

# THE ATAR AND APPLYING FOR UNI



UAC



## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

*The ATAR and Applying for Uni* provides a guide to choosing HSC courses and applying for university through the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC). It includes an explanation of the ATAR and how it is used by universities as part of their selection process.

While it is ultimately the student's decision as to which tertiary course they will study, parents and guardians play an important role in supporting their child in this decision and helping them to explore their options. This booklet can be used as a starting point for an informed discussion between students and their parents about the many paths to tertiary study and the steps to take along the way.

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## CHOOSING HSC COURSES

In Year 10, you'll select the courses that you will study for the next two years. This is an exciting time with many choices available. But you might have heard rumours from older students and siblings about Year 12, the ATAR or university entry. We're here to dispel the myths and give you solid information on which you can base your decisions.





## CHOOSING YOUR COURSES

If you're thinking about going on to tertiary study, you need to choose courses that work for you in three main ways:

- 1 They need to make you eligible to receive an ATAR.
- 2 They need to be subjects you like, do well in and, therefore, give you the greatest chance of receiving the highest possible ATAR.
- 3 They need to prepare you for the areas of tertiary study you're planning to pursue.

### UAC's Year 10 booklet

Our Year 10 booklet will help you select your courses for Years 11 and 12. It includes information and worksheets to help you map your interests and skills to some possible career paths and study options and to select useful HSC courses. It also sets out tertiary course entry requirements for UAC's participating institutions. You can download the booklet from the UAC website.

When using the Year 10 booklet, pay careful attention to the following information:

- course prerequisites: some tertiary courses require students to have completed,

or achieved a certain standard in, an HSC course or equivalent before they will be offered a place in that course

- subject prerequisites: some subjects in tertiary courses require students to have completed, or achieved a certain standard in, a specific HSC course before the student is able to enrol in those particular subjects
- assumed knowledge: some universities assume that students have knowledge of specific HSC courses or equivalent before they begin the course
- recommended studies: these are HSC or equivalent courses that the universities suggest will help students in their chosen tertiary course.

While it's essential to meet course and subject prerequisites, it's also important not to overlook the HSC courses listed as assumed knowledge and recommended studies. While many unis offer bridging courses, these courses are not equivalent to the two-year HSC course and they may add significantly to your course fees.

The Year 10 booklet also provides information about:

- university and college open days to encourage you to begin researching your options by visiting campuses
- HSC courses and whether they are classified as Category A or Category B
- how the ATAR is calculated and used for tertiary entry.

**Around 47% of students do only 10 units in the HSC. The next most common pattern is 11 units (around 17%).**

## Ensuring ATAR eligibility

If you're intending to go on to further study after high school, the first thing you have to do is choose (and continue with) a pattern of study that will make you eligible for an ATAR. It sounds obvious, but it is not unheard of for students to put in a lot of hard work only to find out that their HSC course choices did not meet the ATAR eligibility criteria.

To be eligible for an ATAR, you must satisfactorily complete at least 10 units of ATAR courses, including:

- 8 units of Category A courses
- 2 units of English
- three Board Developed courses of 2 units or greater
- four subjects. (A subject is an area of study, such as mathematics. Within that subject there may be a number of courses, such as Mathematics General 2, Mathematics, HSC Mathematics Extension 1 and HSC Mathematics Extension 2.)

If you don't satisfactorily complete a course (eg attend classes, complete assessments), that course won't count towards meeting your ATAR requirements. If the course is a 2-unit course and you are enrolled in an associated extension course, the extension course will not count either.

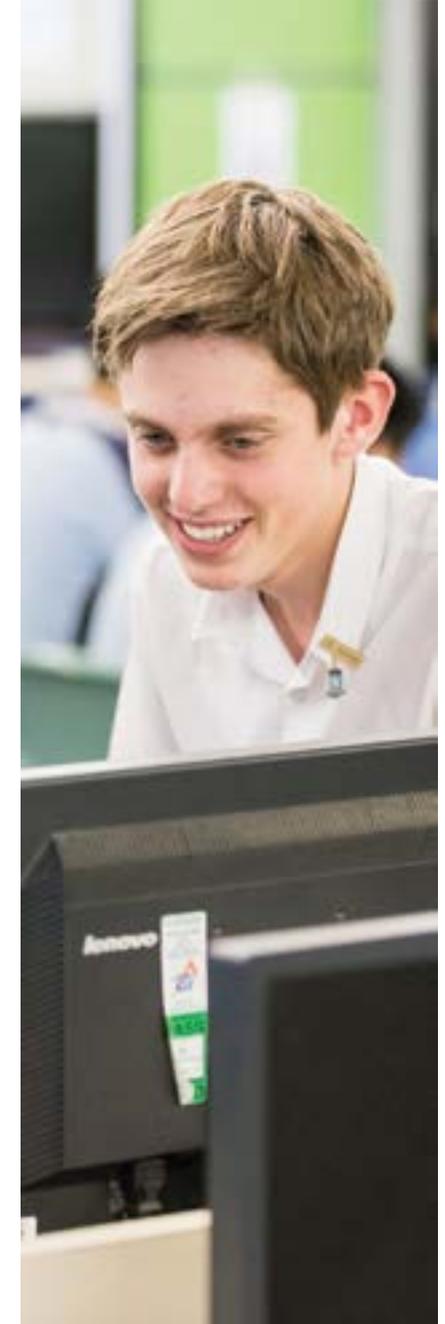
The most common mistake students make is to not study enough subjects – make sure you choose courses from four subjects.

The number of courses, or units, you study will depend on how many you can realistically cope with and succeed in. You also want to ensure that the courses you take will give you some flexibility for entry into a range of tertiary courses.

### 'Maximising' the ATAR

The ATAR is a rank, not a mark. It is a number that indicates a student's position in relation to other students.

Many students and parents are convinced that certain courses, such as HSC Mathematics Extension 2, are 'scaled up' and lead to a higher ATAR. But just about any combination of courses can lead to a good ATAR; it all depends on how well a student has done in all their courses in comparison to other students.





Students who achieve high ATARs are generally placed near the top in all of their courses. Therefore, the best way to maximise your ATAR is to choose courses you will do well in. It's as simple as that!

### Choosing between different levels of courses

As mentioned above, many parents and students believe that studying a higher-level course will lead to higher scaled marks and therefore a higher ATAR.

In fact, it's very difficult to predict which courses will receive higher scaled marks. Even if we could make this prediction, it wouldn't necessarily benefit you if your position in the course was low.

A course such as HSC Mathematics Extension 2 is often studied by a small number of high-achieving students who do well in all their courses and, therefore, the scaled marks for that course are frequently high. You can read more about the scaling process on page 11.

Rather than trying to work out if you are better off completing a lower- or higher-level course, think about which of the two courses you prefer and will therefore do

better in. This is particularly relevant for English because it has to be included no matter how well or poorly you perform.

### Category A and B courses

HSC courses are classified as either Category A or Category B. Category A courses have the academic rigour and depth of knowledge to provide the background for tertiary studies. Examples include Mathematics and Geography.

Category B courses don't have the academic rigour to provide an adequate background for tertiary studies. However, up to 2 units of Category B courses can be included in your ATAR calculation if you are enrolled with the NSW Education Standards Authority for the course and the exam. Examples of Category B courses are Human Services and Hospitality.

For a complete list of Category A and B courses, visit UAC's website.

### VET courses

Vocational education and training (VET) courses give you the opportunity to gain industry-recognised national vocational qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) as part of your schooling.

Some TAFE-delivered HSC VET courses are Category B courses and can contribute to your ATAR if you are enrolled with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and sit an exam. Other TAFE-delivered courses are endorsed by and contribute to the HSC but they do not have an examination and cannot be included in the calculation of your ATAR.

### Accelerating studies

Some students may accelerate their studies by completing HSC courses while in Year 11. While this increases your workload in Year 11, and is not recommended for everyone, it can offer advantages such as:

- letting you take fewer courses in Year 12, meaning you can focus on those units
- allowing you to study a broader range of subjects
- having more units available for inclusion in the calculation of your ATAR.

The course is scaled in the year you complete it and the scaled mark can be used in the ATAR calculation when you become ATAR eligible. You will be ranked with others in the same ATAR cohort.

### Dropping courses

If you are in Year 11 and considering dropping a subject, the most important thing is to make sure you will still be eligible for an ATAR. You need to study the required number of Category A courses, 2-unit courses and subjects. Also, don't drop a course based on your perception of how it scales (read 'Scaling' on page 11). Continue with the courses you most enjoy and, therefore, do well in. The only thing you can control is how well you perform; you can't control how other students perform, your position in a course or the calculation of your ATAR.

English Standard and Mathematics General 2 have the largest candidatures in the HSC.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Are there any courses I can choose to maximise my ATAR?

No. It is a myth that choosing certain courses will increase your ATAR. The best way to maximise your ATAR is to choose courses you will do well in. Students who achieve high ATARs study a large variety of courses and are generally placed near the top in all of their courses.

### Will my ATAR calculation be influenced by the school I attend?

No. The calculation of your ATAR will be based on 10 units of your scaled marks; the school you attend does not form part of the calculation. Students who achieve high ATARs come from a mix of government (both comprehensive and selective) and non-government schools.

All students can perform well regardless of the school they attend, provided they study hard and achieve good HSC results. Study HSC courses you enjoy and are good at.

### Will a Band 4 or 5 in English (Advanced) get me a better scaled mark than a Band 6 in English (Standard)?

It's very difficult to predict which course will lead to a higher scaled mark. Your scaled mark depends on the scaled mean of the course and your position in the course.

Choose the course you prefer as you'll do better in it. This is particularly relevant for English because it has to be included in your ATAR calculation no matter how well or poorly you perform.

Note that if you are planning on applying for teaching you will need three Band 5s, one of which must be in English.

### If I complete Mathematics in Year 11 then go on to complete HSC Mathematics Extension 1 and HSC Mathematics Extension 2 in Year 12, can my Mathematics results still be included in my ATAR?

No. Only 4 units of calculus-based maths can be included in your ATAR calculation. HSC Mathematics Extension 1 has a different weighting (in terms of units) depending on whether you take Mathematics or HSC Mathematics Extension 2.

If you study Mathematics (2 units), then HSC Mathematics Extension 1 accounts for 1 unit.

If you study HSC Mathematics Extension 2 (2 units), then HSC Mathematics Extension 1 accounts for 2 units. This is calculated by doubling the mark you receive for the 1-unit course.

If you complete Mathematics then go on to satisfactorily complete HSC Mathematics Extension 1 and HSC Mathematics Extension 2, your results in Mathematics cannot be included in your ATAR calculation, even if you excel in it.



## HSC AND ATAR

In 2017, the 57,061 NSW students who received an ATAR completed 119 different HSC courses. This meant there were 27,000 different patterns of study. The calculation of the ATAR allows us to compare the overall achievement of the students who have completed all these different courses. Its only purpose is to help universities select students for tertiary study.



### HSC MARKS

The Higher School Certificate syllabus and exams are set by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). Students receive a mark based on their performance against standards in each HSC course. There is no quota as to the number of students who can achieve top marks and students are not scaled against each other.

Your HSC marks, as reported in your Record of Achievement, indicate the standards you have reached in each of your courses. Your HSC mark for each course is a 50:50 combination of your school-based assessment mark for that course and your external examination mark.

#### Assessment marks

As you know, your assessment tasks are marked at your school. Because schools mark in different ways, NESA needs to remove the differences so that it can compare the results in a way that is fair for all students. It does this through a process called 'moderation.'

Moderation aligns school-based assessment marks with the raw state-wide exam marks. Since the exam for a course is taken by all students completing that course, it can be used as a common standard against which school assessments can be compared. When assessment marks are moderated, students maintain their assessment rank but may be given a different assessment mark. If you are ranked second in your school assessment, you will receive the second highest moderated assessment mark.

Only assessment marks are moderated; you will always keep your own examination mark.

#### Examination marks

Your performance in each of your HSC courses is measured against standards defined by NESA. Depending on how well you meet these standards, your raw examination mark will be aligned to one of six performance bands. For a 2-unit course, Band 6 indicates the highest level of performance, and students who reach that standard will receive an exam mark between 90 and 100. It is this aligned exam mark that is reported on your Record of Achievement.

Your exam mark will depend on how well you perform in the exam and is independent of your assessment rank. You keep your own exam mark, regardless of your performance in your assessments.

In 2017, the median ATAR was 69.00 but the median HSC marks were in the high 70s.

## Your Record of Achievement

Your HSC Record of Achievement, provided by NESA, will show your examination mark, assessment mark, HSC mark and performance band. You won't be given a single, overall score for your combined courses.

Here is an example of how your HSC marks will be listed on your Record of Achievement:

Year	Course	Examination Mark	Assessment Mark	HSC Mark	Performance Band
<b>Board Developed Courses</b>					
2017	English (Advanced) (2 unit)	91/100	89/100	90	6
	English Extension 1 (1 unit)	44/50	46/50	45	E4
	Mathematics General 2 (2 unit)	87/100	83/100	85	5
	Business Studies (2 unit)	91/100	91/100	91	6
	Modern History (2 unit)	97/100	95/100	96	6
	Society and Culture (2 unit)	85/100	85/100	85	5
	Studies of Religion 1 (1 unit)	47/50	45/50	46	6

## ATAR

In contrast to your HSC results, your ATAR is a rank, not a mark. It's a number between 0.00 and 99.95 with increments of 0.05. It provides a measure of your overall academic achievement in relation to that of other students and helps universities rank applicants for selection into their courses.

Your ATAR indicates your position relative to all the students who started high school with you. So, if you receive an ATAR of 80.00, it means that you are 20 per cent from the top of your Year 7 group, even though not everyone who started Year 7 with you went on to achieve an ATAR.

The average ATAR is usually around 70.00. You might think that the average should be 50.00. It would be 50.00 if everyone from Year 7 went on to achieve an ATAR. But because the students who leave early are typically less academically able than the ones that stay on, the students receiving ATARs are a smaller, more academically able group, and the average ATAR they receive is higher.

ATARs are calculated in each state (except Queensland) to reflect a student's rank against other students in their state.

An ATAR of 85.00 in NSW will, however, be considered equivalent to an ATAR of 85.00 in other states.

In NSW the ATAR is calculated and released by UAC. In the ACT the ATAR is calculated by the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies and released by schools.

It's quite likely that you've heard some incorrect information about the ATAR and its calculation. Here are the essential facts you need to know:

Your ATAR is affected by	Your ATAR is not affected by
Your position in your courses.	The school you attend.
Your raw HSC marks provided by NESA.	Studying certain courses, such as Visual Arts or Business Studies.
Choosing subjects you enjoy and do well in and working consistently at your optimal level.	Studying extension or advanced courses.
	Studying extra units.
	The performance band you achieve.

## ATAR calculation: the details

The NSW ATAR is based on an aggregate of scaled marks in 10 units of ATAR courses comprising:

- the best 2 units of English
- the best 8 units from the remaining units (max. of 2 units of Category B courses).

The calculation of the ATAR is a complex process that begins with scaling raw HSC marks and ends with ranking the student among their entire Year 7 cohort. It is a different calculation to that used for the HSC, which provides a measure of a student's performance against performance bands.

### The Year 7 cohort

Each state has a different participation rate; that is, the number of students completing Year 12 who are eligible to receive an ATAR. To ensure the interstate equivalence of ATARs, an age cohort is used in each state so that a student's rank is a measure of their performance against all students who started Year 7 with them in that state, not just those who completed Year 12 and were eligible for an ATAR.

### Scaling

Just as individual units of different currencies are not of equal value (£1 is not the same as \$1), marks in different courses can't be compared because the courses are completely different. But just as exchange rates allow us to compare the value of different currencies, the scaling process allows us to compare marks in different courses properly and fairly.

Courses are scaled using the mean scores and distribution of marks, which indicate the ability of the course candidature. Courses such as HSC Mathematics Extension 2 and Physics traditionally scale well because of this. However, you must achieve high HSC marks to gain any benefit from scaling. (Therefore, always choose your courses according to your interests, aptitude and aspirations, not because of how they might be scaled!)

For most extension courses the scaled means and standard deviations are determined by the performance of the extension students on the corresponding 2-unit course.



Scaled marks are the marks included in the ATAR calculation, not HSC marks, and a higher HSC mark does not always mean a higher scaled mark. The scaled mark in a course will be influenced by the student's position in the course and the scaled mean for that course. The example below shows a set of HSC and scaled marks corresponding to results at the 90th percentile for each course.

Course	Scaled mean	HSC mark	Scaled mark
Ancient History	48.0	89.0	77.4
Biology	52.8	89.0	78.4
Business Studies	48.2	89.0	77.2
Society and Culture	47.4	91.0	76.2
Physics	60.8	89.0	84.2
English (Standard)	40.0	81.0	63.2

Even though the highest HSC mark was for Society and Culture, it will not be included in the ATAR calculation. This is because, apart from English, Society and Culture has the lowest scaled mark of all the courses. (At least 2 units of English must be included, even if they are the lowest scaled marks.)

Scaled marks are not reported to students. They are determined during an interim phase in the calculation of the ATAR.

The following table addresses a number of scaling 'myths':

Scaling myths	
Myth	Fact
Some courses are always 'scaled up', therefore I should study those.	Marks are scaled according to a course's scaled mean. The scaled mean indicates the academic ability of the course candidature, which can change from year to year. Your scaled mark indicates your position within the course candidature. For most courses, your scaled mark will be lower than your HSC mark. To get the best possible position and maximise your scaled marks, select the courses you will do best in.
Some courses are always 'scaled down', therefore I should avoid those.	
I have to study 'hard' subjects to get high scaled marks.	'Hard' is a subjective term. What is hard for one student could be easy for another. You need to make an individual choice. Students who achieve an ATAR of 99.95 have varied patterns of study.
I should study a lower level of maths to get a better ATAR.	It's very difficult to predict which course will lead to a higher scaled mark. Your scaled mark depends on the scaled mean of the course and your position in the course. You might have a higher position in a lower level course, but this will be offset by a lower scaled mean. Choose the level of maths that best suits your plans for further study.

### English courses

In NSW it is mandatory for 2 units of English to be included in the ATAR.

The NSW ATAR is calculated using the scaled marks from your best 2 units of English, plus your next 8 best units. If your additional English units are among your next best 8 units, they can also be used in your ATAR calculation.

In 2018, English Studies has no external HSC examination and cannot be included in your ATAR calculation. Therefore, 2018 English Studies students are not eligible for an ATAR.

In 2019, English Studies will have an external HSC examination and be categorised as a Category B course. Therefore, it will be able to be included in the ATAR calculation.

### Mathematics courses

Up to 4 units of calculus-based maths can be included in the ATAR calculation. HSC Mathematics Extension 1 has a different weighting (in terms of units) depending on whether it is paired with Mathematics or HSC Mathematics Extension 2.

If you study Mathematics (2 units), then HSC Mathematics Extension 1 accounts for 1 unit.

If you study HSC Mathematics Extension 2 (2 units), then HSC Mathematics Extension 1 accounts for 2 units. This is calculated by doubling the mark you receive for the 1-unit course.

If you complete Mathematics then go on to satisfactorily complete HSC Mathematics

Extension 1 and HSC Mathematics Extension 2, your results in Mathematics will not be included in your ATAR calculation, even if you have excelled in it.

In 2018, Mathematics General 1 has no external HSC examination and cannot be included in your ATAR calculation.

From 2019, Mathematics Standard 1 (replacing Mathematics General 1) will be a Category B course with an external examination and it will be able to be included in the ATAR calculation.

### Accumulated courses

Courses can be accumulated for the ATAR over a period of up to five years. Scaled marks are calculated in the year you complete the course and the scaled mark can be included in your ATAR calculation when you become ATAR eligible.

### Repeated courses

You will be considered to be repeating an HSC course if you:

- repeat the same course
- study a different course in the same subject area, apart from an extension course.



If you repeat a course, only the marks for your latest satisfactory attempt will be available for inclusion in the calculation of your ATAR, even if they are lower than your earlier attempt.

You will receive an ATAR the first year you satisfy the eligibility requirements. If you complete additional courses or repeat courses, your ATAR will be recalculated. Your most recent ATAR will be the one used by tertiary institutions for selection purposes.

### Re-marked HSC papers

If the NESA provides UAC with amended HSC results, your ATAR will automatically be recalculated and UAC will notify you by email.

### Getting your ATAR

You can access your ATAR by logging in to UAC's website or My UAC, the mobile app, in

mid-December. To log in, you'll need your Year 12 student number and your UAC PIN.

When you view your ATAR you'll also be able to see:

- a list of the ATAR courses you studied and their category
- the number of units of each ATAR course that contributed to the calculation of your ATAR.

If you receive an ATAR between 0.00 and 30.00, your ATAR will be recorded as '30 or less'. If you haven't met the requirements of the ATAR, your ATAR will be recorded as 'not eligible'.

If you have a query about your ATAR, you can call UAC's ATAR Enquiry Centre, which operates when ATARs are released. The telephone number and opening hours are published on UAC's website in December.

ATARs are only accessible by individual students or their authorised agents. ATARs are also released to institutions for the purpose of making offers to courses but UAC doesn't give ATARs to parents, schools or careers advisers. You decide who you tell about your ATAR.

Here's an example of an ATAR notification:

As at: 15/12/2017				
Year 12 student number: 12XXXXXXX				
Name: John Citizen				
NSW ATAR 75.80				
Your Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR)				
Shown below are the ATAR courses that were available for inclusion in your ATAR and those units that were actually included in the calculation. The category, year of completion and unit value of each course is also shown.				
Your NESA Student Number: 2XXXXXXX				
Course name	Category	Year completed	Unit value	Units included
Business Studies	A	2017	2	2
Economics	A	2017	2	2
English Advanced	A	2017	2	2
Mathematics	A	2017	2	2
Textiles and Design	A	2017	2	2

### Limited ATAR

Some institutions allow some applicants completing Year 12 to use a Limited ATAR, along with other selection criteria, to gain entry to tertiary study. A Limited ATAR is calculated from the best 5 units of courses completed, rather than the 10 used for the standard ATAR.

Students who are over 20 years of age on 1 March in the year they complete their HSC studies and who are taking between 5 and 9 units of ATAR courses, including at least 1 unit of English, are eligible for a Limited ATAR.

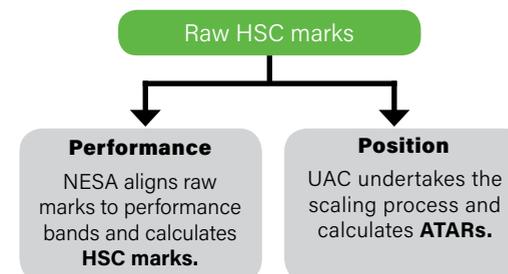
To receive a Limited ATAR, all courses must be completed in the same academic year. You can't accumulate courses over several years.

The Limited ATAR is calculated using the scaled marks from ATAR courses, which must include at least 1 unit of English plus the best 4 other units of Category A courses.

If you meet the criteria to receive a Limited ATAR and an ATAR, both will be calculated and you'll be notified of both. However, students usually receive a Limited ATAR in one year and an ATAR in a later year, once they have completed the required number of units.

## HSC AND ATAR: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

HSC marks and the ATAR are two different measures of achievement: HSC marks tell you about your performance, whereas your ATAR tells you about your position, or ranking. They are calculated separately using different methods:



The following table outlines the main differences between HSC marks and the ATAR.

Your HSC marks	Your ATAR
<b>Your HSC marks</b> provide information about how well you have performed in each of the courses you have completed.	<b>Your ATAR</b> provides information about how well you are positioned overall against other students.
<b>HSC marks</b> indicate your performance in the different courses you have studied.	<b>Your ATAR</b> allows you to be compared with other students who have completed different combinations of courses.
<b>HSC marks</b> are reported against standards.	<b>The ATAR</b> is a rank, not a mark.
<b>HSC marks</b> are provided by the NSW Education Standards Authority.	<b>The ATAR</b> is provided by UAC.

Most HSC marks lie between 50 and 100, and the middle students in most courses receive a mark between 70 and 80. Students who achieve marks in the mid-70s may get an ATAR of around 70.00, but sometimes marks in the 70s can mean a much lower ATAR depending on their courses and their position in those courses: a high level of performance in their HSC courses does not guarantee a high position in those courses.



### Example 1: Fred and Laura

Consider the following two students who completed the same courses. Fred received an HSC mark of 70 in each course, while Laura received an HSC mark of 80 in each course.

Course	Fred		Laura	
	HSC mark /100	Percentile	HSC mark /100	Percentile
Biology	70	34	80	64
Business studies	70	37	80	66
English (Advanced)	70	10	80	41
Mathematics	70	26	80	49
Modern History	70	31	80	64
Visual Arts	70	12	80	50
<b>ATAR</b>	56.05		76.50	

Their HSC marks in each course differ by only 10, yet their ATARs differ by 20.45. Their performance was similar, but their positions were quite different. Laura's ATAR is similar to her HSC marks while Fred's ATAR is much lower than his HSC marks.

This is because Laura's percentiles (her positions) in her courses are much better than Fred's.

The percentile column in this table tells us about their positions in more detail. For example, in Biology, Laura's mark of 80 positioned her in the 64th percentile, which means she is placed in the top 36 per cent of students. Fred's mark of 70 is in the 34th percentile, so he is only in the top 66 per cent of students. Even though Fred and Laura's performance in Biology differed by 10 marks, their positions varied by 30.

### Example 2: Liam and Kellie

Let's consider students who have similar HSC marks in different courses.

Liam and Kellie are in the 50th percentile in all of their courses. Their average HSC marks are similar, 78.2 and 78.4 respectively, but their ATARs are quite different, 55.90 and 81.65 respectively.

Liam			
ATAR	Course	Scaled mean	HSC mark
55.90	Dance	45.6	79
	English (Standard)	40.0	69
	Music 1	42.2	83
	Society and Culture	47.4	79
	Visual Arts	44.4	81
	Average	44.0	78.2

Kellie			
ATAR	Course	Scaled mean	HSC mark
81.65	Chemistry	63.0	77
	Economics	64.4	78
	English (Advanced)	63.4	82
	Mathematics	62.6	81
	Physics	60.8	74
	Average	62.8	78.4

Your ATAR is a rank (not a mark) based on your position compared to other students in the state.

Your HSC mark for each course is based on your performance in your exam and assessments.

The reason for the difference in their ATARs is the difference in the strength of the competition in the courses they have chosen. The average scaled mean for Liam's courses was 44.0, whereas for Kellie's courses it was 62.8. Kellie has done better overall as she has competed against higher-achieving students than Liam. Consequently, her ATAR is higher.

Remember that the scaled mean of a course indicates the overall average academic achievement of the students in that course.





### Example 3: James and Amy

Now let's look at James and Amy's HSC marks, which are shown in the following tables. Their average HSC marks are similar, 76.8 and 76.4 respectively, but their ATARs are quite different, 65.00 and 75.00 respectively.

James			
ATAR	Course	Scaled mean	HSC mark
65.00	Business Studies	47.6	77
	English (Standard)	40.0	79
	Food Technology	39.8	79
	Mathematics General 2	43.8	71
	Society and Culture	47.4	78
	Average	43.8	76.8

Amy			
ATAR	Course	Scaled mean	HSC mark
75.00	Biology	52.8	79
	Chemistry	63.0	76
	English (Advanced)	63.4	76
	Mathematics	62.6	77
	German Continuers	66.4	74
	Average	61.6	76.4

Amy has an ATAR that is almost the same as her average HSC course score (76.4) whereas James's ATAR is much lower than his average HSC course score (76.8). In fact, his average HSC score is higher than Amy's. However, the average of the scaled means of the courses taken by James is 43.8, whereas the average scaled mean for the courses taken by Amy is 61.6. This means that Amy has been competing against higher-achieving students than James.

*\*With the exception of the Fred and Laura example, which is based on 2017 HSC data, the examples in this section are taken from the Report on the Scaling of the 2016 NSW Higher School Certificate, which can be downloaded from UAC's website.*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is the median ATAR?

The median ATAR is usually around 70.00. To achieve a higher ATAR, you'll need to get HSC marks of around 80 in all your courses.

### Why is my ATAR low compared with my HSC marks?

It's a mistake to compare your HSC marks and your ATAR, as they're different measures of achievement – performance and position.

There is no general rule for the relationship between these two measures. However, if you are in the middle group of students in all your courses (with marks typically in the mid-70s), you may get an ATAR of around 70.00, which is usually close to the middle ATAR. But sometimes marks in the 70s can mean a much lower ATAR depending on your courses and your position in those courses.

### If I am ranked third in my class but get the highest exam mark, will that exam mark be given to the student ranked first?

No. You will keep your own examination mark and your own assessment rank. When your school's assessment marks are moderated, you may be given a different assessment mark depending on the exam results of the other students in your course, but you'll keep your rank. Your exam mark will depend on how well you perform in the exam and is not affected by your assessment rank.

### Why do some courses scale better than others?

Courses are scaled using the mean scores and distribution of marks, which indicate the ability of the course candidature (ie all students studying that course). Courses such as HSC Mathematics Extension 2 and Physics traditionally scale well because of this. However, you need to achieve high HSC marks to gain any benefit from scaling.

### Can my ATAR be recalculated?

Generally speaking no, but there are some instances in which your ATAR will be recalculated:

- if NESA provides amended HSC results
- if you complete additional courses in subsequent years
- if you repeat courses in subsequent years.

If your ATAR is recalculated you will receive a new ATAR notification.





## FINDING OUT ABOUT TERTIARY STUDY

There are many different institutions of varying size and location to choose from when you are considering tertiary study. UAC's participating institutions offer more than 2,000 undergraduate courses. It's important to research and explore all your options in order to make an informed choice.





## COURSES AND CAREERS

Trying to decide what to study can be difficult. A good place to start is to consider your interests, the subjects you enjoy at school and the classes you do well in. Find out what jobs would use these subjects as a key part of what they do: talk to teachers, ask careers advisers and visit careers expo. The UAC publication *Steps to Uni for Year 11 and 12 Students* is a useful guide to preparing for tertiary study. This and other publications can be downloaded from our website.

Every year UAC publishes a list of courses available through its participating institutions for the following year. This information is published in the UAC Guide, in the undergraduate course search on UAC's website and in My UAC, UAC's mobile app. The course search is updated in August when applications open.

The UAC Guide is delivered to schools and distributed free of charge to all Year 12 students in July. Copies can also be bought from UAC.

## COURSE SELECTION CRITERIA

### Your selection rank

Your selection rank for a course determines whether you are eligible for selection to that course. As a Year 12 student, your selection rank is usually your ATAR. However, if you're eligible for adjustments (eg EAS consideration or recognition of your achievement in a course related to your preferred degree), these will be combined with your ATAR and your selection rank will be higher than your ATAR.

Adjustment factors used to be called 'bonus points.'

The selection rank required for entry into a course is determined when offers are made. It reflects the supply and demand for that course; that is, the number of places in the course, the number of applicants for the course and the quality of those applicants. It is not an indicator of the quality of the course.

The lowest ATAR and selection rank of applicants who were made an offer to each course in semester 1, 2018 will be listed in UAC's course search and in the UAC Guide. They are intended to be used as a guide only.

If you feel daunted by the lowest selection ranks listed for the courses you're interested in, look out for pathway courses that cover similar areas of study. Examples of pathway courses include foundation studies, preparatory courses and certificates, diploma and associate degree courses. If you successfully complete a pathway course an institution may guarantee you entry into a particular degree course. Otherwise, you can use your pathway course studies to apply and compete for admission to other degree courses.

### Additional selection criteria

Some courses have additional selection criteria. Additional selection criteria are requirements in addition to or instead of the ATAR. They may include interviews, auditions, portfolios, supporting statements, questionnaires and tests. To find out if a course has additional selection criteria, read the course description on UAC's website or the My UAC app or check the UAC Guide.

## INSTITUTIONS

Most of UAC's participating institutions hold open days in August and September. Some offer personalised campus tours throughout the year for prospective students and their families.

UAC recommends you take advantage of this opportunity to get a feel for the campuses and the courses that are offered.

There are lots of ways to reach your goal, so think about plans B and C.

## TUITION COSTS AND FINANCIAL HELP

Most tertiary courses for Year 12 students have Commonwealth-supported places (CSPs). This means the government pays part of the course fee and the rest is paid by the student. This is called the student contribution and the amount depends on the type of course and the institution. For further information, contact the institution.

If you're an Australian citizen you can elect to take up the HECS-HELP option to pay your student contribution. This defers the payment until you are working and a percentage of your wage is taken out to pay off the HECS debt through the taxation system. You will need an Australian tax file number to do this. If you're not an Australian citizen you must pay your student contribution up-front.

If your course does not offer Commonwealth-supported places, you will need to pay the full cost of the course. However, you may be eligible for a



FEE-HELP loan from the Australian Government, which allows you to repay your debt through the taxation system, in a similar way to HECS-HELP.

You might be eligible for additional financial assistance from the Australian Government. Find out more on the government's Study Assist website: [studyassist.gov.au](http://studyassist.gov.au).

Institutions also offer a limited number of Equity Scholarships and merit scholarships to help students with the costs of tertiary study. Find out more on the UAC and institution websites.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What are my options for paying for my tertiary education?

If you're an Australian citizen (or hold an Australian permanent humanitarian visa), you can pay your fees in three different ways:

- pay all of the fees up-front
- receive a HELP loan for all of the fees
- pay some of the fees up-front and receive a HELP loan for the balance.

If you receive a HELP loan, you will repay it through the taxation system once your income reaches a threshold set by the Commonwealth Government.

### How can I find out about what a uni is like and what it can offer me as a student?

Open days are a great way to experience what a uni or college has to offer: there'll be information sessions, campus tours, workshops and the opportunity to talk to students and academic staff. There is a list of open day dates on UAC's website.

You can also talk to staff and students at careers markets and expos. Your careers adviser will have details of these events, and the UAC website has a list of the events that our community liaison team will be attending.

Finally, browse the institution websites and get in touch with them directly. They have lots of useful information to share with you and can answer all your questions.

There are more than 1.4 million uni students across Australia. Over 550,000 are in their first year.



## APPLYING THROUGH UAC

Every year, more than 50,000 Year 12 students apply for uni through UAC. Applying through UAC gives you access to multiple universities and private colleges and a vast range of courses. With just one application you can apply to five institutions at any one time, then keep track of your application and manage your offers all in the same place.



## PREPARING TO APPLY

To apply to courses at UAC's participating institutions, you'll need:

- access to the internet to complete the online application
- your Year 12 student number from the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) or ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies
- your UAC PIN (sent to you in August)
- a private email address (not a shared address)
- a method for paying the processing charge (a credit card or PayPal account if you are paying online).

### PINs and student numbers

To apply through UAC as a Year 12 student, you'll need your Year 12 student number and your UAC PIN.

#### UAC PIN

NSW HSC students receive two PINs that are used for two different purposes.

You will receive your **HSC six-digit PIN** from NESA early in Year 12. This gives you access to NSW Students Online. It is **not used** when applying through UAC.

The **UAC four-digit PIN** is emailed to you in early August. The UAC PIN allows you to apply online through UAC's website and then manage your application. It also gives you access to your ATAR.

It is important to keep your PINs in a safe place.

Keep your UAC PIN private – it can be used to view your ATAR and change your application.

### Lost or forgotten PIN

If you've already applied through UAC, you can go to the application login page, click the 'Forgotten your PIN?' link under 'Manage your application', then follow the prompts to reset your PIN.

If you haven't applied, you can call UAC Customer Service on 1300 ASK UAC (1300 275 822), from mobiles on (02) 9752 0200 or from overseas on +61 2 9752 0200 (Monday to Friday 8.30am–4.30pm, Sydney time). Due to privacy legislation, UAC can only release this information to you.

### Year 12 student number

If you are a current Year 12 student, when you apply you will use your NESA HSC student number (or ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies student number) and UAC PIN to start your application.

### UAC application number

Once you start your application and complete and submit your personal details, your UAC application number will be generated.

It is important to keep your UAC application number and UAC PIN safe and handy, as you'll need them to change your preferences and check your offers online or on the mobile app.



### Additional selection criteria

Year 12 students are selected on the basis of their selection rank (ATAR + adjustment factors) for most courses. However, some courses have additional selection criteria. These can include interviews, auditions, portfolios, supporting statements, questionnaires and tests.

Check if any of your courses have additional selection criteria or particular course requirements. These can be found in the course descriptions on UAC's website and the My UAC app or in the UAC Guide.

For further information, contact the institution directly.

### UMAT

If you wish to study medicine (or some health science degree programs), you'll need to sit the Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admission Test (UMAT) during Year 12. It is only held once a year in July. The test is used specifically to assist with the selection of students into health science degree programs at undergraduate level at certain universities. If you choose course preferences that require you to sit UMAT, you'll be asked to include your UMAT candidate number on your UAC application. Your UMAT results will be sent directly to the institutions, which match them to your application for admission to the relevant courses. (In 2019, UMAT will be replaced by the University Clinical Aptitude Test. For information, visit [ucatofficial.com](http://ucatofficial.com).)

### Special requirements

If you're applying for entry into health/welfare-related and teacher education courses, be aware that there are special requirements relating to:

- criminal record/working with children checks—clinical placements
- procedures for employment after completing the course.

Further details are in the UAC Guide and on UAC's website, but these requirements and policies are subject to regular review, so check with institutions before you apply for these types of courses.

**Interviews, statements, auditions and portfolios** All interviews and auditions are organised directly between you and the institution. You'll need to make these arrangements in addition to listing the course in your UAC preferences.



If a portfolio or personal statement is required, it will be listed in that course's entry in the UAC Guide or in the course description on UAC's website and My UAC. It will also be flagged in your application. Follow the institution's instructions for how to submit the portfolio or personal statement.

Each institution has its own policy for determining how additional selection criteria are assessed. Some institutions may allocate a weighting for each component. For example, the ATAR might be worth 50 per cent, a portfolio 25 per cent and an interview 25 per cent. At other institutions, a minimum ATAR may be used to filter applicants, and those above the minimum ATAR assessed and ranked on the additional criteria. Or the portfolio or audition may take precedence over other criteria, including the ATAR.

For further information, contact the institution.

### Gap years

If you're intending to take a gap year, UAC recommends that you apply now and defer. Current Year 12s are eligible for early entry schemes and selection rank adjustments (eg recognition of achievement in an HSC course or attendance at a regional school). Any adjustments will improve your selection rank. In addition, depending on the institution, Educational Access Schemes, Schools Recommendation Schemes and Equity Scholarships may only be available to current school leavers.

If you wait a year you will be applying as a non-Year 12 applicant and competing against other non-Year 12 applicants who may have a range of

qualifications and experiences. You may also no longer have access to certain adjustments that will increase your selection rank.

## APPLYING ONLINE

You will apply to UAC's participating institutions through UAC's website. Applying through UAC means you don't need to apply separately to each institution. You can apply for up to five courses at any of our participating institutions. It also means you can apply for early offer schemes processed through UAC (Schools Recommendation Schemes) and Educational Access Schemes.

Through these schemes, the institutions are able to consider factors in addition to your ATAR, such as your Year 11 results and any educational disadvantages you have experienced. Read more about them on pages 35–37.

UAC processes the applications but the institutions decide who receives an offer of a place.

## Applying directly to the uni

Some of our participating institutions also take direct applications, which you can have in addition to your UAC application. If you complete both a UAC application and a direct application, make sure you don't duplicate your course preferences. If you do, you will be automatically assessed as 'not eligible' for an offer to that course in your UAC application. This ensures you don't receive two offers to the same course. So make the most of both applications and choose different preferences in each.

If you receive an offer through your direct application, you can still receive an offer through your UAC application: one does not affect the other. Check with the uni as to how and when it will make its direct offers. You can read about UAC offers on page 38.

## Timing

Applications for admission to study open in early August.

By applying before the end of September, you'll avoid the significant increase to processing charges between the end of

September and late February the following year, which is the final closing date for semester 1 courses. Also, some courses have early closing dates – carefully check the requirements for each of your chosen courses. If you are also applying for Schools Recommendation Schemes, you'll need to complete both applications by the end of September.

Once you have your ATAR you can change your preferences quickly and easily. Preferences can be changed as many times as you wish at no extra cost.

## Logging in

To apply, you'll need your HSC student number (or ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies student number) and the four-digit UAC PIN emailed to you in early August. After applying, you can change your course preferences online by logging in to your application on UAC's website or via the My UAC app.

## Paying

You can pay the processing charge online by credit or debit card (Mastercard and Visa) or PayPal, or you can print an invoice and pay by BPAY or Australia Post Billpay (Year 12 applicants only). Payments to UAC are not refundable under any circumstances except as required by law. If you choose to pay the processing charge at a later date your application will not be processed until full payment is received by UAC.

Check UAC's website for dates and processing charges.

## Listing qualifications

Your Year 12 qualification will be added to your application automatically when ATARs are released in mid-December. Most Year 12 students will have no further qualifications to add.

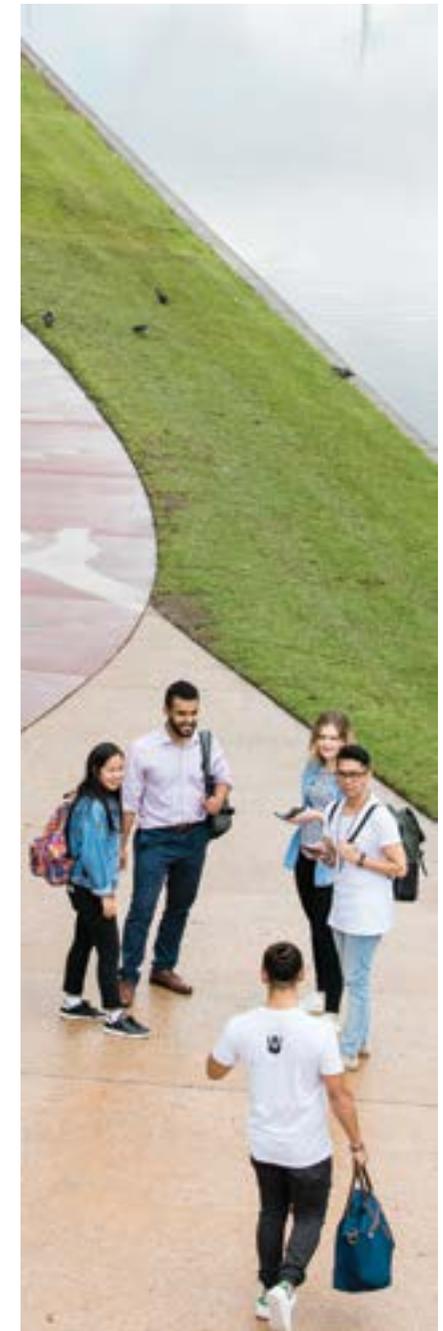
The work experience question in the application is a standard question that isn't relevant to Year 12 students. The question is there for non-Year 12 applicants with other qualifications, such as work experience equivalent to 12 months or more of full-time employment. It is not necessary for current Year 12 students to list or supply employment experience as entry to tertiary study is based on their selection rank (ATAR + adjustment factors) and other selection criteria, where applicable.

## Listing preferences

As an undergraduate applicant you can list up to five different courses at five different institutions. However, you can also apply with just one preference, particularly if you are still undecided about what you want to do. Once you have your ATAR and know if you are eligible for any adjustments to your selection rank, you can change your preferences at no extra cost. Some courses have early closing dates and need to be listed in your preferences by the closing date at the end of September. Check UAC's website or the My UAC app for dates.

UAC recommends you list your 'dream preference' at number one, but follow that with realistic preferences. At the bottom of the preference list you should include one or two 'safe' options to ensure that you get an offer. This is because, during the selection process, course preferences are considered one at a time in the order in which they're listed on the application.

To maximise your chance of receiving an offer, include courses with a range of required selection ranks. The selection ranks published in the UAC Guide and in UAC's course search are the lowest selection ranks of applicants who were made an offer to a semester 1 course in the previous year. Use them as a guide only when selecting preferences. The lowest selection ranks cannot be known in advance because they reflect supply and demand; that is, the number of places in a course, the number of applicants for that course and the quality of those applicants. Read more about selection ranks under 'Course selection criteria' on page 22.





If you're concerned that you won't meet the lowest selection rank for a degree course, don't forget that many institutions offer lower-level courses, such as certificates and diplomas, which can act as a pathway into your desired degree. Consider including one or more of these as a preference. Also, tick the box that asks if you would like to receive information on other study options if you do not receive an offer to any of your selected courses.

Most importantly, take responsibility for your application by reading all correspondence (mainly via email) from UAC and following instructions.

There's only one place to put the course you most want to get into - # 1 in your preferences!

### Applying for early offer or elite athlete and performer schemes

Early offer schemes, including those processed through Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS), are typically made in the early rounds. If you apply for early offer schemes you'll receive notification about when offers are made. In all offer rounds, your preferences are considered in the order you list them, so make sure you have the course you most want to do as your first preference. Check UAC's website for change of preference closing dates.

Entry schemes for elite athletes and performers require you to apply through both UAC and the institution. Check with the institutions about application deadlines and the supporting documents you need to provide.

### Supplying documents

Year 12 students usually do not have to supply any documents with their UAC application. If you do need to provide supporting documents, you will be prompted to do so in your application. The required documents will also be listed in your Confirmation of Application, which you can download when you complete your application.

If you also apply for Educational Access Schemes, you'll need to provide various supporting documents, so start preparing and collecting these as soon as you can and avoid a last-minute rush. (Read more under 'Asking institutions to consider your educational disadvantages' on page 35.)



If you apply through the Schools Recommendation Schemes, you may also need to provide supporting documentation; it depends on where you completed your Year 11 studies. (Read more under 'Early offers through Schools Recommendation Schemes' on page 37.)

After you apply, it's free to change your course preferences. In 2017, one applicant changed their preferences 90 times!

## SELECTION RANK ADJUSTMENT FACTORS

Institutions may use adjustment factors (which we used to call 'bonus points') to change your selection rank for a particular course at a particular institution. So, if you have five course preferences in your application, you could potentially have five selection ranks. Adjustment factors only affect your selection rank; they will not change your ATAR.

Each institution sets its own criteria for applying adjustments. Some institutions require you to have a minimum ATAR before you are eligible for any adjustments.

The following example shows how adjustment factors affect your selection rank: Course A has six applicants and only three places available. The six applicants have the following selection ranks:

1	89.00 (ATAR of 89.00)
2	88.00 (ATAR of 87.00 plus adjustment of 1 point)
3	87.00 (ATAR of 83.00 plus adjustment of 4 points)
4	86.00 (ATAR of 86.00)
5	85.00 (ATAR of 83.00 plus adjustment of 2 points)
6	84.00 (ATAR of 84.00)

## AFTER APPLYING

### Adding your ATAR

UAC will add your HSC results and ATAR to your application when these results are released and your application will be processed in time for consideration of offers. Offers are released online and via the My UAC app on offer round dates. Most applicants will receive their offers in December and January.

### Changing preferences

You can add, delete and change the order of your preferences online as often as you like by logging in to your application on UAC's website or through the mobile app. There is no charge to do this but you will need your UAC application number and four-digit UAC PIN to log in. You won't be able to choose a course as a preference if the course closing date has passed.



Offers will be made to applicants 1, 2 and 3. Applicant 4 will not receive an offer even though that applicant has a higher ATAR than applicant 3. The lowest selection rank required to receive an offer to Course A will be 87.00.

### Types of adjustment factors

Some tertiary institutions will adjust your selection rank if you do well in a subject related to the course you have chosen. These adjustments used to be called 'subject bonus points'.

Some tertiary institutions will adjust your selection rank if you live in a designated region, others will adjust your selection rank if you attend school in a designated region, and some institutions will do both. These adjustments used to be called 'regional bonus points'.

Many institutions will also adjust your selection rank if you have experienced long-term educational disadvantage beyond your control, including attending a school that the government has identified as being disadvantaged. These adjustments used to be called 'Educational Access Schemes (EAS) bonus points'.

### Allocation

Most selection rank adjustments that are made in recognition of achievement in an HSC subject or living or attending school in a regional area are automatically applied as part of the application process. There is no need to apply for these. However, you do need to apply for Educational Access Schemes through UAC. Selection rank adjustments that are made in recognition of extracurricular activities, such as those awarded to elite athletes and performers, require a direct application to the institution.

Selection rank adjustments vary from institution to institution and from course to course within the same institution. All institutions limit the impact of these adjustments on your selection rank. Some cap the increase to your selection rank at 15 points, some at 10 and others at 5.

You will not receive official notification of adjustments to your selection rank.

For more information on adjustment factors, visit UAC's website and check with the individual institutions.

## ASKING INSTITUTIONS TO CONSIDER YOUR EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGES

Educational Access Schemes (EAS) are for UAC applicants who, due to circumstances beyond their control or choosing, have experienced long-term educational disadvantage that has seriously affected their educational performance during Years 11 and 12 (or equivalent).

Institutions consider these disadvantages when assessing your application, and may make you an offer to a course even if your ATAR is below the required selection rank.

### Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for EAS, you must have experienced an educational disadvantage for at least six months during Year 11 or 12. There are seven types of disadvantage considered in EAS applications:

- disrupted schooling
- financial hardship
- home environment and responsibilities
- English language difficulty
- personal illness/disability
- refugee status
- school environment.

For example, you can claim your schooling was disrupted because you attended three or more different schools in Years 10, 11 and 12, or because you moved interstate. If your parents divorced or separated while you were in Year 11 or 12, you can claim that your home environment was severely disrupted. For each disadvantage, you'll need to provide a written statement and supporting documentation. These are explained in the EAS booklet, which you can download from UAC's website.

EAS doesn't cover incidents like breaking your arm just before your exams. In this situation you could submit an illness/misadventure appeal form (available at the exam centre) to the NSW Education Standards Authority via your school principal.





### Applying

You can apply for EAS in August, after you've applied for tertiary study through UAC.

If you're at a disadvantaged school (as categorised by the NSW Government), you'll have an EAS application automatically generated on your behalf when you apply for admission through UAC. You'll be notified of this via an acknowledgement letter. However, if you've experienced one or more of the other types of disadvantage, you should also submit an individual EAS application.

Any student can submit an application and there is no bias toward any particular school or sector. Students from any school can experience disadvantage.

Many schools encourage students to hand in their EAS applications to the school, which then submits all applications from that school directly to UAC. However, it is up to you to make sure your application has been submitted.

If you decide to defer your offered course and then re-apply for another course the following year, you'll need to submit a new EAS application.

### Multiple disadvantages

You can apply for all the disadvantages that are applicable to your situation. You'll need to submit separate statements and supporting documents for each disadvantage.

### Assessment

EAS applications are assessed by UAC according to the guidelines agreed to by all institutions. You won't be notified of how much your EAS application will affect your selection rank, but you will receive a letter informing you whether or not each institution is taking your application into account.

## EARLY OFFERS THROUGH SCHOOLS RECOMMENDATION SCHEMES

Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS) are one way institutions make offers to current Year 12 students who have applied for admission through UAC.

They aim to help students gain access to higher education by using a wide range of selection criteria, including school recommendations and senior secondary studies.

### Eligibility

SRS are open to Year 12 applicants who are attempting an Australian Year 12 qualification or an International Baccalaureate in Australia and are:

- UAC applicants for undergraduate admission
- Australian or New Zealand citizens
- permanent residents of Australia or holders of an Australian permanent resident humanitarian visa.

International students can't apply for SRS.

In 2017, 11,000 Year 12 students applied for SRS and unis made 20,000 offers.

### Applying

You can apply for SRS online through UAC's website after you have completed your UAC application for tertiary study.

Your school will then provide a professional assessment of your ability in, or suitability for, different areas of study and rate your aptitude for tertiary study.

### Assessment and offers

After the school has completed its assessment and rating, your application will be processed by UAC and then considered by the SRS participating institutions. In most cases, offers are made to successful applicants before ATARs are released.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

If you need financial assistance while you're at uni, Equity Scholarships are available. Most institutions also offer a number of merit-based scholarships; check with the relevant institution for more information.





## Equity Scholarships

Institution Equity Scholarships help financially disadvantaged students with the costs associated with higher education.

### Eligibility

You may be eligible to apply for an Equity Scholarship under one or more criteria. These include exceptional financial hardship, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) status, regional or remote disadvantage, carer status, sole parent responsibilities, non-English speaking background, refugee status and long-term illness.

Be aware that meeting the scholarship eligibility criteria doesn't guarantee that you will be awarded a scholarship. There are a limited number of Equity Scholarships and there are more applicants than scholarships, so scholarships will be awarded to those in most need.

### Applying

To apply, submit an Equity Scholarships application through UAC's website.

By submitting just one application through UAC, you will be considered for all available Equity Scholarships for which you are eligible at our participating institutions.

### Offers

Institutions make their Equity Scholarships offers after assessing applications submitted as part of a competitive application process. The Equity Scholarships application gathers sufficient information from applicants to determine which applicants best meet the eligibility criteria. An institution can only award an Equity Scholarship to a student who has received an offer of admission to that institution.

### Merit-based scholarships

Merit-based scholarships are awarded to applicants on a range of criteria such as:

- school examination results
- academic excellence
- Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)
- course/faculty of study
- personal achievements such as:
  - leadership
  - creativity
  - self-motivation
  - communication skills
  - an outstanding ability in sport.

Applications for merit-based scholarships are made directly to individual institutions. To find out more, contact the relevant institution.

## Other types of financial assistance

The Commonwealth Government's Study Assist website has comprehensive information about various types of financial assistance for tertiary study, such as Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY and Austudy. Visit [studyassist.gov.au](http://studyassist.gov.au).

Scholarships range from one-off book bursaries of \$500 to \$25,000 per year for tuition and accommodation.

## COMMON MISTAKES

The most common mistakes UAC sees when students apply are:

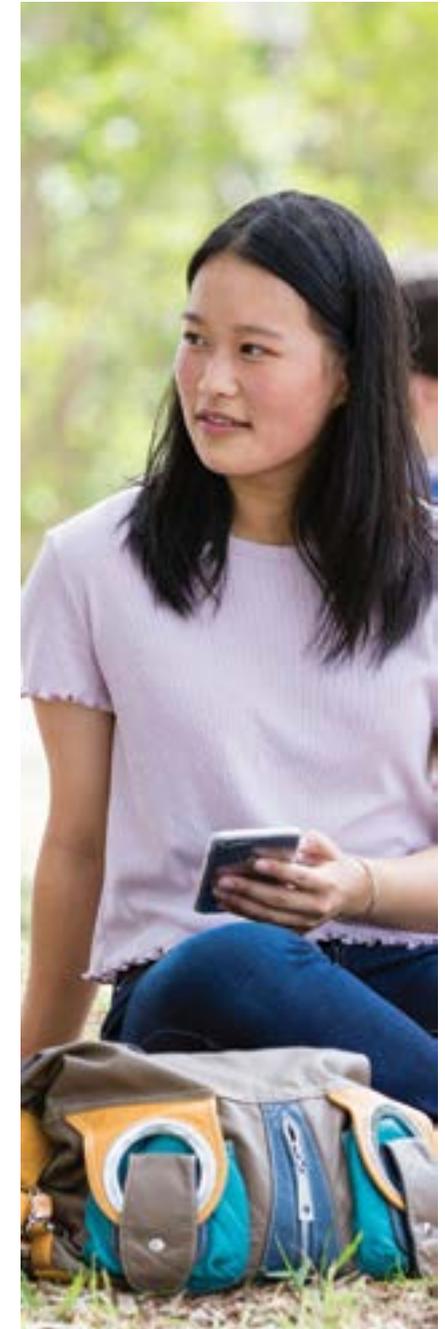
- not understanding the preference system:
  - not listing their most desired course as their first preference
  - listing unrealistic preferences
  - not changing preferences after they receive their ATAR to courses with required selection ranks more in line with their actual rank
  - changing preferences but not saving their changes
- not paying the processing charge
- not meeting UAC deadlines for applying, changing preferences or supplying supporting documentation.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Why do I apply before the end of September when I don't know my ATAR yet?

If you apply by the end of September (early-bird closing) you avoid the increase in processing charges after this date. Once you have your ATAR and know if any adjustments will be made to your selection rank, you can change your preferences quickly and easily as many times as you wish at no extra cost.

If you are also applying for Schools Recommendation Schemes you are required to have completed both applications by the end of September.



**How should I list my preferences?**

List your preferences in the order you wish them to be considered, with your most preferred course as your first preference, then the next most preferred course, and so on. This is because, during the selection process, course preferences are considered one at a time in the order in which they're listed in your application.

**Am I eligible for any adjustment factors? I participated in the Duke of Edinburgh's award and other extracurricular activities.**

Some tertiary institutions apply adjustment factors if you live in a designated region, others apply them if you attend school in a designated region, and some institutions do both. These adjustments are automatically applied to your selection rank – you don't need to apply separately. Some institutions adjust your selection rank if you do well in an HSC subject related to the course you have chosen or if you are eligible for an Educational Access Scheme (EAS).

Some universities will consider extracurricular activities such as participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and carrying out the duties of school captain, but, as these are not part of your HSC results, you must apply directly to the institution for consideration for these schemes. Special consideration for elite athletes and performers also requires a direct application to the institution.

For more information on adjustment factors, check with the relevant institution.

**I broke my arm just before my first HSC exam.****Can I apply for EAS?**

No. EAS does not cover all life situations and this would not be considered a long-term disadvantage. In this situation you could submit an illness/ misadventure appeal form (available at the exam centre) to the NSW Education Standards Authority via your school principal.



## OFFERS

Most offers to Year 12 applicants will be made after ATARs are released in December, but there are many offer rounds throughout the year. Understanding how to manage your offers will help you make the most of your application and access the course of your dreams.



### RECEIVING YOUR OFFER

To retrieve your offers, log in to UAC's website or the My UAC app using your UAC application number and UAC PIN. Keep an eye out for an email from UAC prompting you to do this.

Most offers to Year 12 applicants are made in the December and January rounds (after ATARs are released), but subsequent offers for semester 1 are made up until February. The offer rounds before December are for specific purposes, such as School Recommendation Schemes, and not all universities participate. Semester 2 offers are made periodically throughout the year. Check UAC's website for offer round dates.

In each offer round, you can receive only one offer to the highest preference for which you are eligible and competitive enough. Offers for undergraduate places at university are made by UAC on behalf of the institutions. UAC does not decide who receives an offer and cannot influence institutions' decisions.

If you don't receive an offer to one of your preferred courses, you may receive a 'slipback' offer; that is, an offer to a lower-level course in a similar area of study (read 'Other paths to study' on page 45).

### ACCEPTING YOUR OFFER

Each institution has different procedures and dates for accepting offers. Some institutions have online acceptance and enrolment; other institutions require attendance at an enrolment day. It's your responsibility to read your offer and follow the procedure required by the due date.

If you will be overseas when offers are made, contact the institution directly for advice. If you have nominated an agent in your UAC application, this doesn't transfer to the acceptance of an offer on your behalf.

### DIFFERENT OFFER ROUNDS

There are several offer rounds throughout the year. Early round offers are made by some institutions to a limited number of applicants. These include early offer scheme applicants, applicants for distance education courses, some non-Year 12 applicants, and those selected predominantly on criteria other than an Australian Year 12, such as interview, audition, portfolio or special admissions program.

If you're a Year 12 student, don't worry if you don't receive an early round offer. Institutions make the majority of their offers during the December and January rounds. After this, you can change your preferences for consideration in later rounds. Keep in mind that not all institutions make offers in these later rounds, and not all courses will have vacancies.



## CHANGING COURSE PREFERENCES

Once you have accepted your offer you can delete that course from your list of preferences and place your new first preference at the top of the list. By doing this you will be eligible to receive an offer in a later round if places in that course are still available and you meet the required selection rank for that round. If you do receive another offer you can accept that offer and withdraw from the course originally offered.

For example, let's say you have the following five courses listed as preferences and you receive an offer to your second preference:

Preferences	
1	B Life Science
2	B Animal Science
3	B Science (Physics)
4	B Human Sciences
5	B Natural Science (Animal Science)

First of all, you should accept your offer to B Animal Science. Then, if you want to be considered for courses other than the course you have as your first preference (B Life Science), you can change your preferences in any way you like: just make sure you have a realistic chance of meeting the cut-off and that you can satisfy any additional course requirements.

You might have second thoughts about what you really want to study and change your preferences to the following:

Preferences	
1	B Science (Physics)
2	B Science (Flexible)
3	B Biotechnology
4	B Human Sciences
5	B Teaching/B Science

Note that B Animal Science has been removed from the list. As long as you have accepted your offer to this course you won't lose your place. If you now receive an offer to a course in your new list, you can decide whether to accept it and withdraw from B Animal Science, or not accept the new offer and keep your place in B Animal Science.

If you reject an early round offer or let it lapse, and then change your mind, you'll need to speak with the institution's admissions office as only the institution can reinstate the offer. Also, if you leave the offered, but rejected, course as your first preference, no further offers can be made because the rejected offer will 'block' any new offers to lower preferences.

## DEFERRING

When you receive an offer you will also receive information about how to apply for deferral. Most institutions will ask for a statement to explain why you want to defer. There may also be a fee.

In general it is best to accept and defer only one course so that other applicants may be considered. When the deferred course is re-offered to you, we recommend you accept it, as further offers are not guaranteed.

### Deferral periods

Most institutions offer one-year deferrals. A six-month deferral is not always possible because there may not be mid-year intakes for some courses.

Each institution has its own policies on deferring. For information, contact the admissions office at the institution making the offer.

### Applying for a different course

If you would like to be considered for other courses instead of your deferred position, you will need to submit a new UAC application.

## TRANSFERRING

Course transfers are possible but very competitive and you will usually need to achieve excellent results in your first year in order to transfer.

If the course is at the same university, there may be an internal transfer system. For a course at another institution, you will need to apply through UAC and compete against all other applicants for entry. There is no straight transfer system as students are still competing for a place and must meet the new institution's entry requirements.

## OTHER PATHS TO STUDY

Most institutions offer options if you don't meet the entry requirements for their degree courses or need further support and preparation before studying at degree level.

### Non-degree courses

Institutions often offer non-degree courses, such as Certificate or Diploma courses. If you successfully complete one of these courses, an institution may guarantee you entry into particular degree courses. Otherwise, you can use your new qualification to apply and compete for admission to degree courses. Applications for some of these courses, known as tertiary preparation courses, can be made through UAC, or you may receive a 'slipback' offer to one of these courses; others require you to contact the institution directly.

### TAFE qualification

Another option is to obtain a TAFE Diploma and use that qualification in an application for admission to degree courses. Some institutions might even consider a Certificate III or IV qualification. Speak to the uni or college about their admission requirements, as each institution is different.

## Entry schemes

Some institutions also have specific entry schemes or programs for applicants who don't meet the usual minimum admission requirements of the institution, but meet special requirements determined by the institution. For further details, contact the relevant institution.

## Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT)

Many institutions will accept STAT results from non-Year 12 applicants. STAT is a series of tests designed to assess a range of competencies considered important for success in tertiary study. It assesses a student's ability to think critically and analyse the material given, rather than testing knowledge of specific academic subjects.

For information, visit [stat.acer.edu.au](http://stat.acer.edu.au).

## COMMON MISTAKES

The most common mistakes UAC sees from students after they receive an offer are:

- not removing or moving down the list a preference they have already received an offer to, thereby blocking offers to lower preferences in later rounds
- declining an offer in the December or January rounds in the hope of getting a 'better' offer in a later round
- letting an offer lapse without accepting it
- forgetting to enrol at the institution.

Accept any offer you receive: there's no guarantee you'll get another one. If you do receive a second offer, you can decide which one is best for you.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How many offers can I get?

You can get as many offers as you are eligible for, and then it's up to you to choose which one to enrol in. Most offers to Year 12 applicants are made in the December and January rounds but a small number of applicants may be eligible for an offer before or after these rounds. In each offer round you can receive only one offer to the highest preference for which you are eligible and competitive enough. Once you receive an offer you can accept it and change your preferences for the next round.

### I'll be overseas when the offers are made. Can someone else accept my offer for me?

No. Contact the institution directly for advice; many require you to accept online. Even if you have nominated an agent in your UAC application, this gives them authority to manage your application, but it does not give them authority to accept an offer.

### If I don't think I'll get into a uni course on the basis of my ATAR, do I have any other options?

Yes. Most institutions offer non-degree courses, such as Certificate or Diploma courses. If you successfully complete one of these courses, the institution may guarantee you entry into particular degree courses. Otherwise, you can use your new qualification to apply and compete for admission to degree courses.



## UAC JARGON

Definitions of the common terms used by UAC, universities and colleges.



### ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies

The statutory authority responsible for the certification of senior secondary school studies in government and non-government schools in the ACT.

### Additional selection criteria

Criteria used by some institutions as well as, or instead of, your selection rank to assess specific skills relevant to a particular course. They can include tests, interviews, auditions and portfolios.

### Adjustment factors

Factors that institutions take into account to adjust your selection rank for a particular course preference. Examples are achievement in an HSC course related to your preferred degree or your eligibility for Educational Access Schemes. These adjustments used to be called 'bonus points'. Adjustment factors increase your selection rank; they do not change your ATAR.

### Admission requirements

The minimum qualifications required for you to be considered for entry to a particular course. Entry to many courses is competitive and the attainment of minimum qualifications does not guarantee you will be offered a place.

### Assumed knowledge

Some institutions assume you have knowledge of specified NSW HSC courses or equivalent before beginning your course. If you do not have the assumed level of knowledge but have met the admission requirements you may still be selected for the course, but you may have some difficulty coping with your studies. Bridging courses may be recommended for some students who do not have the assumed level of knowledge.

### ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank)

A measure of academic achievement in the HSC that helps institutions rank applicants for selection to tertiary courses. The ATAR is a rank, not a mark.

### ATAR courses

Board Developed courses for which the NSW Education Standards Authority conducts examinations that yield graded assessments. Classified as Category A courses or Category B courses (see below), these are the only courses that can be included in the ATAR calculations.

### Bonus points (see Adjustment factors)

### Category A courses

ATAR courses that have the academic rigour and depth of knowledge to provide an adequate background for tertiary studies.

### Category B courses

ATAR courses that do not provide an adequate background for tertiary studies, but can contribute to the ATAR when combined with Category A courses. No more than 2 units of Category B courses can be included in the ATAR calculation.



### Cohort

A student's peer group. For example, your ATAR cohort refers to those students who receive an ATAR in the same academic year as you. Your Year 7 cohort comprises those students who began Year 7 with you, regardless of when they left the school system.

### Cut-offs (see Lowest ATARs/selection ranks)

#### Deferment

The situation when a student has received an offer to enrol in a tertiary course but has been given permission by the institution to delay the start of the course for a fixed period, usually one year.

### Educational Access Schemes (EAS)

Schemes for university applicants who have experienced long-term educational disadvantage due to circumstances beyond their control or choosing.

### Equity Scholarships (ES)

Money to help financially disadvantaged students with the costs associated with higher education.

### Extension courses

HSC courses that enable you to undertake more in-depth study in areas of special interest. These courses build on the content of the 2-unit course.

### HSC mark

A 50:50 combination of a student's examination mark and school-based assessment mark for each course. It is recorded on the student's HSC Record of Achievement, which is issued to them by the NSW Education Standards Authority.

### HSC subjects and courses

An HSC subject is a general area of study or a key learning area. An HSC course is a branch of study within a subject. A subject may have several courses. For example, within the subject of English, courses include English (Standard), English (Advanced), HSC English Extension 1, HSC English Extension 2 and English as a Second Language (ESL).

### Institution

A provider of tertiary study, such as a university or a college. Participating institutions are those for which you can apply through UAC.

### International Baccalaureate (IB)

A Diploma qualification offered by some schools and recognised internationally. IB students don't receive an ATAR; they receive a UAC rank based on their total score if they've been awarded the IB Diploma or Bilingual Diploma.

### Lowest ATARs/selection ranks

The ATARs or selection ranks that applicants need to achieve to be offered a place in a course. The lowest ATARs and selection ranks for courses in a particular year are only known after all offers for that year are made.

The lowest ATAR does not take into account whether or not the applicant with that ATAR was offered a place as a result of adjustment factors being taken into consideration.

The lowest selection rank does take into account the impact of adjustment factors, such as equity considerations or achievement in Year 12 subjects.

### Moderation

The process of adjusting school assessment marks to a common scale so that direct comparisons can be made between assessment marks awarded by different schools. The rank order of students within a school group, and the relative gaps between them, are maintained.

### NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)

NSW Government authority that sets the core curriculum for Kindergarten to Year 12, sets guidelines for school assessment tasks, and sets, organises and marks the HSC examinations. Until the end of 2015, it was known as the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES).

### Pathway courses

Non-degree courses – such as foundation studies, preparatory courses and certificates, diplomas or associate degrees – offered by institutions to applicants who don't meet the entry requirements for their degree course or need further support and preparation before studying at degree level.





### Percentile

An indicator of your position in a course relative to other students. For example, if your percentile in a course is 73, you are placed in the top 27 per cent of the students in that course.

### Performance band

A band representing a level of achievement in a course. There are six performance bands for 2-unit courses and four for extension courses. For 2-unit courses, Band 6 is the highest and Band 1 is the lowest.

### Prerequisite

A specified NSW HSC course or equivalent that you need to have completed, or achieved a specified standard in, before you are eligible to be offered a place in the tertiary course (course prerequisites) or a subject within that course (subject prerequisites).

### Raw HSC mark

The average of your raw examination mark and your raw moderated school assessment mark, before it is aligned to performance bands by the NSW Education Standards Authority or scaled by UAC. This mark is not reported to you.

### Recommended studies

NSW HSC or equivalent courses that institutions suggest will help you in your chosen university course. However, if you haven't studied these courses your chances of selection are not affected.

### Scaled mark

The mark used in the ATAR calculation. It is used because unscaled marks in different courses are not directly comparable, and an adjustment must be made before an overall measure of achievement can be determined. Scaling allows the comparison of students who have studied different courses by determining what the marks would have been if all students had attempted all courses.

### Scaled mean

An indicator of the average academic achievement of the course candidature. It is used in the ATAR calculation.

### Schools Recommendation Schemes (SRS)

Schemes that enable schools to recommend current Year 12 students who have applied for undergraduate admission through UAC using a range of selection criteria, such as aptitude for tertiary study and Year 11 results.

### Slipback offer

An offer to a lower level of study than you have applied for. For example, you apply for a bachelor degree and the institution decides that, while you are not eligible and competitive enough for entry, you are eligible for a lower level of study (such as a diploma). The institution makes you an offer to the lower level course.

### Universities Admissions Centre (UAC)

The central office that receives and processes applications for admission to most undergraduate courses at its participating institutions as well as applications for Educational Access Schemes, Schools Recommendation Schemes and Equity Scholarships. UAC notifies NSW HSC students of their ATAR (ACT students are notified by their school) and makes offers of admission on behalf of participating institutions. It also processes applications for many postgraduate courses.

Owned by universities in NSW and the ACT, UAC is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to provide excellence in admissions services and promote equity of access to tertiary education.





## THE ATAR AND APPLYING FOR UNI

Published February 2018

Printer: Blue Star Web, Silverwater, NSW

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(NSW & ACT) Pty Ltd  
ACN 070 055 935 ABN 19 070 055 935

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## IMAGES

Kat Stanley Photography

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The type of personal information UAC holds includes your contact details (name, address, telephone number, email address), date of birth, gender, citizenship, educational achievements, professional qualifications, employment experience, examination results, information related to your health or the health of a family member and your Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

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If you are a NSW Higher School Certificate student, your Year 12 results will be held, along with Year 12 results from other states and territories in Australia, in an archive database at UAC. If you are eligible for an ATAR or a Limited ATAR, these will also be held in the database. Your results, including your ATAR if you are eligible, will be held in similar archives at tertiary admissions centres in other states in Australia. Results held in these archives will only be accessed by the relevant tertiary admission centre if you initiate an application for tertiary study through that centre, or if you submit an application for tertiary study directly with an institution participating in that centre.

Any questions regarding privacy at UAC should be forwarded in writing to:

The Managing Director, UAC, Locked Bag 112, Silverwater NSW 2128.

- 1 *In the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)*,
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ISO 14001  
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for the body of  
the publication.



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