

The ATAR Explained

All you need to know about the ATAR and
Scaling



Education for Life

KENMORE STATE HIGH SCHOOL

Choosing subjects based on your post-school goals, as well as choosing subjects that you will find enjoyable and engaging and will be good at. So, essentially you should consider three things:

- ✓ What do I want to do after school?
- ✓ What do you enjoy?
- ✓ What subjects are you good at?

If you are aiming for a high ATAR then choosing subjects that you will be good at is a good way to go. Further, if you are good at something, and your grades reflect that, then you are more likely to stay motivated during your senior schooling.

This document is to help you understand the process of tertiary entry in Queensland, and the way students are ranked so that offers can be made by universities to students based on their school achievement. Having a detailed understanding of the system that you are in will help you a lot in selecting the best learning program for you.

Let's get started.

What do senior results look like?

All General subjects in the senior school are alike in that there are three school based or internal assessments, and one external exam. The three internal assessments (IAs) in Science and Maths subjects account for 50% of your overall raw score for the subject, with the remaining 50% coming from your result in the External Assessment (EA).

All other subjects have a 75% weighting for internal assessment and a 25% result for the EA.

For example:

Let's take Modern History for example:

Assessment	Score/100	Final mark contribution
Internal Assessment 1	84	21/25
Internal Assessment 2	88	22/25
Internal Assessment 3	96	24/25
External Exam	80	20/25
TOTAL		87/100

What is the ATAR?



The ATAR is the standard measure of overall school achievement used in all other Australian states and territories. It is a rank indicating a student's position overall relative to other students. The ATAR is expressed on a 2000-point scale from 99.95 (highest) down to 0, in increments of 0.05. ATARs below 30 will be reported as '30.00 or less'.

To be eligible for an ATAR, a student must have:

1. satisfactorily completed an English subject
2. completed five general subjects, or four general subjects plus one applied subject or VET course at AQC certificate III or above
3. accumulated their subject results within a five-year period.

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 subjects.

What is the ATAR for?



Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (or ATAR as it is more commonly known), is awarded to students who satisfy the eligibility criteria. It is provided to Year 12 graduates in conjunction with their QCE and is important for university entry. Whilst QCE is under the jurisdiction of the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA), ATAR is calculated by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

ATAR is a rank - essentially meaning that it gives you a percentile of how you have ranked compared to all of the students in the state. Students who receive a 99.95 ATAR are in the top 0.05% of the state (around 30 people), whereas students with a 70 ATAR are in the top 30%.

How is the ATAR calculated?



The ATAR calculation is based on raw exam scores, which are then weighted to provide a cumulative score, which is then ranked accordingly. Raw exam scores are released the same day that ATARs are released. They are then combined with the internal assessment score to give an overall raw subject score out of 50.

The ATAR calculation considers 5 of the 6 general subjects that most students partake in - and the lowest subject is not included at all (known as a 'grace subject'). However, it is important to note that the grace subject is based on the lowest **weighted** score, not the lowest **raw** score. This is a common misconception amongst many students and the reason why you shouldn't just decide that a certain subject will be your grace subject is that this may well change with scaling factored in!

What is scaling?



Raw subject scores are scaled based on overall state performance in that subject. The scaling report provides an indicator of the subjects that were generally the most difficult (with the lowest grades) as well as those which were easier (with the highest grades). In saying that, it's important to always choose subjects you enjoy over subjects you think will scale well because this can change from year to year.

How are subject raw scores scaled?



Inter-subject scaling is where raw scores for a given subject are adjusted so the results for that subject can be compared fairly with the results of any other subject. This is done by analysing the 'competitiveness' of each subject. Not all subjects are the same and some will be more competitive than others.

If a student of a given ability studies an easier Mathematics subject they might get a high mark. But if the same student studied a harder Mathematics subject they might get a lower score out of 100. However, if scaling works, they should end up with the same scaled score for inclusion in their ATAR calculation. If subjects were not scaled, students could maximise their ATAR by studying what they believe are the easiest possible subjects to get the highest possible best five subject results to comprise their ATAR.

Subject	Raw score out of 100	Scaled new score out of 100
English	89	91
General Mathematics	78	73
Psychology	73	62
Food and Nutrition	90	82
Specialist Mathematics	85	97

Inter-subject scaling will not enhance or diminish a student's performance in their subjects. The student's ranking relative to other students in their subjects does not change. Scaling simply allows for performances to be compared across all subjects, and then only for the purposes of including these in the calculation of a student's ATAR.

Understand how your subjects are scaled and affect your ATAR?



Different scaling is applied to different subjects in Queensland. ATAR calculators can be used to investigate how different combinations of subjects can result in different ATARs for students in the same percentile, as well as how different results with one subject cohort and produce significant differences in scaling.

Estimate your ATAR score - ATAR calculators



The link below is a good example of a reliable ATAR calculator, and is a good way to get an idea of potential ATAR scores presuming you are entering realistic projected results!

<https://qce.atarcalc.com/#{}>

Remember that your ATAR is a ranking. To accurately calculate your ATAR, the calculator predicts not just your final results but everyone's final results. Maybe you have a decent idea where you fall in your own school group, but it's harder to guess your position across the whole state.

It's important to be honest with yourself when you project results for yourself. You already have subject results behind that indicates how you are progressing as a scholar.

Scaling Variance within a Subject



The table below illustrates how scaling impacts an ATAR score differently depending on the result within a subject. Just because a student is enrolled in a subject that historically scales very well at the top end of subject results does not mean it will also scale well if a student achieves a lower score.

The table below illustrates how students who are not high performers in a subject may receive a score dramatically below their raw score out of 100. Red indicates scores where scaling has produced a lower score than the original raw score out of 100.

QCAA result (raw score)	CHEMISTRY Scaled result	GERMAN Scaled result	ENGINEERING Scaled result	MATH METHODS Scaled result	BIOLOGY Scaled result
100	98.07	98.87	97.77	98.02	95.28
90	94.27	96.65	95.4	96.04	89.21
80	84.19	90.48	90.74	92.26	77.17
70	63.31	75.8	82.25	85.4	58.02
60	35.86	50.79	68.66	74.17	36.11
50	8.3	16.2	48.3	48.3	13.5

Why you shouldn't choose subjects because of scaling



Choosing your subjects based on scaling isn't a good idea. Scaling will change from year-to-year in QLD and you won't necessarily get the best ATAR from simply choosing subjects that have scaled well across the years.

Even if a subject that you take scales well, **you still have to do well in it to get a high ATAR** (if that is your goal).

For example, if you take Specialist, Methods, Engineering, and Economics as four of your subjects, because they consistently scaled in the top 4 two years in a row, **you won't automatically get a top ATAR and top subject results just because you took the subjects**. In fact, you can be dramatically scaled down in a subject that scales well if you don't perform well in it.

You still have to work hard and perform well in those subjects. How you will scale in them depends on how well you do relative to all of the students in Queensland who are also taking the subject.

When should you consider scaling during subject selections?



There are some times when scaling can be used in your selections of subjects into Year 11. Generally, these are:

- If you have a history of very strong academic results and are trying to achieve one of the top ATAR scores for highly competitive university courses
- If a high competitive ATAR is important to you and you are trying to decide between subjects that you can be good at
- To see the impact of scaling on subjects you have decided on to see if you stay ATAR eligible or not

The table on page 7 entitled "Real Case Studies of Tertiary Entrance" show journeys to an ATAR score for past Kenmore State High students. The examples provide the overall story of not only the subjects studied and the ATAR, but the types of academic performance that is required to achieve particular scores and university entrance. While scaling differs from year to year, we know that the changes are only small, and a good picture of what is required can be learned by recent stories of our students.

How to get Extra ATAR Points



It's true that there is a magical bonus that can boost your ATAR and help you get into the university course that you want. You need to meet specific criteria to be eligible to receive them. But they can give you a competitive edge when applying for your preferred program, especially if your ATAR is lower than expected.

What are Adjustment Factors?



It's worth noting that while many people refer to adjustment factors as extra ATAR points, they don't actually add to your overall ATAR. It's like a little bonus that tertiary institutions (such as universities) add onto your ATAR to increase your selection rank, helping you get into specific programs at that institution.

It's also important to know that different institutions have different types of adjustment factors and vary the maximum number of rank adjustments you can gain – UQ for example, it's a maximum of 5.

Most universities offer bonus ATAR points for achieving a particular grade or higher in specific Year 12 subjects. You'll need to check out the university's website to see what Year 12 subjects they give rank adjustments for, and how many adjustments you can receive.

Example: University of Queensland that subjects boost your ATAR score for entry into UQ You can receive a max of 5 adjustments through UQ's Subject Incentive Scheme, for the following:

- 2 adjustments for achieving a grade of C or higher in Units 3 and 4 of an approved language other than English subject (or an equivalent subject from another approved senior program)
- 2 adjustments for achieving a grade of C or higher in Units 3 and 4 of Queensland Specialist Mathematics (or equivalent)
- 1 adjustment for successfully completing a university-level enrichment course concurrently with your senior program (e.g. the UQ Enhanced Studies Program).

Educational Adjustment Scheme (EAS)



You can apply to EAS as part of your QTAC application if you have experienced hardship through your senior schooling such as:

- Home environment and responsibility
- Financial Hardship
- English Language difficulties
- Personal Illness or disability

An EAS helps if your studies have been negatively affected by circumstances beyond your control. QTAC applies adjustment points to your rank to help you compete more equitably for an offer. Applicants must include all the appropriate application forms and documentary evidence. Note that different institutions award different adjustment factors so one may allow more or less adjustments than another.

In Conclusion...



The QCE ATAR system can be quite complex, and understanding what's going on can be very daunting for new students and parents. If you ever need some assistance with your ATAR, make sure you see your Guidance officer, Senior Schooling Coordinator or Head of Year.

With all this info under your belt, you should be ready for the trials and tribulations that your senior studies bring. Good luck with Year 11s and 12s!



Kenmore State High School Vision

Schooling at Kenmore State High will be a happy and inspiring experience, a time and place where every young person develops a real sense of spirit and belonging. **Our vision is for our young people to be influential locally and prepared to transform the world.** We want our school to make a difference for each and every student, now and in the future.

Our motto is Education for Life.

Excellence

Integrity

Learning

Belonging

Partnerships

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