

# QTAC | ATAR – AN OVERVIEW



From 2020, Queensland Year 12 students will be certified for tertiary entrance with the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

## WHAT IS THE ATAR?

Across Australia, the ATAR is a standard measure of a student's overall academic achievement in relation to that of other students. It is intended to assist tertiary institutions to select applicants into their courses.

The ATAR is a percentile rank, not a mark. This rank indicates a student's position relative to other students in their age group in any given year.

It's expressed as a number on a 2000-point scale from 99.95 down to 0.00 in steps of 0.05.

An ATAR of 80.00 does not mean a student got 80%. It indicates that the student placed in the top 20% of students in Queensland in their Year 12 age group.

## WHO CALCULATES AND RELEASES THE ATAR?

Responsibility for calculating and issuing the ATAR has been assigned to the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) on behalf of Queensland tertiary institutions.

QTAC administers the application and offer process for tertiary institutions in Queensland (and a few institutions interstate) and has over four decades of experience in tertiary admissions.

## WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR AN ATAR?

To be eligible for an ATAR, a student must:

- complete five General subjects (Units 3 and 4); or
- complete four General subjects (Units 3 and 4) plus one Applied subject (at Units 3 and 4) or a VET course at AQF Certificate III level or higher; and
- accumulate results within a five-year period.

Students must also satisfactorily complete (i.e. achieve a minimum grade of C or higher) an English subject (one of English, English as an Additional Language, English and Literature Extension, Literature, or Essential English).

While students must satisfactorily complete an English subject to be eligible for an ATAR, the result in English will only be included in the ATAR calculation if it is one of the student's best five scaled results. For more information about scaling and the ATAR, refer to QTAC's website.

## PRECLUDED SUBJECTS AND SUBJECT COMBINATIONS

The following rules apply regarding precluded subjects and subject combinations in the ATAR calculation:

1. Only General English subjects or Applied English subjects can be included in the ATAR, but not both. **For example**, it is not possible to include both English (a General subject) and Essential English (an Applied subject) in a student's ATAR.
2. Only General Mathematics subjects or Applied Mathematics subjects can be included in the ATAR, but not both. **For example**, it is not possible to include both Mathematical Methods (a General subject) and Essential Mathematics (an Applied subject) in a student's ATAR.
3. Only one result for the same subject taken as a General subject and via Senior External Examination can be included in the ATAR. **For example**, it is not possible to include both the General subject Chinese and the Senior External Examination subject Chinese in a student's ATAR. Similarly, it is not possible to include both the General subject Biology and the Senior External Examination subject Biology in a student's ATAR.

There are no other restrictions on the inclusion of subjects in the ATAR, for example a student may count the following General subject results in their ATAR:

- both English and Literature
- both Mathematical Methods and Specialist Mathematics
- both Chinese and Chinese Extension

**Remember!** Some university courses have subject prerequisites that you must satisfy before you can be considered for tertiary entry so if you have a desired course(s) in mind, consider this when selecting your subjects.

## HOW IS THE ATAR CALCULATED?

Your ATAR is calculated based on an aggregate of scaled results from your five best ATAR eligible inputs from three different schemes:

- Five General subjects (at Units 3 and 4); or
- Four General subjects (at Units 3 and 4) plus an Applied subject (at Units 3 and 4); or
- Four General subjects (at Units 3 and 4) plus one completed VET qualification at Certificate III level or above.

The key steps in the ATAR calculation process are:

**Step 1:** QCAA provides QTAC with student's subject results (Units 3 and 4 only) and completed VET qualifications.

**Step 2:** The subject scaling process is undertaken.

**Step 3:** The best five scaled subject results (from eligible inputs) are added together to create a best five Subject Aggregate.

**Step 4:** Students are placed in a descending order of merit based on their Best five Subject Aggregates.

**Step 5:** Determine how many students are to be in each of the 2000 ATAR bands (based on the Queensland Year 12 population). For example, if the Queensland Year 12 population is approximately 60,000 students then approximately 30 students will be placed in each ATAR band.

**Step 6:** Assign students to each ATAR band. The top 30 students are assigned ATAR 99.95, the next 30 students are assigned 99.90, and so on.

## INTER-SUBJECT SCALING

*What is scaling?*

Students can study thousands of different combinations of subjects in their senior schooling and qualify for an ATAR. Scaling adjusts for the fact that it is more difficult to obtain a high result in some subjects than in others. This is not because some subjects are inherently harder or easier, it is because some subjects attract a more competitive cohort of students. Scaling ensures that students are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged based on the subjects they choose. Each state in Australia uses a scaling process in the calculation of the ATAR. In Queensland, subject results are scaled by QTAC.

There is some complex mathematics that underpins the scaling process, but as a simplified explanation, scaling is the process by which 'raw' subject results are adjusted to allow the results for each subject to be fairly compared with the results from any other subject for the purpose of calculating ATARs. The scaling process will adjust the raw results in each subject to take account of how well students achieve in their subjects and how difficult it is to achieve a particular result in the subject relative to achievements in all other subjects.

Refer to the QTAC website for more information about scaling.

## WHO GETS AN ATAR?

**Queensland Year 12 students:** QTAC calculates an ATAR for all Queensland Year 12 students who have met ATAR eligibility requirements.

## YOUR QCE AND YOUR ATAR

Your Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) and your ATAR are different and have different purposes.

QCE	ATAR
Certifies learning, showing the individual has achieved a specific standard of education at senior schooling level and may be considered for further study and employment.	Tells us about a student's position (or ranking) compared to all other students in the state. The only intended purpose for the ATAR is to assist with selecting applicants for tertiary study.
Shows a set of results across QCE subjects. Your results in a subject show your performance in the subject against every student who took the subject.	Your ATAR measures your position (or ranking) against the whole Queensland Year 12 age cohort, where a variety of combinations of subjects have been studied. Is based on scaled results.
Is awarded and released by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).	Is calculated and released by QTAC.

## THE ATAR AND TERTIARY SELECTION

Most tertiary courses administered by QTAC attract more applicants than there are places available. This requires applicants to be placed in a merit order (i.e. 'ranked') to allow selection to take place.

The first step when selecting applicants is to check whether the applicants have met the prerequisites for the courses for which they have applied (for example some Bachelor of Physiotherapy courses will have a science subject prerequisite). If you have not successfully completed these prerequisite subjects you will not be considered for entry to the course, regardless of your ATAR.

The second step is to rank all applicants who satisfy the prerequisites for that course. For most courses, current school-leavers are ranked using the ATAR.

Some courses may have additional selection criteria, such as portfolio, interview, audition, questionnaire or test.

Prerequisites and additional selection criteria will be listed in the course description in the *QTAC Guide* and on the QTAC website.

## ATAR AS THE STANDARD PATHWAY TO TERTIARY STUDY

ATAR will be the standard pathway used to determine entry for most tertiary courses (in addition to other entry requirements such as subject prerequisites).

ATAR will not be the only pathway to tertiary study for all courses however. Other pathways include:

- **VET qualifications as a stand-alone basis of admission:** Individual institution policies will apply as to whether VET qualifications such as AQF Certificates III and IV, Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas can be used to gain admission to a course. Refer to the institution website or QTAC website for more information.
- **Courses where ATAR is not a selection factor:** Most TAFE VET courses, and some university tertiary preparation courses and other courses may not require an ATAR for entry. Refer to the relevant institution website or the QTAC website for more information about course entry requirements.

- **Bridging and preparation courses:** Completion of approved bridging, pathway or preparation courses can lead to entry to your preferred tertiary course. Refer to institution websites or the QTAC website for more information.
- **Other admissions pathways:** Refer to institution websites for additional information on other admissions pathways.

## **ATAR AND ADJUSTMENT FACTORS**

Adjustment factors (previously referred to as ‘bonus points’) are additional points that may be added to an applicant’s ATAR (or other rank) to derive an adjusted selection rank for a particular course at a particular institution. They do not change the ATAR.

Each institution has its own criteria for when adjustment factors can apply. They may not be applicable for all courses or all applicants. All institutions limit the maximum adjustments that will apply to your selection rank (for example some may cap the increase to your selection rank to 5 points). Common types of adjustment factors include:

- Equity adjustment: if an applicant has experienced difficult circumstances or disadvantage
- Subject adjustment: if a current Year 12 applicant has undertaken a secondary subject in a Language Other than English (LOTE) or Specialist Mathematics, or university enrichment courses
- Location adjustment: if an applicant has resided in certain areas
- Elite athlete adjustment: if an applicant is an elite athlete

## **WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ATAR?**

For more information about the ATAR refer to QTAC’s website or contact QTAC at:

**Phone:** 1300 467 822

**Email:** [atar@qtac.edu.au](mailto:atar@qtac.edu.au)