

VTAC

Year 10 Guide

Choosing VCE studies for the right reasons

Choices

The options
can seem
overwhelming

What is the ATAR?

And why are study
scores scaled?

Frequently asked questions

... and the rules

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VTAC Year 10 Guide – Choosing VCE studies for the right reasons

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The facts

Don't panic

The study choices you make now are not binding for life and, like most of us, you will probably make several different work and career choices throughout your life.

It's your decision

Study choice is your personal decision and requires you to think carefully about what you are good at, what you are interested in and which studies help keep your options open.

How to choose

When choosing studies, think about what interests you and what you like doing.

Check out the VCE studies your school is offering and whether or not it's possible to study individual subjects at any other school. There's no point choosing studies that aren't available to you.

Talk to people

Talk with your careers teacher, VCE coordinator or other teachers to get an impartial opinion on your strengths.

Visit an open day

Whether you know what you want to do or not, visit open days or make an appointment for a campus tour. Studying is much more than the course you're interested in—it's also about finding an institution that is the right fit for you.

Keep your options open

If you have no idea which studies you want to take up in two years, don't panic! Keep your VCE study program broad and go back to basics: what do you love doing, and what you are interested in. You've got plenty of time.

Don't let the joke be on you

Don't choose studies if you don't like them or aren't good at them. Choosing studies simply because of how they were scaled last year, in general doesn't guarantee you a 'good' ATAR.

When is a bonus a bonus?

Studying a language doesn't mean an extra five points are added to your ATAR. See page 18 for more information on ATAR myths.

The goods on ATARs

Fifty is not a pass. The ATAR is a rank, not a score. As a result, if you get an ATAR of 50 it means you have performed better than 50% of Year 12 students in your age group.

A 'good' ATAR is the ATAR you need to get you into the course you want.

If you read nothing else...

Choose studies that you like and are good at. If you perform well in all of your studies, you will increase your chance of getting a 'good' ATAR regardless of whether or not the studies are scaled up or down.

So many choices

As a Year 10 student about to choose your VCE study program, the choices can seem a little overwhelming. There might be many questions you are asking yourself.

What if I change my mind?

What is a good ATAR?

What if I don't get a good ATAR?

What next—study, travel, work?

How do I know what I want to do tomorrow, let alone in two years?

How do I know which studies are going to suit my interests?



The decisions you make about your studies now are important, but they're not the only chance you'll have to choose or change your future career. There are many avenues to tertiary study and the career you want. It doesn't hurt, however, to do some investigation and planning so that you give yourself the best opportunity to be happy with your choices in the long run.

How do you get started?

Think about what you like, what you are good at and which fields of study and types of work you are interested in pursuing. If you are interested in tertiary study, then check out the VTAC Prerequisite and Course Explorer which lists the tertiary courses you will be able to choose from when you finish your Year 12 studies—these are courses that commence in 2019.

Even if you haven't made up your mind about tertiary study yet, keep reading and use the information in this booklet to help you choose your VCE studies.

When choosing VCE studies, choose studies that:

- » you enjoy
- » you are good at
- » provide you with options
- » reflect your study interests

Studies you enjoy and are good at

You'll always enjoy yourself more if you can pursue studies that interest you and that you're good at. But even more importantly than making sure you have interesting classes for the next year or two, choosing these subjects is an opportunity to learn more about different aspects of your interests. You might find yourself really enjoying a particular topic in a class, and this might inspire your future course choice or career direction.

Studies that provide you with options

Some tertiary courses have specific entry requirements like prerequisites (VCE subjects which you must have completed to be eligible for the course), auditions, extra forms, or folios of your past work. Some of these requirements, like interviews or extra forms, are easy to meet at the last minute if you change your mind and want to pursue a new course, but requirements like prerequisite studies and folios of your work require some advance planning. When choosing your subjects, look at the entry requirements for a wide range of courses and take note of the different requirements. If there are particular subjects that are common to the areas that interest you, or areas you might want to pursue in the future, make sure you include those in your VCE program.

How not to choose VCE studies

You've probably heard a few different things about the scaling process for VCE studies already. But make sure you check out the facts about scaling on page 16 before you let it influence your VCE subject choices. You can read all the details about scaling later on in this guide, but all you need to know for now is that the scaling process is just about accounting for differences in competitiveness between subjects. This means that there's no advantage in terms of scaling between picking one subject over another. So let your subject choices be guided by what interests you and what you're good at, rather than scaling.

Selecting your VCE program based on studies that are scaled up will not guarantee you a high ATAR. The ATAR is based on your overall performance in VCE studies, not just one or two studies. If you perform well across all studies, you are more likely to get a good ATAR. If you perform well in a few and poorly in others, this will be reflected in your ATAR.

ATAR snapshot

Don't be a JOFFREY: Joffrey didn't choose subjects based on his interests. He chose two studies that were scaled up, even though he wasn't very interested in or good at them. Joffrey did not excel in any of his studies and even though two of his six studies were scaled up (including a VCE Language study), the ATAR was still not as high as it might have been if he had chosen studies based on what he was good at, interested in and enjoyed.

Year	Study	Unit 3/4 Results	Study Score	Scaled score	2015 Aggregate Contribution
2015	English (EAL)	SS	17	13.90	13.90
2013	VCE Languages: Chinese First Language	SS	28	32.72	32.72
2015	Specialist Mathematics	SS	17	21.80	21.80
2015	Mathematical Methods (CAS)	SS	18	17.77	17.77
2014	Accounting	SS	18	17.77	1.77
2015	Physics	SS	17	17.29	1.72
Aggregate					89.6
Aggregate converted to an ATAR of					33.40

Find your strengths

How much do you enjoy...	Love it	Like it	It's okay	Not really	Hate it
Doing things outside					
Helping others					
Working with technology					
Organising things					
Caring for people					
Talking to other people					
Finding out how things work					
Being creative					
Building things					
Working in a team					
Working on your own					

What types of activities do you enjoy at school or at home? Be specific!

Activity	Why do you enjoy it?

What types of things do you hate doing?

Activity	Why do you hate it?

Think about your answers above, and look for any common themes in the activities that you enjoy or hate. Can you think of any jobs that use similar skills to the activities you enjoy? Which studies might lead to these jobs?

If you're having trouble thinking of courses or jobs that relate to activities you enjoy, bring this page to your careers counsellor for discussion.

Resources to support your search

VTAC Prerequisite and Course Explorer

The Prerequisite and Course Explorer outlines the VCE study requirements needed for entry into university and VET courses in 2017, 2018 and 2019. It also allows you to:

- » explore all the courses you will be eligible to apply for in 2019
- » see the impact on the range of courses available to you by adding and removing different VCE studies
- » filter tertiary course choices by a range of factors including area of interest.

Reading course information that looks ahead to 2019 is vital in helping you prepare a VCE study plan that maximises your course choices in the future. If your study program meets the prerequisites published in the Prerequisite and Course Explorer for the relevant year, you will definitely meet the subject requirements in that year (but remember you will also have to meet the study score requirement and even then, selection is a competitive process).

The VTAC Prerequisite and Course Explorer is available on the VTAC website and is regularly updated to ensure you have access to the most up-to-date information.

VTAC CourseSearch

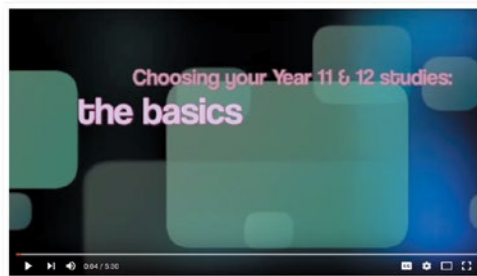
VTAC CourseSearch is an online tool for researching tertiary study options. It is available on the VTAC website (www.vtac.edu.au).

Enter your interests to find courses that are suitable for you, and read the course entries to find out more and make sure that you meet the selection criteria.

CourseSearch lists all courses available for application through VTAC, as well as some courses that take applications directly through the institution.

You can also save courses that interest you to your shortlist, and then email the shortlist to yourself for future reference.

Get advice from past students:



Check out our video "Choosing your Year 11 and 12 studies: the basics" on VTAC's YouTube channel for helpful hints on planning your VCE program.

The video explores how to go about planning your VCE program, with comments from students discussing their experiences.

www.youtube.com/user/vtacmedia

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- blog.vtac.edu.au
- facebook.com/vtacguide
- [@vtacguide](https://twitter.com/vtacguide)
- [VTACmedia](https://www.youtube.com/user/vtacmedia)

Other resources

TAFE and Training Line

Telephone 131 823 (8:30am–4:30pm, Monday to Friday except public holidays)

Email tafe.courseline@edumail.vic.gov.au

Visit www.education.vic.gov.au/victorianskillsgateway

Youth.gov.au

Visit www.youth.gov.au

Youth Central

Email youthcentral@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Visit www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au

The basics

What is a higher education course?

Higher education courses provide professional qualifications with an emphasis on theory and the development of transferable skills. Some courses are vocational, leading to careers in clearly identified areas, while others are 'generalist' with no vocational skills component.

Higher education qualifications include:

- » Associate degrees or diplomas, which generally require between one and two years full-time study, although some offer an accelerated one-year program. Diplomas may also provide a clear pathway into a degree course.
- » Bachelor degrees, which take three to four years to complete.
- » Postgraduate studies, which include postgraduate degrees, honours, masters degrees and doctorates (PhDs).

What is a vocational education course (VET)?

VET courses provide both professional and para-professional qualifications with an emphasis on practical skills and vocational outcomes that lead into higher level training, higher education or employment. A wide variety of study areas are offered.

VET qualifications include:

- » Certificate I-III courses, which range from a few weeks to several months of study.
- » Certificate IV courses, which generally take six months to a year to complete.
- » Diplomas and advanced diplomas, which generally require one or two years full-time study, although some offer an accelerated one year program. Diplomas may also provide a clear pathway into a degree course.

University, TAFE, private colleges – how are they different?

Universities, TAFE providers and private tertiary colleges all offer courses through VTAC.

Universities

Universities offer mainly three and four year degree courses, although some offer diplomas, advanced diplomas, double degrees and honours programs of differing lengths.

Courses may be offered full-time or part-time. Many university courses have prerequisites.

Depending on the course you apply for, studying at a university may involve practical assessments, lectures with hundreds of other students, and smaller tutorials. Additionally, universities generally have a huge associated infrastructure including clubs, numerous student services, amenities and sporting facilities.

TAFE or polytechnic providers

TAFE or polytechnic providers offer a range of courses. Traditionally the types of courses have included certificate I-IV, diploma and advanced diploma courses. Most courses are offered either full-time or part-time. Some TAFE providers also offer higher education degree courses, approved by the Australian Government.

Most VET courses don't have Year 12 prerequisites, however, generally VET courses offered through VTAC are designed for applicants who have completed high school.

Depending on the course you apply for, studying at a TAFE or polytechnic may include practical work in the field, classroom lectures and assignments, and smaller working groups. Many of the larger TAFEs and polytechnics also have a range of clubs, student services and sporting facilities.

Independent tertiary colleges

Independent tertiary colleges offer a range of courses from both the VET and higher education sectors. Most courses offered by these colleges don't have prerequisites and are designed for applicants who have completed high school.

A number of colleges have a formal relationship with universities, offering a secure pathway into a degree course at a university.

Like universities and TAFE providers, college courses may include a mix of practical work, smaller classroom lectures, and assignments.

Going on to tertiary study: The facts

Different types of courses teach different skills and take different amounts of time to complete. Think about the type of course that will help you achieve your aims.

Course types and durations

Certificate I-III	3-6 months
Certificate IV	6-12 months
Diploma	1-2 years
Advanced Diploma	2 years
Associate Degree	2 years
Degree	3-4 years
Double Degree	4-5 years

Benefits

- Higher income
- Healthy living
- Greater life satisfaction
- Employability
- Confidence

Challenges

Don't listen to urban myths about scaling.
Don't choose subjects based on how they were scaled in previous years.

Actions

Choose studies you like and are good at.

Try different combinations of VCE studies using the VTAC Prerequisite and Course Explorer to see how different choices impact on your eligibility for different courses.

Create a list of what you like doing, what you're good at and what you have a passion for.

TEACHING STYLES vary between institutions

UNIVERSITIES have formal lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops, laboratory classes and work experience placements.

TAFE INSTITUTES AND POLYTECHNICS have small classes, individual attention and ensure practical learning while bridging the gap between work and education.

PRIVATE COLLEGES have lectures, workshops, laboratory classes, seminars, small group tutorials, practical work placements, industry visits and self-paced virtual classrooms.

The facts

- VET courses include: certificate I-IV, diploma and advanced diplomas
- Higher Education courses include: associate degrees, diplomas, bachelor degrees, honours, and postgraduate courses.

Be confident in your choices

There are no right or wrong choices, so don't be frightened of making a mistake.



Jargon

Major studies

Major studies are the main areas of study covered in a course. A course might have only one major study area, or it might have more than one that you can choose from. For example, a Bachelor of Arts might have a wide range of major studies available such as history, languages, journalism, photography and sociology.

Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded to students on a range of criteria to help them meet the costs of study. Some scholarships are awarded on merit (i.e. academic or other achievement) but others are based on educational disadvantage or other criteria.

SEAS

SEAS stands for Special Entry Access Scheme. It is a way for VTAC applicants to apply for special consideration in conjunction with their course application. Some institutions also offer special consideration outside of the VTAC process.

Selection criteria

Selection criteria are broken down into three major elements:

- » minimum tertiary entrance requirements
- » institutional requirements and
- » course requirements.

You must meet minimum tertiary entrance and institutional requirements to be eligible for entry into a course. Many courses also have specific course criteria which must also be met. These criteria can include prerequisites and selection requirements, which are described in the course entry. No matter how good your ATAR is, unless you also meet the prerequisites and complete the selection requirements you will not be considered by course selection officers for their courses.

Minimum tertiary entrance requirements

Generally, if you successfully complete your VCE you will meet minimum tertiary entrance requirements for all courses. Some VET and higher education courses will also consider your application if you successfully completed a Senior VCAL Certificate. Refer to page 13 for more information about minimum tertiary entrance requirements.

Institutional requirements

In addition to the minimum tertiary entrance requirements some institutions have specific institutional requirements. For VET courses these may include a specific literacy and numeracy test; for some universities it may include successful completion of Units 3 and 4 English studies. Further information is available from the VTAC website.

Selection criteria

Selection criteria are criteria that are applied to specific courses such as prerequisites and selection criteria. For further information go to page 13.

ATAR and scaling jargon

The ATAR

The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank is an overall percentile ranking reflecting your comparative Year 12 achievement compared to all others in the relevant age group.

Your ATAR is developed from an aggregate of your VCE study scores after scaling (see ATAR calculation and scaling definitions over the page). To be eligible for an ATAR, you need a minimum of four permissible scorable studies and to have successfully completed the VCE.

ATAR calculation

Primary four: These are four studies that are counted first in the calculation of the ATAR. The primary four aggregate is made up of the VTAC Scaled Study Score in one of English, English (EAL), Literature or English Language added to the next highest three permissible scaled scores.

Increments: An increment is 10% of any fifth or sixth permissible scaled score that is available. Increments are added to the primary four during the calculation of the ATAR. Where multiple combinations exist, the highest permissible combination is used.

Aggregate: The total produced by adding the primary four to a maximum of two available (and permissible) increments. A maximum of six studies can contribute to the ATAR. Any additional studies are visible on your application.

Approved Higher Education studies: The VCAA provides very capable students with the opportunity to undertake some approved higher education study as part of the VCE. These studies are recognised as higher education studies contributing to completion of the VCE. If you are undertaking such a study, it may count as an increment (fifth or sixth) study provided the conditions outlined on page 22 are met.

Within the rules of calculating your aggregate, many combinations exist. Your aggregate will be calculated using a permissible combination that gives the highest ATAR.

ATAR snapshot

SANSA

Here is an excellent example of a student who knew what she liked, what she was interested in and good at. Sansa chose studies based on all of these factors and as a result was in the top 6% of the state even though five of her six studies were scaled down.

Sansa completed Dance in Year 10 so her study score was scaled in 2013, and Health and Human Development in Year 11, which was scaled in 2014. Her results for these two subjects were included as increments because they were her lowest two scaled scores (apart from English, which is compulsory).

Year	Study	Unit 3/4 Results	Study Score	Scaled Score	2015 Aggregate Contribution
2015	English Language	SS	35	38.54	38.54
2015	Visual Communication Design	SS	48	47.44	47.44
2015	Further Mathematics	SS	43	41.48	41.48
2015	Psychology	SS	41	40.12	40.12
2014	Health and Human Development	SS	40	37.16	3.71
2013	Dance	SS	27	26.55	2.65
Aggregate					173.9
Aggregate converted to an ATAR of					95.35

Scaling

A VCE study score provides an indication of your relative performance in a particular study. Scaling adjusts for differences in abilities of students undertaking different studies, so that the scaled scores are comparable across different studies.

It ensures that students are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged on the basis of the studies they choose. All VCE study scores are scaled by VTAC. For more information, read *The ABC of Scaling*.

Study groupings

Study groupings list related subjects under a common heading. There are restrictions on how many studies from one study grouping can be used in prerequisite and subject bonus statements, and ATAR calculation. English and Mathematics are the most well known. For a complete list refer the study groupings fact sheet available in the Publications section of the VTAC website.

VCE study score

This is a score from 0–50, determined by the VCAA, which shows how you performed in a study relative to all other students doing that same study. It is based on your results in school assessments and examinations.

(VCE) VET studies

VET programs with Unit 3 and 4 sequences can contribute to the ATAR in two ways:

1. VET sequences with scored assessment are counted the same as any VCE study (in the primary four or as an increment). If a scored assessment is available and you decide not to take it, no increment will be available.
2. VET studies with no scored assessment recognised by the VCAA may be counted as fifth and/or sixth contributions to the ATAR. The increment will be 10% of the average of the primary four VTAC scaled study scores.

VFE (VET and Further Education) studies

These are unscored VET programs recognised but not approved by the VCAA as VCE VET studies. VFE studies are subject to the restrictions outlined on page 22.

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)

Like the VCE, the VCAL is a recognised senior secondary qualification. The VCAL is another pathway to tertiary study. Students who undertake the VCAL are generally focused on training at TAFE, apprenticeships or getting a job after completing Year 12.

VTAC scaled study score

A score from 0.00 to 55.00, determined by VTAC, which shows how you performed in each study, relative to all students doing all studies. It is based on the study score, but also uses the performance of the entire cohort compared to other studies.

ATAR snapshot

JON

Jon didn't know what he wanted to do when he left school, so he chose a wide range of studies that he was good at. He performed well across all of his studies, met the prerequisites of the course he was interested in and was offered a place. It is also interesting to note that all of Jon's studies were scaled down but this didn't prevent him getting the ATAR he was aiming for.

Year	Study	Unit 3/4 Results	Study Score	Scaled score	2015 Aggregate Contribution
2015	English	SS	31	28.77	28.77
2015	Health and Human Development	SS	40	37.01	37.01
2015	Psychology	SS	34	32.22	32.22
2015	Business Management	SS	35	31.43	31.43
2015	Visual Communication Design	SS	35	31.37	3.13
2015	Further Mathematics	SS	28	25.48	2.54
Aggregate					135.1
Aggregate converted to an ATAR of					75.20

Entrance requirements

No matter how high your ATAR is or how much you want to do a course, if you don't fulfil all the entrance requirements for the course, you won't be considered.

To be offered a place in a course you must:

- » apply for the course
- » meet the minimum tertiary entrance requirements for Victoria
- » meet any VCE prerequisites (or equivalent) for the course, and
- » be selected in competition with other eligible applicants.

Minimum tertiary entrance requirements

VET courses: Certificate IV, Diploma and Advance Diploma courses

For Year 12 students, the minimum tertiary entrance requirement for VET courses available at TAFE providers and independent tertiary colleges is:

Satisfactory completion of any of the qualifications listed for Higher Education courses or satisfactory equivalent senior secondary completion such as Senior VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) OR Literacy requirements as stated in VET Training Packages/ curriculum (training.gov.au).

Higher education courses

For higher education courses, the minimum tertiary entrance requirement at universities, independent tertiary colleges and TAFE providers is:

The satisfactory completion of both the VCE and Units 3 and 4 English (any) or equivalent.

If you receive an ATAR, you have met minimum tertiary entrance requirements for all Higher Education and VET courses in Victoria.

ENGLISH INCLUDES:

English (any) includes any of the four English studies.

- » English or English (EAL)
- » Literature
- » English Language

Units 3 and 4 must be completed in sequence and in the same calendar year (unless granted interrupted study status by the VCAA)

VCE INCLUDES:

- » VCE studies and VCE VET qualifications.
- » Block credit granted for unscored VET or Further Education training (where permitted), may also contribute to the VCE award.

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

Applicants may satisfy minimum tertiary entrance requirements on the basis of other qualifications. These may include completion of:

- » Senior VCAL
- » the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma
- » overseas qualifications deemed comparable by VTAC to the required Victorian qualifications.

If you meet minimum tertiary entrance requirements for all institutions in your home state (for example, you have received an ATAR in NSW), you will meet minimum tertiary entrance requirements for all Victorian institutions.

Course requirements

A number of courses have requirements additional to the minimum tertiary entrance requirements. These will always be listed in the selection criteria section of the course entry.

These may be in the form of:

- » Prerequisite studies and
- » Selection requirements

Prerequisites

The Prerequisite and Course Explorer will assist you to create and change VCE programs and identify which courses you will be eligible to apply for in two years.

For further information about how to read and understand this information, refer to 'How to read a course entry' on our YouTube channel.

Example of a prerequisite entry for a course commencing in 2019:

Prerequisites: Units 1 and 2: two units (any study combination) of any Mathematics or Units 3 and 4: any Mathematics; and any English.

- » If a course specifies Units 1 and 2 of a study as a prerequisite, this means a satisfactory result must be awarded in both Units 1 and 2.
- » If a course specifies prerequisites for a study at Units 3 and 4, this means that a satisfactory result must be awarded in both Units 3 and 4.

How the same prerequisite will appear on CourseSearch in 2018:

Prerequisites: Units 1 and 2: satisfactory completion in two units (any study combination) of any Mathematics or Units 3 and 4: any Mathematics; and a study score of at least 20 in any English.

- » In addition to successfully completing the stated study, Year 12 students will also be required to meet the stated minimum VCAA study score.
- » This study score will be listed in VTAC CourseSearch 2018

Selection criteria

In addition to the prerequisite requirements outlined above, many courses have selection requirements such as a folio, an interview, performance audition or completion of a questionnaire.

Details of course selection requirements are not contained in the Prerequisite and Course Explorer or the Prerequisites PDF for two years in advance. They are listed in CourseSearch for courses being offered in the following year only. This is because selection requirements often include requirements that must be met on particular dates for the year concerned. As a guide, however, you might like to refer to the current course entries using CourseSearch on the VTAC website.

- » **Prerequisites** are VCE studies you must have successfully completed in order to qualify for a course. Courses with prerequisites specify which VCE units are required. Prerequisites for 2019 are available from the VTAC Prerequisites and Course Explorer.
- » **Selection requirements** are compulsory requirements set for a course—in addition to completion of the VCE—that you must satisfy to be considered for selection. These may include attending an interview, presenting a folio, or submitting a supplementary form. Selection requirements for art and design courses or similar at some institutions are published in their policy statements in the Prerequisites PDF available for download from the VTAC website.
- » **Additional considerations** are factors that are not required, but if completed may add to your course application. For example, some courses will give subject bonuses to Year 12 students. Other courses may look at your work experience and how it might help you successfully complete the course.
- » **Enrolment considerations** give you information that you may need to be aware of before enrolling in the course. They may include obtaining a Working with Children Check or police records check, or being aware of the physical requirements necessary to complete the course.

When applying for courses you are competing against other applicants. So even if you meet all of the criteria, you may still miss out.

If you want a hint of which selection criteria may apply to the courses you're interested in, check out selection requirements, additional considerations and enrolment considerations under the course information in CourseSearch on the VTAC website.

What factors are considered when selecting applicants for courses

Around 50% of the courses accepting applications and offers through VTAC use a range of criteria.

These criteria may include the ATAR as well as other factors such as an interview, folio presentation, pre-selection tests, additional forms and so on. Information about selection criteria will be published within each course entry in 2018 for courses commencing in 2019. To get an idea of the types of criteria you may be required to complete, check out VTAC CourseSearch.

Entrance requirements

Meet the minimum tertiary entrance requirements for Victoria.

Prerequisites

Meet the required prerequisites. The VCAA study score must be met.

Tick all the selection requirements off

These may include interviews, folio presentations, auditions, additional forms, essays, letters or additional tests to name a few.

Perform well and stand out from the crowd

Once you've met all the eligibility criteria, you are selected based on your performance across the criteria compared with other applicants for that course.



Figure out your options with VTAC's Prerequisite and Course Explorer

Not sure exactly which courses to list on your preferences? Overwhelmed by all the options? Try VTAC's Prerequisite and Course Explorer at vtac.edu.au. You can enter your VCE program and see a list of all the courses you're eligible for. You can also narrow down the results, filtering by area of interest, institution, course level, and much more.

If you're not yet in Year 12, you can use the Explorer to get an idea of which subjects lead to which course options later on, and compare different study programs.



The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)

What is the ATAR?

The ATAR is an overall percentile rank reflecting a student's comparative Year 12 achievement compared to the relevant age group in a given year. The ATAR allows tertiary institutions to competitively rank students who have completed different combinations of VCE studies. It is calculated by VTAC solely for use by institutions for admission to tertiary studies.

The ATAR is reported as a number between 0.00 and 99.95 with increments of 0.05. A student with an ATAR of 75.00 has achieved VCE results above 75% of the population of the relevant age group.

What the ATAR isn't

The ATAR isn't a reflection of you as a person, and there's no pass or fail ATAR. Everyone who receives an ATAR has passed the VCE. The ATAR is simply a rank that is used by institutions for some of their courses. In most cases, the ATAR is only one of many criteria and factors considered as part of the selection process.

How to qualify for the ATAR

To qualify for an ATAR a student must:

- » qualify for the VCE, and
- » achieve study scores in at least four permissible Unit 3 and 4 VCE studies, including one from the English group.

Who gets an ATAR?

VTAC calculates an ATAR for all currently enrolled VCE students who have qualified for an ATAR. You can access your ATAR online or via SMS.

If you have applied for tertiary entry through VTAC and paid your processing fee, you will also receive a printed ATAR statement in the mail from VTAC at the same time that you receive study scores from the VCAA.

Why are study scores scaled?

Study scores are scaled in order to take account of the different levels of competition in different studies. In order to select applicants fairly, institutions need an overall measure of the performance of students undertaking the VCE in all studies in all combinations.

First, the VCAA collects your assessment results and uses them to calculate your study scores. Each study is standardised to the same average of 30. Then for each study you took, VTAC takes your VCAA study score and compares it with the VCAA study scores for everyone else taking that subject, as well as the study scores for all other studies for everyone taking that same study as you. This occurs for each study. These calculations allow VTAC to rank student performance in each study and across studies.

Where the competition in a study is higher, study scores have to be adjusted upwards, otherwise students doing that study would be unfairly disadvantaged.

Similarly, in a study where the student competition is lower, the study scores have to be adjusted downwards, otherwise students doing that study would be unfairly advantaged.

Once the study scores have been scaled, they are called VTAC scaled study scores. It is these VTAC scaled study scores that are used to calculate the ATAR. VCE studies are always scaled in the year in which they were undertaken. This may not necessarily be in the year in which you receive your ATAR.

What would happen if there was no scaling?

No consistency

- » A 30 in one subject wouldn't be equivalent to a 30 in another subject

Assumptions made

- » Individuals would make their own assumptions about scores from different subjects - "that's a soft score" or "this subject is harder than that subject."

Subjective decisions

- » Two students have the same score. The selection officer looks at the study and makes a personal call because they perceive one student to have completed more difficult studies than other students.

With scaling...

Fair comparisons can be made of students' achievement over all their studies, regardless of the studies they have taken. Because of this, students should freely choose studies they like or are good at without worrying about their ATAR.

Consistency

- » A 30 in one study is equivalent to a 30 in all studies.

No assumptions

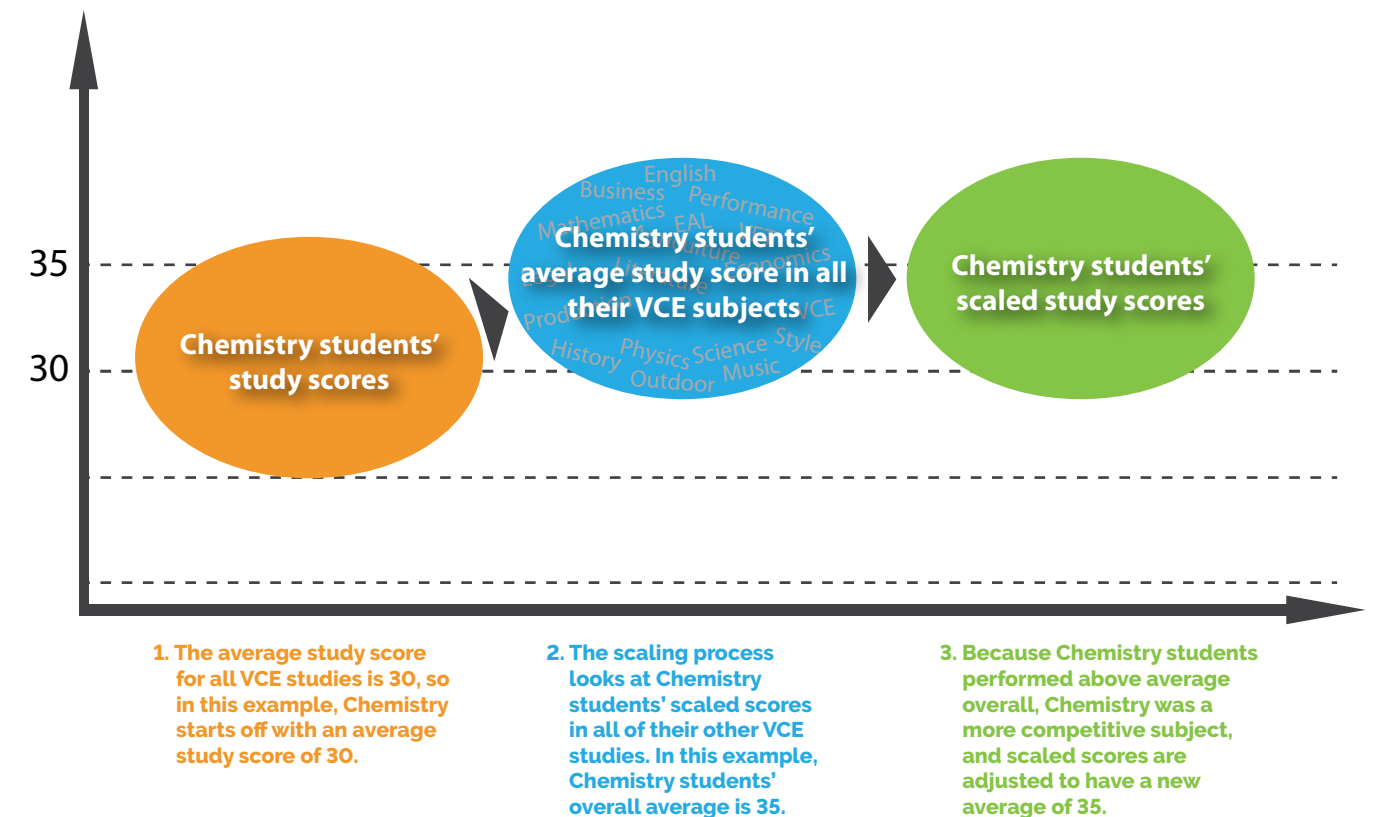
- » No personal opinions about scaled study scores because of consistency.

No subjective decisions

- » If two students have the same ATAR or scaled study score, institutions need to look at other published criteria.

The bare bones of scaling: A beginner's guide

Let's look at a simple example of how scaling works



Note: This diagram uses simplified figures and processes for the purpose of clarity. Refer to the details elsewhere in this publication and on the VTAC website for more details about the intricacies of scaling.

Studies with additional scaling

The following studies attract additional scaling rules. Unless you like these studies and are good at them, choosing these studies simply because they are treated differently in scaling won't automatically guarantee you a higher ATAR.

Mathematics

VCE Mathematics studies are designed to cater for students of differing abilities and interests. Unlike other studies there is a distinct hierarchy of studies:

- » Specialist Mathematics is the most difficult
- » followed by Mathematical Methods (CAS) and
- » Further Mathematics.

To ensure that students undertaking the more difficult mathematics studies are not disadvantaged by the level of difficulty, all three mathematics studies are scaled against each other as well as being scaled against all other studies. The higher of the two resulting scales is used for each of the mathematics studies.

Languages

As a result of government policy to encourage the study of languages, each Language is adjusted up by adding up to five to the initial VTAC scaled study score average.

This does not mean that five points are added to the ATAR. What it does mean is that for study scores at or close to the score average of 30, the adjustment is 5. This adjustment is different for each study score and decreases as the study score moves away from 30.

Myths about the ATAR

Many students believe that to achieve their best possible ATAR they need to choose studies that are traditionally scaled up. This is not true, and may even work against you. If you choose a study that you are not very good at simply because it may be scaled up, the VCAA study score you receive will be a lot lower than what you could expect in a study you are good at and that interests you. While your score will be scaled up, it is unlikely that your VTAC Scaled Study Score would be any higher than if you had chosen a more suitable study, even one that may be scaled down.

The way to ensure that you achieve your best ATAR is to choose your studies according to what you are interested in, what you are good at, and which studies you need for future study. Don't forget to keep in mind that you must have a primary four in order to qualify for the ATAR. The calculation of the ATAR guarantees that all studies are treated equally and provides you with a common rank for tertiary selection across Australia. ATARs are comparable across states.



Calculating the ATAR

How is the ATAR calculated?

Your ATAR is calculated from an aggregate produced by adding your results for up to six studies including:

- » the VTAC scaled study score in one of English, English (EAL), Literature or English Language
- » the three next highest VTAC scaled study scores permissible (which together with the English study make the "primary four")
- » 10% of any fifth and sixth permissible studies that are available.

The primary four and increments for any fifth and sixth studies are added together to form an aggregate for each student.

You are then ranked in order of these aggregates—the highest rank being 99.95 and then decreasing in steps of 0.05. The group of students with the highest aggregates will be assigned the highest rank of 99.95. ATARs below 30.00 are reported as 'less than 30' on printed statements.

Sample ATAR calculation

What if I have more than six VCE study results?

If you have more than six results, the six permissible results that give the highest ATAR are used.

All VCE and VCE VET studies can be used in the ATAR if permitted. Check the following pages for details about subject eligibility and restricted combinations.

Studies from any year can be used in the calculation of the ATAR

You must pass Units 3 and 4 for a study to be included in your ATAR

Your Graded Assessment results are used by the VCAA to produce your study score. They do not directly affect your ATAR or scaling.

The study score is calculated by the VCAA, with an average score of 30 for each subject.

All study scores are scaled before use in the ATAR to adjust for competition. See the previous pages for more information about the scaling process.

Year	Study	Unit 3/4 Results	GA 1	GA 2	GA 3	Study Score	Scaled score	2015 Aggregate Contribution
2015	Literature	SS	A	A+	A+	42	43.24	43.24
2015	Specialist Mathematics	SS	A+	A	B+	36	47.23	47.23
2015	Philosophy	SS	A+	A+	A+	47	47.79	47.79
2015	Mathematical Methods (CAS)	SS	A+	A+	A+	43	47.58	47.58
2015	Physics	SS	A+	A+	A+	43	45.13	4.51
2015	Approved Higher Education Study	SS						5.0
Aggregate								195.3
Aggregate converted to an ATAR of								99.20

You must have at least four eligible scored studies to receive an ATAR. If you have more than four studies available, we will use the highest eligible four studies. These are known as the "Primary 4".

Up to two more eligible studies can contribute as increments, which for scored subjects is 10% of the scaled study score.

Your ATAR is a percentile rank determined by your aggregate. For example, an ATAR of 60 means that your aggregate was higher than 60% of the Year 12 age group.

The aggregate is the total of all contributions to your ATAR.

How many years do I have to complete my VCE?

Studies used in the calculation of the ATAR may be taken over any number of years, however there are some restrictions around time taken to complete individual VCE scored studies (generally one calendar year without special exceptions being granted).

What studies will be used to calculate my ATAR?

Subject to the rules and restrictions that are described in this magazine, the studies that can be used for the ATAR include:

- » All VCE Unit 3 and 4 sequences
- » Vocational Education and Training (VET) Programs with Unit 3 and 4 sequences
- » One approved Higher Education study

What is a VCE VET program?

A VCE VET program is constructed around a nationally recognised qualification, usually at Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level II or III. Some VCE VET programs offer more than a single qualification outcome. There are VCE VET scored studies and VCE VET unscored studies:

- » VCE VET scored studies contribute to the ATAR in the same way as any other VCE study.
- » Unscored VCE VET studies may contribute to the ATAR as either the fifth or sixth study.

What is an 'Approved Higher Education study'?

Approved higher education studies are offered by higher education institutions (universities) and the VCAA for high achieving VCE students.

Higher education studies are designed for independent high achieving VCE students. For further information about this program refer to the VCAA website.

Restricted area - FAQs and the rules

The ATAR

I've gone back to do one or two subjects this year. Will I get a new ATAR?

For students who return to study with a previously achieved ATAR and are awarded at least one study score or complete a non-scored VET subject, a new ATAR will be calculated. The new ATAR is awarded only if it is higher than the one previously achieved. Ranking for courses will be based on the overall highest ATAR achieved. Note: study scores are scaled in the year they are undertaken.

I've received a notional ATAR. What does that mean?

Notional ATARs are used to rank applicants who either have previous Victorian Year 12 results (other than VCE results) or another qualification obtained in Victoria such as the International Baccalaureate. In the case of previous Victorian Year 12 results, a notional ATAR is calculated using the same rules as for the ATAR. For these qualifications, different methods are used whilst still adhering to the same underlying principles. Further information may be obtained from VTAC.

Only Victorian IB students who sit the GAT and are VTAC applicants will be issued with a printed notional ATAR statement.

I'm applying interstate. Is my ATAR relevant?

Victorian VCE applicants applying for tertiary courses in other Australian states will be considered on the basis of their Victorian ATAR. For example, an ATAR of 50 is the same across all states.

VCE studies

Are there any restrictions on the subjects I can study?

There are several restrictions on study combinations that will affect the calculation of the ATAR:

- 1** Only one subject from within each of the following combinations can be used in the best six for the calculation of the ATAR:
 - » English/English as an Additional Language (EAL)
 - » Chinese (FL)/Chinese (SL)/Chinese (SL Advanced)
 - » Indonesian (FL)/Indonesian (SL)
 - » Japanese (FL)/Japanese (SL)
 - » Korean (FL)/Korean (SL)
 - » Mathematical Methods/Mathematical Methods (CAS)
- 2** At most two results from any of the English, Mathematics, History, Contemporary Australian Studies, Information Technology, Languages and Music study areas can contribute to the primary four.
- 3** At most three results from any of the English, Mathematics, History, Contemporary Australian Studies, Information Technology, Languages and Music study areas can contribute to the ATAR, whether they are VCE results, Higher Education study results, or VET results.

Note: The restrictions listed here are for studies completed after 2007. Additional restrictions may apply where earlier studies have been completed. Contact VTAC for further information. The VET industry area restrictions and VFE block credit restrictions also apply.

English business
history science

languages mathematics
information technology

For a list of study groupings and the subjects they contain,
go to **Publications > Fact sheets** on the VTAC website
or scan the QR code with your mobile device.

VET programs

I'm thinking of selecting one or two VCE VET Unit 3 and 4 sequences with a scored assessment. Will that contribute to my ATAR?

VCE VET study scores are scaled and treated in the same way as traditional Unit 3 and 4 VCE studies. As a result, they may be included in the calculation of the ATAR.

If a scored assessment is available and you decide not to take it, no increment will be available.

I've successfully completed VCE VET Unit 3 and 4 sequences with no scored assessment available. How will my results contribute to my ATAR?

Because there are no scores available for unscored sequences, VTAC may include the sequence as an increment (the fifth or sixth study). The amount of the increment is determined by calculating 10% of the average of the primary four.

I've completed two VET Unit 3 and 4 sequences and they are very similar. Will they both be included in my ATAR?

If you have completed two VET Unit 3 and 4 sequences deemed by the VCAA to be equivalent because of significant duplication, only one result can contribute to the ATAR.

- » If one sequence has scored assessment available, then your result in the scored sequence will be used in the calculation of your ATAR.
- » If both sequences have scored assessment, then the higher result will be used. If neither sequence has scored assessment, one VET increment will be available.

Are there any restrictions on the use of VET studies within an industry area?

There are a range of restrictions which apply to how VET studies within an industry area are used:

No scorable sequence available:

In cases where no scorable sequence in an industry area has been attempted, up to two VET or VFE increments from that area can contribute to the ATAR as increments.

Where a single scorable VCE VET sequence has been attempted in an industry area:

That result will be the first possible industry area contributor to the ATAR, and a maximum of two increments can be added by non-scorable VET or VFE sequences in the same industry area.

Where two scorable non-equivalent VCE VET sequences have been attempted in an industry area:

Those results will be the first possible industry area contributors to the ATAR, and at most one increment can be added by non-scorable VET or VFE sequences in the same industry area.

Where more than two scorable non-equivalent VCE VET sequences have been attempted in an industry area:

Only those results will be possible industry area contributors to the ATAR, with at most two being permissible in the primary four and at most three being permissible in the ATAR.

Remember: "Scorable" means that scored assessment is available and completed. If your VCE VET subject has scored assessment available, and you choose not to complete it, that subject cannot contribute towards your ATAR.

I've completed some VFE studies. Is it true that I'll get block credit towards my ATAR?

VFE studies are VET courses which are not part of the VCE VET program, but have been approved for block credit by the VCAA, with the results recorded by your school. Your VFE studies will count towards block credit for your ATAR if you only have four or five VCE or VCE VET studies available. If you have six or more VCE or VCE VET studies available, a VFE block credit result will not be used in the calculation of the ATAR.

Approved higher education studies in schools

What are approved higher education studies?

The VCAA provides for very able students to have an opportunity to undertake an approved higher education study as part of the VCE. Such studies are recognised as higher education studies contributing to completion of the VCE.

How are my approved higher education results included in the ATAR?

If you are undertaking such a study, it may count as an increment (fifth or sixth study) in the ATAR.

I don't get a study score for my higher education results. How is the increment calculated?

Upon satisfactory completion an increment may be calculated for the higher education study based on performance in the HE units:

HE contribution to the ATAR

If the average mark over all the higher education (HE) units awarded is:

- » at least 90, the HE increment will be 5.0;
- » at least 80 but less than 90, the HE increment will be 4.5;

- » at least 70 but less than 80, the HE increment will be 4.0;
- » at least 60 but less than 70, the HE increment will be 3.5;
- » at least 50 but less than 60, the HE increment will be 3.0.

If the average mark over all the HE units awarded is less than 50, then no higher education increment is available.

I haven't decided whether or not I'll do VCE or the IB yet. If I do the IB, can I also do a higher education study and will it contribute to my notional ATAR?

Higher education extension studies are explicitly designed for credit towards the VCE. As a result, a higher education increment is not available for IB students.

ATAR snapshot

TYRION

Tyrion attempted an approved Higher Education study.

Higher Education studies can include first year university studies and advanced standing TAFE courses, recognised by the VCAA and made available to VCE students who are very capable academically and have the endorsement of their school principal. Upon satisfactory completion, such a study may contribute as an increment in the calculation of the ATAR. Tyrion's result in the Higher Education study program contributed 5.0 to the aggregate. Results in Higher Education studies can only contribute as an increment, not as part of the primary four, and the increment will be based on the student's performance in the particular study.

Year	Study	Unit 3/4 Results	Study Score	Scaled score	2015 Aggregate Contribution
2015	Literature	SS	42	43.24	43.24
2015	Specialist Mathematics	SS	36	47.23	47.23
2015	Philosophy	SS	47	47.79	47.79
2015	Mathematical Methods (CAS)	SS	43	47.58	47.58
2015	Physics	SS	43	45.13	4.51
2015	Approved Higher Education Study	SS			5.0*
Aggregate					195.3
Aggregate converted to an ATAR of					99.20

*The HE result was greater than 90. Therefore, the increment is 5.0

Are there any restrictions on the use of approved higher education studies?

If your ATAR incorporates a Higher Education increment from any of the study areas outlined in the study groupings fact sheet available from the publishing section of the VTAC website, then at most two VTAC scaled study scores and/or VET increments from that study area may be used.

Who determines if my higher education study is 'approved'?

All VCAA designated rules for higher education studies must be satisfied prior to the higher education study increment being available. Check the VCAA's VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook or VCAA Bulletins for the latest information.

For some VCE study groups you can't use more than three studies in the calculation of the ATAR. Do approved higher education studies count in those study groups?

If your ATAR incorporates a higher education increment from any of the study areas of Mathematics, English, Languages, Music, History or Computer Science/Information Technology then at most two VTAC Scaled Study Scores or VET increments from that study area may be used.



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