. It focusses on the personal characteristics of the student and the school environment factors and their influence on the student's decision to withdraw from a unit or from college.

3.2 Quay and Allen.

Quay and Allen, in an article on truants and dropouts (Encyclopaedia of Educational Research, 1983, pp1958-1961) quote a study by Neill (1979) involving over 1200 school personnel in California and focussing on the problem of truancy. Neill found that truancy could be "principally ascribed to dislike of or boredom with school, social adjustment problems and academic problems".

In this study some of the non-completers of units were deemed unassessable because of poor attendance, that is, truancy from individual classes. Questions included in the questionnaires and surveys also referred to the students' achievement (in terms of marks) in the unit.

Quay and Allen warn that:

"data resulting from interviewing dropouts that are not compared to responses of those still in school must be interpreted with great caution. For example, to conclude that dislike for school is a critical characteristic of dropouts without knowing how many of those who remain would have reported the same feelings would clearly be erroneous." (p1960)

Consistent with this view, the Erindale study was designed to consider the views of completers with those of the non-completers by devising an End of Semester Questionnaire which included questions similar to those on the Change of Unit Survey and the Leaver's Survey.

B. STUDIES ON CHOICE OF SUBJECT.

1. Snowdon.

Of all the literature reviewed, the only piece obtained which related closely to this study was that of Snowdon (1984). Snowdon studied the factors involved in the choice of college and choice of subjects for Year 10 students moving to Year 11 at an ACT secondary college. While his study does not exactly cover the same ground, Snowdon did survey students who changed subjects during their first term at Copland College. He found the reasons given by students to an open response question, fell into three groups:

(1) "the course was too hard", "could not cope", getting bad marks"

(2) the course was not what they thought it would be or didn't measure up to expectations

(3) there was a timetabling problem, usually a clash of interests.

Other reasons given include: "course unnecessary, was boring and a waste of time" and "personality clash with the teacher." However, as Snowdon was interested more in the choice of subjects, these reasons were of marginal interest to his study apart from influencing recommendations that

(a) Students should be given the opportunity to change courses during first term to overcome poor choices resulting from a pressure on them to select six courses at the time of enrolment, and

(b) Because a disproportionate number of students were choosing tertiary accredited courses (which they were finding "too hard"), clear guidance should be given at the point of course selection.

The purpose of the present study is to tease out more carefully the reasons why students change their unit selections with a view to discerning implications these may have on course design, teaching strategies, student assessment and counselling. In some respects it may be regarded as a sequel to Snowdon's work as it takes a deeper probe into an aspect of how and why students choose their subjects for study at the secondary college level in the ACT.

2. Grant et al.

Another study relating to the choice of subjects was carried out by the ACT Schools Authority and published in 1979 (Grant et al). This study carried out an analysis of Registered units and low-demand accredited courses in secondary colleges. Two of the findings are of particular interest:

(a) "Further development of registered courses is desirable. Some students feel that college courses are biased towards preparation for tertiary education".

(b) "Colleges need strong counselling and advisory services on course choice to obtain all benefits of the college curriculum".

Once again there is evidence in (a) above that college curricula are not seen as adequately catering for the needs of all students. It is only in the last three or four years that some of the imbalance has been redressed. However, this is only in a small way. At Erindale College, the number of non-tertiary accredited courses has increased so that they now form just over 40% of the courses offered. The fact that the number of students opting for these courses is still small, may indicate that either the courses are not perceived by students to meet their needs, or there is some other factor or factors persuading them not to choose the accredited courses.

Again we find (in (b) above) the need for appropriate counselling and advisory services on course selection.

Amongst its recommendations the report concludes that

"School Principals should give systematic attention to...the recognition of the effects of higher retention rates on the need for greater differentiation of curricula and maintenance of a greater variety of programs to cater for the wide range of abilities, motivations, and the needs of students".

The Participation and Equity Program is taking up this challenge and this study should provide some insight into the perceived needs of students.

3. Lane.

Lane (1980) looked at subjects chosen by students at Dickson College in the ACT. He found that they generally selected English, Mathematics and a Science for at least one year of their total study program. He also found that they selected a high proportion of tertiary-accredited courses (70% of all courses studied). Experience has shown this to be the case at Erindale also. Given the increase in the proportion of students of lower academic ability continuing into Years 11 and 12, this may be a factor leading students to withdraw from tertiary-accredited units.

HYPOTHESES SUGGESTED FROM THE LITERATURE AND THE GENERAL BACKGROUND.

In terms of the aims of this study, three sets of hypotheses are suggested from the background and the literature.

1. On why students do not complete units.

It is expected that students who are non-completers will have characteristics similar to those of early leavers (or dropouts):

(a) They will perceive that the units are uninteresting and/or not relevant to their needs.

(b) They will be finding it difficult to understand or cope with the work.

(c) They will be getting poor marks.

(d) They will find the class activities uninteresting.

(e) They will be finding the workload too heavy.

(f) They will generally come from a lower socio-economic background.

2. On comparisons between completers and non-completers.

It is expected that non-completers will less frequently:

(a) be seeking tertiary entrance and therefore studying 3 or more T-units.

(b) intend to complete Year 12.

(c) have a positive attitude to college organisation, the units offered and their relations with their teachers.

(d) expect to work harder than at high school.

(e) prefer studying units that require a lot of reading and writing and making their own notes.

(f) have aspirations to careers requiring higher educational qualifications.

(g) come from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

(h) find unit content relevant and class activities interesting.

(i) be happy with the marks they are receiving in the units studied.

3. On reasons for leaving college.

It is expected that students who left would give reasons such as the following:

(a) "getting poor marks".

(b) "units were not interesting or relevant".

(c) "fed up with school".

(d) "expected to do too many tests and assignments".

It is not expected that there will be any difference significant at the 0.05 level between male and female students with respect to their tendency to be non-completers or leavers. However, a small difference is expected between Year 11 and Year 12 students for the reasons that:

(a) Year 11 students are less likely to have established a pattern of units and courses and therefore have greater freedom to try different units. Many Year 12 students, on the other hand, have committed themselves to a third unit in each of a number of courses and are therefore less likely to find reason not to complete.

(b) Those in Year 12 are students who continued after some of their contemporaries had left in Year 11 and are more committed to completing Year 12. Year 11 students on the other hand, still include many among their number who

are still trying to decide whether to continue at college
or not.

CHAPTER 3.

METHODOLOGY.

In this study data collected during the research project was analysed in terms of the final status of the students involved, that is, whether or not they were completers or non-completers at the end of Semester 1. The information was almost entirely in the form of written questionnaires. Some information was retrieved from computer records held by the college e.g. which students gained "V" grades in any of the units studied in Semester 1, 1985.

The instruments used for data gathering were:

A. A Baseline Questionnaire, administered to all students in Week 3 of Semester 1, 1985 (February).

B. A Change of Unit Survey which was completed by students who changed or withdrew from units between Weeks 4 and 10 of Semester 1, 1985 (March to April).

C. A Leaver's Survey which was given to students who left college between Week 4 and the end of Semester 1, 1985 (June).

D. An End of Semester Questionnaire, completed by all students still enrolled at the college in Week 16, Semester 1, 1985 (May).

E. A Socio-economic Status Survey, completed in November, 1985. This had been omitted in earlier surveys and then found to be unavailable from other sources.

THE POPULATION.

The population studied consisted of 362 students in Years 11 and 12. However, not all cases were used in the analysis.

Since the main focus of the study was on students who were non-completers, all students who changed units, withdrew from them, or left college were prime targets. Also, since the total population of this category could not be identified until the end of the semester, all students had to be surveyed at the beginning of the semester when the answers to the Baseline Questionnaire were most likely to be reliable.

The final sample was composed of:

1. All Non-completers. (120) - this included:

- students who changed or withdrew from units between Weeks 4 and 10
- students who left college between Weeks 4 and the end of the semester
- students who obtained a "V" grade in one or more units as a result of being declared "unassessable".

The total population of non-completers was used in order to obtain reasonable sample sizes in the categories Year 11/Year 12 as well as male/female.

2. A Sample of Completers. (135) This was determined from an alphabetical list of all students who completed all units. Every second Year 11 male, every second Year 11

female, every second Year 12 male and every second Year 12 female were selected. This gave approximately equal numbers in each of the four categories.

Thus the total sample size was 255 out of a total college population of 362 at the time of administering the Baseline Questionnaire.

Three points should be noted about the sample:

(a) As the Socio-economic Status Survey was completed separately from and much later than the other information, only 121 students in the sample responded. Of these, 78 (64.5%) completed all units and 43 (35.5%) did not. None of the leavers (who have been included with the non-completers throughout the study), completed the Socio-economic Status Survey. This introduced a bias by excluding a large percentage of non-completers from the sample, giving a percentage of completers greater than the 52.9% in the total sample.

To reduce the bias, all non-completers were included with a proportion of completers to match the percentages in the total sample. i.e. all 43 non-completers with 48 completers, giving respective percentages closest to those in the total sample of 47.1% and 52.9%. The numbers of completers in each of the categories of occupation finally used in the analysis were also reduced proportionally.

The Socio-economic Status data was finally used only to see if there was any significant relationship between parent occupation and the tendency to complete all units.

(b) There was a small number of students who did not complete the End of Semester Questionnaire although they had not left the college at the time the questionnaire was administered. These students were included where possible in the sample nevertheless as there were approximately equal numbers of completers and non-completers in this group.

(c) Students who did not complete the Baseline Questionnaire were not included in the sample even though some of them were non-completers, as inclusion would have meant that many cases would have had missing data in some substantial areas.

Table 3.1 shows the composition of the sample.

Table 3.1 Completers, Non-completers and Leavers by Sex and Year. (N = 255)

	Male		Female		TOTAL	%
	Y 11	Y 12	Y 11	Y 12		
Completers	41	32	33	29	135	52.9
Non-completers	25	15	28	16	84	32.9
Leavers	16	6	9	5	36	14.1
TOTALS	82	53	70	50	255	
	32.2%	20.6%	27.4%	19.7%		
	52.8%		47.1%			

Table 3.2 shows the total population, for comparison.

(Figures taken from the official census, February, 1985.)

Table 3.2 Total Population by Sex and Year. (N=390)

	Y 11	Y 12	Total	%
Male	117	87	204	52.3
Female	107	79	186	47.7
TOTAL	224	166	390	
	57.4%	42.6%		100

At the time of commencing this study, no similar research had been carried out and so there were no instruments available. Consequently, all questionnaires and surveys had to be developed for the purpose of this study. To assist in this process, a pilot study was conducted in Semester 2, 1984, seeking reasons why students were changing units.

In the pilot study, all students who changed units after Week 4 were asked to complete a brief questionnaire at the time they made the change, asking them to state their reasons for changing. 82 students changed units but only 52 completed the questionnaire. On the basis of these responses, a modified set of questions was developed into the Change of Unit Survey used in the actual study.

About the same time (November, 1984), a trial Baseline Questionnaire was developed with reference to the background literature on early leavers and dropouts, keeping in mind the purposes of this study. This was given to a small sample of Year 12 students who were in their last semester in the college and would therefore not be in

the sample to be used for the actual study. On the basis of the responses and suggestions from the students concerned, the trial questionnaire was modified and coded for the final version which was used in Semester 1, 1985.

The Leaver's Survey and the End of Semester Questionnaire were not trialled as they were closely related to the other two instruments and were designed to check whether students had changed their minds about certain issues, and to compare the responses of completers with both non-completers and leavers.

DESCRIPTION OF INSTRUMENTS.

A. BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRE.

The purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain background information on students which could then be used to compare completers and non-completers. The questionnaire was administered at one Advisory Group session. (Each Advisory Group consists of 12 to 15 students meeting with a teacher. Every student is assigned to a group in this way.) Students were asked by their teachers to complete the questionnaire and return it during the twenty minute session. Absentees were then followed up individually to ensure a maximum response.

The questions were mostly of the precoded closed response type with a few open questions to provide opportunity for students to make their own comment. The questions were grouped in sections as follows:

1. Background to Enrolment at College.

These questions sought information about Year level, sex, previous school and its location (ACT or elsewhere) and reasons for enrolling at college. Answers to these questions were intended to show any differences between completers and non-completers in terms of their previous schooling (government or non-government, ACT or interstate) and/or their reasons for coming to college (seeking tertiary entrance, improve chances of getting a job, parents' wish etc.) A number of researchers on early leavers as summarised by Poole (1980), have found them to be disenchanted with school and lacking any purpose for being there. One would expect any disenchanted students who come on to Year 11 to have little real purpose in being at college. For example, one response stated "I couldn't find a job so college will give me something to do". This would appear to be a disenchanted student with no real purpose for being at college.

2. Work, Career and Future Orientation.

Questions in this section were intended to compare completers and non-completers with respect to career aspirations, future education intentions (tertiary TAFE or nil), whether seeking a full-time or part-time job, intention to complete Year 12 and the amount of time they spent in part-time work. It was thought that, as in some studies, early leavers had more part-time work than continuing students, non-completers in this study would be

likely to have more part-time work than completers. (Work would be a distraction which would lead to poorer grades and less interest.) All responses were precoded except career choice.

3. Influences on Decisions Relating to Unit Choice.

These questions asked students to indicate the extent to which each of a set of items had influenced them in their choice of units. The items referred to factors such as the college handbook, parents, teachers at their high school, teachers at Erindale, career interests, their own interests, friends, their ability to get good marks. A three-point scale was used: "not at all", "a little", "a great deal". From the answers it was intended to see if completers and non-completers differed significantly on the factors influencing their initial choices. Any observed difference could provide guidance for the college staff involved in the initial counselling of students in their feeder high schools before entering college.

4. Nature of Units and Status of Choice.

Students were asked how many units chosen were T-units, A-units and R-units. They were also asked if they were happy with the choice of units offered, whether they had chosen some units "on trial" and whether they had decided to complete 2 or more units in the subjects chosen.

Answers from these questions would allow comparisons between completers and non-completers on the bases of

number of T-units studied, original satisfaction with choice and commitment to courses chosen. It was expected that non-completers would be studying more A-units than T-units and completers would be studying more T-units than A-units.

Underlying Hypothesis.

It was hypothesised that students whose intention was to gain a tertiary entrance qualification would be more likely to have a commitment to their college studies and would therefore be less likely to withdraw from units. They would also tend to study two or more units in each of their chosen subjects. Any student seeking tertiary entrance would also need to be studying three or more T-units in Semester 1. It was assumed that the number of T-units could therefore be used to identify "tertiary" students. In fact, students tended to fall into two major groups - those doing 3 or more T-units and those doing 3 or more A-units.

5. Attitude to Study/Learning.

These questions asked students about their expectations of work level at college in comparison to high school, and about their preferred methods of learning (reading and writing, teacher notes and handouts, individual work, experiments and making things).

Underlying Hypotheses.

(a) It was hypothesised that, since leavers in other studies were found to be alienated from schooling, alienation was partly due to the more academic teaching methods used. Therefore non-completers would be less likely to prefer studying units involving a great deal of reading and writing, and those which involved working on their own. They would be more likely to prefer units where they were doing experiments and/or making things.

(b) It was further hypothesised that, from the overall analysis of this Baseline Questionnaire, it would be possible to build a profile of non-completers (and possibly leavers) in order to identify them early. It might also point to possible action to reduce the problem.

B. CHANGE OF UNIT SURVEY.

This survey was printed on the back of the form which students were required to fill in when changing units and was administered at the time of completing the form. This was done by the Assistant Principal (Student Welfare). In this survey students were asked to indicate whether the unit being changed was a T-unit or not. This was done to keep a tally on the number of T-units which were not completed in comparison with the number of A-units not completed. They were then asked to tick boxes to indicate their agreement with any of a number of statements expressing possible reasons why they wanted to change their units. The statements provided were based on results

of the pilot study and included such reasons as:

- I could not understand the work
- There was too much work to do
- The unit did not suit my future career plan
- I had to do too much work on my own.

Space was provided so that up to three units could be processed on one form. Students were also given the option of writing in some reason other than those printed on the form.

The final section of this survey asked if the student had discussed the decision to change, with college staff and then to nominate the person who had helped the most in making the decision.

From the analysis of this survey it was intended to list in rank order the reasons why students change or withdraw from units. Comparing these answers with the Baseline information, it was intended to seek relationships between the decision to change or withdraw and characteristics such as intentions for future study, preferred styles of learning and the basis of the original choice of units.

Analysis of the final section of the survey was expected to provide information on the usefulness of counselling as perceived by the students.

Underlying Hypotheses.

(a) It was hypothesised that non-completers were likely to have characteristics similar to those of early

leavers as identified in other studies. Consequently responses such as "content was not relevant to my needs, "getting poor marks" and "I was not getting on well with my teacher" were included as possible responses in the survey. Other items related to the assumption that non-completers and early leavers are disenchanted with school and its activities e.g. "Class activities did not interest me", "too many written assignments", "given too many notes in class".

(b) It was hypothesised that there might be a marked difference in the numbers of T-units and A-units changed because

(i) T-units are more difficult than A-units and

(ii) students taking a high proportion of A-units together with 1 or 2 T-units would be less likely to have a strong commitment to their studies and likely to change their T-units.

Note: R-units were not included in this survey as they were not seen as crucial, and are generally viewed as being more recreational in nature.

Since the final group of non-completers included leavers who did not change any units prior to leaving and students who obtained "V" grades without changing units or withdrawing before Week 10, the Change of Unit Survey was not administered to all non-completers. A small number of those who did change units also neglected to complete the survey in spite of attempts to follow them up. In

hindsight, it would have been profitable to interview or survey students who obtained "V" grades and seek their answers to questions similar to those on the Change of Unit Survey. However, the fact that these students are not identifiable until the end of the semester when assessments are completed, means that their responses may not be as reliable because of lapse of time and/or negative attitudes.

Table 3.3 shows the various categories of non-completers.

Table 3.3 Types of Non-completers. (N=120)

	No.	%	
Changed 1 or more units, no "V" grades	45	37.5	(17.6)
Changed 1 or more units, plus 1 or more "V" grades	18	15.0	(7.1)
No changes, 1 or more "V" grades	37	30.8	(14.5)
Left, no changes	20	16.7	(7.8)

Figures in brackets are percentages of the whole sample.
(N = 255).

C. LEAVER'S SURVEY.

Although this was not trialled, it was based on the findings of studies mentioned in the review of literature. The survey was printed on the back of the official leaver's form. When a student decides to leave, he/she is required to complete this form which is obtained from the Assistant Principal (Student Welfare). Each leaver was

asked at the time of obtaining the form, to complete the questions on the back. However, two factors worked against this, resulting in a poor return of responses:

(a) When returning the completed form, many students just left it in the office when the Assistant Principal was not there to check that the survey had been completed.

(b) Several students were leavers by default - they ceased attending and therefore were deemed to have left. These students did not complete a leaver's form at college.

All students in both these categories were followed up by sending the survey together with a stamped addressed envelope for ease of return, and a letter requesting assistance. Some responded by mail, and of those who did not, some were contacted by telephone and supplied answers as the questions/statements were read to them. A few more responded to a second mailing, but the remainder either could not be contacted or failed to respond. As a result, the sample was finally too small for any detailed analysis which could be considered reliable.

The survey asked firstly the reason for leaving (to take up a job, transferring elsewhere or just terminating secondary education). The second question asked leavers to tick any one or more of a number of statements with which they agreed. These statements implied reasons for leaving college and were based on some of Rosier's "student personal characteristics" of early school leavers.

(Rosier, 1978). Some of these duplicated the Change of Unit Survey e.g. "The units were not relevant to my needs", "I was getting poor marks", "The units were uninteresting".

Others related to general aspects of college administration (Rosier's "school environment factors".) e.g. "The units are too long", "I don't like the choice of units available at Erindale", "Erindale is not my idea of a good college".

It should be noted here that the semester organisation at Erindale has been under criticism because, with semester units, students have to wait longer for their final unit assessment than students in other colleges which have term length units.

The third question related to Rosier's "personal characteristics". It referred to student relationships and a career decision. e.g. "Friends have left", "Didn't like the way I was treated by teachers and/or other students".

Finally students were given the opportunity to write in any reason not listed.

This survey was kept brief because it was considered that leavers would have limited interest in completing it at the time of their departure. This view was justified when following up those who did not complete the leaver's form in that one student returned the letter and uncompleted survey in the envelope provided by return mail!

In hindsight, given the small percentage of leavers and the poor response, I would try some other method to obtain this information. e.g. a larger population (including leavers from other colleges) and an interview at the point of leaving or as soon as possible thereafter.

The questions were designed to obtain reasons for leaving full-time secondary education (transferring students were not considered for this purpose), and to see the extent to which they were related to school environment factors and/or personal characteristics. When compared with the Baseline data it was intended to seek relationships between reasons for leaving and factors such as the number of T-units and A-units chosen, future study or career choice and reasons for enrolling at college. It was also intended to see if leavers tended to change or withdraw from units more frequently than continuing students. This was based on the assumption that because early leavers tend not to have a definite purpose in coming to college, they would tend to change units more frequently.

As mentioned earlier, the small number of leavers in the sample precluded reliable analysis, but some comment has been made on the results in chapter 5.

D. END OF SEMESTER QUESTIONNAIRE.

This questionnaire was aimed at comparing the attitudes of completers and non-completers and was therefore based largely on questions in the other three

instruments used. It was administered at an Advisory Group session in Week 16, in the same way as the Baseline Questionnaire. Absentees were followed up as before.

313 students who completed the Baseline Questionnaire also completed the End of Semester Questionnaire. Of those who had not left, less than 10 of the students who completed the Baseline Questionnaire failed to respond to the End of Semester Questionnaire. For the purposes of analysis, responses of only those students who had been identified in the sample before were used. Where a student in the sample had not completed the End of Semester Questionnaire, missing values were entered for these items.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

1. Attitudes Towards Erindale College.

Students were asked to tick boxes to indicate whether they "strongly agreed", "agreed", "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with ten statements. These statements included ones such as:

- "I am glad to be at Erindale College"
- "I think Erindale is a good college"
- "I like the semester system"
- "I am happy with the choice of units"
- "I am happy with the way I am treated by teachers"

Respondents were invited to make any other comment about Erindale as a college. Very few people wrote comments and most of these were expansions of the

statements in the questionnaire, in particular "it is a good idea to have the public sharing the library and other facilities.

Underlying Hypothesis.

It was hypothesised that responses to these statements would enable comparisons to be made between completers and non-completers on attitudes towards the college environment and organisation. Students who left or changed units would have responded to similar questions in the Change of Unit and/or Leaver's Surveys.

2. Future Intentions.

The questions in this section largely repeated similar ones in the Baseline Questionnaire such as the intention to complete Year 12, seek tertiary entrance, continue studying courses studied in Semester 1 and career. The purpose of this section was to check whether students had changed their intentions in any one of these areas. This would allow some comparisons between completers and non-completers with respect to these items.

Note: The response to the item on the intended career was compared with the original career indicated in the Baseline Questionnaire. Only changes were recorded for analysis, rather than entering data for all respondents. This was done by hand.

A number of statements were also presented for responses on a four-point scale ("very important", "fairly important", "slightly important" and "not important").

These statements were designed to gauge the importance of a number of factors in making decisions about the next semester's choice of units. Many statements were similar to those in the Baseline Questionnaire relating to the influences on their Semester 1 unit choices, and to some in the Change of Unit Survey. This was done to compare completers with non-completers in the decision-making process and in their attitudes to some aspects of college life.

Students were invited to add other factors that are of importance to them. Too few responses were written in the space provided to make any analysis reliable. Once again, comments tended to expand on previous statements and therefore added little information.

Underlying Hypothesis.

It was hypothesised that some students may have been influenced by some different factors from those operating at the time of their selection of units for Semester 1. It was thought that, for Year 11 students in particular, the experience of Semester 1 may have given them a different perspective. At the time of completion of the questionnaire (Week 16), students would have had enough results from tests, essays and other assessment items to enable them to rate factors pertaining to assessment, workload and level of difficulty.

3. General Attitudes to Units.

In this section students were asked firstly to

indicate the number of units they were currently studying in each of the categories T-units, A-units and R-units. They were then asked "How do you feel about the units you are studying at the moment?" A tick was required in one of four boxes; "In all units", "In most units", "In few units", "In no units", for each of ten statements. These statements included ones such as "I find class activities interesting", "I can understand the work", "The units suit my career plans" and "I am happy with my marks". Many of these items were similar to the Change of Unit Survey statements relating to Rosier's "student personal characteristics". This was done in order to compare completers with non-completers in terms of reasons given for withdrawing from classes. It was also considered a means of obtaining information from students who obtained "V" grades but who would not have completed a Change of Unit Survey. However, because some of the students who eventually obtained "V" grades may have considered themselves as having withdrawn, the data must be treated with some care. These students would not have included these units in their replies as they would not consider them amongst those they were "studying at the moment".

Note: Students who obtained "V" grades were identified at the end of the semester from the computer printout of results for all students.

In any future studies, a more reliable way to obtain information about attitudes towards "V" grade units would be to survey or interview the relevant students after the

semester results are finalised.

Underlying Hypothesis.

It was hypothesised that students who ticked the boxes "In most units" or "In all units" were generally satisfied with their units while those choosing "In few units" or "In no units" were generally dissatisfied with their chosen units. From this it was expected to check for a difference between completers and non-completers in their attitudes towards units studied.

Note: In the initial stages of data entry, students with "V" grades were identified using two different codes; one for those who also changed one or more units, and one for those who neither changed nor withdrew. Those who changed units but obtained no "V" grades were given yet another code. In the final analysis there was seen to be no value in keeping these groups separated. Therefore non-completers included all three of these categories as well as those who left during the semester.

E. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARENTS SURVEY.

This survey simply asked students to indicate the present or last main occupation of the mother and the father. It was completed at an Advisory Group session in November, 1985. This was administered at such a late stage because it had been assumed that the information was available from students' enrolment forms and so was omitted from the Baseline Questionnaire. I was wisely persuaded that this information was too important to omit

altogether and so carried out the survey late in Semester 2. The number of responses was far short of the number received from the two major questionnaires. Some students had left college while others either were not given the survey form or the response was not returned. The discrepancy was too great to allow a thorough follow-up of missing responses as on previous occasions. Nevertheless a total of 121 students in the sample completed this survey, giving a large enough group for the purposes of analysis.

The characteristics of this group and the allowances made for the bias introduced have been discussed earlier in this Chapter.

Occupational Groups.

The occupational classification system developed by Anderson et al (1980) was used, though some categories were collapsed as some of the finer occupational distinctions proved to be too difficult for reliability. The father's occupation was taken where occupations were given for both parents. A total of 7 categories was used:

1. Graduate Professional - as in the Anderson study.
2. Other Professional.
3. Large-scale Employers and Managers.
4. Small-scale Employers and Managers or Self-employed.
5. Non-manual Workers - a combination of Anderson's

intermediate and junior non-manual workers.

6. Manual-skilled Workers - a combination of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers.

7. Farmer, Housewife, Pensioner.

(The same categories were used for classifying the careers nominated by students in the Baseline and End of Semester Questionnaires.)

ANALYSIS OF DATA.

Nearly all items in the questionnaires and surveys were precoded to allow easy data entry for computer analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Two types of printouts were examined:

(a) Frequencies. The percentage of students selecting each response was obtained using the SPSS program. This was done for all variables in all questionnaires and surveys to provide the basic facts.

(b) Cross-tabulations. All independent variables were cross-tabulated with the dependent variables of completer and non-completer. Then variables relating to attitudes, expectations and types of units studied were cross-tabulated between Baseline data, Change of Unit data and End of Semester data to look for any significant connections between these variables and whether the students were completers or non-completers.

For all cross-tabulations, the chi-square test was

applied to identify cases where results were significant. The 0.05 level of significance was chosen as a reasonable indication of some relationship between variables. In some cases where the significance according to the chi-square test was less than or equal to 0.05, and one or more of the cells had a frequency of less than 5, it was decided not to regard those as significant because of the distortion produced by very small numbers. (The SPSS program gave a corrected chi-square value to compensate for small values occurring in some cells. In all cases, the corrected chi-square value was the one used.)

To facilitate interpretation, and to bring cells up to interpretable sizes, tables were reduced, where possible, to 2 by 2 matrices by combining values for some variables. e.g. In the last section of the End of Semester Questionnaire, "In all units" and "In most units" were combined as "More than half the units" and the other two values combined as "Less than half the units".

CHAPTER 4.

RESULTS OF THE BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE CHANGE OF UNIT SURVEY.

In this chapter it is intended to report the results of the various questionnaires and the surveys in terms of completers and non-completers. Questionnaires are appended as follows:

Appendix I Baseline Questionnaire.

Appendix II Change of Unit Survey.

Appendix III Leavers' Survey.

Appendix IV Socio-Economic Status of Parents Survey.

Appendix V End of Semester Questionnaire.

A. BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRE.

1. Year, Sex, Previous School and Location.

(See questions 1-4.)

The sample contained more males than females and a larger number of Year 11 students than Year 12 students. This stems from the decision to include all non-completers in the sample and the fact that the population contained more Year 11 (57.4%) than Year 12 students, and more males (52.3%) than females.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the numbers of completers and non-completers categorised according to Year and Sex. The proportions in the sample are reasonably consistent with the total college population.

Table 4.1 Completers and Non-Completers by Year.
(N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Year 11	74	78	152
Year 12	61	42	103
	135	120	255

Table 4.2 Completers and Non-Completers by Sex.
(N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Male	73	62	135
Female	62	58	120
	135	120	255

On the basis of the chi-square test, there was no relationship (significant at the 0.05 level) between the tendency to complete units and either Year or Sex. However the percentage of Year 11 non-completers (51.3%) was greater than the percentage of Year 12 non-completers (40.8%). There was also a slightly larger percentage of female non-completers (48.3%) than male non-completers (45.9%).

85.5% of students previously attended a government school and only 14.5% attended non-government schools before coming to Erindale.

90.2% came from schools in the ACT and 9.8% from elsewhere, most of these being in New South Wales.

With regard to both these variables, there does not seem to be any relationship significant at the 0.05 level

between them and the tendency to complete units. The actual numbers of non-government and non-ACT schools were too small to produce any reliable results when analysed in terms of completers and non-completers.

2. Reason for Enrolling at College.

(See Baseline Questionnaire question 5.)

In spite of requesting a response on the basis of the statement which "best describes your reason" a number of students ticked more than one box so that the totals exceeded 255. However, in analysis, each reason was considered separately in terms of the stated reason or "not applicable". The only two reasons which revealed a possible relationship (significant at the 0.05 level) to the tendency to complete were "to gain tertiary entrance" and "to improve my chances of a job".

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show the numbers of completers and non-completers in these categories. Those who did not indicate the item as a reason for enrolling at college are recorded under "Not applicable".

Table 4.3 Completers and Non-Completers Enrolling "To Gain Tertiary Entrance". (N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Gain T.E.	65	31	96
Not applicable	70	89	159
	135	120	255

Significance 0.0004

Table 4.4 Completers and Non-Completers Enrolling
"To Improve Their Job Chances". (N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Improve job chances	74	82	156
Not applicable	61	38	99
	135	120	255

Significance 0.0373

From these results we can say that there is a significant tendency (at the 0.05 level) for students to complete all units if their reason for enrolling at college is either "to gain tertiary entrance" or "to improve the chances of a job". Also, those who do not complete all units have a greater tendency to enrol for reasons other than these. Of the other reasons, "parents' wish" (5.5%), "something to do while waiting for a job" (2.4%), too few respondents identified with these to make any reliable analysis.

3. Work, Career and Future Orientation.

(See Baseline Questionnaire questions 6 - 13.)

Students were asked to indicate whether they had a part-time job, how many hours per week they worked at it or, if no job, were they looking for one.

The results showed a relationship significant at the 0.05 level between students with a part-time job and the tendency to complete units. No statistically significant relationship was found for the other variables; "hours worked per week" or "seeking part-time job". However, it

was interesting to note that 64.5% of students with part-time jobs work up to 10 hours per week and 35.5% work more than 10 hours per week.

Table 4.5 shows the relationship between completers and non-completers with respect to having a part-time job.

Table 4.5 Completors and Non-Completers by Part-Time Job.
(N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Have part-time job	67	43	110
No part-time job	68	77	145
	135	120	255

Significance 0.0363

From Table 4.5 there seems to be, interestingly, a greater tendency for students who have part-time jobs to complete all units and for those without part-time jobs not to complete all their chosen units.

In answer to the question "Do you intend completing Year 12?", 94.5% of the students said "Yes". The rest were classified as "not definitely completing". This included 2 students who were undecided and 2 who did not answer the question.

Table 4.6 shows the breakdown of completers and non-completers with respect to their intention to complete Year 12.

Table 4.6 Completers and Non-Completers by
Intention to Complete Year 12. (N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Intend completing Y12	132	109	241
No definite intention to complete Y12	3	11	14
	135	120	255

Significance 0.0312

While the chi-square test showed a significance of 0.0312, caution must be exercised as one of the cells in the table has a frequency of less than 5.

These results suggest, as expected, that completers are more likely to have a definite intention to complete Year 12 than non-completers.

Those who did not have the intention to complete Year 12 were asked if they were seeking a full-time job. Only 12 students said "Yes", giving too small a sample for statistical analysis.

No relationships significant at the 0.05 level were evident when looking at students' intention to attend a TAFE College, nor their choice of career. 71.8% indicated they were considering doing a full-time course at a college of Technical and Further Education at some time after their secondary education.

In the analysis of the career options, a modified version of the occupation classification used by Anderson et al (1980) was applied. (See Appendix VI.)

Of the 179 in the sample who identified a career 68.7% chose either a professional or non-manual career, while

31.3% chose a career in the group employer/manager/self-employed. None chose the manual skilled category. When grouping various categories together in order to simplify analysis, there was a higher proportion of completers than non-completers who identified a professional or non-manual career and a greater tendency for completers to choose careers in the professional/non-manual category than the other category.

Table 4.7 shows the career choice of completers and non-completers in the original categories.

Table 4.7 Completers and Non-Completers by Identified Careers. (N=255)

Career	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Graduate Professional	27	15	42
Non-graduate Profess.	44	36	80
Large-scale employers, managers	16	14	30
Small-scale employers, self-employed	12	14	26
Non-manual	0	1	1
No career stated	36	40	76
	135	120	255

The minimum qualifications for the chosen careers were given as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Completers and Non-Completers by Minimum Qualifications for Careers. (N=255)

Qualification	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Tertiary	47	30	77
TAFE	10	6	16
Year 12 Certificate	41	46	87
No response or unclear	37	38	75
	135	120	255

4. Influence on Decisions Relating to Unit Choice.

(See Baseline Questionnaire question 14.)

Students were asked to tick the appropriate box for each statement relating to factors which may have influenced the choice of unit. Responses were required for each item to indicate if the item had no influence at all, a little, or a great deal of influence. In the final analysis it was decided to group "little influence" with "a great deal" so that only two categories were used; "no influence at all" and "some influence". No significant relationships (at the 0.05 level) were found between the various influences and the tendency to complete all units. Table 4.9 shows the influences in rank order from most frequently to least frequently identified by the whole sample. As different numbers of students failed to respond to different items, the totals differ from the sample total according to the number of missing cases for each item.

Table 4.9 Completers and Non-Completers by Influences on Unit Selection in Rank Order. (N=255)

Influence	Completers		Non-Completers		Total
	No infl.	Some	No infl.	Some	
1. Own interests	3	131	3	115	252
2. Career prospects	11	122	7	109	249
3. College handbook	31	104	20	98	253
4. Chances of good marks	38	90	25	91	244
5. Erindale teachers	42	88	29	86	245
6. Parents	39	93	40	76	248
7. High school teachers	54	77	50	66	247
8. Friends	72	56	64	51	243
9. Timetable line on which unit offered	76	27	59	33	195*

*The low response to this item could be related to the fact that the item was not carefully lined up with the response box on the questionnaire form.

There were only 4 responses to the invitation to write any other influences in the space provided. They were:

"help in the future" (2); "brother" (1); "enjoyment" (1).

In terms of factors which may contribute to a tendency to complete or not complete all units, the results in Table 4.9 provide no hard evidence. However, they do show the factors seen by students to have the most influence on their selection of units; their own interests, career prospects, the college handbook, chances of getting good marks and Erindale teachers.

It should be noted here that when the responses were grouped differently ("no influence" with "a little" versus "a great deal"), the same five items appeared as having the most influence. The rank order was the same except for a reversal between "the college handbook" and "Erindale teachers".

Of the five main influences, the most significant ones which seemed to be related to whether students complete units or not were:

(a) Chances of getting good marks

(significance 0.1923) - those who said this had no influence seemed to have a greater tendency to complete than not complete, while those who said it had some influence had as much tendency to complete as not.

(b) Timetable lines on which units are offered

(significance 0.1926) - those who said this had no influence had a greater tendency to complete than not complete while those who said it had some influence had a greater tendency not to complete than to complete.

5. Nature of Units and Status of Choice.

(See Baseline Questionnaire questions 15 - 18.)

Students were asked to state how many units they had chosen in each of the categories T-unit, A-unit and R-unit. For the purpose of later cross-tabulation, combined categories were used. These were:

- (a) 3 or more T-units and less than 3 T-units;
- (b) 3 or more A-units and less than 3 A-units;
- (c) 1 or more R-units and no R-units.

These divisions were chosen since most students were studying 5 units and any who were seeking a tertiary package would be studying a minimum of 3 T-units. Cross-tabulations between the number of T-units and A-units gives a strong indication of a relationship between those studying 3 or more T-units and those studying 1 or 2 A-units and vice versa. Students taking 3 or more T-units were thought of as "T-students" and those taking 3 or more A-units were considered as "A-students".

Tables 4.10, 4.11 and 4.12 show the numbers of students taking the different types of units.

Table 4.10 Number of T-Units Chosen by Completers and Non-Completers. (N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
3 or more T-units	95	67	162
Less than 3 T-units	28	36	64
	123	103	226

Missing cases: 29. Significance 0.0605.

Table 4.11 Number of A-Units Chosen by Completers and Non-Completers. (N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
3 or more A-units	38	53	91
Less than 3 A-units	47	46	93
	85	99	184

Missing cases: 71. Significance 0.2954.

Table 4.12 Number of R-Units Chosen by Completers and Non-Completers. (N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
1 or more R-units	61	48	109
None (or missing)	74	72	146
	135	120	255

It should be noted that some of the missing cases in Tables 4.10 and 4.11 would be students who were doing no units in those categories. This would explain the larger number of missing cases in Table 4.11 than in 4.12 as many students take only T-units. In fact 29.4% of students were studying 5 or 6 T-units. Once again, the chi-square test revealed no relationships significant at the 0.05 level between the variables.

In the next section of the questionnaire, students were asked to indicate whether they would be studying their chosen subjects for two or more semesters and if so, to indicate how many were T-units and how many were A-units.

Table 4.13 shows the relationship between completers and non-completers in terms of their decision to continue their subjects.

Table 4.13 Completers and Non-Completers by Intention to Continue Subjects for 2 or More Semesters. (N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Continuing subjects	105	68	173
Not decided to cont.	29	49	78
	134	117	251

Missing cases: 4. Significance 0.0009.

This indicates that students who have decided to continue their subjects are more likely to complete all units than those who have not made this decision. (This result only adds statistical backing to what was to be expected, although it also shows that most of those who have made the decision to continue do not change their minds.)

While a total of 173 stated that they had decided to continue with their subjects, only 137 indicated they would be continuing with 1 or more T-units and 97 would be continuing with 1 or more A-units. This means that some students have decided to continue both T-units and A-units. The largest proportions of students indicated an intention to continue in 4 or 5 T-units (15.7% and 18.8% respectively) and 1 or 2 A-units (17.6% and 8.6% respectively). Analysis of these figures in terms of completers and non-completers did not show a significant relationship at the level of 0.05.

Students who had not decided to continue their subjects were asked to indicate how many T-units and A-units they had chosen "on trial". Only 32 out of the 78 answered these questions with most (10.2% of the total

sample) indicating 1 or 2 A-units and 9.1% (of the total sample) indicating 1 or 2 T-units. There was a slight difference in the proportion of completers and non-completers who had chosen units "on trial". 46.9% of those who chose 1 or more T-units on trial completed all units while only 34.4% of those who took 1 or more A-units on trial completed all units. However, the sample was too small for statistical testing.

89.0% of all students in the sample said they were happy with the choice of units they had been offered. 9.4% were not happy and 1.6% gave no response. There was no significant difference at the 0.05 level between completers and non-completers on this variable.

20 students supplied reasons for being unhappy with the choice of units. 40% of these would have liked a better timetable arrangement, 20% wanted a wider choice and 20% wanted a particular unit to be available. Only 2 (10%) of these students were unhappy with the advice they had been given. Once again the sample was too small for statistical analysis in terms of completers and non-completers.

6. Attitude to Study and Learning.

(See Baseline Questionnaire questions 19 - 25.)

Students were asked if they thought that to do well at college they would have to work harder, as hard or not as hard as they did at high school.

82.0% expected to work harder, 16.1% expected to work as hard and 1.6% expected not to work as hard as at high school. 0.4% did not answer.

No results significant at the 0.05 level were achieved when comparing this variable across completers and non-completers. However, those who complete all units have a slightly greater tendency to expect to work harder, than those who do not complete all units.

The last four questions on the Baseline Questionnaire asked students if they liked studying units which were characterised by four different learning styles;

(a) ones which require a lot of reading and written assignments,

(b) ones which require making things or carrying out experiments,

(c) ones where the teacher gives a lot of notes and handouts,

(d) ones which require a lot of work on your own.

The response in each case was "Yes" or "No". The results for completers and non-completers are shown in Table 4.14 below. Discrepancies between the totals and the total sample result from a differing number of missing cases for each item.

Table 4.14 Completers and Non-Completers' Preferences for Learning Styles. (N=255)

Requirements of Unit	Completers		Non-Completers		Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Lot of reading and written assignments	42	83	39	75	239
Making things and doing experiments	96	33	86	28	243
Teacher gives notes and lots of handouts	60	68	42	70	240
Lot of work on your own	73	57	69	45	244

From this it can be seen that the most preferred choice is "units which require making things and doing experiments", followed by ones "which require a lot of work on your own". The least "popular" learning styles are those which involve a lot of reading and written assignments, and those where the teacher gives a lot of notes and handouts.

While completers and non-completers showed no significant difference at the 0.05 level with regard to the above variables, Table 4.14 shows a larger proportion of completers than non-completers who prefer units where the teacher gives a lot of notes and handouts. Or stated alternatively, among the non-completers, a higher proportion do not like studying such units.

B. CHANGE OF UNIT SURVEY.

63 students completed the Change of Unit Survey. Of these, 66.1% changed or withdrew from 1 or more T-units and 33.9% changed only A-units. This is understandable as more students were studying T-units than A-units and the T-units were generally more demanding.

Students were asked to tick any of the reasons listed (on the survey) for changing the unit and, as the reasons were not mutually exclusive, they could tick more than one. Table 4.15 shows the reasons in rank order as identified by non-completers who changed units. (Most students who left or gained "V" grades did not complete the Change of Unit Survey although they have been identified as non-completers).

Table 4.15 Reasons for Changing Units in Rank Order.
(N=63)

Reason	No.	%
I was getting poor marks	30	47.6
I could not understand the work	29	46.0
The class activities did not interest me	26	41.3
The content was not very relevant	25	39.7
The unit did not suit my career plans	23	36.5
There was too much work to do	20	31.7
I had to do too much work on my own	20	31.7
I did not get on well with the teacher	16	25.4
There were too many written assignments	14	22.2
I couldn't keep up with the work	11	17.5
I wanted more free time	10	15.9
We were given too many notes	10	15.9
The work was too easy	1	1.6
Other reasons	11	17.5

It is interesting to note the low frequencies of some responses which were listed in the expectation that many of the students who changed would not like certain aspects of learning.

(a) Only 15.9% wanted more free time. It was expected that the less committed students would want more free lines to socialise with their friends.

(b) Only 15.9% felt they were given too many notes. It was expected that more students would not like note-taking especially as more than 50% of non-completers indicated that they did not like studying units where the teacher

gave a lot of notes and handouts. One interpretation is that the units which they changed were not characterised by this learning/teaching style.

(c) Only 22.2% considered there were too many written assignments. It was expected that, as a considerable number of students studying A-units seemed to withdraw about the time the first major assignment was due, there may have been a larger proportion giving this as a reason. However, since more students changed T-units than A-units, this result is not so unusual.

Of the 17.5% who gave other reasons, the most common was "I couldn't keep up with the work". In some cases the student had missed lessons either through illness or late arrival in the college. Other reasons included: "disliked teaching method", "not what I expected", "I want to find a job", "more time for other homework" and "course requirements". (This was a case where a student realised that to complete the necessary package of courses, a change of unit was necessary.)

Students were asked to indicate if they had discussed their decision to change the unit(s) with any member of the college staff.

40 (63.5%) of those who completed the Change of Unit Survey said "Yes", 17 (27.0%) said "No" and 6 (9.5%) did not respond to this question.

They were then asked to indicate which person in the list provided, helped them most in making their decision.

The results are shown in Table 4.16 below.

Table 4.16 Person of Most Help in Making Decision to Change Unit(s). (N=57)

Person	No.	%
Counsellor	11	19.3
Careers adviser	5	8.8
Teacher of the unit	8	14.1
Other College staff	1	1.8
My parents	1	1.8
It was my own decision	29	50.8
My friends	2	3.5
Total	57	100

Missing cases: 6.

Since only 17 students said they did not discuss the decision it is reasonable to assume that it was "their decision". The rest of the 29 who identified this reason must have discussed the matter but eventually claimed major responsibility for the decision. Combining all who could be classified as College staff, (the first 4 "persons" in Table 4.16), 43.9% of students who changed, said that the College staff helped the most. 56.1% said that other than College staff helped most, but, as most of these said the decision was their own, it would appear that students generally do not get help from outside. It is interesting that so few stated that they found their parents or friends of most help. This is probably related to the fact that few parents understand the system well

enough to give useful or helpful advice.

It would appear from this section of the Change of Unit Survey that many students do not choose to discuss their decision about changing units with College staff. This may be due in part to a sense of independence or unwillingness to accept advice, or a lack of confidence in the counselling service available.

Some cross-tabulations were carried out to compare the reasons given for changing units with preferred ways of learning as identified in the Baseline Questionnaire. However, no relationships significant at the 0.05 level were obtained, mainly because some of the numbers in the sample for particular variables were small. In general, there was an indication of consistency in that, where students had given a particular reason for changing a unit, the majority of the group identified a consistent preference for learning style. For example, where the reason given was "too many notes", 80% of the group did not prefer studying units where the teacher gives a lot of notes and handouts).

CHAPTER 5.

RESULTS OF THE LEAVER'S SURVEY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS
SURVEY AND THE END OF SEMESTER QUESTIONNAIRE.

A. LEAVERS' SURVEY.

As stated earlier, only a small number of students (36) left college during Semester 1 and only 20 of these provided any responses to the survey either on the Leavers' Form at the time of leaving or when followed up later by letter or by telephone.

Although the sample is too small for statistical analysis, a summary of the findings is included here as a matter of interest.

Students were first asked to indicate their reason for leaving in terms of the items listed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Reasons for Leaving College.
(N=36)

Reason	No.	%
Taking up full-time job	12	33.3
"Fed up" with school	6	16.7
Transfer to another school	2	5.6
No response	16	44.4
Total	36	100

Leavers were then asked to tick any one or more of a series of statements which they considered were true for them. The responses are shown in Table 5.2 below. The

totals exceed 100% since several students identified more than one statement which was true for them.

Table 5.2 College Environment Factors Related to the Decision to Leave College. (N=36)

Statement	No.	%
Erindale is not my idea of a good college	3	8.3
The units are too long (whole semester)	4	11.1
I didn't like the choice of units	3	8.3
The units were not relevant to my needs	4	11.1
I found the units uninteresting	3	8.3
I didn't like the teaching methods	4	11.1
There were too many tests and assignments	0	0
I was getting poor marks	6	16.7
No response	16	44.4
Total	43	119.3

The third section of the Leavers' Survey listed statements relating to students' personal characteristics. The responses are shown in Table 5.3 below. Once again, totals exceed 100% because of multiple answers from several students.

Table 5.4 Leavers and Continuers by Intention to Complete Year 12. (N=255)

	Leavers	Continuers	Total
Intend completing Y12	31	210	241
Not definitely completing Y12	5	9	14
	36	219	255

Significance 0.0463

Table 5.5 Leavers and Continuers by Preference for Studying Units Where Teacher Gives Notes and Handouts. (N=255)

	Leavers	Continuers	Total
Like studying these units	7	95	102
Do not like studying these units	27	111	138
	34	206	240

Missing cases: 15. Significance 0.0093

The data did not support the prediction that leavers would have a greater tendency to change units. In fact, 20 of the 36 leavers (55.6%) did not change units whereas 135 out of the total sample of 255 (53.0%) did not change units. Considering the small sample of leavers and the fact that some left very early in the semester, therefore not being there long enough to even consider changing units, very little reliability can be placed on the data for the purposes of generalisation or prediction.

No significant results (in statistical terms) were obtained when analysing the leavers according to Year and Sex. Table 5.6 shows the distribution of males and females among leavers and continuers by Year.

Table 5.6 Leavers and Continuers by Year and by Sex.
(N=255)

	Leavers		Continuers		Total
	M	F	M	F	
Year 11	16	9	66	61	135
Year 12	6	5	47	45	120
	22	14	113	106	255

Amongst the leavers, most are Year 11 males (44.4%). This is a higher proportion than they occupy in the total sample (32.2%). Year 11 females are next most common among leavers (25.0%) but this is a lower proportion than they occupy in the sample (27.5%). The small numbers render statistical analysis unreliable but these results at least support to some extent the prediction that more Year 11 than Year 12 students would leave.

The numbers tend not to support another prediction; that there would be no difference between males and females. In fact, 61.1 % of leavers were male. This is larger than the percentage of males in the total sample (52.9%), suggesting that males may have a greater tendency to leave than females.

It may be possible to obtain more reliable results by taking a larger sample, such as all students in all A.C.T. secondary colleges who leave before completing a term or semester.

B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARENTS SURVEY.

As explained earlier, this was carried out much later in the year than the other questionnaires and surveys. Consequently it did not reach all students in the original sample. In some cases, students had left college before the survey was issued and in others, the collection of the completed surveys was not carried out as it should have been. As a result, data from only 121 students in the original sample were obtained for analysis.

Students were asked to write down the current or last occupation of their parents. Where occupations of both parents were given, that of the father was used for analysis. Responses were post-coded using a modified version of the categories used by Anderson et al in their study "Schools To Grow In" (1980).

Seven categories were used originally but these were later collapsed into two main categories to enable analysis to be done which could be more readily interpreted when comparing completers and non-completers.

Table 5.7 shows the parent occupations of students in the sample according to the original 7 categories for completers and non-completers.

Table 5.7 Parent Occupations of Students in Sample.
(N=255)

Occupation Category	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
1. Graduate professional	6	3	9
2. Other professional	22	8	30
3. Large-scale employers or managers	3	4	7
4. Small-scale employers or managers, self-employed	8	4	12
5. Non-manual workers	24	9	33
6. Manual skilled /unskilled	12	12	24
7. Farmer, housewife, pensioner	3	3	6
	78	43	121

Missing cases: 134.

From Table 5.7 it can be seen that there is a very small proportion of parents in the Graduate Professional and Manager/Employer categories. The largest groups represented are the Other Professional and Non-manual Workers. These two groups include nurses, para-medical personnel, technicians, primary school teachers, non-graduate clerical administrative and military personnel, journalists and sales assistants.

The Manual Skilled Workers include those engaged in occupations such as various trades (carpenter, plumber, electrician etc.) and semi-skilled occupations such as truck driving.

When grouping categories together for easier analysis, a number of combinations were tried which would give

reasonable sample sizes. Of these, one combination produced a significant result at the .05 level when a cross-tabulation was done between the tendency to complete all units and socio-economic status of parents.

Table 5.8 below shows the results when categories 1, 2 and 5 are combined under Professional/Non-manual, and categories 3, 4, 6 and 7 are grouped together under Employer/Manager/Manual.

Table 5.8 Completers and Non-Completers by Parent Occupation (Combined Groupings). (N=255)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Professional/Non-manual	52	20	72
Employers/Managers/Manual	26	23	49
	78	43	121

Missing cases: 134. Significance 0.0490

This result seems to suggest that there is a greater tendency for students whose parents belong to the Professional/Non-manual group of occupations to complete all units compared with students whose parents belong to the other group. Some caution must be taken in the interpretation of these results when considering the reduction in sample size (none of the leavers are included in the figures above, and they all belong in the group of non-completers). However, an attempt will be made to interpret these results in Chapter 6 in terms of Bourdieu's view of the transmission of cultural heritage. (Bourdieu, 1970).

When adjustments were made for the bias resulting from

the omission of all leavers from the Socio-economic Status of Parents Survey, the results did not show a relationship significant at the 0.05 level. However, the significance was less than 0.06, thus giving an indication of some relationship worth discussing.

Table 5.9 shows the results achieved when the number of completers in the S.E.S survey is reduced proportionally to give a composition similar to that of the whole sample.

Table 5.9 Adjusted Cross-Tabulation of Completers and Non-Completers By Parent Occupation. (Combined Groupings).
(N=91)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
Professional/Non-manual	32	20	52
Employers/Managers/Manual	16	23	39
	48	43	91

Significance 0.055 (approx.)

C. END OF SEMESTER QUESTIONNAIRE.

The main purpose of this questionnaire was to have a check on the attitudes of non-completers (shown in the Change of Unit Survey) as against the attitudes of completers. Many questions in this questionnaire therefore balanced similar questions in the Change of Unit Survey and the Leaver's Surveys.

The first group of questions asked students to indicate their feelings about Erindale as a College. Each item required one of 4 responses; "Strongly agree",

"Agree", "Disagree" and "Strongly disagree". Table 5.10 shows the results for completers and non-completers in terms of "Agree" or "Disagree". Categories were combined in order to enable clearer interpretation of results. (The number of missing cases varies for each item and includes continuing students who did not complete the questionnaire. Leavers have not been included in the numbers.)

Table 5.10 Completers and Non-Completers by Feelings about Erindale College at End of Semester 1. (N=219)

Statement	Completers		Non-Completers		Total
	A	DA	A	DA	
Glad to be at Erindale College	123	7	71	10	211
Like the semester system	120	10	66	14	210
Prefer units which last 1 term	23	105	24	57	209
Happy with unit choice offered	117	13	74	9	213
Happy with way teachers treat me	120	5	74	8	207
Happy with help available for unit and course choices	114	14	74	8	210
Happy with way students treat me	126	2	79	3	210
To do well I need to work harder than I did at high school	110	20	69	14	213
Erindale is a good college	120	6	76	5	207
Good idea to have public sharing the library and other facilities	99	29	61	17	206

A = Agree DA = Disagree

Although students were invited to write in any other comment about Erindale as a college, very few responded. Most of those who did comment expressed their disapproval

of little children being allowed to make disrupting noise in the library while students are trying to work. (This relates to the fact that a creche is conducted in the library for children while their mothers are involved in the Community Education classes being run during the day.) One student made a derogatory comment about a particular teacher with whom he/she did not get on very well.

The chi-square test did not point to any relationships significant at the 0.05 level for any of the items in Table 5.10. However, "Like the semester system" showed a significance of 0.0517, suggesting that completers have a greater tendency than non-completers to like the semester system.

The next group of questions on future intentions were repeats of questions asked in the Baseline Questionnaire. The purpose of this was to check if continuing students had changed their minds about any of these issues.

Table 5.11 shows the results for these questions, comparing the responses of completers and non-completers. The differences between totals and the sample total (219) is due to varying numbers of missing cases for each item.

Table 5.11 Completers and Non-Completers by Future Intentions as at End of Semester 1. (N=219)

Intention	Completers		Non-Completers		Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Intend completing Y12	127	5	72	6	210
Seeking tertiary entrance	87	39	38	36	200
Seeking a full-time job *	13	23	13	19	68
Continuing some of courses you are studying currently	127	5	73	6	211

*This item was only to be answered by those 75 who said "No" to the item about completing Year 12.

Of the above results, the only one which was significant at the 0.05 level was "seeking tertiary entrance" (0.0190). This is consistent with the results from the Baseline Questionnaire, indicating that the completers still have a greater tendency to be seeking tertiary entrance than non-completers. The experience of one semester has not changed intentions significantly with respect to this item. In fact, only 7 students (among the continuers) changed from "seeking tertiary entrance" to "not seeking tertiary entrance".

As may be expected, the number of students continuing in their courses showed an increase: 173 in the Baseline and 211 in the End Of Semester Questionnaire. Those who had changed units and, at the time of answering the questionnaire, were about to complete them, could be expected to be more confident of continuing these new courses. Those who were completing all their units would

have confidence to continue in those courses about which they may have had doubts at the beginning of the semester.

Students were asked to indicate the career they wished to take up on leaving college. The purpose of this question was to see if there was any change from the response at the beginning of the semester. Of the 219 respondents, 60 showed a change of career intention. Table 5.12 below shows the types of changes and Table 5.13 compares the completers and non-completers with respect to their tendency to change career intentions.

Table 5.12 Career Changes Between Beginning and End of Semester. (N=219)

	No.	%
No change	159	72.6
Change of nominated career	12	5.5
Change from stated career to "undecided"	32	14.6
Change from "undecided" to stated career	16	7.3
Total	219	100

Table 5.13 Completers and Non-Completers by Change in Career Intention. (N=219)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
No change in career	103	56	159
Change in career intention	32	28	60
	135	84	219

While the results are not statistically significant, they indicate a smaller tendency for a career change among completers than non-completers.

Students who responded "yes" to the question about continuing some of their courses, were asked to indicate how many of these were (a) Tertiary Accredited and (b) Accredited. The responses were collated under the same categories as for the parallel question in the Baseline Questionnaire; 1 or 2 units/3 or more units. The results are shown in Tables 5.14 and 5.15.

Table 5.14 Completers and Non-Completers by Number of T-Units Being Continued. (N=219).

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
1 or 2 T-units	25	28	53
3 or more T-units	83	32	115
	108	60	168

Missing cases: 51 (includes those taking no T-units).

Significance 0.0030.

Table 5.15 Completers and Non-Completers by Number of A-Units Being Continued. (N=219).

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
1 or 2 A-units	50	29	79
3 or more A-units	22	29	51
	72	58	130

Missing cases: 89 (includes those taking no A-units).

Significance 0.0379.

The results above are consistent with those from the Baseline Questionnaire, indicating a significant tendency at the 0.05 level for completers to continue with 3 or more T-units and/or 1 or 2 A-units.

The next section of the questionnaire asked students to indicate the importance to them of a number of influences affecting their choice of units for Semester 2. These influences were parallel to those listed in the Baseline Questionnaire. The purpose of these questions was to compare responses of completers and non-completers with their responses to the Baseline Questionnaire. Students were asked to tick one of 4 boxes for each item. The boxes were headed "Not important", "Slightly important", "Fairly important", and "Very important". In the final analysis, the first two categories were combined under the heading "No great importance" (N.G.I.), and the other two under the heading "Significant importance" (S.I.). The results are shown in Table 5.16. Items are listed in rank order of total frequencies for "Significant importance". This means that the table can be read as showing the items identified by students in order of importance.

Table 5.16 Completers and Non-Completers by Importance of Influences on Semester 2 Choices. (N=219).

Influence	Completers		Non-Completers		Total
	N.G.I.	S.I.	N.G.I.	S.I.	
Career plans	12	120	6	74	212
Ability to get good marks	30	101	11	66	208
Interest'g class activities	36	96	15	63	210
Teacher advice	38	90	30	50	208
Good teacher relations	59	73	29	48	209
Unit difficulty	69	63	31	48	211
Work load of unit	82	50	39	40	211
No. written assignments	87	45	48	31	211
Timetable line on which unit is offered	81	48	51	28	208
Parents' wish (Sig.0.0141)	87	45	66	14	212
Students' opinions	117	14	66	14	211

The differing numbers in the Total column is due to the varying number of missing cases for each item.

Only one item showed any statistical significance ; the influence of parents' wishes. In this case, it appears that non-completers have a greater tendency than completers to say that their parents' wishes have no great importance in their choice of units. Both completers and non-completers are consistent with the original indication that their parents had very little influence in their choice of units.

Results for the influence "Unit difficulty", deserve a brief comment. While not showing a significant relationship at the 0.05 level, the results suggest a

tendency for non-completers to regard it as having "significant importance" more frequently than completers. This is consistent with the finding that those who changed units stated most frequently that their reasons for changing units were "I was getting poor marks" and "I could not understand the work".

The next group of questions asked students to indicate the number of T-units, A-units and R-units they were studying at the time the questionnaire was administered. The responses were once again grouped as "1 or 2 T-units" and "3 or more T-units"; "1 or 2 A-units" and "3 or more A-units"; "1 or more R-units" and "No R-units". The results are shown in Tables 5.17, 5.18 and 5.19.

Table 5.17 Completers and Non-Completers by T-Units Studied. (N=219)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
1 or 2 T-units	26	30	56
3 or more T-units	89	35	124
	115	65	180

Missing cases: 39. Significance 0.0019

Table 5.18 Completers and Non-Completers by A-Units Studied. (N=219)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
1 or 2 A-units	48	35	83
3 or more A-units	38	35	73
	86	70	156

Missing cases: 63.

Table 5.19 Completers and Non-Completers by R-Units Studied. (N=219)

	Completers	Non-Completers	Total
No R-units	60	41	101
1 or more R-units	71	41	112
	131	82	213

Missing cases: 6.

Of these results, the only one with statistical significance is the relationship between the tendency to complete all units and the number of T-units being studied. Students studying 3 or more T-units at the end of the semester have a greater tendency to complete all their chosen units. This result is consistent with the findings from the Baseline Questionnaire although the results there (see Table 4.10) showed a significance of 0.0605, just outside the 0.05 level chosen as the level of significance for this study.

The final section of the End of Semester Questionnaire asked students to indicate how they felt about the units they were studying at the time. They were to tick one of four boxes for each statement. The boxes were headed; "In no units", "In few units", "In most units" and "In all units". For the final analysis, the first two categories were labelled "In less than half the units" and "In more than half the units".

Table 5.20 shows the results for completers and non-completers. Differences between N and the totals arise from the differing numbers of missing cases for each item.

Table 5.20 Completers and Non-Completers by Feelings
About Units Being Studied. (N=219).

Statement	Completers		Non-Completers		Total
	<half units	>half units	<half units	>half units	
Class activities are interesting	30	103	27	54	213
Unit content is relevant	30	100	23	58	211
I can understand the work	16	115	9	71	211
I'm happy w. the workload	23	108	17	64	212
Happy with no. of written assignments	28	104	26	56	214
Happy with the assessment	30	100	23	57	210
Units relevant to career	28	104	20	58	210
I'm happy with my marks	34	98	34	44	210
Have good tchr. rel'ships	15	117	11	70	213
I find teachers helpful	16	115	13	69	213

While most of the above cross-tabulations showed no significant relationship at the 0.05 level, the item "I'm happy with my marks" showed a significance of 0.0119. This would suggest that students who complete all units have a greater tendency than non-completers to be pleased with their marks. This is to be expected since those who changed one or more units during the semester gave the reason "I was getting poor marks" as one of the most frequent reasons for changing. It may be assumed that several of those who did not complete all units, and who did not complete the Change of Unit Survey, would have concurred with those non-completers who did complete the

Change of Unit Survey. (Only 62 students completed that survey, and a total of 78 non-completers responded to this item in the End of Semester Questionnaire.)

The statements in this section were also used to compare responses of completers with those of students who completed the Change of Unit Survey. In general, the proportion of completers who expressed positive feelings about more than half their units, was greater than the proportion of non-completers. However, the results were not statistically significant.

CHAPTER 6.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION.

This study set out to explore the reasons why students who do not finish their chosen secondary college units fail to complete. Besides seeking the reasons given by students when changing or withdrawing, the study also compared completers and non-completers with respect to a number of background variables in an attempt to discover possible factors underlying the reasons for non-completion. The variables investigated were based largely on the findings of studies relating to early school leavers as the underlying hypothesis was that non-completers of units would tend to show characteristics similar to those of early leavers from school. In general, my findings support the hypothesis; non-completers will have characteristics similar to those of early leavers as identified in other studies.

From the results which, on the chi-square test, showed a significance of 0.05 or better, I have compiled a general profile of the non-completer, as this is a convenient way of summarising the findings and of identifying the student who is "at risk" of non-completion. As a means of organising the discussion of my findings, the rest of this chapter is divided into three sections:

- I. Discussion of the General Profile of a Non-Completer.
- II. Discussion of the reasons given by students for changing or withdrawing from units.
- III. Discussion of related hypotheses raised in Chapters 2 and 3.

I. GENERAL PROFILE OF A NON-COMPLETER.

Compared with students who complete all their units, non-completers have one or more of the following characteristics, all significant at the 0.05 level:

- (a) do not enrol to gain tertiary entrance qualifications
- (b) enrol to improve their chances of getting a job
- (c) are not definitely seeking a tertiary entrance score
- (d) have no definite intention of completing Year 12
- (e) have no firm intention of studying subjects in order to complete major or minor courses in them
- (f) are less likely to have a part-time job
- (g) by the end of the semester, are not happy with their marks in most units
- (h) finish the semester studying less than 3 T-units
- (i) continue into Semester 2 with 3 or more A-units and less than 3 T-units
- (j) do not consider their parents' wishes an important influence on the choice of units for Semester 2.

In addition to these relationships, two others showed a significance between 0.05 and 0.06. Non-completers showed a greater tendency than completers to:

(k) not like the semester system (significance 0.0517)
(l) come from a socio-economic background of parents who are either managers/employers/self-employed or manual-skilled workers i.e. not professional or white-collar workers (significance 0.055 approx.)

DISCUSSION

The above characteristics (a) to (j) can be related to Rosier's findings about early leavers. Rosier (1978), found the strongest factors influencing the decision to leave were the personal characteristics of the student at age 16. These personal characteristics included low profiles in relation to:

- commitment to future education
- academic achievement
- social activities.
- general attitude to school.

Rosier also found that these personal characteristics were influenced by the school environment and the family environment. I propose to discuss the general profile above in terms of Rosier's findings and, where possible, relate the characteristics to the other literature referred to in Chapter 2.

A. Rosier's Work.

1. Commitment to future education.

1.1 Characteristics (a) to (e) all relate to a definite goal or commitment of the student to future

education whether at secondary or tertiary level. The results suggest that those who do not have a clear goal or commitment to their education have a higher tendency towards non-completion.

In the first instance, the orientation towards further education is clearly shown in the reason for enrolling; "to seek tertiary entrance qualifications"; and the intention at the end of the semester to "seek a tertiary entrance score". The fact that those who do not have these intentions also have a lower tendency to complete their units suggests that the units they are studying, whether T-units or A-units, are not meeting their perceived needs, and/or they are not receiving adequate counselling. This may mean one or more of the following:

- the college curriculum may be oriented too much towards the tertiary aspiring student
- non-completers may generally lack a specific educational goal which reduces their commitment to the units they have chosen, thus leading to change, withdrawal or a "V" grade
- students who are not seeking tertiary entrance are also the less competent ones academically, and therefore susceptible to giving up when they are unable to meet the academic standards expected of them.

1.2 Item (b) shows that non-completers have a greater tendency to enrol for the purpose of improving their chance of getting a job. Because this is not a directly educational goal in every case, it is understandable that it may not lead to a strong enough commitment for the student to persevere and complete the units. A year or two at college may be seen by some as just providing a better background generally for a career. For example, many students report that prospective employers seeking apprentices have told them simply to go to college first to improve their chances of getting an apprenticeship. This anecdotal evidence at least lends support to the view I have expressed, namely, "to improve my chances of getting a job" is not an educational goal sufficiently strong or specific enough to prevent non-completion.

1.3 Items (d) and (e) reveal a commitment on the part of completers with respect to their studies at college. Non-completers tend to have some doubts about completing Year 12 and are undecided about continuing their subjects to make up a minor or major course. They do not seem to have a plan in mind for their studies at college. This is probably very closely related to the lack of commitment to future education. The student who knows what he/she wants, and knows what is required to get it, can plan ahead.

Another possibility may account for this apparent lack of continuity of subjects. The group of non-completers may include some who need more careful counselling in their choice of units. They may be unsure at the beginning of

the semester about the content and the level of difficulty of the units, and hence are somewhat tentative. As the semester proceeds, they become aware of the difficulties and eventually fail to complete. The reasons given for changing or withdrawing would support this view. (See Table 4.15).

2. Academic achievement.

2.1 Items (h) "finish the semester studying less than 3 T-units" and (i) "continue into Semester 2 with 3 or more A-units and less than 3 T-units", relate to both commitment and academic achievement in Rosier's personal characteristics. Non-completers tend to be those who at the end of the semester are studying less than 3 T-units and intend continuing this pattern in Semester 2. This can be understood in terms of commitment to future education in that students not seeking tertiary entrance have no need to study T-units.

It can also be understood from the aspect of academic achievement. By the end of semester, many non-completers have changed units because they were getting poor marks and having difficulty understanding the work (as shown in the Change of Unit Survey). It can be reasonably argued that non-completers who, at the end of semester are studying less than 3 T-units, have withdrawn from those in which they were not having success. That is, T-units which they had selected at the beginning of the semester most probably proved too difficult for them.

2.2 Item (g) is another characteristic which relates to Rosier's "academic achievement". At the end of semester, non-completers have a greater tendency to be unhappy with their marks in the majority of their units. While this is the student's perception of his/her academic performance, it is nevertheless probably related to actual performance. In any case, it is the student's satisfaction (or perception) which is a deciding factor in the student's non-completion. The fact that 55 of the non-completers obtained "V" grades in their other units bears witness to the actual poor academic achievement of at least 45% of the non-completers.

3. Social activities.

Item (f) "are less likely to have a part-time job", relates to Rosier's "social activities". This study did not set out to probe the social activities of students, so this finding was an isolated situation which happens to tie in with this aspect of Rosier's work. The questions prompting the response were included as it was considered that students who had part-time jobs would be distracted from their studies by this work and therefore would show a greater tendency towards non-completion. This turned out not to be the case. A number of possible explanations could account for the actual results obtained.

(1) Students who are committed to their educational goals are also the type of people who are both motivated and able to maintain a part-time job. That is, they seek

the job and possess the qualities which make them desirable employees.

(2) Students who are able to organise their time in order to maintain a part-time job as well as pursue full-time study have the necessary self-discipline and perseverance to complete all the units studied.

(3) Some students who need the financial support gained from part-time work in order to remain at college probably have a very strong motivation to complete all their units at college.

There is a better relationship (though not statistically significant at the 0.05 level) between completers and those who work up to 10 hours per week than between completers and those who work more than 10 hours per week. This would suggest that my original assumption tends to be supported by the results when the number of hours exceeds 10 hours per week. That is, students working more than 10 hours per week at a part-time job have a greater tendency not to complete their units than those working up to 10 hours per week.

Munro (1987) lends some support to my original assumption. He found in a survey conducted at Stirling College (another ACT secondary college) that students spent an average of 10 hours per week on homework. Further, those who worked up to 10 hours per week on part-time jobs were able to maintain this average of 10 hours per week on homework, whereas those who worked at part-

time jobs for more than 10 hours per week spent less than the average time on homework. Assuming that the amount of time spent on homework correlates with the tendency to succeed at college subjects, these results would indicate to some extent why students who work more than 10 hours per week at part-time jobs have a greater tendency not to complete all their units.

4. Family environment.

Item (j) "do not consider their parents' wishes an important influence on the choice of units for Semester 2", relates to Rosier's "family environment factors", although not in the same sense as Rosier found. In that study, the "family environment" was seen to affect the decision to leave through family members and significant others acting as career models who influenced the student through their activities and attitudes which relate to career decisions. In this study, non-completers tend not to regard their parents' wishes as important in choosing units for Semester 2. This may relate to some extent to the parents' own lack of background in senior secondary education. Those parents who have not experienced upper secondary education and those who are unsure of the ACT system could have little confidence in advising their offspring. The comparatively recent establishment of the ACT system and its distinct difference from systems in other states makes it quite unfamiliar to parents of most of the students in the current study. It is therefore to

be expected that, in many cases, both parents and students would have little confidence in parental advice on the choice of subjects.

The fact that there is a greater tendency for completers to come from socio-economic backgrounds where parents are professional or white-collar workers, and therefore likely to have completed senior secondary education at least, would lend support to this view.

Thus, in terms of Rosier's "personal characteristics" at least, the current study shows that non-completers have characteristics similar to those of early leavers.

B. Other Literature.

1. Beck and Muia.

Other studies mentioned in Chapter 2 do not relate closely to the characteristics of the non-completer listed in the profile above. The only characteristic in the list impinging directly on those studies is item (g) ("not happy with their marks"). In their summary, Beck and Muia (1980) listed a sequence of events; "... loss of interest, lower grades, skipping class, dropping out of school". The fact that non-completers tend to be unhappy with their marks (and were probably getting lower grades) is the only statistically significant finding which is consistent with the school leavers studied by Beck and Muia.

2. Poole.

The profile of the early school leaver devised by Poole (1981), which was based on several Australian studies, lists a number of characteristics relating to those of non-completers in this study. (See Chapter 2, page 20). Although only one of Poole's characteristics showed a significance at the 0.05 level, the general trends showed non-completers to have a greater tendency to match the profile than completers. The only characteristic which showed a significant relationship in this study was that non-completers, like leavers, were getting poor grades.

One characteristic listed by Poole and by overseas researchers, was that early school leavers tend to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Item (1) above relates to this although it does not match closely with the lower socio-economic background of the other studies. A discussion of the relationship is included later in Section III.

3. Hunt and Fordham.

Hunt and Fordham (1983) found that lower achievers had fewer positive and more negative feelings towards schools. Once again, none of the findings of this study showed statistical significance at the 0.05 level linking non-completion with the feelings towards school (or any other of Hunt and Fordham's findings). The closest statistically significant finding in this study was that non-completers

had a greater tendency to not like the semester system (item (k) in the profile above). However, there was a general tendency for non-completers to have more negative and fewer positive feelings about school. (See Tables 5.10 and 5.20.) This also relates to Rosier's "general attitude towards school".

II. REASONS FOR CHANGING/WITHDRAWING FROM UNITS.

A. MAJOR REASONS.

The results of the Change of Unit Survey (See Table 4.15) show that the main reasons stated for changing units were:

1. "I was getting poor marks."
2. "I could not understand the work."
3. "The class activities did not interest me."
4. "The content was not very relevant."
5. "The unit did not suit my career plans."
6. "There was too much work to do."
7. "I had to do too much work on my own."

The reasons above were identified (ranked in the order above) by at least 31.7% of changers in each case. These findings are all consistent with the expectations (listed in Chapter 2) which were based on studies of leavers. Once again, this shows a similarity between changers and early leavers.

DISCUSSION.

The first two reasons listed ("I was getting poor marks" and "I could not understand the work") relate to the students' achievement. This has been discussed earlier in relation to Rosier's "personal characteristics" of the student.

Snowdon (1984) also found that students changed or withdrew from units for similar reasons: "too hard", "couldn't cope" and "bad marks". Another category of reasons given by these students in Snowdon's study was that the units were "not what they thought". Reasons 4 and 6 in the present study relate most nearly to this.

All of these reasons suggest that the students concerned had made an unwise choice of units as a result of either poor information in the decision-making process or an unrealistic estimation of their own ability, or both. At the very least, it would seem that many expectations have not been met. This is supported by the fact that non-completers had a slightly greater tendency to say that they did not expect to work harder at college than they did at high school.

In some cases, the level at which the subject is taught needs to be experienced before the student can properly judge the appropriateness of the unit for him/her. This happens frequently in Mathematics where there are three levels of tertiary-accredited units and one of accredited. Many students change from one level to

a lower level during the semester.

Snowdon (1984) also found that there needs to be a period during which students can "try out" units. His suggestions were to allow students the first term to settle in to the new circumstances at college and to provide clear guidance to avoid students selecting too many T-units beyond their ability. I would have to agree with these suggestions in the light of my results. In particular, I see the need for more appropriate counselling to be given students early in the stages of transition from high school to college so that they are better prepared for the change.

The third most frequently stated reason for changing units ("class activities did not interest me"), also relates to personal characteristics of the student. However, there may also be some implications for teachers and teaching strategies. The finding relates to the work of Hunt and Fordham (1983) who found that "students want teachers to use interesting teaching methods".

The present study found that there was a slightly greater tendency for completers to find class activities interesting in the majority of their units, and a greater tendency for non-completers to attach significant importance to "interesting class activities" in choosing units for Semester 2. This would suggest that non-completers (including changers) may not have a clear commitment to study their chosen units and are therefore more likely to seek extrinsic satisfaction ("interesting

class activities") than the intrinsic satisfaction available to students who see what they are doing as relevant, valuable and therefore interesting.

In summary, then, the major reasons for changing units relate closely to the findings of other studies cited in the literature, particularly to Rosier's "personal characteristics" of the student. In this study, some of these personal characteristics would seem to be the strongest factors leading to the decision to change units. The final section of the Change of Unit Survey endorses this view further, where a large proportion of changers said that the decision to change units was mostly their own.

B. MINOR REASONS.

The remaining reasons identified for changing units (each selected by less than 26% of changers) were, in order:

8. "I did not get on well with the teacher".
9. "There were too many written assignments".
10. "I couldn't keep up with the work".
11. "I wanted more free time".
12. "We were given too many notes".
13. "The work was too easy". (1 student only.)

Of these reasons, only 8 and 9 warrant comment as I had expected them to draw a higher frequency of responses.

(a) "I did not get on well with the teacher"

Other studies in the literature found that early leavers nominated poor relationships with teachers as one of their reasons for leaving. For example, Poole (1981) lists "dislike of authoritarian teachers" as a characteristic of early leavers. Collins et al (1980) comment that "the personal relationships teachers form with students stands out as crucial". Hunt and Fordham (1983) found that "students want teachers to have good interpersonal skills, to be helpful and to treat students with respect as maturing young people". However, the influence of these relationships is not as strong in this study as seems to be indicated in studies of early leavers. This could be related to two major differences:

(1) this study deals with only Year 11 and 12 students (Year 10 leavers were included in other studies), and

(2) the nature of staff-student relationships in ACT secondary colleges is generally more friendly than in Year 7-12 high schools. This was noted by Anderson et al (1980) where it was found that "college students have more favourable perceptions of their teachers".

In the current study, 93% of students indicated that they were happy with the way they were treated by their teachers with a slightly greater tendency for this to be the case for completers than non-completers. Over 80% said they had good teacher relationships in more than half their units with a slightly greater tendency for this to

be so for completers than non-completers. These results would indicate that Erindale College was doing well in meeting these "requirements" highlighted in the Hunt and Fordham study.

The importance of teacher relationships in deciding on unit choices for Semester 2 ranked fifth in those items of "significant importance" as shown in Table 5.16. This would suggest that these students, like those in Hunt and Fordham's study, look for teachers with whom they can establish good relationships. However, there is no evidence significant at the 0.05 level, to indicate that poor teacher relationships lead to non-completion of units. This answers the question raised from the study of Collins et al (1980); "Do students withdraw from units because of poor teacher relationships?" Changers gave this a low ranking as a reason for changing, but, when completers and non-completers were compared on the item "I have good teacher relationships", there was only a slightly greater tendency for completers to agree.

In summary then, these results indicate that students at Erindale College generally have good relationships with their teachers and that "poor teacher relationships" is not a major reason given for changing units.

(b) "there were too many written assignments".

I had expected a bigger percentage of students to give this as a reason for changing or withdrawing from units. In the Baseline Questionnaire, the least "popular" units

were ones "involving a lot of reading and writing". It was therefore expected that many students would have given as a reason for changing units, "too many written assignments. One possible explanation may lie in the fact that the Change of Unit Survey was completed up to the end of Week 10 (the last opportunity to withdraw from units), with many students changing units well before this. Thus, at the time of completing the Change of Unit Survey, the load of written assignments may not have built up to the point where the student felt it was a major reason for changing or withdrawing from a unit.

My expectation was also partly based on the assumption that a large proportion of changers would be the less able students who would be finding the written assignments too demanding. However, as the units which were changed were mostly T-units, being studied by more able students, "too many written assignments" may not have been a major concern for changers. This is supported by the fact that there was a greater tendency for students who enrolled to gain a tertiary entrance to complete their units even after changing i.e. they did not obtain "V" grades.

III. DISCUSSION OF OTHER HYPOTHESES AND QUESTIONS.

A. HYPOTHESES FROM THE LITERATURE.

In Chapter 2, a set of hypotheses on comparisons between completers and non-completers stated the expectations that non-completers will less frequently:

- (1) be seeking tertiary entrance and therefore studying 3 or more T-units.
- (2) intend to complete Year 12.
- (3) have a positive attitude to college organisation, the units offered and their relations with their teachers.
- (4) expect to work harder than at high school.
- (5) prefer studying units that require a lot of reading and writing and making their own notes.
- (6) have aspirations to careers requiring higher educational qualifications.
- (7) come from higher socio-economic backgrounds.
- (8) find unit content relevant and class activities interesting.
- (9) be happy with the marks they are receiving in the units studied.

Of these only three hypotheses (1,2 and 9) were supported at the 0.05 level of significance by the results. These have already been discussed under the General Profile of a Non-Completer.

Hypothesis 7 was not supported at the 0.05 level, but showed a significance of approximately 0.055 when completers and non-completers were crosstabulated with the groups (i) employers, managers, self-employed, manual-skilled and (ii) professional, non-manual workers. The findings are worthy of discussion.

The grouping of employment categories which produced the results above, were arrived at after attempting

several other combinations. However, there is a possible link between the groups within each category. Professional and Non-manual workers could be seen as people who value education highly. The Professionals have acquired their status through education and the Non-manual workers (such as public servants and shop-assistants) see education as the only means of improving the status of their offspring. This contrasts with employers, managers and self-employed who have other options to offer their children.

Pierre Bourdieu (1970) writes of the "cultural capital" of society being transmitted through the education system. He states that certain social classes are rich in this cultural capital, a considerable and valuable part of which they pass on to their offspring in the family environment. The education system assumes a certain cultural background and children of these classes who are familiar with the culture are thus best fitted to succeed in school.

While the groupings in the present study do not appear to match Bourdieu's categories exactly, there is some overlap. At least in the case of Manual-skilled workers, there may be a lack of "cultural capital" necessary to gain maximum benefit from the education system. The tendency to not complete may be related to their lack of knowledge or understanding of how the college system works and how to get the most out of it. Students from this background who find work difficult in a

unit are not likely to find their parents helpful because these parents lack knowledge of the work, or understanding of how to get help. Also, the language used in the classroom in some subjects may be so different from the language with which the students and their parents are familiar, that there is a need for "decoding". This could explain why students who withdrew from units stated that they could not understand the work.

Bourdieu claims that children of the favoured class acquire the necessary "code" from their social environment. Other children, who are seen as failures, or lacking in ability, may well reach this position simply because they do not possess the cultural background which forms the context in which the education system makes sense.

In this study, it is understandable that completers have a greater tendency to come from backgrounds where the parents are professionals and white-collar workers. In the ACT, these are the people who either possess more than their share of cultural capital themselves or who have the sense of its value and support their children to acquire it.

While none of the other hypotheses were supported at the statistically significant level chosen, there was nevertheless a general tendency which showed support in each case. Hypothesis 3, for example, related directly to the study of Hunt and Fordham (1983) and was supported by the results in Tables 5.10 and 5.20. Completers show a

greater tendency to have positive attitudes such as "like the semester system", "glad to be at Erindale College", "happy with the way teachers treat them" etc.

Only one hypothesis from Chapter 2 has not been addressed in previous discussion; (6) career aspirations of completers will require higher educational qualifications. The results, which gave qualitative support to the hypothesis, are most easily understood in the light of

(i) completers having a greater tendency to be seeking tertiary entrance qualifications, and

(ii) the high priority given to career aspirations when selecting units to study.

B. HYPOTHESES FROM CHAPTER 3.

1. (a) Non-completers will have characteristics similar to those of early leavers as identified in other studies.

This hypothesis is supported by my results; non-completers show some characteristics at least which are similar to those of early leavers. They:

- (i) are getting poor marks
- (ii) have difficulty understanding the work
- (iii) lack a commitment to future education
- (iv) tend to have more negative attitudes towards school.

These characteristics have been discussed earlier in Section I. However, it is worth discussing at this point

some of the differences between non-completers in this study and leavers in other studies.

The fact that many of these non-completers do not leave is attributable to the willingness within the college system to allow students to reduce their workload to four units or less. Dropping one or more units does not force a student to withdraw from college in the ACT system. Students are able to continue studying just those units which they are able to handle without forcing them to continue in units where they are experiencing failure. In other systems which are less accommodating in this regard, the student would be likely to leave.

1.(b) There will be a marked difference in the numbers of T-units and A-units changed because

- (i) T-units are more difficult than A-units, and
- (ii) students taking a high proportion of A-units together with 1 or 2 T-units are less likely to have a strong commitment to their studies and therefore likely to change their T-units.

This hypothesis is also supported by the findings. The greater level of difficulty of T-units and the fact that a greater proportion of students were studying 3 or more T-units would explain this. The reasons given for changing ("poor marks" and "could not understand the work"), would also support this view.

Of those students who changed 1 or more T-units, the majority were students studying 1 or 2 T-units and/or 3 or more A-units. The assumption that students of mostly A-

units would have less commitment to studying T-units could be justified to some extent by these results. However, the ability of these students is a possible reason, rather than difficulties with commitment.

C. HYPOTHESES ABOUT LEAVERS.

As noted in the results (Chapter 5), the sample of leavers was small and the number who completed the Leavers' Survey was even smaller. This meant that no statistically reliable information could be gleaned from the study. The relevant hypothesis in Chapter 2 stated:

"It is expected that students who left would give reasons such as:

- (a) "getting poor marks".
- (b) "units were not interesting or relevant".
- (c) "fed up with school".
- (d) "expected to do too many tests and assignments".

The small number of leavers who completed the survey did identify the reasons above, but in no way that would allow a firm conclusion to be drawn.

Tables 5.4 and 5.5 show two crosstabulations which indicated a significance better than 0.05. However, the sample size of leavers in both tables is rather small. If any reliability can be attributed to the results, they are saying that leavers

- (i) do not intend completing Year 12 and

(ii) leavers have a greater tendency than continuers to dislike studying units where the teacher gives a lot of notes and handouts.

The first of these is self-evident, affirming that the leavers tend to have no firm commitment to stay at college at the time they completed the Baseline Questionnaire. The second seems to indicate that leavers may just dislike having to do a lot of reading and writing even when they don't have to make up their own notes. This may simply be a consequence of being disenchanted with schooling which is perceived by leavers to be partly characterised by teacher-given notes.

For more reliable results, a larger sample would be necessary, such as one which included all leavers from all colleges in the ACT.

D. MALES AND FEMALES, YEARS 11 AND 12.

It was hypothesised that there would be no significant difference between males and females in the tendency to complete all units. The results supported this.

Similarly, in accordance with the hypothesis, there was no significant difference between Years 11 and 12 at the 0.05 level. There was an expected difference in that the proportion of Year 11 students who did not complete all their units was higher than the proportion in Year 12. The likely explanation of this difference is that most of the Year 12 students have decided to complete Year 12 and have committed themselves to finishing majors and minors

in particular courses. Year 11 students on the other hand, have yet to finalise their directions and are more susceptible to changing or withdrawing from their chosen units.

CHAPTER 7.

IMPLICATIONS.

A. IMPLICATIONS FROM PROFILE OF NON-COMPLETER.

In this study I have found that non-completers show identifiable characteristics which, in some cases are similar to those of early leavers in other studies. The profile of a non-completer described in Chapter 6 will be useful in identifying students who are "at risk" in this sense. Early identification, through a questionnaire at the time of enrolment and information from staff at the feeder schools, will assist in developing more appropriate counselling for these students in order to alleviate the problems associated with non-completion.

1. Identified students should be given more detailed counselling at the time of enrolment to help them establish some realistic goals in coming to college.

This implication flows from the findings of the study which indicate that non-completion is related to the following factors:

- (a) lack of commitment to complete Year 12
- (b) not enrolling to gain tertiary entrance
- (c) not deciding at the beginning of the year whether to study units for two or more semesters and, possibly,
- (d) Coming from families less likely to understand the

education system.

If students can be helped to develop a firm commitment to future education, or some other specific goal which can be achieved by participating in the education program offered by the college, there should be a reduction in the number of students who do not complete their chosen units.

To provide additional counselling effectively, the target students need to be identified prior to actual enrolment by means of a questionnaire given to Year 10 students. The counselling should be aimed at leading these students through a careful consideration of their options, interests and abilities, to decisions about continuing their education and planning a career path. If the decision is then to enrol at college, subsequent support should attempt to help the student select the most appropriate set of units to study and to develop a commitment to studying the units selected.

The study suggests that those who are seeking tertiary entrance are likely to complete all their chosen units. It would seem that this goal is a factor influencing the tendency to complete. However, this goal will not be appropriate for all students. Other goals which should be suggested to prospective "at risk" students are:

- to improve basic skills of literacy and numeracy
- to explore a range of courses to widen career options
- to develop skills in personal development, communication and relationships

- to improve skills required for employment (specific or general), for coping well with adult life, and/or for contributing to Australian society.

2. Closer liaison needs to be established between college and high school staff.

A major problem in the counselling process is the disjunction between the high school and the college. High school teachers who have taught the students over a four-year period are familiar with their capabilities. They are in a good position to advise students on the basis of past experience. However, their lack of familiarity with college courses and procedures may in some cases, put them in a poorer position for advising students on their future.

College teachers have a much better understanding of courses and procedures but have very little knowledge of individual students' past performance or of their potential. This puts them in a poorer position to advise Year 10 students on courses which will lead to the maximising of their potential.

Ideally, high school and college teachers should complement each other in advising students, possibly working together as a team. There may be some practical difficulties to be overcome here. However, some specific suggestions for facilitating this are:

(a) exchanges between college teachers and their counterparts in the feeder high schools,

(b) discussions between faculty staffs to develop better mutual understanding of the demands of college courses and procedures on students during the transition period from Year 10 to college,

(c) transfer of records from high school to college, particularly in the case of students who are most likely to need additional help in selecting the appropriate level of units to study at college.

3. At the stage of unit selection, there is a need to insist that students in this category enrol in a course, whether accredited or registered, which is designed to help them establish future goals.

At the time of the study, little work had been done at the college to cater for students who enrolled simply because there was nothing else they could think of doing. Apart from the initiatives of the Participation and Equity Program which introduced the work experience program, no other efforts were specifically directed towards helping these students establish achievable and worthwhile goals. The same students tend to drop out of units so that they are underloaded and could quite easily cope with a prescribed unit which would direct their thinking along these lines.

At the time of writing this report, the college has developed and submitted for accreditation, a course, "Vocational Studies" which is intended for students in this category. Given its orientation towards the

development of basic skills and work experience, it would seem a suitable course to which "at risk" students should be directed. The fact that the course is written in half-semester units will allow students to study them for shorter periods and thus gain a sense of achievement sooner than otherwise. This should help develop their confidence in the ability to achieve goals.

4. At the start of their Year 11, "at risk" students should be monitored more closely to detect early signs of failure to achieve.

This implication arises from the finding that non-completers tend to be getting poor marks and/or not understanding the work. With the high rate of retention of students in senior secondary education in the ACT, an increasing proportion of students of lesser levels of competence are coming on to college. Because colleges tend not to seek academic records from feeder schools (to allow students a fresh start) it is often several weeks before college staff become aware of low-achievers. In the meantime, they are well on the way to becoming non-completers.

If these low-achievers were identified through the college counsellor who has had access to high school records and some contact with students in the feeder schools, they could be given special monitoring by the counsellor and, perhaps, attention by their teachers, to watch for signs of struggle and inability to cope. Those

students in this category could then be directed to tutorial or remedial sessions where appropriate assistance can be given before they get too far behind in their work. For some, even if all preliminary counselling processes are in place, it will become obvious that they should not be studying the chosen unit. These should be directed to other more appropriate units and helped to see positive gains which can be realised from studying them. It may be necessary to discuss this advice with the parents as, in many cases, students in the past have rejected the advice of their teachers early in the semester only to realise too late that they should have heeded it.

Another mechanism for implementing this recommendation is to assign these "at risk" students to particular advisory group teachers. Where possible, these should be teachers who are able to teach them in more than one unit, and/or teachers with a particular interest in their welfare. Class teachers would feed concerns to the advisory group teacher who could then follow up with the student and, if necessary, with the parents.

5. Provide remedial and tutorial assistance for those students who begin to show signs of falling behind in their work, or who are not achieving satisfactorily.

This is already available to some degree, but operates on a voluntary basis for students. Tutorial assistance is not provided in all subjects at the moment. This recommendation calls for a more intrusive program in which

"at risk" students are directed to undertake tutorial sessions. Allowance will have to be made in the allocation of staff duties also.

This implication arises from the finding that non-completers often stated that they were finding difficulty understanding the work. Providing such tutorial and remedial assistance should prevent students arriving at the position where they feel unable to cope and therefore decide to withdraw from the unit. Too often students allow the position to be reached where think they are too far behind because they could not understand earlier work.

6. Parents of "at risk" students should be interviewed as early as possible to discuss their offsprings' prospects.

The aim of such an interview would be to inform the parents of college expectations and involve them in the decision-making about units and courses. These parents should then be in a better position to support their children as they seek to achieve their goals.

This study suggests that there is a possible link between non-completion and students who come from families less likely to understand the education system. If this is true, broadening the parents' understanding of the system may well help reduce the occurrence of non-completion.

B. IMPLICATIONS FROM THE CHANGE OF UNIT SURVEY.

An underlying assumption behind this study is that college is the appropriate educational institution for all students who seek to enrol. This means that the college will seek to provide an appropriate curriculum for all its users. In fact, among the aims of Erindale College, is included the aim to "provide a broad educational program which caters for the needs of its students".

The fact that some students find "the content of units not very relevant" suggests that their needs are not being met. This may be related to the curriculum, or to the level of the unit chosen.

1. There needs to be a constant review of the college curriculum to ensure that the needs of its students are met (within reasonable expectations).

Over the years since the college opened, the curriculum has been progressively expanded to provide a larger range of accredited courses, including some which allow considerable flexibility, such as half-semester units and multidiscipline combinations of units to make up a course. In spite of this, students still find their chosen units "unsuitable" for various reasons. Nevertheless the process must continue, with appropriate regard being given to the expressed and observed needs of students.

This will become increasingly important in the light of the government decision to extend the waiting period

before 16 and 17 year olds can receive unemployment benefits. More of those Year 10 leavers who did not previously enrol in college are likely to seek entrance as their best alternative. They will have needs which may not yet have been catered for by the college curriculum. Greater attention may need to be focussed on shorter units which can be completed in minimum time to enable these students to have something worthwhile on their Secondary College Record before they leave. (It is to be expected that students in this category will be most likely to leave as soon as they can, whether to take up a job or to receive unemployment benefits.)

2. Students need to be better prepared to handle the level of work expected of them as they make the transition from high school to college.

In this study, the fact that more T-units were changed than A-units suggests that many students had chosen units that were at a level which was too hard for them. In some cases, these students may not have had realistic expectations of how hard they would have to work. In others, they may have decided to attempt a higher level even though they had been advised against it. For some of these, the assistance available through tutorial sessions may be sufficient for them to handle the higher level. However, many may have simply overestimated their competence. For these, a clearer indication is needed of the levels of achievement required for success at college.

For example, some students come to college with a view to gain entry to a medical faculty. They consider that their best chances will be achieved by studying the highest level of mathematics, physics and chemistry, assuming that this will maximise their tertiary entrance score. What they do not realise is that, in order to obtain a score in the top 2%, they will need to average 94 or better in their 4 best subjects. If given this information, students will then have a more concrete guide to the level at which they will have to work.

Some able students who have managed to achieve high marks at high school without extending themselves academically, expect that they can still achieve at the same level, at college, without changing their amount of effort. These students need to be helped realise as early as possible that the conceptual level of many of their college units is such that it will require greater effort on their part in order to succeed at a high level.

This could be done by college teachers taking more time at the beginning of the year to help students adapt to college expectations. This is particularly important in matters such as planning their workload, researching and presenting assignments, and meeting deadlines. Perhaps a period at the beginning of the semester during which little of the assessment contributes to the final unit score, may allow students to make some of these adjustments. Assessment items could be used more for

diagnostic purposes during this time.

SUMMARY.

This study attempted to discover the factors leading to the non-completion of units by students at Erindale College.

In this last chapter I have suggested the findings of the study point to some possible ways of reducing the problem. They are:

A. Counselling.

- more appropriate counselling of "at risk" students, leading to the establishment of specific goals and commitment to their education

- development of closer links between college and feeder high schools to improve the advice given to students in Year 10

- direction of "at risk" students into units giving them the opportunity to explore and establish specific goals for themselves

- involving parents more directly in the decision-making process;

B. Tutorial Assistance.

- close monitoring of the progress of "at risk" students early in Year 11

- provision of tutorial and remedial assistance in a variety of subjects;

C. Curriculum.

- keeping the curriculum under constant review to provide for the needs of all students at the college

- preparing students more adequately for the greater level of work expected of them at college.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- Anderson, D. 1979. "A Social-Psychological Theory of School Drop-outs: An Exploratory Study". In Rowley, G. (Ed.) Proceedings of the 1979 Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education. AARE.
- Anderson, D., Saltet, M. and Vervoorn, A. 1980. Schools to Grow In: An Evaluation of Secondary Colleges, Canberra. Australian National University Press.
- Australian Government Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training. 1979. Education, Training and Employment. (Williams, B.R., Chairman). Canberra. AGPS.
- Australian Capital Territory. ACT Schools Authority. 1981. Survey of 1979 Year 10, 11 and 12 School Leavers in ACT and Queanbeyan Schools, Canberra. ACT Schools Authority.
- Australian Capital Territory. ACT Schools Authority. 1984. Impact. 3 (1). Canberra. ACT Schools Authority.
- Bean, J. 1979. "Path Analysis: The Development of a Suitable Methodology for the Study of Student Attrition". Papers of American Educational Research Association Conference, San Francisco. AERA.
- Beck, L. and Muia, J. 1980. "A Portrait of a Tragedy: Research Findings on the Dropout". The High School. 64 (2).
- Bean, J. and others. 1974. Early Leaving in Northern Ireland. Research Report. Northern Ireland Council for Educational Research. Belfast. NICER.
- Boshier, R. 1972. "The Development and Use of a Dropout Prediction Scale". Adult Education. XXII (2).
- Boshier, R. 1973. "Educational Participation and Dropout: A Theoretical Model". Adult Education. XXIII (4).
- Bourdieu, P. 1970. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction". Papers of British Sociological Association Conference.
- Campbell, J. and McMeniman, M. 1983. A Comparative Study of Alternative and Mainstream Courses at Year 11. Report to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Canberra. AGPS.

- Chance, B. and Sarthory, J. 1972. "Dropout Prevention: A Model for Educational Change". The High School Journal, 55 (5).
- Collins, C., Clark, M., Moran, G. and Warhurst, J. 1980. Looking Backwards, Views of Secondary Schooling Held by Recent School Leavers and Those Who Work With Them. Research report for the Schools Commission, Canberra. Canberra College of Advanced Education.
- Delin, J. and Dawson, J. 1981. "A Second Chance at Bowden Brompton. The Early Leavers Project". Pivot, 8 (2).
- Grant, J. and others. 1979. Secondary Colleges. An Analysis of Registered Units and Low-demand Accredited Courses. Report of the Education Programs Standing Committee to the Schools Authority, Canberra. ACT Schools Authority.
- Handbook, 1986. Erindale College Handbook. Erindale College, Canberra.
- Hunt, J. and Fordham, A. 1983. Year 10 Students and Recent High School Leavers Views of ACT High Schooling. Canberra. ACT Schools Authority.
- Ironmonger, D. 1983. "How to Keep More Children at School". Australian Society, 2 (6).
- Kennett, J. 1973. "The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu", Educational Review, 25.
- Kerlinger, F. 1965. Foundations of Behavioural Research. New York. Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.
- Lane, R. 1980. The Development and Implementation of the ACT Schools Accreditation System. Canberra. ACT Schools Authority.
- Miller, P. 1982. Determinants of School Participation Rates: A Cross-Sectional Analysis for NSW and Victoria. Discussion Paper No. 40. Canberra. Centre for Economic Policy Research, ANU.
- Minium, E. 1978. Statistical Reasoning in Psychology and Education. 2nd Edition. New York. John Wiley and Sons.
- Munro, L. 1987. "Homework and Part-time Work - Do They Mix?" Stirling College Newsletter. No. 2. Stirling College, Canberra.

- Neill, S. (Ed.) 1979. Keeping Students in School: Problems and Solutions. American Association of School Administrators. Critical Issues Report. Arlington, Virginia. AASA.
- Nie, N., Bent, D. and Hull, C. 1970. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. New York. McGraw-Hill.
- Peel, M. 1981. "Clive's Kids: An Employment Scheme for Unemployable Youth". Australian Journal of Social Issues. 16 (4).
- Poole, M. 1981. School Leavers in Australia: A Comprehensive Review and Analysis of Existing Australian Research on Early School Leavers with Particular Emphasis on Early Female Leavers. Report for the Schools Commission. Canberra. Schools Commission.
- Quay, H. and Allen, L. 1983. "Truants and Dropouts". In Mitzel, H. (Ed.) Encyclopaedia of Educational Research. 5th edition. pp 1958-1961. New York. MacMillan.
- Rosier, M. 1978. Early School Leavers in Australia. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell and Hawthorn, Victoria: ACER.
- Scales, H. 1969. "Another Look at the Dropout Problem". The Journal of Educational Research. 62 (8).
- Snowdon, G. 1984. Factors Involved in Choice of College and Choice of Subjects for Students Moving from Year 10 in High School to Year 11 in an ACT Secondary College. Field Study Report for Master of Education Degree. Canberra College of Advanced Education. Canberra.
- Van Dalen, D. 1973. Understanding Educational Research: An Introduction. 3rd Edition. New York. McGraw-Hill Book Co.
- Weisberg, H. and Bowen, B. 1977. An Introduction to Survey Research and Data Analysis. San Francisco. W.H. Freeman and Co.
- Wicks, D. and Clowry, J. 1979. Survey of 1977 Year 12 Students Who Attended ACT/Queanbeyan Schools. School Leavers Survey. Canberra. ACT Schools Authority.
- Wiersma, W. 1969. Research Methods in Education - An Introduction. Philadelphia. J.B. Lippincott Company.
- Youngman, M. 1979. Analysing Social and Educational Research Data. London. McGraw-Hill.

APPENDIX I.

Baseline Questionnaire.

Administered to all Year 11 and Year 12 students
at the college in February, 1985.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out something about your expectations as you start the units of study you have chosen this semester. You are asked to include your name on this response so that we can ask you further questions to clarify your answers if necessary. It will also be important for a later survey to see how your views change.

All answers will be treated confidentially. Please answer all questions carefully by filling the boxes and spaces appropriately.

NAME: _____ I.D. NO.

1	2	3	4	5	6

Office Use

7 1. What Year are you in? Year 11 1 (Tick the appropriate box)

Year 12 2

8 2. Are You Male? 1

Female? 2

9 3. Where did you attend school before enrolling at Erindale?

a) In a government school 1

b) In a non-government school 2

10 4. Where was this school?

a) In the A.C.T. 1

b) In N.S.W. 2

c) Elsewhere (Please say where) (3-9)

5. Why did you enrol at College?

(Tick the box next to the statement which best describes your reason)

11 a) To gain entry to a University or College of Advanced Education. 0-1

12 b) To improve my chances of getting a job. 0-1

13 c) My parents want me to. 0-1

14 d) I couldn't find a job so College will give me something to do while I wait. 0-1

15 e) Some other reason (please give your reason) (0-9)

- 16 6. Do you have a part-time job? Yes 1
No 2
- 17 7. If you answered "Yes" to Question 6, how many hours per week do you work on average? (Tick one box)
- a) Less than 5 hrs/week 1
- b) 5-10 hrs/week 2
- c) More than 10 hrs/week 3
- 18 8. If you answered "No" to question 6, are you seeking a part-time job?
- Yes 1
- No 2
- 19 9. Do you intend to complete Year 12?
- Yes 1
- No 2
- 20 10. If you answered "No" to Q.9, are you looking for a full-time job?
- Yes 1
- No 2
- 21 11. Are you considering doing a full-time course at a TAFE College?
- (a) Perhaps at some time. 1
- (b) Definitely at the end of Year 11. 2
- (c) Definitely at the end of Year 12. 3
- 22 12. Do you have a particular career in mind which you want to take up when you finish College?
- Yes 1
- If your answer is "Yes", say briefly what that career is: (2-4) No 0
-
- 23 13. If you answered "Yes" to Q. 12, what are the minimum qualifications you will need for the career you have chosen?
- (a) Tertiary (University, College of Advanced Education) 1
- (b) TAFE 2
- (c) Only Year 12 Certificate 3

14. In deciding which subjects or units to take, how much were you influenced by each of the following? (Tick the appropriate box for EACH statement.)

		Not at all 1	A little 2	A great deal 3
24	(a) The College handbook			
25	(b) Teachers or advisers at my previous school			
26	(c) Your parents			
27	(d) Your friends			
28	(e) Teachers or advisers at Erindale			
29	(f) Your own interests			
30	(g) Your career prospects			
31	(h) Your chances of getting good marks			
32	(i) The timetable line on which the units are offered			
33	(j) Some other reason. (Please describe) (0-9)			

15. How many units have you chosen this semester which are:
(Write a number 0-6 in each box.)

- 34 (a) Tertiary accredited? 0-6
- 35 (b) Accredited? 0-6
- 36 (c) Registered? 0-6

37 16. Have you decided at this stage whether you will be studying your present subjects for two or more semesters?

- Yes 1
- No 2

17. If you answered "Yes" to Q.16, how many units are:
(Write a number 0-6 in each box.)

- 38 (a) Tertiary accredited? 0-6
- 39 (b) Accredited? 0-6

18. If you answered "No" to Q.16, how many units have you chosen "on trial" and may change during this semester or at the end of the semester?
(Write a number 0-6 in each box.)

- 40 (a) Tertiary accredited? 0-6
- 41 (b) Accredited? 0-6

42 19. Are you happy with the choice of units you have been offered ?

Yes 1

No 2

43 20. If you answered "No" to Q.19, please give a reason. (0-9)

44 21. Do you think that, to do well at College, you will have to work:

(a) harder than you did at high school? 1

(b) as hard as you did at high school? 2

(c) not as hard as you did at high school? 3

45 22. Do you like studying units which require a lot of reading and written assignments?

Yes 1

No 2

46 23. Do you like studying units which require you to make things or carry out experiments?

Yes 1

No 2

47 24. Do you like studying units where the teacher gives a lot of notes and handouts?

Yes 1

No 2

48 25. Do you like studying units which require you to do a lot of work on your own?

Yes 1

No 2

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Winston Newman.

APPENDIX II.

Change of Unit Survey.

This was printed on the back of the Change of Unit form and administered by this means to all students who changed or withdrew from one or more units between March and April, 1985.

The purpose of this survey is to find out why you have dropped out of the unit(s) shown on the other side of this form.

DO NOT ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IF YOU HAVE ONLY CHANGED THE LINE ON WHICH YOU TAKE THE UNIT.

If you have dropped more than one unit (shown on the other side of this form) please tick the boxes in the second and/or third columns for the second and third units.

A. Tick the box to show you agree with statements which apply to the unit(s) you have dropped.

		1st Unit	2nd Unit	3rd Unit
1. Is the unit <u>tertiary</u> accredited?	49	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³
2. I could not understand the work.	50	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The work was too easy.	51	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. There was too much work to do.	52	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. There were too many written assignments.	53	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I was getting poor marks.	54	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I wanted more free time.	55	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The unit did not suit my future career plans.	56	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The class activities did not interest me.	57	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The content was not very relevant to my needs.	58	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I did not get on well with the teacher.	59	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I had to do too much work on my own.	60	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. We were given too many notes in class.	61	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Some other reason (please describe) <u>62 (0-9)</u>				

B.1. Before you made this change did you discuss it with anyone on the College Staff?

63 Yes 1 No 2

2. Which one of the following helped you most in making this decision? (TICK ONE BOX.)

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 64 The College Counsellor <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | The Careers Adviser <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | The teacher of the unit <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| My parents <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | It was my own decision <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | My friends <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |

Other (please state briefly) (7-9)

APPENDIX III.

Leaver's Survey.

This was printed on the back of the Leaver's form.

All leavers were asked to complete the survey at the time of their leaving. It was used throughout

Semester 1, 1985.

LEAVERS' SURVEY

DATE OF LEAVING _____ 65(1-7)

I.D. [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

The purpose of this survey is to find out why you are leaving Erindale College. This information will help us improve our ability to meet the needs of future students.

If any of the statements below express your reason(s) for leaving Erindale please tick the box opposite that statement. Please tick the box opposite each statement which is true for you.

- 1. (a) I have accepted a full-time job 66 1
- (b) I do not have a full-time job, but I am just fed up with school. 2
- (c) I am transferring to another college in Canberra. 3
- (d) I am leaving Canberra and will be finishing my school interstate 4
- 2. (a) Erindale is not my idea of a good college. 67 1
- (b) The units are too long (a whole semester) 68 1
- (c) I didn't like the choice of units available at Erindale. 69 1
- (d) The units were not relevant to my needs. 70 1
- (e) I found the units I had chosen uninteresting. 71 1
- (f) I didn't like the teaching methods used in the units I was studying. 72 1
- (g) I was expected to do too many tests and assignments. 73 1
- (h) I was getting poor marks in the units I was studying. 74 1
- 3. (a) Most of my friends have left school. 75 1
- (b) I didn't like the way I was treated by the teachers. 76 1
- (c) I didn't like the way I was treated by other students. 77 1
- (d) I have decided on a career which does not require the Year 12 Certificate. 78 1
- 4. Some other reason (please describe). 79 (0-5)
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

APPENDIX IV.

End of Semester Questionnaire.

This was administered to all students
still enrolled in May, 1985.

QUESTIONNAIRE.

NAME _____ OR I.D. Number

0	1	0			
---	---	---	--	--	--

This is a follow-up questionnaire to the one you were asked to complete at the beginning of the year. The purpose of this second questionnaire is to find out if you have changed some of your views during the semester.

All information will be treated as confidential and will not be used in any way which might affect your assessment.

Your name OR I.D. number is needed in order to compare your answers with those given in the earlier questionnaire.

Your help will be appreciated.

A. These questions are asking how you feel about Erindale as a College.
PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN FOR EACH STATEMENT.

		Strongly agree ⁴	Agree ³	Disagree ²	Strongly disagree ¹
1. I am glad to be at Erindale College	80				
2. I like the semester system.	81				
3. I would prefer units which last for one term only.	82				
4. I am happy with the choice of units at Erindale.	83				
5. I am happy with the way I am treated by the teachers.	84				
6. I am happy with the help I can get in choosing my units and courses.	85				
7. I am happy with the way I am treated by other students.	86				
8. To do well at college, I find I have to work harder than I did at high school	87				
9. I think Erindale is a good college.	88				
10. It is a good idea to have the public sharing the library and other facilities	89				

11. Please make any other comment you wish to about Erindale as a college.
90

B. These questions are asking about your future intentions, to see if you have changed your ideas.

12. Do you intend completing year 12? Yes No
 91
13. If you answered "Yes" to question 12, are you seeking a tertiary entrance score? Yes No
 92
14. If you answered "No" to question 12, are you seeking a full-time job before the end of this year? Yes No
 93
15. What career do you want to take up when you finish college? (If you have no preference at this time, just write "undecided".)
 94 _____

16. In semester 2, will you be continuing with at least some of the courses you are studying now? (i.e. Will you be taking further units in the same courses?) Yes No
 95
17. If you answered "Yes" to question 16, how many of these courses are:
 (a) Tertiary accredited 0-6 (WRITE A NUMBER 0-6 IN EACH BOX.)
 (b) Accredited 0-6

As you think about choosing units to study next semester, how important to you are the following factors in making your decisions?

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN FOR EACH STATEMENT.

	Very important 4	Fairly important 2	Slightly important 3	Not important 1
18. Requirements of your career plans. 98				
19. Your parents wishes. 99				
20. What other students say about the unit. 100				
21. Advice from College staff (including the Careers Adviser). 101				
22. The amount of written assignments. 102				
23. The amount of work you have to do. 103				
24. How hard the unit is. 104				
25. Your ability to get good marks. 105				
26. Whether class activities are interesting. 106				
27. Whether you get on well with the teacher. 107				
28. The timetable line on which the unit is offered. 108				

29. Please add any other factors which are important to you. _____
 109

C. These questions are asking about the units you are studying at the moment.

30. How many units are you studying which are:

- (a) Tertiary accredited 0-6
- (b) Accredited 0-6
- (c) Registered 0-6

(WRITE A NUMBER 0-6
IN EACH BOX.)

How do you feel about the units you are studying at the moment?

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN FOR EACH STATEMENT.

	In all units ₄	In most units ₃	In few units ₂	In no units ₁
31. I find class activities interesting.				
32. The content is relevant to my needs.				
33. I can understand the work.				
34. I am happy with the amount of work I have to do.				
35. I am happy with the number of written assignments.				
36. I am happy with the way the units are assessed.				
37. The units suit my career plans.				
38. I am happy with my marks.				
39. I get on well with my teachers.				
40. I find the teachers helpful.				

41. What improvements or changes would you like to see in the units you
are studying?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

WINSTON NEWMAN.

APPENDIX V.

Socio-economic Status Survey.

Administered in November, 1985.

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S EMPLOYMENT.

Please supply the following information which will be treated confidentially. It will only be used to calculate general college wide statistics.

NAME: _____ I.D. NO: _____

1. What is the present or last main occupation or job of your father (or male guardian)?

2. What is the present or last main occupation or job of your mother (or female guardian)?

Thank you.

Winston Newman.

APPENDIX VI.

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS.

(Adapted from Anderson et al, 1980.)

1. Graduate Professional.

Generally an occupation requiring a university degree. Law, medicine, science, engineer, architect, secondary teacher, public servant (professional).

2. Other Professional.

Generally requires a diploma or equivalent. Pharmacy, physio, nurse, ambulance, primary teacher, journalist, librarian, accountant, electronic technician, librarian, computer operator, surveying, instrument-maker.

3. Large-scale Employers and Managers.

People who employ and/or manage 25+ persons. This includes public servants in managerial positions as well as people in private industry.

4. Small-scale Employers and Managers or Self-employed.

People who employ and/or manage up to 25 persons. This includes people in the building trades who are self-employed as well as those who employ others. Also supervisors of sections of department stores.

5. Non-manual Workers.

Employees without any supervisory responsibility, engaged in non-manual work not normally requiring tertiary qualifications - clerical, sales and security occupations.

6. Manual-skilled Workers.

Employees, other than managers engaged in manual occupations requiring specific skills or those requiring little or no on-the-job training. e.g. non-officer military personnel, truck drivers, farm workers.

7. Farmer, Housewife, Pensioner.

This included Indo-chinese refugees receiving government pensions.