

FAQs about the

change from UAI to ATAR

What changes are being made?

There are three changes:

- The university rank currently known as the UAI (Universities Admission Index) will now be known as the ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank).
- The highest rank will now be an ATAR of 99.95, as opposed to a UAI of 100. Achieving an ATAR of 99.95 is the same as achieving a UAI of 100 – you are in the top ranked group of students.
- The ATAR will indicate a NSW student's position in relation to the Year 7 students they began high school with, including those who did not complete Year 12, rather than the Year 10 group. (Year 7 results will have no bearing on ATARs; results from the HSC are used to rank all students, even those who did not go on to complete Year 12).
- The ACT is also moving to the ATAR so that its university selection rankings continue to be the same as NSW.

When will the changes be implemented?

This year's NSW and ACT Year 12 students, who would have been eligible for a UAI, will receive an ATAR. Other states (except Queensland) will change to the name ATAR in 2010.

Why is NSW introducing these changes now?

The changes are designed to achieve national consistency in the name and reporting of the university selection index. In most states this means just a change in name, but in NSW it includes a change in the number given to the top ranked group of students as well. The new top rank of 99.95 will bring NSW students into line with their interstate peers.

The minimum leaving age in NSW is also changing from 15 to 17 years in 2010, meaning that all students will complete Year 10.

Rather than make these changes at different times, it was decided to introduce all three changes now as the UAI is replaced by the ATAR.

Who is responsible for the changes?

The Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admissions Centres (ACTAC) decided to adopt the universal name ATAR across Australia (excluding Queensland).

The NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NSWVCC) agreed to change the top rank in NSW to 99.95, and to indicate a student's position in relation to the Year 7 group of students.

Why is the name being changed?

The Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admissions Centres (ACTAC) decided to adopt a common name for existing ranks across all states and territories (except Queensland) to highlight that student ranks are reported on a common scale. This means, for example, that a rank of 70.00 in NSW and the ACT is considered equal to a rank of 70.00 in Victoria – the use of a common name will emphasise this equivalence of interstate ranks.

What effects will the name change have?

None, apart from highlighting that students ranks across all states (except Queensland) are reported on a common scale.

Why is the maximum rank attainable in NSW and the ACT being reduced from 100 to 99.95 and what will this mean for students aiming for a perfect 100 score?

The number given to the maximum rank in NSW and the ACT will now be an ATAR of 99.95, as opposed to a UAI of 100. This means NSW and ACT students will now be in line with their interstate peers, where the top rank is 99.95. Achieving an ATAR of 99.95 is the same as achieving a UAI of 100 – you are in the top ranked group of students.

One of the common mistakes people make is to think a score of 100 means a "perfect score": this is not the case. Students who received a UAI of 100 were those with the highest rank, not those with a perfect score. In 30 years, no NSW student has ever received an aggregate of 500 (which is indeed a "perfect score").

For those students aiming for university selection, this change has no bearing on their current studies or their potential for acceptance to university.

The scaling process will be the same, the rank order of students will be the same, and the same applicants will be selected for the same courses.

Because they can no longer achieve a top rank of 100, won't this mean that the top students are disadvantaged?

No, because the ATAR is a ranking of students and the ranking won't change.

The scaling process will be the same, the rank order of students will be the same, and the same applicants will be selected for the same courses.

Any small change in an ATAR compared to a UAI will see an equivalent change in the course cut-off.

Students can still achieve the top rank. Achieving an ATAR of 99.95 is the same as achieving a UAI of 100 – you are in the top ranked group of students.

In fact, more students will now be included in the top ranking – while approximately 22 NSW students were in the top rank based on the UAI, there will now be approximately 45-50 NSW students in the top rank based on the ATAR. In the ACT, in place of 1 student with a top rank UAI of 100, there will be 2-3 students with the top rank based on the ATAR

Wouldn't NSW and ACT students have been better off with a maximum UAI of 100, when other states had a maximum rank of 99.95?

Previously, there was no advantage in getting a UAI of 100 in NSW and the ACT compared to 99.95 in the other states – the ranking was the same and they were considered equal.

The opportunity for students has not changed. Achieving an ATAR of 99.95 is the same as achieving a UAI of 100 – those students are in the top ranked group.

Why are students being compared with Year 7 students and not Year 10 students?

The ATAR will indicate a NSW student's position in relation to the Year 7 students they began high school with, rather than the Year 10 group used for the UAI.

The minimum leaving age in NSW is being raised from 15 to 17 years in 2011. When this happens all students will complete Year 10, which will produce a small shift in the distribution of ranks. Rather than waiting to make this change, it is being introduced now as part of the package of changes being made to introduce the ATAR.

What will the change to the Year 7 group mean for students?

For all practical purposes this change will have no effect. The scaling process will be the same, the rank order of students will be the same, and the same applicants will be selected for the same courses. While most students will receive a slightly higher ATAR than the equivalent UAI, this will be offset by an equivalent change in the course cut-off.

The reason most students will receive ATARs that are slightly higher than the equivalent UAI is that now students who have left school early will be included in the calculation.

Tables comparing UAIs and ATARs are available on UAC's website and will be included in the *UAC 2010 Guide*.

Will all students receive higher ATARs than their UAIs would have been?

No. Because of the change to the top rank from 100 to 99.95, a small number of students in the top four bands will receive ATARs 0.05 less than their UAIs would have been. Students who would have received a UAI of 100 will now receive an ATAR of 99.95, together with the top group of those who would have received a UAI of 99.95. The result is an increase in the number of students on the maximum rank from approximately 22 in NSW based on the UAI to approximately 45-50 in NSW based on the ATAR. In the ACT, in place of 1 student with a top rank UAI of 100, there will be 2-3 students with the top rank based on the ATAR.

This will have no impact on choice of university courses for 2010. Any change to ATAR compared with UAI will see an equivalent change in the course cut-off.

Tables comparing UAIs and ATARs are available on UAC's website and will be included in the *UAC 2010 Guide*.

I am a Year 12 student, what do these changes mean for me?

You should not be concerned as these changes will have very little effect.

The scaling process will be the same, the rank order of students will be the same, and the same applicants will be selected for the same courses.

Any small change in an ATAR compared to a UAI will see an equivalent change in the course cut-off.

The same students will receive entry to the same university courses under the ATAR as they would have under the UAI.

What will the changes mean for universities?

The changes will not affect university courses. Any small change in an ATAR compared to a UAI will see an equivalent change in the course cut-off.

The same students who would have received offers with their UAIs will receive offers with their ATARs.

Every year course cut-offs vary as a result of supply and demand and other factors. This year will be no different.

Will the changes make it easier or harder for NSW and ACT students to get into their preferred university courses?

The changes will have no effect on NSW and ACT students' potential for acceptance into their preferred university courses.

The scaling process will be the same, the rank order of students will be the same, and the same applicants will be selected for the same courses.

Some university prospectuses and guide books still list UAIs. Does that mean those unis will use UAIs?

No, all universities will offer courses based on ATARs. Although some universities have printed publications listing UAIs, the *UAC 2010 Guide*,

which is the definitive reference for students seeking university entry, will have comprehensive information about the ATAR, along with a UAI to ATAR conversion table and a list of ATAR cut-offs in the table of courses. Schools give every student a free copy of the Guide in late July.

Will this make it easier for me to get into a course interstate?

No, this won't change your ability to gain entry interstate as the equivalence between interstate ranks (except Queensland) has not changed.

Are the rules for an ATAR the same as for a UAI?

Yes, the eligibility rules for the ATAR are the same as for the UAI.

Has the scaling process changed?

No. The scaling process is the same, the way that aggregates are calculated is the same, and the rank order of students is the same. Only the number you get and the name it is given will be different.

I am a Year 10/Year 11 student, what do these changes mean for me?

For all practical purposes, nothing. These changes will not affect Year 10 or Year 11 students choosing their subjects. The scaling process has not changed and the advice to students is the same as it has always been – choose subjects that you are good at, that you are interested in and that will be useful for your future plans.

It is a myth that choosing particular subjects will maximise your university admission rank. In any event, choosing your subjects without thinking about what you are good at, what you are interested in and what you plan to do after school would be to trivialise your education.

I see from the conversion table that a small number of ATARs will be lower than the UAI, but some will be higher. If the ATAR I get is lower than the UAI, but other students get a higher ATAR compared to the UAI, isn't that unfair?

An ATAR (like a UAI) is simply a ranking of all students, so whether your ATAR is slightly higher or slightly lower than the equivalent UAI will have no impact on what university course you get into.

The scaling process will be the same. The rank order of students will be the same. And the same applicants will be selected for the same courses.

Any small change in an ATAR compared to a UAI will see an equivalent change in the course cut-off.

How will I know what ATAR I need to get into a course?

Tables comparing UAIs and ATARs are available on UAC's website, and the table of courses in the *UAC 2010 Guide* will include ATAR cut-offs for every course.

Remember that every year course cut-offs vary as a result of supply and demand and other factors.

This year will be no different. And any small change in an ATAR compared to a UAI will see an equivalent change in the course cut-off.

The same students who would have received offers with their UAIs will receive offers with their ATARs.

I have more questions – where can I get more information?

There is lots of information available on UAC's website at www.uac.edu.au or you can call UAC on 02 9752 0200.