



ATAR Calculation Method

Printable Series

What is ATAR?

- **Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)** is a percentile ranking between 0.00 and 99.95 that indicates a student's position relative to all other students who completed Year 12 in their state or territory. It's not a score but a rank.

Key Processes in ATAR Calculation

Subject Scaling:

Raw Scores: Students receive marks for their Year 12 subjects from exams and assessments.

Scaling: Each state scales these raw scores to account for differences in subject difficulty and student cohort ability. This ensures that students are not disadvantaged by choosing harder subjects. The scaling process adjusts scores so that the same level of achievement in different subjects equates to the same scaled score.

Aggregate Calculation:

Best Scores: Most states consider the scaled scores from a student's best subjects. Typically, this includes:

English: 2 units (mandatory)

Best 8 Units: From other subjects, making a total of 10 units.

Unit Contribution: In most states, each 2-unit subject contributes to the aggregate, but how these units are counted can vary slightly by state.

Conversion to ATAR:

Ranking: After calculating the aggregate score, students are ranked. The aggregate is then converted into an ATAR, which indicates how many students performed below this rank. An ATAR of 90.00 means the student has performed as well as or better than 90% of the cohort.

State-Specific Variations:

- **New South Wales (NSW) and ACT:** The aggregate is based on the best 2 units of English and 8 other units. The NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee oversees scaling.



- **Victoria:** The Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) calculates ATAR based on the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) results. Here, the ATAR is based on a primary four subject study score plus any increment from further subjects.
- **Queensland:** Since transitioning to ATAR from the Overall Position (OP) in 2020, Queensland uses a similar method to other states, considering the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) subjects.
- **South Australia, Northern Territory:** The South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC) handles ATAR calculation, considering 90 credits of study for the university aggregate, with specific rules on how credits are allocated.
- **Western Australia, Tasmania:** Similar processes apply, tailored by their respective admissions centres considering local curriculum specifics.

Additional Points:

- **Scaling Isn't Transparent:** The exact scaling algorithms are not publicly detailed to prevent gaming the system.
- **Adjustment Factors:** Some universities add additional points to the ATAR for specific achievements or disadvantages, creating a higher "Selection Rank" for admissions purposes.

How to Prepare for ATAR Calculation:

- **Subject Choice:** Choose subjects you are good at and enjoy, but also consider those relevant to your desired university course.
- **Performance:** Aim to do well in all subjects, particularly in those that will count towards your aggregate.
- **Understand State Differences:** Know how your state calculates ATAR as there might be nuances in subject contributions or scaling.

Note: While the general method is consistent across states, specific details can vary, so always check with your state's tertiary admissions centre or educational authority for the most accurate information.

Queensland State Specific Details for ATAR Calculation

Overview:

- **Transition:** Queensland moved from the Overall Position (OP) to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) system starting in 2020. ATAR is now the standard for university entry across Australia.

Key Elements of Queensland's ATAR Calculation

Subject Eligibility:

General Subjects: These are the primary subjects considered for ATAR calculation. Students must complete at least 4 General subjects or a combination of General and Applied subjects or VET qualifications to be ATAR-eligible.

Applied Subjects: Only one can count towards the ATAR if combined with four General subjects.

VET Qualifications: A Certificate III or above can be included if paired with four General subjects.



Unit Structure:

General Subjects: Each subject is divided into four units. Units 3 & 4 are the ones that contribute to the ATAR.

Applied Subjects: Similar unit structure, but only one can contribute to the ATAR.

Scaling and Calculation:

Raw Scores: Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) provides raw results for each subject. These include school-based assessments and external exams.

Scaling:

The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) scales these results to account for subject difficulty and cohort performance. Scaling ensures fairness across different subjects. Scaling reports are released annually, showing how subjects scaled in the previous year, but exact scaling methods are not revealed to prevent manipulation.

ATAR Calculation:

Best 5 Subjects: Typically, the ATAR is calculated based on the best 5 General subject results, excluding the lowest score if more than 5 are taken (known as the "grace subject").

Combination Rules: Only General English or Applied English can be included, not both. The same rule applies to Mathematics subjects.

ATAR Bands:

ATARs are given in bands of 0.05, from 99.95 (highest) to 0.00 (lowest), with scores below 30 reported as "30.00 or less".

Approximately 30 students per band in a cohort of around 60,000, depending on the Year 12 population.

Eligibility:

Completion Requirement: To be ATAR-eligible, students must satisfactorily complete (i.e., achieve a grade of C or higher) in their subjects, particularly in English.

ATAR Ineligible: If students don't meet these requirements, they won't receive an ATAR but can still qualify for university entry through other pathways like alternative entry schemes or bridging courses.

Additional Considerations:

- **Interstate Comparability:** Queensland's ATAR is designed to be comparable with ATARs from other states, facilitating interstate university applications.
- **External Assessments:** For most subjects, there's a significant external assessment component, conducted by the QCAA, contributing to the final score.
- **Subject Scaling Insights:** Students often look at previous years' scaling reports to make informed subject choices, although scaling can vary year to year.

How Students Can Prepare:

- **Choose Subjects Wisely:** Opt for subjects you're passionate about or excel in, but also consider how they might scale based on past trends.



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- **Performance in External Exams:** These can significantly impact your final subject scores, so thorough preparation is essential.
- **Understand the System:** Regularly check updates from QTAC and QCAA for any changes or clarifications in the ATAR calculation process.

Note: Always refer to the latest information from QCAA and QTAC, as the specifics of ATAR calculation can evolve with educational policy changes.

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