

QCE and ATAR – A Quick guide for students and families

What is the QCE?

The Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) is Queensland's senior school qualification, awarded to students who meet specific requirements by the end of Year 12.

To be eligible for a QCE, students must:

- Complete 20 credits from General, Applied, VET or other recognised studies
- Achieve a set standard (e.g. C grade or higher in General subjects)
- Meet literacy and numeracy requirements

The QCE shows that a student has achieved a significant amount of learning at a set standard and is ready for further education, training or work.

What is the ATAR?

The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is a rank (not a score) from 0.00 to 99.95 that indicates a student's position relative to other students in their age group. It is used for university admission across Australia.

How is the ATAR calculated?

- Calculated by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC)
- Based on a student's best 5 General subject results, or
- 4 General subjects + 1 Applied subject or VET qualification
- Includes scaling to adjust for subject difficulty

Note: The ATAR is only needed for university entrance. Students not planning to go to university may not need an ATAR.

Key Differences

Feature	QCE	ATAR
Purpose	Certificate of education	University ranking
Who awards it	QCAA	QTAC
Needed for graduation?	Yes	No
Needed for university?	No	Yes

How Parents Can Support

- Encourage consistent effort and attendance
- Stay informed about subject selection and assessment schedules
- Talk with school staff during subject selection and career planning
- Support student wellbeing during high-stakes assessment periods

For more information:

- QCAA: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au
- QTAC: www.qtac.edu.au
- Your child's school senior schooling team

Pathway essentials

The following may be useful reference to help decipher the world of acronyms education speaks in within the Senior Phase of Learning:

Acronym (Term)	Definition
QCE	The Queensland Certificate of Education is Queensland's senior secondary schooling qualification. It is internationally recognised and allows students to choose from a wide range of learning options to suit their interests and career goals. To receive certification, students must achieve the set amount of learning, at the set standard, in a set pattern, while meeting literacy and numeracy requirements.
QCIA	The Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement recognises and reports the achievements of students whose learning is part of an individual learning program. It provides students with a summary of their skills and knowledge to present to employers and training providers.
ATAR	The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank is a rank used for tertiary application. It indicates a student's position overall, relative to other students. The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre calculates and issues ATARs: calculated from the highest results in 5 General subjects, or the highest results in 4 General subjects + 1 Applied subject or completed VET qualification III level or above. ATARs are expressed as a number from 99.95 down to 0.00 in steps of 0.05. The highest ATAR is 99.95, then 99.90, then 99.85, and so on, down to 0.00 (ATARs below 30 are reported as '30.00 or less').
VET	Vocational Education and Training is learning that directly relates to getting a job. It can be accessed at every stage of our work life, whether you're a student, a job seeker or already employed.
SAT	School-based apprenticeships and traineeships provide an opportunity for students in Years 10, 11 and 12 to undertake employment-based training while continuing full-time enrolment at school.
QTAC	The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre processes applications for most undergraduate & selected postgraduate programs offered by Queensland universities.
Tertiary qualification	In Australia, a tertiary qualification refers to any form of post-secondary education or training typically earned after secondary school. It is offered by universities, vocational education and training institutions, and other accredited providers.
General subject	General subjects are suited to students who are interested in pathways beyond senior secondary schooling that lead to tertiary study and pathways for vocational education and training and work. Results in General subjects contribute to the award of a QCE and may contribute to an ATAR.
Applied subject	Applied subjects are suited to students who are primarily interested in pathways beyond senior secondary schooling that lead to vocational education and training or work. Results in Applied subjects contribute to the award of a QCE and up to one Applied subject result may contribute to an ATAR.
Prerequisite	Some tertiary courses have prerequisite requirements. That means you must meet the requirements to gain entry to these courses.
Assumed knowledge	Some tertiary courses assume you will have certain knowledge or skills, rather than outlining prerequisite requirements.

Pathways to Senior Studies

What type of Learner are you?	You might enjoy and do well with this pathway...	Consider choosing these type of subjects
High performing, highly motivated, organised academic students who plan to study at university after graduating Year 12. You usually work hard and achieve A's and/or B's on your report card	Intensive Academic Pathway <i>With achievement of the required results, this pathway may lead to direct entry to university after graduating Year 12.</i> ATAR pathway.	5 General Subjects
Achieve good results, are organised and motivated to study & value tertiary studies at TAFE and/or University as an option after graduating Year 12. You usually work hard and achieve B's and C's on your report card but, due to your efforts and interests, you can earn A's as well.	Tertiary Options Pathway <i>With achievement of the required results, this pathway may lead to direct entry to TAFE or College for a Diploma or to university after graduating Year 12.</i>	5 General Subjects Or 4 General + 1 Applied Or 4 General + 1 VET Cert III, IV or Diploma (must study an English subject)
Prefer hands-on learning and have specific areas of interest and strength.	Work Readiness Pathway <i>This pathway may provide students with excellent preparation to transition from school to TAFE or the workforce after graduating school.</i>	5 Applied Subjects Or 4 Applied Subjects + 1 VET course or SAT opportunity
Prefer hands-on learning and have specific areas of interest and strength and possess a strong desire to access the workforce after completing Year 10 studies.	Life and Work Skills Pathway <i>Students on this pathway will receive a very practical, skills-based education to prepare them with work readiness skills.</i>	4 Applied subjects + WYNMET trade testing course during year 10.