

Admissions Transparency

Glossary of common admission-related terms and their meaning

(Source: Department of Education and training, improving the transparency of higher education admissions: Phase two common terminology and information sets, Dec 2017)

The following common admission-related terms and definitions have been committed to by Australian higher education providers, tertiary admission centres and other related bodies, to ensure consistency in the presentation of admission requirements across courses and institutions.

Admission pathway: Any one of the options available to a prospective higher education student that will enable them to meet the entry requirements of their chosen courses.

Applicant background: The following grouping of applicants is used to help prospective students, family and others easily find the admission information most relevant to their circumstances. The groupings do not themselves determine how an application will be assessed but direct an information seeker to the most useful information.

- **Higher education study:** Applicants whose highest level of study enrolment since leaving secondary education is a higher education course, whether at a university or non-university provider.
- **Vocational education and training (VET) study:** Applicants whose highest level of study enrolment since leaving secondary education is a VET course.
- **Work and life experience** (includes less recent secondary results): Applicants who left secondary education more than two years previously and have not undertaken VET or higher education study since then.
- **Recent secondary education:** Applicants whose admission is based mostly on secondary education undertaken at school, TAFE or other VET or higher education provider (Australian or overseas equivalent) that was completed (or will be) in the current year or within the previous two years.

ATAR: The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a ranking from 30 (lowest) to 99.95 (highest) agreed by COAG as a nationally equivalent measure of a person's relative academic ranking within their complete age cohort in the year they graduated from senior secondary school (including those who did not complete Year 12 or completed but were not eligible for an ATAR). The ATAR is derived from the scaled scores achieved for senior secondary school subjects. The specific calculation used is different in each state and territory but the result is designed to be nationally equivalent.

ATAR-related thresholds: (where relevant – not all institutions use ATAR to determine eligibility. Different institutions may use only some of the following types of eligibility thresholds)

- **Lowest ATAR to which an offer was made:** the lowest “raw” or unadjusted ATAR of an applicant to which an offer of a place was made in the relevant year or year-to-date.
- **Lowest Selection Rank to which an offer was made:** The lowest Selection Rank of an applicant to which an offer of a place was made in the relevant year or year-to-date (including the consideration of any adjustments the applicant may have been eligible for).
- **Minimum ATAR [or Selection Rank] required for consideration to enter in next intake:** For use where a threshold minimum ATAR or Selection Rank must be achieved to be considered for admission to a course or institution.
- **Guaranteed Entry ATAR [or Selection Rank]:** Where achievement of a specified ATAR or Selection Rank (as appropriate) will guarantee acceptance into a course or institution, subject to any non-ATAR criteria being met, such as prerequisite study or English language proficiency.

Adjustment factors Often referred to previously as “bonus points”, these are additional points that may be used in combination with an applicant’s ATAR to derive a person’s course Selection Rank. Adjustments do not change applicants’ ATARs, but change their Selection Rank for a particular course or courses. Common types of adjustment factors are:

- **Elite Athlete and Performer adjustments:** Adjustments available on the basis of the applicant’s sporting or artistic prowess.
- **Equity adjustment:** Adjustment available on the basis of characteristics associated with disadvantage.
- **Location adjustment:** Adjustment available on the basis of the applicant’s proximity to the institution offering the course.
- **Subject adjustment:** Adjustment available on the basis of the particular relevance of a secondary subject to the academic requirements of the higher education course.
- **Maximum adjustment:** The maximum total adjustments possible to an applicant’s Selection Rank from the combination of all adjustments they are eligible for.

Advanced standing: A form of credit for any previous learning (Australian Qualifications Framework definition) – see also the definitions for “credit transfer” and “recognition of prior learning”.

Bridging course: A course designed to cover subject knowledge, which assists students to gain knowledge in specialist areas that are a core component of the course. If a course requires a prerequisite in an area that students have not studied or worked with before, a bridging course will help students to bridge the gap in that knowledge and gain admission.

Credit transfer: A process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes for components of a qualification based on identified equivalence in content and learning outcomes between matched qualifications (Australian Qualifications Framework definition).

Direct application to provider: Application made directly to a higher education provider rather than through a tertiary admission centre.

Early offer: Where an offer of enrolment is made to a recent secondary school student prior to release of ATARs or equivalent (e.g. OP in Queensland, IB). Such offers are generally conditional on other requirements being met, such as successful completion of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education or achievement of a specified minimum ATAR.

Enabling Course: A course designed to provide students with skills needed for success in further study, to assist in the transition to tertiary education – for example study techniques or English language skills. Successful completion helps prepare a person to be admitted to a course that leads to a higher education award.

Experience based entry schemes: A selection method used by higher education providers to assess and select students who may not have educational qualifications sufficient for an offer of admission to a course but who have other relevant work and life skills and experience that make them a suitable candidate.

International Baccalaureate (IB): formerly known as the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) is an international educational foundation founded in 1968 and headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The IB Diploma program is a senior secondary education curriculum and assessment framework offered by some schools as an alternative to the Australian National Curriculum and overseen by state and territory curriculum and assessment authorities. Australian tertiary admission centres convert IB scores to a notional ATAR or QTAC Selection Rank, enabling IB students to be ranked for tertiary entrance alongside their peers.

Offer round/s: Refers to the series of dates on which offers of higher education places are issued to applicants throughout the year, whether through a tertiary admission centre or directly by a higher education provider.

Overall Position: The Overall Position (OP) refers to a Queensland student's position in a state-wide tertiary entrance rank order based on their overall achievement in senior secondary subjects. It indicates how well a student has done compared to all other OP-eligible students in Queensland. Students are placed in one of 25 OP bands from OP1 (highest) to OP25 (lowest). Queensland students seeking admission to higher education in other states can have their OP converted to an ATAR. Interstate students looking to study in Queensland can have their ATAR converted to a Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) Selection Rank. Queensland will adopt the ATAR instead of the OP for students who commence Year 11 in 2019 and beyond.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL): A process used to assess an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit that may be granted towards completion of a qualification.

School recommendation: A recommendation from a school or other secondary education provider on the abilities of a student. Previously referred to by some as a principal's recommendation.

Selection Rank: The ranking that tertiary admission centres and most universities actually use to assess admission to a course. A person's course Selection Rank can include their ATAR, any adjustments they are eligible for, such as equity or subject adjustments, other contributions calculated on the basis of work experience or previous non-secondary study, portfolio assessments, results of the Special Tertiary Admissions Test, other supplementary tests, etc.