



ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies

A message from the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies for students and parents/carers

Working together for all senior secondary students

The COVID -19 (Novel Coronavirus) pandemic has disrupted all aspects of our lives. It has caused great uncertainty and presents many challenges.

Our priority is the safety, wellbeing and future of all students. The Board of Secondary Studies (BSSS) is focused on equity and fairness so that no student need be disadvantaged.

Students will be able to achieve an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate this year, which will be able to facilitate access to university, other further education opportunities and employment.

The BSSS is working in collaboration with schools to support student engagement with their learning and assessment.

Schools are employing the flexibilities available in providing learning and assessment for students. Effective and innovative learning opportunities and interactions can deliver positive learning and assessment experiences for students.

Schools have received advice on learning and assessment to maintain the intent and integrity of the knowledge, skills and understandings described in the curriculum. Our continuous school-based assessment model provides flexibility for each school to accommodate the learning and assessment needs of their students. In the current circumstances, there is broad scope for principals to adjust the number of assessments, and the type of assessment, including no requirement for examinations.

Students who complete the appropriate T courses, meet the requirements of the ACT Senior Certificate, and undertake the ACT Scaling Test (AST), will qualify for a Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES) and an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

The intention is to conduct the ACT Scaling Test as per normal. The BSSS is currently developing a range of contingencies for the ACT Scaling Test (AST) if required.

The Universities Admission Centre (UAC) has confidence in ACT assessment outcomes and the data used for the calculation of the ATAR.

I would like to draw your attention to two relevant publications. The information released by Education Council following the April 7 meeting, and the Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admissions Centres (ACTAC) media release are included below. These documents provide further clarity and assurance across states and territories that all are working together for the benefit of all students.

I encourage all year 11 and 12 students to remain committed to their learning and the completion of the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate. Your schools and the Board will support you to do so.

Martin Watson
Executive Director
ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies

7 April 2020

Communiqué

Senior secondary arrangements and university admissions

The Education Council met by teleconference to discuss advice from the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) on options for senior secondary arrangements and university admissions. Ministers reiterated the importance of this issue and acknowledged the urgency in providing certainty to students, their families and teachers.

Ministers noted the considerable work being undertaken by each state and territory to consider the assessment requirements for senior secondary students and the impact on the calculation of final subject results.

ACACA advised Ministers that while some issues will benefit from a national approach, others will rely on local adaptation to suit the circumstances across states and territories. To promote equitable outcomes, Council agreed a set of national principles to support local decisions. The principles are that:

- Students will be able to achieve a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education this year, and that certificate will facilitate access to university, further education and employment.
- In consideration of the current situation, any revisions to school assessment programs must be made with students' best interests in mind and to honour the intent of the learning described in the curriculum.
- Equity in assessment must be maintained while also providing schools with flexibility to accommodate their unique circumstances, including the specific needs of individual students.
- Revisions to assessment programs must not compromise the integrity of senior certification and public confidence in the credentials issued to this year's senior students.

To ensure that students applying for university entry interstate are not disadvantaged, Education Council decided that Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) results will be released in a nationally consistent window of dates beginning in 2020.

Further announcements regarding specific arrangements will be advised by state and territory governments.

Continued delivery of school education for all students during COVID-19

Education Council endorsed a set of national principles for the consideration of the National Cabinet to support continued delivery of high-quality school education for all students during COVID-19. Noting that decisions about education in government schools continue to be the responsibility of states and territories, these principles will inform decision-making to ensure that every student has access to education in a sustainable and effective manner.

Jurisdictions will continue to regularly share information, experiences, learnings and outcomes relevant to managing the impact of COVID-19 in school education.

Media queries: Greg Donaghue, Education Council Secretariat on 0423 748 320 or greg.donaghue@ec.edu.au.

ACTAC STATEMENT: NATIONAL COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT YEAR 12 STUDENTS THROUGH COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS

The Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admissions Centres (ACTAC), comprising admissions centres from across Australia, is committed to ensuring that prospective students will still have a pathway to tertiary study in 2021.

ACTAC's members are working with their own state's education authorities and tertiary institutions to ensure that admissions processes can adapt to any changes in Year 12 assessment in 2020. Students should be reassured that all tertiary institutions are looking forward to welcoming this year's graduating secondary students into courses commencing in 2021.

ACTAC has worked for many years to ensure that the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) provides a consistent starting point for tertiary entry across all states and territories, no matter where a student completes their senior secondary study. ACTAC will continue this important role coordinating admissions processes and ATAR equivalence nationally.

The ATAR is a rank, not a score – so any changes to assessment processes in individual states will not affect the validity of the ATAR as a tool for tertiary admissions. ACTAC's coordination already ensures that the ATAR provides a reliable comparison of a student's performance compared to their age group, regardless of the different examination and assessment processes within each state's curriculum. Any changes to such processes will be accommodated within this existing framework to provide certainty and consistency for both students and tertiary institutions.

These are extraordinary times. Year 12 students and others aspiring to further study should remain committed to their goals and confident that all state and national education bodies are working on an equitable way forward that maintains the integrity of tertiary admissions.

Media queries: please contact the tertiary admissions centre in your jurisdiction.

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