

## ATAR BRIEFING PAPER

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TOPIC:	QTAC ATAR BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT		
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### PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEFING PAPER

QTAC is pleased to provide this Briefing Paper to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee of the Queensland Parliament to appraise its Members of developments towards the introduction of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) in Queensland from 2020. This Briefing Paper includes information about QTAC's activities and priorities, and the work being undertaken to support Queensland's transition to the ATAR.

### ABOUT THE QUEENSLAND TERTIARY ADMISSIONS CENTRE (QTAC)

QTAC was established in 1975 to provide a one-stop shop for higher education providers across both undergraduate and postgraduate admissions. Among its functions, QTAC:

- Provides information about and promotes tertiary study options and courses
- Receives and processes approximately 75,000 applications per year
- Makes offers in 1,700 tertiary courses on behalf of participating institutions.

QTAC currently provides these services to 16 institutions across Queensland, Northern New South Wales and Tasmania.

From 2020, QTAC will take on a new role: calculating and awarding ATARs to eligible Queensland students.

### ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN TERTIARY ADMISSION RANK (ATAR)

The ATAR is the primary mechanism used nationally for tertiary admissions. Like the Overall Position that it is replacing, the ATAR indicates a student's position relative to other students.

The ATAR is expressed on a 2000-point scale extending from 99.95 (highest) down to 0 in steps of 0.05. The highest ATAR is 99.95, the next highest is 99.90, and so on. For students awarded ATARs less than 30, their ATAR will be reported as "30 and below".

As is currently the case in every other Australian state and territory, the ATAR will become the standard pathway to tertiary study in this state.

### ABOUT QUEENSLAND'S ATAR

The new Queensland ATAR will be comprised of 5 inputs, either:

- 5 General subjects or
- 4 General subjects plus one other input.

The one other input can be an Applied Subject or a completed Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification at Certificate III level or higher.

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To be eligible for an ATAR, students must successfully complete one of the five available General or Applied English subjects. However, the result in English is not a mandatory inclusion for the calculation of a student's ATAR if the student has better achievements in five other subjects.

Most students are expected to follow a traditional pattern of accumulating their results over two years of study in Grades 11 and 12 to qualify for their ATAR. However, to support Variable Progression Rate (VPR) students who require longer time to complete due to medical, sporting or other circumstances, ATARs can be calculated on results obtained from within five consecutive years of study. At the extreme, a student could qualify for an ATAR based on the study of one ATAR eligible subject per year over a five year period.

To ensure that student results in different subjects can be compared fairly, scaling will be a feature of the Queensland ATAR. With the phasing out of the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test in 2019, QTAC will use a process of inter-subject scaling that is common to the ATAR calculation processes in all other jurisdiction calculating ATARs.

### **ATAR INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS PROVISION**

To support students, parents, schools and their communities, QTAC has been active in providing appropriate and relevant information resources to help these stakeholders understand the coming changes. These have included a dedicated ATAR hotline, videos, explanatory presentations, information resources and ongoing updates. QTAC maintains a specific web page for students, schools and others to access for information about the new Queensland ATAR at: [www.qtac.edu.au/atar-my-path/atar](http://www.qtac.edu.au/atar-my-path/atar).

QTAC has alone and in conjunction with Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) presented on ATAR in metropolitan and regional areas to school and parent groups. The next such state roadshow is planned for May/June 2018 with a series of Principals and Senior School Staff Forums in conjunction with QCAA. Among other things, a document describing the inter-subject scaling process will become available at these Forums that describes both the need to scale, and how scaling works, for a non-technical readership.

QTAC also remains engaged with a range of departments, industry bodies and representative groups to create awareness around the introduction of ATAR that includes:

- Department of Education and Training
- Independent Schools Queensland
- Queensland College of Teachers
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission
- Brisbane Catholic Education
- Adult Learner Network
- P&C Queensland
- Queensland Association of Student Advisors
- Other Tertiary Admission Centres

QTAC works very closely with the QCAA as a valuable and key partner in the transition from the current Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) to the new QCE system. Both organisations are very aware of the need to ensure that any information provided about the new ATAR does not undermine the existing OP system which will continue for the next 2 years.

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### MY PATH

Taking on the role of calculating the ATAR provided QTAC with an opportunity to engage more directly and meaningfully with the Year 10 cohort and schools. In particular, it was apparent that there was a need to support Year 10 students to make informed decisions about their subject choices heading into their Senior phase of schooling. It was also apparent that this need should not be geared solely to tertiary course outcomes, but should also include postsecondary and vocational outcomes.

In a collaboration with the Institute for Working Futures (IWF) and The Centre for Leadership Advantage (CLA), QTAC developed and rolled a free online planning tool called My Path to schools and their Year 10 students in March 2018. The My Path planning tool assists Queensland 10 students with:

- Planning their Senior subjects
- Checking their ATAR eligibility
- Satisfying entry requirements for desired tertiary course options

My Path can be customised to enable each Queensland school to pre-populate the subjects on offer and include timetabling restrictions. It allows students to try different subject combinations and update their Plans throughout their Senior schooling. And importantly, it allows students to see if their subject combinations will make them ATAR eligible, and if they will meet the specific prerequisites for their preferred courses.

But at its heart, My Path is a tool for helping students make informed career decisions. At the front end of My Path, students progress through 40 questions, from which tailored feedback can be provided to them about what kind of work roles would suit them based on their answers. Through the guided experience, students are encouraged to think about their personal skills, preferences and goals, including goals such as employment, apprenticeships and further study. From this information, students can use filtering tools within My Path to identify tertiary course options, or explore postsecondary or vocational options.

Additional My Path information and resources related can be accessible from: [www.qtac.edu.au/atar-my-path/my-path](http://www.qtac.edu.au/atar-my-path/my-path). These include step by step instructions for parents, schools and students to use My Path, School presentations, and a white paper '*My Path: the rationale behind the results*' which outlines the science behind the development of My Path.

My Path is a first of its kind for Australia. QTAC is unaware of anything similar offered anywhere else in the world.