

THE QUEENSLAND EDUCATION SYSTEM

The current system of senior school education in Queensland has its roots in the Radford System, which was introduced in 1971, and later modified under ROSBA (Review of School-Based Assessment). This system is currently undergoing further changes with the implementation of recommendations contained in the ETRF white paper, which was released in late 2002. The Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) State Government White Paper is a wide-ranging package of education and training reforms that will have an impact on education from preschool to Year 12.

The central education authority in Queensland is the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA). This Statutory Authority is responsible, among other things, for subject syllabuses, the maintenance of standards, as well as the certification of student achievements.

Under the Queensland system of education, schools are required to write their own programs, which are then accredited by the QSA, for all Authority Subjects that they teach. Programs are also required for Authority Registered Subjects (Vocational Education subjects). The programs must state the knowledge that students will be required to learn; what practical skills they should acquire; what thinking and reasoning abilities will be developed in them, as well as what attitudes etc are appropriate to that subject. In addition, the work programs require the school to show how the school intends to achieve these aims.

All assessment of work within these programs of study is undertaken internally and students are awarded exit grades ranging from a VHA (Very High Achievement) to a VLA (Very Low Achievement). These grades are assigned by comparing student work to the standards set in the relevant QSA syllabi. As a further check, these grades are externally verified by panels of experienced teachers from across the state. Upon completion of their course of study, students are awarded a Senior Certificate by the Queensland Studies Authority and an EXIT CERTIFICATE by the school.

TERTIARY ENTRANCE

The method by which students will be selected for entrance to Tertiary Courses at the end of Year 12 is outlined below. All students who have studied the equivalent of 5 Authority Subjects for each Semester over the next two years will be eligible for an Overall Position (OP) that is issued by the QSA. All Authority Subjects are weighted equally (i.e. have a weighting of 5) for the purpose of determining the OP. OP's are distributed on a 1 to 25 scale with band 1 being considered the highest band.

It is possible that because of quotas for places in Tertiary Institutions that some faculties will not be able to accept all students who applied for a particular course and who were placed on a particular "cut-off" OP band. The Tertiary Institution will then offer these "marginal" students a place based on their Field Positions. There are 5 fields – A through to E. Field A refers to a student's ability in extended written expression; Field B refers to a student's ability in short written communication; Field C places its emphasis in basic numeracy; Field D emphasises complex problem solving involving mathematical symbols; while Field E emphasises substantial practical performance involving physical or creative arts.

Field positions will be allocated by the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority on a rank order of 10 bands, 1 through to 10, with 1 being the highest band. Therefore "marginal" students will gain entry to a particular course based on their field positions.

Further information regarding Field Positions and Overall Positions can be obtained from the website: www.qsa.qld.edu.au.

NON-OP ENTRY TO TERTIARY COURSES

All students need to select a course that best suits their career interests and abilities. Such a course may include several Vocational Education subjects containing modules, which teach students skills for work, increasing chances of employment or apprenticeship/traineeship after Year 12.

A course that consists of two or more Vocational Education subjects will make students ineligible for an OP. However, this does not mean that people who select this subject pattern cannot go on to study a degree at a university or an advanced diploma at TAFE. Provided they have good results in the subjects they study, they can gain access to many courses via a tertiary entrance Rank, calculated by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC). The Rank enables comparison between OP eligible and OP ineligible students.

In collaboration with most tertiary institutions and the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), QTAC has developed “schedules”, which are a way of assigning a nominal point value to an individual’s achievements. Points for senior students who require a Rank come chiefly from:

- subject achievement ratings (VHA to VLA) on both Authority and Authority-Registered subjects;
- competencies gained in VET approved modules;
- results gained by the individual in the Queensland Core Skills Test.

These points are combined to make a Rank, which can range from 99 to 1. A Rank of 99 is the equivalent of OP 1, and 48 is equivalent to OP 25. Achievement in Authority subjects attracts more points than in Vocational Education subjects. For example, in the schedule used by QTAC for the Year 12 cohort last year, these values applied:

RATING	QSA SUBJECT	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SUBJECT
VHA	8.9	5.4
SA	4.0	2.1

These point values indicate that non-OP eligible students who think that tertiary study might be an option, should consider taking as many QSA subjects as possible, while still gaining the competitive vocational edge that successfully completed modules provide. If you wish to see the relevant QTAC schedule or discuss subject selection to maximize your options after Year 12, please contact the Career Counselor for an appointment.

NOTES:

- All tertiary institutions participating in QTAC, with the exception of Southern Cross University, welcome applications from OP ineligible students.
- Most OP ineligible students, who are successful in their application, gain entry to TAFE diploma and advanced diploma courses, and diploma courses at universities. Only a small number gain entry to university degree courses.
- Non-OP eligible students apply to QTAC for places in degree, advanced diploma or diploma courses in exactly the same way as OP eligible students.
- Just like OP eligible students seeking entry to degrees, advanced diplomas or diplomas, those using Rank must still study the pre-requisite subjects set out by the institutions in QTAC’s publication *Tertiary Pre-requisites 2008 (available late July)*.
- A result in the Queensland Core Skills Test (QCS Test) graded above the minimum of “E” will increase a student’s Rank for tertiary placement. It is advantageous for non-OP eligible students to sit for the QCS Test if they hope to access tertiary courses. Faith Lutheran College, Redlands expects all its Year 12 students to sit for the QCS Test.

- The nature of QTAC's schedules for calculation of Rank indicates that it is not an appropriate way for school leavers to seek admission to tertiary courses, which are in high demand, and so have traditionally required a high OP.