



Response to HESP Request for Submission
Consultation on the Transparency of Higher Education
Admission Processes

Response submitted by:

SATAC

<http://www.satac.edu.au>

27 May 2016

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Executive Summary..... | 2 |
| 2. Context..... | 3 |
| 3. Current Situation..... | 4 |
| 4. Proposed Action | 7 |
| 4.1. Response to Question 2 | 7 |
| 4.2. Response to Question 3 | 8 |
| 4.3. Response to Question 5 | 9 |
| 4.4. Response to Question 6 | 9 |
| 4.5. Response to Question 7..... | 11 |
| 4.6. Response to Question 11..... | 13 |
| 5. Appendix..... | 14 |
| Appendix 5.1: Questions for consideration from the Higher Education Standards Panel – Consultation on Higher Education Admissions Processes | 14 |
| Appendix 5.2: SATAC School Counsellor information sessions 2015..... | 15 |
| Appendix 5.3: Comparison of Admission Centres..... | 16 |
| Appendix 5.4: SATAC Web Tertiary Entrance Booklet 2015 extract..... | 17 |
| Appendix 5.5: SATAC Web sample of institution cut-off and guaranteed entry scores..... | 19 |
| Appendix 5.6: SATAC Recognised Studies register (as at 11 August 2015)..... | 20 |

1. Executive Summary

This submission provides a discussion of current application and assessment processes in SATAC and recommendations for improvements to enable clear and concise information to be given to potential higher education applicants. This submission to the Higher Education Standards Panel has been prepared by SATAC, the South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre, from the perspective of a stand-alone organisation. SATAC's member institutions are submitting individual university responses reflecting their specific views.

The submission makes a primary recommendation that the use of a Guaranteed Entry Rank be more widely used by higher education providers to provide applicants with a guaranteed lower limit ATAR that would need to be achieved for entry. In contrast to an ATAR cut-off this is an indicator of future cut-offs rather than past cut-offs which may be misleading.

Other recommendations include:

1. Continued support by SATAC for a national approach driven and supported by the Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC). This will enable standardised definitions, reporting of ATARs and contribute to a national review of the ITI/ATAR calculation;
2. Continued publication by SATAC in print, online and in annual conference sessions to school counsellors, of course outlines and entry requirements which provides concise, accurate and timely course and application information for applicants and schools;
3. Support for a restriction on the use of websites claiming to be able to calculate an ATAR from raw year 12 subject scores.

SATAC welcomes the opportunity to work with and support other Tertiary Admissions Centres, our stakeholders and applicants to provide a seamless application and admissions service to future students.

2. Context

SATAC would like to respond to the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) *Consultation on the Transparency of Higher Education Admission Processes* (April 2016). We aim to respond directly to HESP questions (see Appendix 5.1) as an independent Tertiary Admission Centre (TAC).

SATAC was established in 1977 under an Indenture Agreement of the participating South Australian tertiary institutions. In 1995 TAFE SA joined the University of Adelaide, the University of South Australia, and Flinders University as a full member of the SATAC Indenture Agreement. Prior to 2016 SATAC was jointly owned and funded by its members. Fee-for-service stakeholders included Charles Darwin University with Tabor College and CQU University joining as fee-for-service in 2016. SATAC is in the process of becoming incorporated in 2016 and is in the process of appointing an independent Board.

SATAC's primary role is to:

- process applications for courses offered by the institutions
- assess the academic qualifications and other information presented by applicants according to the rules and guidelines provided by the institutions
- generate offers on the instructions of the institutions
- respond to enquiries about the application process and outcomes

SATAC also:

- administers the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT)
- calculates the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) and TAFE SA Selection Score for SACE students and issues the Tertiary Entrance Statement
- processes applications for some institutions' equity scholarships

The institutions:

- make decisions on how qualifications are assessed and the rules for entry to their courses
- decide which applicants receive offers and how many offers are made

3. Current Situation

1. The SATAC Business Rules were collectively conceived and agreed to by the institutions and presented to SATAC as a charter by which the organisation is required to operate. Implicit to these Rules are key principles of providing a service to the applicants which is transparent, impartial, fair and equitable.
2. SATAC, on behalf of its collective institutions, answers questions about courses, entry requirements, qualifications for entry and entry processes. SATAC will refer any questions from applicants to the institution's website or the Future Students team where appropriate.
3. SATAC operates as a facilitator for universities to select applicants based on their preferences and the individual course requirements. SATAC does not construct course admission requirements, advise on tuition fees or advise on the student support available at individual institutions.
4. The SATAC website provides one central online location for application with detailed information on:
 - How to search/explore for courses available for preference selection by name, area of study, location or course code;
 - How to apply, what happens after an application has been submitted, selection rules and application fees;
 - How to start an undergraduate application;
 - How to access an existing application to change preferences, check personal details and respond to an offer.
5. Courses can have a range of qualifications and conditions that need to be understood by applicants in order to submit their full application. This information for a Year 12 student can be provided by the School Counsellor, the SATAC web-site¹, through SATAC publications or an individual institution website. In selecting a course preference from the SATAC website and then nominating a course preference, applicants are given the following specific course information:
 - Course location
 - Duration and if the course is offered for internal &/or external study
 - Prerequisites
 - Deferral options if available
 - Text with general course information
 - Program structure
 - Double /combined/concurrent degree options if available
 - Entry requirements such as courses where a VET course must have been completed such as for the Flinders University Bachelor of Creative Arts (Fashion) (VET pathway)
 - Additional entry requirements such as auditions, interview etc.
 - Professional recognition / membership
 - Details on who to contact for further information
6. The ATAR is, as quoted in the document, "a number out of 100 that ranks students across each state based on their upper secondary school subject results...[it is] an indicator of

¹ <http://www.satac.edu.au/undergraduate-explore>

students' relative academic standing among their peers". While this guarantees that students from the same state who are looking to enter a competitive based course are ranked fairly.

7. SATAC has the responsibility of scaling the Stage 2 results of all South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) and Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) students. This is undertaken by a Scaling Subgroup consisting of the Chair of the SA/NT Scaling Monitoring Committee and key SATAC and SACE Board staff. After scaling, SATAC calculates the ATAR on behalf of the South Australian public universities. SATAC also calculates the ATAR for Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) students. The calculation of the ATAR is undertaken using the nationally agreed methodology² which was reviewed & released by ACTAC on 17 May 2016 for implementation no later than for the 2017 cohort of year 12 students.
8. SATAC provides annual School Counsellor briefings on changes to courses offered by its institutions. Appendix 5.2 lists the location and attendees for these comprehensive information sessions delivered in 2015. The purpose of these presentations is to educate new school counsellors on the SATAC application and offer processes and to also provide updates on courses and application and admission procedures to current school counsellors. In 2014 SATAC surveyed this group to assess the quality and timeliness of information in both published, online and counsellor information sessions and received feedback that we should continue with printed publications and the current format of the information sessions.
9. As a tertiary admission centre, SATAC has a charter to make the admission process clear and simple while giving the applicant the best opportunity to present themselves for selection. SATAC has undertaken external marketing surveys of university staff, past applicants and the general public to ensure we are meeting applicant expectations and to provide a list of projects to improve our service.
10. SATAC provides a web service to applicants which serves as the entry point for online applications, and also provides an online version of all information available in SATAC printed publications. This enables applicants who are in remote locations have equal access to all available information.

The SATAC printed publications produced in 2015 were:

| Publication | Description | Printed & distributed in 2015 |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| SATAC Guide to undergraduate courses for 2016 | Information about entry requirements to undergraduate courses and how to apply through SATAC includes descriptions of all undergraduate courses offered through SATAC. \$12 (incl. GST) published in July .The SATAC Guide is available from newsagents throughout Australia and from the SATAC office. Current year 12 students in South Australia and the Northern Territory receive a copy of the Guide | 38,000 |

² <http://www.actac.edu.au/ntas.html>

| | | |
|---|--|--------|
| | through their school, and reference copies are provided to schools and educational institutions across Australia. | |
| Tertiary Entrance (SACE/NTCET) 2016, 2017, 2018 | Information about tertiary entrance requirements for South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) and Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) students. It is designed to assist years 10, 11 and 12 students to make subject choices to maximise their opportunities for tertiary study. The Tertiary Entrance Booklet (TEB) is available free of charge to all students in years 10, 11 and 12 in South Australia and the Northern Territory. | 70,000 |
| Tertiary Entrance (International Baccalaureate) 2016, 2017, 2018 | Information about tertiary entrance requirements for International Baccalaureate students in South Australia and the Northern Territory. Each edition provides detailed information about the coming entry year requirements and highlights planned changes for the following two years. The booklet is available free of charge to all International Baccalaureate students. | 2,000 |

11. The five Tertiary Admission Centres (TACs) in Australia operate under different Business Rules and authorities from their participating institutions. These differences need to be understood when comparing one state to another: for example, only some TACs process mid-year entry applications. Appendix 5.3 shows a comparison of admission centre activities between the TACs.

4. Proposed Action

In answering any of the questions in this submission related to the degree of transparency and/or knowledge about specific admissions processes SATAC would like to indicate that there is quite extensive and detailed information available to applicants, parents, schools and the broader educational community.

It is important to note that there is an unassailable fact in relation to admissions processes; that they are complex, often multifarious and vary between institutions and courses. It is not the intention of SATAC or its institutions to be overly complex in detailing admissions processes but they are by their very nature often specific, detailed and deal with multifaceted processes.

Furthermore, what is presented in writing either in print or online not only serves the purpose of informing people about admissions, it is the formal and official statement of how entry to a course(s) is determined. Tertiary admissions centres can and have been held legally accountable for what is written about admissions to tertiary institutions. Therefore, what is stated needs to be explicit and defensible.

4.1. Response to Question 2

Is knowledge about how the ATAR rankings are calculated and published 'cut-off' thresholds a significant influencing factor on course and institution preferences? How could this information be made more accessible and useful?

SATAC has no data which indicates that Year 12 students are disadvantaged in their preference choice due to a lack of understanding about how an ATAR is derived.

The calculation of the ATAR is outlined in the annual SATAC online and printed publication 'SATAC Tertiary Entrance' and details the policies and procedures for calculating an ATAR. Detailed information is included about entry requirements for the coming admission year and highlights planned changes for the two subsequent years. By providing information covering a three year period the booklet provides assistance to students seeking to make appropriate subject choices in anticipation of tertiary study. The 'SATAC Tertiary Entrance' publication also provides details on 'Converting the university aggregate to an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR)' (see Appendix 5.4).

In an effort to improve transparency and gain a level of consistency nationally, the TAC Directors agreed to the following specific actions at the Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres (ACTAC) Meeting in April 2015:

1. Each state would adopt the common definition of ATAR candidature;
2. Each state would commit to using a common Proforma to report its State's ATAR methodology supplemented with a distribution of its candidates to each ATAR band; and
3. Support the commitment to move forward with a national review of the ITI/ATAR with a view to adopting a common calculation of the relationship between participating and population rank.

SATAC has noted that there are a number of web-based applications that claim to convert a subject score to an ATAR. SATAC has had no involvement with, nor been invited to have involvement with, any online application developed which claims to be able to provide a conversion. SATAC's view is that these websites may disadvantage an applicant who plans subjects

around an ATAR predicted by these websites but which may prove false. One recommendation, therefore, that SATAC would like to propose to the HESP is that some form of regulation is put into place by the federal government to prohibit the action of these websites. Additionally, SATAC would like to recommend that a working group be established involving TACs from across Australia and the Department of Education and Training for the purpose of determining a common and comprehensive way to describe ATAR related processes and ensure this information is available and consistent on both Department and TAC websites. This will facilitate community understanding of the ATAR processes and provide publicly available and trusted information about the ATAR.

In the current demand-driven funding world of university admissions, the publication of the ATAR cut-off for course entry works as an indication for future students and is based on:

1. The number of students who applied for the course; and
2. The number of places the university has available in that teaching year for that course;

An example of where this has created a misrepresentation is where a course was notified to SATAC to make offers to all applicants with an ATAR over 70, but one applicant for that course had an ATAR of 99.5 and therefore this course was reported with a cut-off of 99.5.

SATAC would like to suggest that the use of Guaranteed Entry ranks published by institutions in the year prior to entry is more helpful than a cut-off score because it establishes a baseline ATAR which the institutions will honour for everyone at or above that published Guaranteed Entry rank (see Appendix 5.5 for an example). This would be a better enabler for prospective students to assess their chances of entry and opportunities for future learning.

4.2. Response to Question 3

Is there sufficient information about how 'bonus points' are awarded and used to adjust 'raw' ATARs sufficiently understood? Should the application of bonus points be more consistent across different institutions? Is the current variety of different bonus point rules appropriate to meet the needs of individual students and institutions?

In 2016, SATAC's institutions replaced all existing equity and subject bonus schemes with two new bonus schemes. At the time of this change the following institutions were involved in the new scheme:

- Flinders University
- The University of Adelaide
- University of South Australia
- Charles Darwin University
- Tabor College *

* Tabor College was the only fee-for-service client serviced by SATAC at this time. Any fee-for-service client of SATAC is required to follow all of SATAC's processes, procedures and policies. As a result Torrens University and Central Queensland University's Adelaide campus, which are currently being on-boarded into SATAC, will also participate in SATAC's bonus points scheme.

The key reason for this significant change in policy was to improve the transparency, simplicity and uniformity associated with the allocation of bonus points. It was the view of the Vice-Chancellors of SATAC's institutions that change could only occur if they all agreed collectively to implement one scheme consistently across their universities. This change was also in acknowledgement of the fact that the original intentions underpinning bonus points schemes when first implemented was to

improve the entry (or study of specific subjects by students in senior secondary schools e.g. Languages other than English) of disadvantaged students into tertiary education.

It is the view of SATAC that the bonus points approach adopted and implemented by its institutions is the most transparent model implemented in Australia and the current best practice approach – which should be considered for national adoption.

The South Australian Universities Equity Scheme provides bonuses in two ways:

1. Bonuses for all students in certain specified schools and bonuses for individuals in other schools. Schools qualifying for school-based bonuses will be identified on an annual basis using the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) data from the My Schools website. Students in other schools are able to make an application under the Scheme to demonstrate their individual disadvantage;
2. The Universities Language, Literacy and Mathematics Bonus Scheme encourages students to strengthen their preparation for undergraduate studies by undertaking a language other than English, or specified English and mathematics subjects. It should be noted that there are courses with exceptions to this scheme.

In alignment with the SATAC business model all future fee-for-service institutions will be obliged to abide by the same bonus points scheme to ensure consistency for applicants across SATAC institutions.

4.3. Response to Question 5

Should there be an annual report of the proportion of students accepted into courses by each higher education institution on the basis of their ATARs and/or what the median ATARs was for each course?

The HESP report documented the alternative methods for an applicant to be considered for an undergraduate place (ATAR, preferred pathway, STAT, university or TAFE/VET). Universities use cohorts to rank these groups separately and then offers are made against each cohort.

SATAC publishes the yearly ATAR cut-off for all courses in its SATAC Undergraduate Guide with data from the latest year ATAR cut-offs at the time of printing (therefore the 2015 Guide will have the 2013 cut-off). The online report by university of course cut-offs has the most recent data (currently 2015 cut-offs are reported).

It is SATAC's opinion that the median ATAR would not influence a candidate's course selection as this would not necessarily indicate for future years if an applicant would be eligible for entry with an equivalent ATAR. SATAC does see an advantage in ensuring that applicants are able to easily navigate to list courses with a guaranteed entry which will guarantee selection into a course/program for applicants competing in the year 12 subquota. See Appendix 5.5 for a sample of the current SATAC website information available.

4.4. Response to Question 6

Do the current state-based Tertiary Admissions Centre arrangements adequately cope with students' desire for mobility to institutions across state borders? Would a more national approach to managing applications across borders be beneficial?

There is a generally held public belief that young people today move interstate more frequently and is in essence more mobile than previous generations. The data, however, does not support this view. At this stage the students who enquire and/or apply for courses interstate are generally those who are seeking entry to courses which are highly sought after, medicine being one example. The exception to this statement is for applicants from the Northern Territory who have a higher proportion of Year 12 students moving interstate than most other states.

SATAC accepts applications for undergraduate study from Australian citizens, Australian permanent residents, holders of an Australian permanent humanitarian visa, or a New Zealand citizen. International year 12 applicants are applicants who hold a student visa, temporary resident visa or visitor visa and were enrolled in an Australian year 12 program. The applications by each type for 2010 and 2014-2015 are shown below:

SATAC Applications by Applicant Type:

| Applicant Type | 2010 | 2014-2015 ³ |
|---|---------------|------------------------|
| International Year 12 applicants ⁴ | 1564 (6.3%) | 882 (2.6%) |
| SA/NT applicants | 8651 (32.9%) | 10653 (31.4%) |
| Interstate/IB school leavers | 2422 (9.2%) | 2781 (8.2%) |
| Non-school leavers | 13639 (51.9%) | 19280 (56.8%) |
| Total | 26276 (100%) | 33956 (100%) |

Every year South Australians who have completed their Year 12 studies apply for entry to an interstate TAC, as shown in the following table:

South Australian Year 12 students applying to interstate TACs⁵:

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Interstate Admission Centre | 2014 |
| QTAC - Queensland | 430 |
| TISC – Western Australia | 128 |
| UAC – New South Wales | 594 |
| University of Tasmania | 116 |
| VTAC - Victoria | 982 |
| Total | 2250 |

To facilitate this movement of applicants between states, ACTAC has implemented a number of shared processes with interstate TACs, making it more transparent for an applicant to be considered for a university place interstate. These include:

3 Member institutions only

4 Students sitting an Australian Year 12 qualification who are not an Australian resident or have a permanent humanitarian visa from Australia

5 <<<https://www.actac.edu.au/pdf/stats/stats-offers2014-5-breakdownbystate.pdf>>>, Students applying to more than one TAC are counted more than once in this table

- The use of the Automated Results Transfer System (ARTS) which allows for TACs to electronically access university records from 39 institutions in Australia and has been in operation since 1996/1997. This ensures that applicants from interstate do not need to provide hard copy transcripts of university results for assessment;
- The sharing of Year 12 results files between states. The result of this import load process is that SATAC is able to assess and rank interstate applicants at the same time and pace as local residents, with all being able to be ranked in a single list for selection in the January offer rounds;
- The centralised database for STAT results allows applicants to use this as a qualification between states by supplying their candidate number on their application.

The result of these shared processes is that interstate applicants generally have the same documentation requirements as local applicants meaning there is no disadvantage for them.

Through ACTAC, the notion of the eligibility of interstate applicants is guided by the 'home state rule'. This rule means that if an applicant meets minimum tertiary entrance requirements for all institutions in their home state/territory they will meet minimum tertiary entrance requirements for all interstate Australian institutions subject to tertiary entrance rank (TER) and individual course requirements. For the purposes of TER calculation and university admission under the home state rule, Northern Territory and South Australia are combined and treated as a single entity.

Admissions centres, including SATAC, refer to tables of interstate subject equivalents so that interstate applicants are not disadvantaged where institutions have established prerequisites at course level. Some centres also include subjects completed interstate in local measures of overall achievement calculations where appropriate arrangements have been made with certifying authorities to convert those subjects into local scores. Many IB and Australian interstate year 12 subjects have been considered by the universities and TAFE SA and have been pre-approved as Recognised Studies. IB and Australian interstate subjects approved as Recognised Studies are shown in Appendix 5.6 which is an extract of the dataset available to applicants and educators of interstate course equivalence.

If there was to be a national approach in relation to students potentially seeking entry to a course(s) across the country it is the view of SATAC that it should only relate to specific courses, of the highly competitive nature, and this process could be facilitated by ACTAC.

4.5. Response to Question 7

Is there an understanding of how such mechanisms as early offers, second round offers and forced offers affect the transparency of higher education entry? How, if at all, should these factors be dealt with for the purposes of transparency?

The issues of early offers, second round offers and forced offers need to be considered in parallel with the different ways in which an applicant can apply for an undergraduate program. While there are different pathways to an undergraduate university place, these paths can result in offers being made outside of the main January offer round solely due to the timing of results. The fact that these different qualification types are grouped in cohorts and do not compete with each other is often not clear or understood. SATAC has placed offer round timetable information on the front inside cover of its SATAC Universities Guide, on its website as well as using announcements via Twitter with the date of the main offer round and follow-up offer rounds. The printed publication

also states that “offers will continue to be made through February for courses where there are still places available”.

The change in offer timetables has been driven by the university sectors aiming to maintain and increase market share between state based and out-of-state based institutions. Most institutions offer Year 12 applicants a pathway for university entry through a Foundation Studies style of program which, on passing, guarantees an applicant direct entry to either first or second year of a university program. This would need to be accounted for in any detailed publication of entry scores to courses.

SATAC has a business rule approved by the Board which ensures that all undergraduate applicants for first year entry for courses offered through SATAC must apply through SATAC, no matter the basis of admission. This ensures that all applicants are assessed for an offer based on the same criteria and, where required, can be ranked for offers to competitive courses. There is the ability for universities to ‘force’ an offer where they are required to enter a reason for the action.

In understanding the mechanisms of offer processes, it is important to understand that there are a number of ways applicants can be considered eligible for domestic applicant undergraduate courses from SATAC:

- Courses that accept all applicants who have an ATAR rank at or above an advertised cut-off rank;
- Completion of a pathway program such as a foundation studies program;
- A recognised non-school qualification such as from a STAT score, university or TAFE/VET;
- Offer to a course which the applicant deferred in a previous year;
- Some courses have additional entry requirements to an ATAR that must be met to be considered for an offer. For example an interview, statement of intent (new teaching requirement), UMAT, pre-requisite or a portfolio may be required to be assessed prior to an offer.

These different pathways result in different subquotas being offered places in a course which have a different ranking process from the ATAR. The subquotas used by SATAC for undergraduate courses include:

- Year 12
- Higher education
- TAFE/VET
- Special entry (the STAT)
- Foundation studies

The allocation of places available for each subquota varies between courses and each offer round. This may cause confusion when an applicant is in two categories (for instance they have a STAT which places them in the Special entry subquota and an ATAR which also places them in the Year 12 subquota) which are considered for an offer separately. The option suggested where applicants are made an offer and have the Basis For Admission clearly stated may well offer applicants information on the process but will not necessarily enhance their understanding of the system prior to the offer round.

Most competitive courses in the January and February offer rounds use a calculated cut-off rank to determine eligibility. This cut-off rank is not generally established until one day before offers are made as this depends on spaces available. The institutions conduct 'offer round simulations' to examine the numbers of applicants which would be made an offer based on different ranks. SATAC applicants are able to apply across five universities so the movement of a cut-off rank by one university generally has an impact on numbers of applicants who would be made an offer in another course and therefore institutions need to make these offers at the same time.

The transparency of the system is currently disadvantaged by the nature of offer rounds: the complexity of ensuring equity between disparate groups of applicants and the requirement to assess applicants for a January offer round who have frequently only received a qualification late the previous year add to the complexity of the process. SATAC has instituted a process of correspondence with an applicant for major offer rounds that inform them of an offer or no-offer which has been shown to lessen anxiety about offers as demonstrated by less contact with SATAC immediately prior or after an offer round.

4.6. Response to Question 11

Can you suggest any other changes that would improve public awareness and understanding of tertiary admissions processes?

SATAC provides impartial advice to applicants about the application procedure and as long as the requirement is for applicants to be able to select preferences from multiple institutions then SATAC has an important role to play. However, the application process needs to be incorporated into a simplified end to end process for applicants. The use of social media to connect to the Year 12 cohort is being encouraged. A federally based marketing campaign to advise on key application dates and contacts would be encouraged by SATAC. SATAC would also recommend that the approach mentioned earlier in this paper in relation to the ATAR being considered in response to this question. Joint work between the Department of Education and Training and ACTAC would be useful in ensuring public awareness and understanding of this area be improved. Additionally, social media could be utilised to facilitate a broader understanding of processes in relation to tertiary admissions.

5. Appendix

Appendix 5.1: Questions for consideration from the Higher Education Standards Panel – Consultation on Higher Education Admissions Processes

- 1. Based on your experience, what is the most important information needed to help potential higher education students determine which course to study and which institution to apply for? Please feel free to rank the different types of information in order of importance. Examples could include information about course prerequisites, ATAR cut-offs, other non-ATAR-related entry options or requirements, possible career pathways and qualification requirements, institution reputation, campus facilities, course cost, student peer cohort characteristics, family history or other connections to a particular institution, accreditation of a course by a professional body or association, graduate employment and earnings outcomes, student reviews or surveys of teaching quality, recommendations from friends or family.*
- 2. Is knowledge about how the ATAR rankings are calculated and published 'cut-off' thresholds a significant influencing factor on course and institution preferences? How could this information be made more accessible and useful?*
- 3. Is there sufficient information about how 'bonus points' are awarded and used to adjust 'raw' ATARs sufficiently understood? Should the application of bonus points be more consistent across different institutions? Is the current variety of different bonus point rules appropriate to meet the needs of individual students and institutions?*
- 4. Is there sufficient knowledge of the range of alternative admissions procedures employed by higher education institutions?
Examples could include 'early' offers on the basis of previous year's cut-off or school recommendations.*
- 5. Should there be an annual report of the proportion of students accepted into courses by each higher education institution on the basis of their ATARs and/or what the median ATARs was for each course?*
- 6. Do the current state-based Tertiary Admissions Centre arrangements adequately cope with students' desire for mobility to institutions across state borders? Would a more national approach to managing applications across borders be beneficial?*
- 7. Is there an understanding of how such mechanisms as early offers, second round offers and forced offers affect the transparency of higher education entry? How, if at all, should these factors be dealt with for the purposes of transparency?*
- 8. What information or enhancements do you think should be added to the Australian Government's Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website?*
- 9. How best should comparable information on student admissions procedures be made available to the public? What is the most appropriate and effective way to communicate information to students? What information or enhancements do you think should be added to Tertiary Admission Centre websites, university and non-university institution websites, and/or Australian Government websites such as QILT and Study Assist?*
- 10. What special measures are needed to ensure equity of access for disadvantaged students?*
- 11. Can you suggest any other changes that would improve public awareness and understanding of tertiary admissions processes?*

Appendix 5.2: SATAC School Counsellor information sessions 2015

Each year SATAC conducts a series of information sessions for both new and experienced careers teachers. These sessions cover:

1. Changes to SACE Board to ATAR conversion e.g. introduction of the 90 credit aggregate in 2016
2. Updates to procedures pertaining to SATAC applications

| | Location | Number of attendees |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| New counsellor session | Adelaide | 47 |
| SA regional counsellor sessions | Mt Gambier, Renmark, Pt Augusta and Streaky Bay | 48 |
| Northern Territory counsellor session | Darwin | 33 |
| Metropolitan counsellor sessions | Adelaide | 250 |
| Total | | 378 |

Appendix 5.3: Comparison of Admission Centres

TAC University Undergraduate Applications

| | ASSESSMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS | COMMENTS |
|-------|---|---|
| TISC | TISC processes applications but does not assess qualifications of non-school leavers. A hard copy of applications are given to the relevant university to assess. | Does not process applications from international students. Does not process midyear applications. |
| SATAC | SATAC assesses all qualifications for applicants (including employment experience & personal competencies statements) and determines eligibility and competitiveness for each preference according to university rules. | Assesses applicants for all teaching periods in the academic year. Assesses International applicants studying Australian Year 12. |
| VTAC | Some assessment of quals through the categorization process; assessment of some overseas quals. Copy of all documents available to institutions through imaging system. | International only for VCE and IB. Accepts mid-year applications. |
| UAC | Assesses qualifications of non-school leavers. | Process international students sitting an Australian Year 12. Process mid-year applications. Includes some distance ed courses. |
| QTAC | QTAC assesses all Year 12 and non-school leaver applications on behalf of institutions | May process Year 12 International students (students have the option to apply to QTAC or direct to the institution). QTAC processes applications for mid-year. |

Appendix 5.4: SATAC Web Tertiary Entrance Booklet 2015 extract

2016 university entry requirements

Selection into university courses/programs

Selection is based on both eligibility and rank. Eligibility allows you to be considered for selection; rank determines whether you are competitive enough to be selected.

The university aggregate and the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)

Your competitiveness in relation to other applicants for a given university course is based on your selection rank, which is made up of your ATAR plus any bonuses for which the university deems you eligible. The ATAR is a rank given to students on a range from 0 to 99.95 and is calculated from your university aggregate.

Calculating the university aggregate

The university aggregate is calculated from scaled scores. These are the numeric measures of your performance in Tertiary Admissions Subjects (TAS) which are derived from your grades, and are reported to you out of 20.0 for 20 credit subjects and out of 10.0 for 10 credit subjects. Please note that if you do not attempt the publicly assessed component of a TAS (e.g. an examination or final recital), you will be given a scaled score of 0.0.

The university aggregate is calculated from your best scaled scores from three 20 credit TAS plus the best outcome from the flexible option, which is the best 30 credits of scaled scores or scaled score equivalents from:

- the scaled score of a 20 credit TAS
- half the scaled score of one or more 20 credit TAS
- the scaled score of one or more 10 credit TAS
- scaled score equivalents for Recognised Studies to the value of 10 or the maximum of 20 credits

subject to precluded combination and counting restriction rules. Subjects with scaled scores of 0.0 can be used in the calculation of the university aggregate. The subjects used in the calculation can only come from a maximum of three attempts which need not be in consecutive years.

University selection

To be eligible for selection into a university course/program you must:

- qualify for the SACE/NTCET
- obtain an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)
- meet any prerequisite subject requirements for the course/program

University aggregate and ATAR

To obtain a university aggregate and an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) you must:

- qualify for the SACE/NTCET
- comply with the rules regarding precluded combinations
- comply with the rules regarding counting restrictions
- complete at least 90 credits of study in Tertiary Admissions Subjects (TAS) and Recognised Studies at Stage 2 in a maximum of three attempts which need not be in consecutive years
- of the 90 credits of study a minimum of 60 credits of study must be from 20 credit TAS*

* Normally 10 credit subjects do not count towards this requirement but some 10 credit subjects in the same area, when studied in pairs, can substitute for a 20 credit subject. These are called valid pairs. Such subjects are identified in the table on pages 47-62.

Converting the university aggregate to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)

The university aggregate is converted to an ATAR. The ATAR is an indicator of how well a particular student has performed relative to other students. It is calculated as follows:

- The group of students who may qualify for a university aggregate in 2015 is called the **2015 cohort**.
- For each university aggregate (in the range 0-90.0) obtained by the students in this cohort, the percentage of students who obtained that aggregate or better is calculated. This is known as calculating the **percentile distribution**.
- Each university aggregate in the range 0-90.0 now has a corresponding **percentile rank** in the range 0-100. For example, if an aggregate of 78.0 or better out of 90.0 has been obtained by the top 10% of the cohort, the aggregate of 78.0 will correspond to a percentile rank of 90.0 (100 – 10).
- To derive an ATAR from the university aggregate we need to look at where the students in the cohort sit compared to the **entire population** who are in the same age group.
- The 2015 cohort may differ from that of other years in that it may represent a smaller or larger percentage of the population who are in the same age group.
- The percentage from the given year is known as the **participation rate**. It is calculated using population statistics obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and measuring these against the size of the cohort.
- The percentile rank is adjusted to take account of the participation rate and where the student sits relative to the entire population, and the result is the ATAR. For example, if a student has an ATAR of 95.00 it indicates that they have achieved as well as, or better than, 95% of the population. This process ensures the ATAR is comparable from year to year.
- When the calculations are completed, a student's relative position on the ATAR range is unchanged from the student's relative position on the university aggregate range.
- It is important to remember that the ATAR is a **rank**, not a score, and that it cannot be calculated arithmetically from a university aggregate.

Reporting the university aggregate and ATAR

The university aggregate is reported to students on a score range of 0-90.0 with intervals of 0.1. The ATAR is reported to students on a percentile scale, i.e. on a range 0-99.95 with intervals of 0.05. The university aggregate and ATAR are reported only to students who qualify for the SACE or NTCET.

Important information for prior year SACE/NTCET students who returned to study in 2015 attempting to obtain or improve a university aggregate

The universities wish to ensure that all students obtaining an aggregate in 2015, whether for the first time or as a result of returning to study, will compete on the same basis for 2016 university entry. All students will therefore be subject to the 2015 rules for the university aggregate.

If you did not obtain an aggregate by the end of 2014

If, for any reason, you either did not meet the requirements of the SACE, nor achieve a university aggregate by the end of the 2014 clerical check period (February 2015), you will be subject to all of the 2015 aggregate rules including the requirement to present 90 credits (see pages 6-16).

If you obtained an aggregate in 2011, 2012, 2013 or 2014

If you obtained a university aggregate in these years, your aggregate will have been calculated on 80 credits of study. If you returned to study in 2015 to improve your university aggregate, you will need to comply with the 2015 rules for the university aggregate outlined above including the requirement to present 90 credits.

Please note, for your aggregate to be recalculated, you must receive a result in the 2015 results processing period such as a grade of E- or better with a scaled score of at least 0.0 in a TAS.

If you do not comply with these rules, a new university aggregate will not be calculated for you, but you will still be able to use the university aggregate and ATAR you obtained prior to 2015 for university entry.

Appendix 5.5: SATAC Web sample of institution cut-off and guaranteed entry scores⁶

| The University of Adelaide - 2015 cutoffs | | | |
|---|--|-------------|------------------|
| SATAC code | Course/Program | 2015 cutoff | Guaranteed entry |
| | Degrees | | |
| 324561 | Agricultural Sciences | 66.10 | 75.00 |
| 324141 | Animal Science | 68.75 | † |
| 324851 | Applied Biology | 70.45 | 75.00 |
| 314131 | Architectural Design | 72.05 | 80.00 |
| 314071 | Arts | 65.10 | 70.00 |
| 324671 | Arts (Advanced) | 95.10 | † |
| 324131 | Arts/Economics | 67.60 | † |
| 324891 | Arts/Music | ** | † |
| 324021 | Arts/Science | 72.80 | 75.00 |
| 314091 | Biomedical Science | 73.15 | 75.00 |
| 314691 | Biotechnology | 88.25 | 75.00 |
| 314101 | Commerce | 80.05 | † |
| 314111 | Computer Science | 70.45 | † |
| 324681 | Computer Science (Advanced) | 95.80 | † |
| 324931 | Criminology | 72.25 | 70.00 |
| 314122 | Dental Surgery | ** | † |
| 324391 | Development Studies | 66.15 | 70.00 |
| 314141 | Economics | 65.05 | † |
| 324791 | Economics (Advanced) | 95.75 | † |
| 314151 | Economics/Finance | 65.10 | † |
| 324921 | Energy Geoscience | # | 75.00 |
| 314161 | Engineering (Honours) (Chemical) | 80.85 | 80.00 |
| 314871 | Engineering (Honours) (Chemical) double/combined degrees | 82.00 | 80.00 |

2015 cutoff (0-99.95)

The 2015 cutoff is the minimum 2015 year 12 selection rank (equivalent to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) after any university access and bonus points have been applied) which guaranteed selection into a course/program in semester 1 2016 for applicants competing in the year 12 subquota. For further information on selection ranks and the year 12 subquota see the SATAC website at www.satac.edu.au.

What is guaranteed entry?

Guaranteed entry is the minimum year 12 selection rank (equivalent to an ATAR after any bonus points have been applied) which will guarantee selection into a course/program in 2016 for applicants competing in the year 12 subquota.

For many courses/programs, the final cutoff used will drop below the guaranteed entry threshold.

Key to symbols

Where no cutoff is listed the following symbols are used:

** No cutoff rank is shown because the course/program used selection criteria other than, or in addition to, year 12 results. If you have any doubts about the requirements, please contact the institution offering the course.

† No cutoff rank is shown because the course/program did not use year 12 results in its selection criteria.

No cutoff rank is shown because the course/program was not offered, or did not make offers, through SATAC for entry in semester 1 2016.

‡ No guaranteed entry threshold is shown because the course/program does not use one.

⁶ As viewed at << http://www.satac.edu.au/documents/adelaide_cutoffs_2015.pdf>> 6 May 2015

Appendix 5.6: SATAC Recognised Studies register (as at 11 August 2015)

| Australian Capital Territory | | International Baccalaureate | | New South Wales | | Queensland | | Tasmania | | Victoria | | Western Australia | | South Australia / Northern Territory | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------------|---|----------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mathematics | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Mathematical Methods</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1012 | Mathematical Applications | 100385 SL | Math Studies - SL | 15235 | Mathematics General 2 | 0036 | Mathematics A | MTG315115 | General Mathematics | NF | Further Mathematics | MAT 2CD | Mathematics 2C/2D | MHD | Mathematical Methods |
| | | | | | | 4036 | Mathematics A | | | | | MAT 3AB | Mathematics 3A/3B | | |
| <i>Mathematical Studies</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1010 | Specialist Mathematics (major) | 100386 SL | Mathematics - SL | 15240 | Mathematics | 0037 | Mathematics B | MTM315114 | Mathematics Methods | NJ | Mathematical Methods (CAS) | MAT 3CD | Mathematics 3C/3D | MDS | Mathematical Studies |
| 1013 | Mathematics Methods (major) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1010 | Specialist Mathematics (major/minor) | | | 15250 | Mathematics Extension 1 | 4037 | Mathematics B | JEE103 & JEE104 | Mathematics I & Mathematics II | MA12 | Mathematical Methods (CAS) CBE | MAS 3AB | Mathematics: Specialist 3A/3B | | |
| 1010 | Specialist Mathematics (double major) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Specialist Mathematics</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1010 | Specialist Mathematics (double major) | 100218 HL | Further Maths - HL | 15260 | Mathematics Extension 2 | 0038 | Mathematics C | MTS315114 | Mathematics Specialized | NS | Specialist Mathematics | MAS 3CD | Mathematics: Specialist 3C/3D | MSC | Specialist Mathematics |
| | | | | | | | | KMA152 & KMA154 | Calculus and Applications 1A & Calculus and | | | | | | |