
23 December 2015

Online results issue

The SACE Board has concluded its investigation into how a proxy server – used to speed up the provision of student results during a period of extreme demand – malfunctioned last week.

On Tuesday morning (15 December) when the Year 12 results were released, the proxy server – a globally recognised piece of technology – behaved contrary to its specifications, despite rigorous testing by the Board's IT experts.

The investigation has shown that 92% of the students who logged in on results release day were not affected by the problem, with 2% of students remaining impacted after 9am on the morning results were released.

For the 8% of students who were initially affected, the investigation has revealed the nature of the issue:

- After students viewed their Tertiary Entrance Statement in the SACE results application, their statement was stored for a fraction of a second on the proxy – a process called caching. This caching should not have occurred, according to the proxy server's specifications.
- Because of the very high number of students viewing results, when some students clicked on the link to their Tertiary Entrance Statement, another student's cached statement was displayed instead of their own.
- For most students, clicking again on the link to the Tertiary Entrance Statement displayed their own statement. This meant that by 9am – when the proxy issue had been resolved by SACE Board IT staff – all but 2% of all students had viewed their own Tertiary Entrance Statement.
- By the end of the day, the SACE Board was still concerned about 23 students who appeared to have been affected by the issue who still had not viewed their own Tertiary Entrance Statement. SACE Board staff phoned these students to ensure they were aware of the issue and their correct tertiary entrance information, before receiving the results in the mail. These students, and others who may have been negatively affected by the malfunction, have been offered advice and support, including professional counselling.

The malfunction was extremely regrettable and the results of our investigation are now being analysed and – with further forensic work still to be conducted – will be used to ensure such a problem does not reoccur.