

10 June 2020

Statement regarding 2020 ATAR Results and 2021 University Admissions

The Education Council today announced the decision by Ministers that the release of individual Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) results, for students completing Year 12 in 2020, will occur within a nationally consistent window of 15 December to 31 December 2020.

This follows Council's consideration of advice from the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) on an appropriate and achievable window for the release of ATARs, noting the ATAR remains Australia's nationally consistent tool for university entrance.

Ministers also considered advice on 2021 university admissions, provided by a working group comprising representatives of Universities Australia, ACACA, and the Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admissions Centres.

Council recognised the challenges faced by 2020 Year 12 students and their families due to the disruption to schooling caused by the coronavirus pandemic. In considering the working group's advice, the Council acknowledged the seriousness of these concerns and agreed that Year 12 students and their families must be supported and have reliable information to pursue their post-school pathways.

The working group advised Council that continuing to work hard and complete the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE) is the best course of action for students wishing to enter and succeed at university in 2021. The working group advised that students and families can be confident the processes underpinning the calculation of the ATAR can be successfully applied in 2020 to accurately determine the ranking of Year 12 student results for the purpose of supporting entry to university.

Council agreed a nationally consistent set of messages to ensure all year 12 students, their families and teachers across Australia are confident in, and clearly understand, the university admissions processes for 2021:

- Current year 12 students will be able to complete a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE) this year. States and territories are putting arrangements in place to take account of disadvantage faced by this year's student cohort due to COVID-19, while ensuring the integrity of the assessment process.
- Students should continue learning and finish their year 12 studies to the best of their ability to ensure they gain the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully transition to university study, other post-school education options, or work in 2021.
- Students completing the SSCE in each state and territory, and meeting ATAR eligibility requirements in 2020 will receive an ATAR.
- States and territories have worked closely with schools and tertiary admissions centres to ensure that the disruption of the 2020 school year does not impact the validity of the ATAR. The ATAR remains an accurate ranking of year 12 student results for university entry.
- Students will be able to use their ATAR to apply for university admission in 2021 as is the normal practice. Universities understand that 2020 will be a challenging year for Year 12 students and that students may be concerned. Universities have a range of entry pathways available every year for students.

- In 2021, universities will continue to use the ATAR and existing alternative pathways alongside the ATAR to facilitate access to university. Students should check individual university websites, consult with their state or territory Tertiary Admission Centre, or go to the Course Seeker website (www.courseseecker.edu.au) for the most up to date admissions information.

The Council has previously confirmed that eligible 2020 Year 12 students in every state and territory will be able to receive an ATAR and use this to apply for university in 2021 through their local Tertiary Admissions Centre.

All universities will continue to provide pathways that take other factors into consideration alongside ATAR, including where students experience disadvantage.

Council members welcomed the working group's advice and acknowledged the importance of completion of the SSCE and the integrity of the ATAR as an equitable and accessible pathway to university studies for school leavers.

The working group has confidence that the processes underpinning the calculation of the ATAR can continue to be successfully applied to determine accurately and precisely Year 12 student achievement.

In 2020, as in previous years, the ATAR will be used as the major assessment factor for university admission for those recently completing secondary school. The ATAR is a reliable measure that indicates a student's academic performance relative to all other eligible students completing Year 12 in the same cohort. As a single, nationally comparable ranking, the ATAR also assists students who wish to study at an interstate university. Jurisdictions have actively considered the potential impact of COVID-19 on this year's student cohort and have policies and procedures in place to assess disadvantage and support students.

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