**Australian Government**

# Improving the transparency of higher education admissions:

Joint higher education sector
and Australian Government
implementation plan

June 2017

# Contents

# Commitment

The following organisations affirm their commitment to:

- the principles and objectives outlined in this implementation plan for the higher education sector and Australian Government; and
- working with and supporting institutions to implement the actions outlined in the plan.

**Universities Australia**

**Australian Council for Private Education and Training**

**Council Of Private Higher Education**

**TAFE Directors Australia**

**Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres**

**Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities**

**Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency**

**Department of Education and Training**

# Introduction

In October 2016, following extensive consultation with higher education and secondary education stakeholders, the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) released its report *Improving the Transparency of Higher Education Admissions*. The HESP made 14 recommendations intended to:

- achieve greater transparency through the use of common language about admissions processes and the publication of consistent information
- widen the accessibility of information to prospective students
- improve the comparability of information available from providers about their admissions processes and entry criteria
- enhance the accountability of higher education providers for the information they publish about their admissions policies
- ensure all higher education providers are subject to the same reporting requirements
- give students, parents, teachers and career advisors the knowledge and capacity to more easily navigate higher education admissions policies and processes.

The recommendations include changes to the way the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) and other academic requirements are presented; as well as the need for clearer, easier to understand information about the wide range of different application and assessment pathways into higher education for school leavers, mature age students and others seeking entry.

This plan sets out the objectives and timeframes agreed to by key stakeholders in the Australian higher education sector to implement the HESP's recommendations.

A sector-led working group was established, with support from the Department of Education and Training, to develop a practical response to the HESP's report – a joint higher education sector and Australian Government plan to implement the HESP's recommendations (terms of reference at Appendix A). The working group consulted with relevant stakeholders to ensure their engagement with and commitment to the terms of the implementation plan.

The Implementation Working Group (IWG) comprised:

**Professor Kerri-Lee Krause**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, Victoria University (Chair)
**Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Australian National University
**Professor Allan Evans**, Provost and Chief Academic Officer, University of South Australia
**Emeritus Professor Sue Willis**, Former Vice-Provost (Education Programs), Monash University
**Ms Helen Zimmerman**, Head of Corporate Affairs, Navitas
**Ms Sarah Lye**, Student Senator, Australian Catholic University
**Ms Belinda Robinson**, Chief Executive, Universities Australia
**Mr Conor King**, Executive Director, Innovative Research Universities
**Dr David Christie**, Managing Director, Universities Admissions Centre (NSW & ACT) and Chair, Australasian Conference of Tertiary Admission Centres
**Mr Anthony McClaran**, Chief Executive Officer, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)

Admissions transparency implementation plan

*Benefits of greater transparency*
Through this implementation plan and the commitment to its objectives by the key representative organisations relevant to higher education admissions, the higher education sector is collectively committing to implement positive change.

The intended main beneficiaries of these changes are prospective higher education students, their families, schools and other influencers. Higher education providers, employers, the community at large and both Commonwealth and state and territory governments will also derive benefits if the transparency and effectiveness of higher education admissions policies and processes are enhanced.

Prospective students should be able to more readily identify the courses that will lead them to the career opportunities they seek and to apply for admission to those courses in a more informed way. They will be able to identify the full range of entry criteria, prerequisites, additional assessments and tests needed to be accepted into each course. It will be easier for them to find out about the range of academic and non-academic supports available to them at each institution, together with the financial and other relevant information needed to make their choices.

Students' families, schools, career advisers and other influencers should be able to more readily find useful information about the full range of study, career and application options, including specific options for students facing disadvantage or with special needs.

It is recognised that more consistent and transparent admissions information is not a "quick fix" for improving student retention and completion rates in higher education. Many students will continue to need support and advice in making course and study choices. Nevertheless, if students can make better informed decisions about the most appropriate course and institution for their needs, capabilities and career aspirations, they will be more likely to navigate their way successfully through the higher education system. This, in turn, is expected to complement existing institutional strategies for reducing the rate of student attrition.

Institutions will benefit if students are making better, more informed decisions about which course to enter, and should be able to more readily tailor their academic and support offerings to students' needs and circumstances.

Government – and through it the community and economy – will benefit through a more efficient targeting of precious taxpayer resources if it can be assured that students being accepted by institutions into subsidised higher education courses have the ambitions, the attributes and the necessary information and support to succeed at their studies and complete their qualification.

To ensure the achievement of all these benefits, the Government will consider whether it is necessary to require specific actions in response to the commitments embodied in this implementation plan, along with possible mechanisms for ensuring delivery of those actions. TEQSA will be asked to report periodically on the sector's progress in responding to the HESP's recommendations and complying with the commitments in this implementation plan. Other responses may be considered as needed, depending on the take-up of the committed actions.

The Government is committed to working closely with the sector and to investing in achievement of these goals, both through the development of this joint higher education sector and Australian Government implementation plan and development of a national admissions information platform.

# Purpose and principles

The key aim of the HESP recommendations is to drive consistency in the ways higher education providers present information about their admission criteria and processes, guided by agreed principles. The HESP identified what it considered the minimum range of information necessary to support informed choice by prospective students. It proposed that each higher education provider make a comparable range of information available about its admission policies and course entry criteria. The information should be easy to find and help prospective students, their families and others effectively compare available courses and providers. The HESP proposed that in at least one location – which it described as a "national admissions information platform" – information should be able to be lined up to enable direct comparison of admission criteria and application processes across different courses and providers.

As proposed by the HESP, the IWG agrees that the purpose of this consistency is to:

- make information on admissions policies available in a comparable way so that individuals can make better informed choices about providers and courses of study
- clarify the requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework with respect to transparency of admissions policies, and ensure that higher education providers know what they must do to fully meet those requirements
- reduce uncertainty among students and their teachers about what is required in order to be admitted to higher education, especially where admission is on the basis of the ATAR achieved
- give each higher education provider the capacity to promote a strong sense of its educational ethos and how admissions policies seek to contribute to that mission
- ensure higher education providers can be held accountable for the information they publish on their admissions policies.

It is also agreed that the following principles will guide the development and implementation of greater transparency in higher education admissions policies, processes and information:

- a student-centred approach to the provision of information about admissions
- higher education providers have autonomy over their admissions policies, consistent with the requirements set out in the Higher Education Standards Framework
- access to clear information relating to admissions criteria and various entry pathways is to be made available to all applicants equally
- the arrangements set out in this implementation plan apply equally to all higher education providers, universities and non-university higher education providers alike
- higher education providers are accountable for public claims against their stated admission policies
- improved transparency of higher education admissions policies and compliance with the terms of this implementation plan are not intended to add regulatory red-tape over and above what is necessary to comply with the Higher Education Standards Framework.

The initial focus is to support the choices of prospective domestic undergraduate students, including applicants for diploma, advanced diploma, associate degree and bachelor degree courses.

# Implementation objectives

The actions committed to in this implementation plan will deliver easier access to comprehensive and readily comparable information about the full range of study options, entry criteria and application processes at all registered Australian higher education providers.

Over the course of 2017 and 2018, six agreed objectives will be delivered through the actions set out in this plan:

1   Consistent presentation of admissions information
2   Adoption of common admissions terminology
3   Revised ATAR-related thresholds and definitions
4   Tertiary admission centres (TACs) to adopt more consistent approaches and reporting and streamline interstate application processes
5   TEQSA monitoring and guidance on improved admissions transparency
6   A new national admissions information platform

The first four of these will be delivered largely by the higher education sector itself. Delivery of the last two will be the responsibility of the Australian Government.

A staged approach has been adopted to ensure implementation and adjustment to the new arrangements is manageable for providers, and prospective students. The achievement of each of these commitments will commence in 2017 with some elements in place to assist students applying to enter higher education in 2018. Full implementation of all commitments will take longer but should be in place, at the latest, to assist students seeking to enter higher education in 2019. It will take time to fully reconfigure information technology systems and make changes to the content of printed publications and websites. A staged approach will provide the opportunity to undertake user testing with intended audiences and draw on the experience of implementing stage one in 2017 in order to refine approaches in 2018 and beyond.

The scope and detail of each of the six objectives is outlined below, along with target timeframes for delivering specific elements. A summary of the actions required to implement each of the objectives is outlined in the following section.

## Higher Education Sector-led Initiatives

### 1.   Consistent presentation of admissions information

All higher education providers – universities and non-universities alike – will adopt a common approach to the provision of information about:

- course and institutional entry criteria, including institution-wide policies and any course-specific academic or non-academic requirements or prerequisites
- available application or entry options for all domestic students – both school leavers and others – including any special or at-school offer schemes for particular target groups; plus information on the proportion of students entering by each applicant grouping
- the methods and policies used to assess applications including how any academic rank, auditions, portfolio assessments or other specified tests are used

- where ATAR is an element of the application assessment, details of any ATAR or selection rank criteria or thresholds that may apply, and how any available ATAR-related adjustments (e.g. equity or subject 'bonus points' or reduced thresholds) operate
- academic and non-academic supports available within or by referral from the institution, including access to career advice
- the cost of study
- financial support available including scholarships, student loans and fee discount schemes
- campus facilities, student life, social and sporting facilities, transport and accommodation options and student employment opportunities.

The need for increased consistency and comparability in the types of admission information available is not intended to drive standardisation in admissions policies. Instead, the aim is to ensure that, whatever those policies and criteria are, clear explanations of the full range of admission and application options and how eligibility for each is assessed are available to prospective students. The autonomy of institutions to set their own admission criteria and processes, consistent with the requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework, is recognised and encouraged.

The primary mechanism to achieve consistency is the adoption by institutions of common 'information sets' for the provision of course and institutional admissions information. These will set out the types of information that all higher education providers are expected to make available through publications and online presence – either through their own website or that of the relevant TAC. Where a specified type of information is not relevant to the institution or course or not available, this should be indicated for clarity.

The 'information sets' agreed for implementation in 2017 to convey whole-of-institution admission policies (Appendix C) and course-specific admission criteria (Appendix D) are presented in this plan. The IWG will continue to refine the detail of the 'information sets' through feedback from providers on their early experiences, testing with intended audiences and other means. In early 2018, the IWG will endorse final formats for the 'information sets' that the higher education sector can commit to adopting to inform students applying to enter higher education in the 2019 academic year.

Over time, all admission-related information will migrate to the new approach. From 2018 (to support applications for the 2019 academic year and beyond) it is expected that the agreed 'information sets' will be adopted for all provider and TAC admission information. While the full 'information set' should be available in at least one online location, it is not necessary to publish the full set in all locations. However, if a more limited selection of information is published in some locations – e.g. in a TAC handbook – the content should be consistent with the content in the full set – e.g. on the provider or TAC website.

If the full 'information sets' are not hosted on the provider's own website, links to the full institution and/or course set as relevant should be prominently located on the provider's site and easily found by prospective students looking for information.

It is recognised that it may take time to reach the level of sophistication to which both institutions and the guiding principles aspire. In 2017, a 'best endeavours' approach will be sufficient to ensure that the information is available in the agreed formats, even if this is as a separate document or series of documents, in addition to existing approaches on institution websites.

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***When:***
*(for achievement, at the latest, by the end of the month indicated)*
By June 2017: detail of provisional 'information sets' that set out the types of information and minimum information requirements that providers and, where appropriate, TACs will convey about institution-wide and course-specific admission options and entry criteria will be agreed and committed to by the sector – as set out in this plan.

By August 2017: all higher education providers will publish on their websites, or otherwise make readily available:

- information about their institutional admissions policies, consistent with the whole-of-institution 'information set' outlined at Appendix C.
- information about the admission criteria of each program/course or appropriate cluster of related courses offered by the institution, consistent with the course 'information set' outlined at Appendix D.

Language used in the 'information sets' will be consistent with the agreed common terminology and, where relevant, ATAR-related thresholds and definitions at Appendix B.

As an initial step in 2017, a 'best endeavours' approach will be adopted. If it is not possible to implement the agreed presentation of information throughout the institution's website during the stage 1 transition period, at the very least a separate document should be made available in a prominent location on the provider website that presents the requisite information agreed as required in 2017. However, providers are encouraged to go beyond the minimum requirement where possible.

Trialling use of the 'information sets' in this way in 2017 will help to identify any operational issues and to enable them to be refined for use in subsequent years.

By December 2017: the IWG will review and agree the structure and content of the 'information sets' for use in 2018 and beyond, in light of providers' experience in 2017 and the findings of TEQSA's initial work on a formative evaluation of sector responses to the HESP's recommendations. This review will draw on user feedback to fine-tune the elements of the 'information sets' and address any problems identified.

By May 2018: all TACs as well as higher education providers will adopt the agreed full 'information sets'. Online information will be available about institution-wide and program/course-specific admission options and entry criteria applicable to prospective students for the 2019 academic year. Information will also be available for inclusion in a national admissions information platform. Institutions should engage as needed with their publication partners to determine their own required timelines.

By July 2019: the Department of Education and Training will implement any necessary changes to data collection through the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) or other related information technology systems, to fully support the collection and reporting of data required to verify and deliver the 'information sets'.

## 2. Adoption of common admissions terminology

To enhance the ability of prospective students to compare course offerings across institutions, the sector will adopt consistent usage of agreed terms and phrases to describe common admission-related concepts and actions. This will help to reduce confusion and remove questions of difference arising where none exists.

This is particularly relevant to issues relating to special entry criteria and equity-related application options. Students seeking access through these schemes, or eligible to do so, may have difficulty discerning whether or not different language implies different requirements.

Appendix B sets out the common terms and ATAR-related definitions to be adopted in the initial stages of implementation. These are terms and concepts needed to support adoption of the 'information sets' at Appendices C and D in 2017. This includes terminology relating to the main applicant pathways into higher education and various types of ATAR-related adjustment factors that may be available depending on students' circumstances.

It also outlines new expressions for ATAR-related reporting. In 2017 these may be used alongside current reporting of ATAR "cut-off" and "clearly-in" rankings. From information supporting 2019 admissions onwards, use of those legacy terms should be discontinued by all stakeholders and replaced by the new terms.

Over the rest of 2017, the IWG in consultation with stakeholders will refine and agree a more comprehensive list of common terms and definitions that the entire higher education sector can commit to adopting for use in information for applicants to study in 2019.

*When:*
By June 2017: initial set of common terms, admission-related concepts and definitions necessary to support implementation of the sector-wide common 'information sets' will be determined and common language agreed –as set out in this plan.

By August 2017: information published by providers in accordance with the whole-of-institution and program/course 'information sets' at Appendices C and D will utilise language consistent with the initial set of agreed common terms.

By September 2017: a final proposal for a comprehensive set of common admissions terminology will be developed and agreed by the IWG for sector consultation, agreement and then commitment by the end of November 2017.

By December 2017: sector commitment to final proposal for common admissions terminology.

By May 2018: all higher education providers, TACs and the other organisations committing to this implementation plan will adopt usage of the agreed set of common terms, concepts and definitions in their admission-related printed publications and online information to support applicants to study in 2019.

### 3. Revised ATAR-related thresholds and definitions

To ensure the clarity, usefulness and public credibility of published ATAR course entry thresholds and reporting on admissions in a previous year, the definitions of these figures will be amended to include the impact of all rounds of offers for places in higher education courses.

Four new ATAR-related threshold terms are set out in Appendix B. It is intended that from mid-2018, in all published information to support applications to study in 2019, these terms will replace the current usage of ATAR "cut-off", "clearly-in" or any other ATAR-related figures that do not include the impact of all offer rounds. For 2017, these figures should at least be reflected in the ATAR profile in the course 'information set' for institutions that select students wholly or partly on the basis of ATAR.

Where ATAR-related thresholds or the outcomes of past admissions are published, it will be made clear whether the figures include the impact of any ATAR-related adjustment schemes that students may be eligible to access (e.g. 'bonus points' or reduced thresholds) or whether they are exclusive of the effects of any ATAR-related adjustments that may have been applied.

For *prospective* thresholds that indicate who may be admitted to a course on the basis of ATAR, institutions should indicate whether these relate solely to the student's unadjusted (sometimes referred to as the 'raw' ATAR); or alternatively to a selection rank that can be achieved through a combination of the 'raw' ATAR plus any adjustment factors for which they may be eligible (e.g. equity or subject-related 'bonus points', credit for other credentials such as completed vocational education and training (VET) certificates, work experience, etc.).

When reporting the ATAR profile of *past* offers where ATAR was a factor in the selection process, institutions will need to publish a profile of the lowest, highest, median and quartile ATARs *exclusive* of any adjustment factors that may have applied – i.e. the 'raw' ATAR. A complementary profile of selection ranks that *include* the impact of any adjustment factors may also be provided, in order to convey the range of ranks offered places after the impacts of any ATAR-related adjustments such as equity or subject 'bonus points' of other factors were taken into account (see the table at Appendix D, item 3.C).

***When:***
By June 2017: revised definitions and naming conventions for ATAR-related thresholds and reporting figures will be agreed –as set out in this plan.

By August 2017: all providers will adopt the revised definitions and naming conventions for the publication of ATAR-related thresholds and reporting of past year admissions in 'information sets' to inform and support applications relating to the 2018 academic year and beyond.

By May 2018: all providers and TACs will continue to use the revised definitions and naming conventions for the publication of ATAR-related thresholds and reporting of past year admissions in 'information sets' and discontinue the publication of ATAR "cut-off", "clearly-in" or other previously reported ATAR threshold figures that do not include the outcomes of all offer rounds for the relevant period.

## 4. Tertiary admission centres to adopt more consistent approaches and reporting and streamline interstate application processes

Like other sector stakeholders, by May 2018, TACs will adopt the common terminology and language developed, together with agreed 'information sets' as the basis for presenting information to prospective students seeking to enter higher education in the 2019 academic year. It is recognised that the lead time for TAC publications to support secondary student course and institution choice and application processes is significant. In most jurisdictions, preparation commences by February. Given this, there is no expectation that TACs will deliver updated information products during 2017. The aim will be to provide information that is presented consistent with the new approach to support students seeking to enter higher education in 2019.

In addition to this, TACs will develop improved reporting on the outcomes of higher education offers, acceptances and enrolments, such that there will be greater consistency in the availability, detail and format of published data and other information. This will enable an enhanced level of comparability and consistency in the information reported in each jurisdiction about the operation of the higher education market.

Reporting products will be revised and improved progressively, with priority given to developing an agreed core suite of standard reported data on admissions to study in the 2018 academic year and a more comprehensive suite of standard reports on admissions in the 2019 academic year.

TACs will also develop and implement a more streamlined approach to accepting and managing applications for courses at institutions that have membership of another TAC in a different jurisdiction. This streamlined approach is expected to reduce the current complexity and sometimes multiple additional application fees for prospective students. It may be that some additional fee will remain for students making interstate applications, however.

It is anticipated that students will be able to apply through their local TAC to enter any Australian higher education course at any provider that uses the services of a TAC to manage applications for and offers of places. This may be a separate process to the normal preference-based selection system within the jurisdiction but should remove the current need for students to lodge multiple applications through different TACs and to pay multiple separate fees for each application to be assessed.

*NB: this excludes situations where a TAC may be managing direct applications to an institution on the institution's behalf. For the purposes of this initiative, "tertiary admission centre" includes the University of Tasmania, which accepts and manages applications in Tasmania.*

***When:***
By August 2017: TACs will develop and commence transition to a more streamlined approach to the acceptance and assessment of applications for courses at providers that are a member of a TAC in another jurisdiction.

By December 2017: TACs will agree a core suite of standard reports to be produced with consistent content and presentation on admissions to higher education in the 2018 academic year.

Throughout 2018: TACs will produce the agreed core suite of standard reports with consistent content and presentation on admissions to higher education in the 2018 academic year.

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By May 2018: all TACs will adopt the agreed 'information sets' for provision of information about institution-wide and course-specific admission options and entry criteria applicable to prospective students for the 2019 academic year and beyond.

By May 2018: all TACs will adopt usage of the agreed set of common terms, concepts and definitions in their admission-related printed publications and online information.

By December 2018: TACs will agree a more comprehensive core suite of standard reports to be produced with consistent content and presentation on admissions to higher education in the 2019 academic year.

Throughout 2019: TACs will produce the agreed minimum suite of reports with consistent content and presentation on admissions to higher education in the 2019 academic year.

## Australian Government-led Initiatives

### 5.  TEQSA monitoring and guidance on improved admissions transparency

Once the details of common terminology and language and the adoption of 'information sets' have been agreed by the sector through the arrangements set out in this plan, TEQSA will develop written guidance on the types of evidence it would expect to see to demonstrate compliance with those commitments in order to satisfy the admissions transparency elements of the Higher Education Standards Framework.

TEQSA's guidance will take account of this implementation plan and the detailed stakeholder engagement undertaken by the IWG and its technical sub-working groups to respond to the HESP's recommendations.

The aim of the guidance will be to assist higher education providers of all types, scales and sophistication to engage proactively with the new sector-wide commitments and develop their own tailored responses to the need for greater transparency of admissions-related information for prospective students and the community at large. The guidance will recognise that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution; that every provider has the scope to differentiate itself in the market and tailor the presentation of information to its needs and mission.

In the 2017-18 Budget, the Government provided additional ongoing funding to TEQSA to enable it to monitor and support engagement by higher education providers with the HESP's recommendations. TEQSA will commence a formative evaluation of sector compliance with the enhanced admissions transparency commitments in this plan, including:

- a desktop audit of initial responses to the implementation plan
- assessment of how this relates to the admissions transparency requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation of how the response to the HESP's recommendations takes effect over time.

In 2019-20 TEQSA will undertake a comprehensive review and complete an evaluation of sector responses to the HESP recommendations. The completed evaluation will inform recommendations about any actions needed to further refine the transparency and accountability of provider

admission policies, processes and information. As far as possible, TEQSA will draw on publicly available information to minimise any additional regulatory burden on providers.

If a provider chose not to publish admissions information that was consistent with the agreed 'information sets' and the sector-wide commitments embodied in this plan, the onus would clearly be on that provider to demonstrate how their approach complies with the transparency requirements of the Higher Education Standards.

***When:***
By October 2017: TEQSA will undertake initial work on a formative evaluation of sector responses to the HESP's recommendations to provide a progress snapshot of the sector in its move towards greater transparency of higher education admissions.

By December 2017: TEQSA will release a draft guidance note on admissions transparency for stakeholder comment, informed by findings and evidence gathered in the formative evaluation.

By February 2018: TEQSA will commence monitoring and reporting to government and the community on how higher education providers are responding to the HESP's recommendations and commitments embodied in this implementation plan in order to transition to an enhanced level of transparency in higher education admissions.

By March 2020: TEQSA will undertake a review and complete an evaluation of sector responses to the HESP report and make recommendations to government on the need for further reforms to embed greater transparency in provider admission policies and processes.

## 6. A new national admissions information platform

The Department of Education and Training will undertake a research discovery project to inform the development of the platform in line with the Digital Transformation Agency's Digital Service Standard. The department will also work with stakeholders and relevant partners in the higher education sector, including the TACs, and state and territory governments to develop a new online information source that will provide a useful first point of contact for prospective students seeking information on higher education courses and providers.

The national admissions information platform will respond to the needs of students seeking information about institutions, courses, admission criteria and application pathways. It will be based on user research which examines how students use current services and identify what they think needs improvement.

A user-centric approach to design of the information to be presented will ensure it is easier for prospective students and their families to access the information they need to help make decisions about courses and providers before considering making an application. It is envisaged that initially the primary audience for the platform will be current and prospective domestic undergraduate students, with possible future expansion to include information relevant to admissions for international students.

A key feature of the national admissions information platform will be the capacity to directly compare the admission policies, courses and admission criteria across different higher education providers. The lack of ready comparability in currently available information was a key concern that

the HESP sought to address through its recommendations. Delivering this comparability will be critical to the success of the national admissions information platform in empowering informed choice by prospective students.

Adequate support to school students, their parents, schools, teachers and career advisers to use the new national admissions information platform will be critical to its success. As the national admissions information platform is developed, the Department of Education and Training, in consultation with stakeholders, will develop and promote appropriate online supporting materials to help prospective students, their families, schools, teachers and career educators to make the most of the new resources and functionality developed.

***When:***
By July 2017: the Department of Education and Training will begin consultations with prospective partner agencies and other stakeholders on options to develop, deliver and sustain a new higher education national admissions information platform.

By July 2017: the Department of Education and Training, working in conjunction with the Digital Transformation Agency, will complete an initial scoping study to assess core user needs and design and test options for a new higher education national admissions information platform.

By October 2017: the Department of Education and Training will enter into a development agreement with selected partner organisations to develop, deliver and maintain a new higher education national admissions information platform.

By December 2017: the national admissions information platform will begin a phased approach to delivery with an initial proof of concept release intended for December 2017.

By August 2018: the national admissions information platform will be operational to support students seeking to enter higher education in the 2019 academic year.

# Implementation overview and timeline

This section summarises the agreed objectives set out in this implementation plan in their order of proposed delivery as part of a three-stage process.

| By when | Category | Who | Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | STAGE ONE |
| Jun-17 | Terminology | IWG Peaks | Initial set of common terms, admission-related concepts and definitions necessary to support implementation of the sector-wide common 'information sets' will be determined and common language agreed –as set out in this plan. |
| | Consistent information | IWG Peaks | Detail of provisional 'information sets' that set out the types of information and minimum information requirements that providers and, where appropriate, TACs will convey about institution-wide and course-specific admission options and entry criteria will be agreed and committed to by the sector – as set out in this plan. |
| | ATAR-related | IWG Peaks | Revised definitions and naming conventions for ATAR-related thresholds and reporting figures will be agreed –as set out in this plan. |
| | Information platform | DET | The Department of Education and Training will begin consultations with prospective partner agencies and other stakeholders on options to develop, deliver and sustain a new higher education national admissions information platform. |
| Jul-17 | Information platform | DET | The Department of Education and Training, working in conjunction with the Digital Transformation Agency, will complete an initial scoping study to assess core user needs and design options for a new higher education national admissions information platform. |
| Aug-17 | Consistent information | Providers | All higher education providers will publish on their websites, or otherwise make readily available:<br>• information about their institutional admissions policies, consistent with the whole-of-institution 'information set' outlined at Appendix C.<br>• information about the admission criteria of each program/course or appropriate cluster of related courses offered by the institution, consistent with the course 'information set' outlined at Appendix D.<br><br>Language used in the 'information sets' will be consistent with the agreed common terminology and, where relevant, ATAR-related thresholds and definitions at Appendix B.<br><br>As an initial step in 2017, a 'best endeavours' approach will be adopted. If it is not possible to implement the agreed presentation of information throughout the institution's website during the stage 1 transition |

| By when | Category | Who | Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | period, at the very least a separate document should be made available in a prominent location on the provider website that presents the requisite information agreed as required in 2017. Where possible, though, providers are encouraged to attempt to go beyond the minimum requirement. |
| Aug-17 | Terminology | Providers | Information published by providers in accordance with the whole-of-institution and course 'information sets' at Appendices C and D will utilise language consistent with the initial set of agreed common terms. |
| | ATAR-related | Providers | All providers will adopt the revised definitions and naming conventions for the publication of ATAR-related thresholds and reporting of past year admissions in 'information sets' to inform and support applications relating to the 2018 academic year and beyond. |
| | TACs and interstate applications | TACs | TACs will develop and commence transition to a more streamlined approach to the acceptance and assessment of applications for courses at providers that are a member of a TAC in another jurisdiction. |
| STAGE TWO | | | |
| Sep-17 | Terminology | IWG | A final proposal for a comprehensive set of common admissions terminology will be developed and agreed by the IWG for sector consultation, agreement and then commitment by the end of November 2017. |
| Oct-17 | Information platform | DET | The Department of Education and Training will enter into a development agreement with selected partner organisations to develop, deliver and maintain a new higher education admissions information platform. |
| | TEQSA guidance | TEQSA | TEQSA will undertake initial work on a formative evaluation of sector responses to the HESP's recommendations to provide a progress snapshot of the sector in its move towards greater transparency of higher education admissions. |
| Dec-17 | Consistent information | IWG | The IWG will review and agree the structure and content of the 'information sets' for use in 2018 and beyond, in light of providers' experience in 2017 and the findings of TEQSA's initial work on a formative evaluation of sector responses to the HESP's recommendations. This review will draw on user feedback to fine-tune the elements of the 'information sets' and address any problems identified.. |
| | Consistent information | IWG Peaks | Sector commitment to final proposal for common admissions terminology. |
| | TACs and interstate applications | TACs | TACs will agree a core suite of standard reports to be produced with consistent content and presentation on admissions to higher education in the 2018 academic year. |
| | TEQSA guidance | TEQSA | TEQSA will release a draft guidance note on admissions transparency for stakeholder comment, informed by findings and evidence gathered in the formative evaluation. |

| By when | Category | Who | Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dec-17 | Information platform | DET | The national admissions information platform will begin a phased approach to delivery with an initial proof of concept release intended for December 2017. |
| 2018 | TACs and interstate applications | TACs | TACs will produce the agreed core suite of standard reports with consistent content and presentation on admissions to higher education in the 2018 academic year. |
| Feb-18 | TEQSA guidance | TEQSA | TEQSA will commence monitoring and reporting to government and the community on how higher education providers are responding to the HESP's recommendations and commitments embodied in this implementation plan in order to transition to an enhanced level of transparency in higher education admissions. |
| May-18 | Consistent information | TACs Providers | All TACs as well as higher education providers will adopt the agreed full 'information sets'. Online information will be available about institution-wide and program/course-specific admission options and entry criteria applicable to prospective students for the 2019 academic year. Information will also be available for inclusion in a national admissions information platform. Institutions should engage as needed with their publication partners to determine their own required timelines. |
| | Terminology | TACs Providers | All higher education providers, TACs and the other organisations committing to this implementation plan will adopt usage of the agreed set of common terms, concepts and definitions in their admission-related printed publications and online information to support applicants to study in 2019. |
| | ATAR-related | TACs Providers | All providers and TACs will continue to use the revised definitions and naming conventions for the publication of ATAR-related thresholds and reporting of past year admissions in 'information sets' and discontinue the publication of ATAR "cut-off", "clearly-in" or other previously reported ATAR threshold figures that do not include the outcomes of all offer rounds for the relevant period. |
| | TACs and interstate applications | TACs | All TACs will adopt the agreed 'information sets' for provision of information about institution-wide and course-specific admission options and entry criteria applicable to prospective students for the 2019 academic year and beyond. |
| STAGE THREE | | | |
| Aug-18 | Information platform | DET | The national admissions information platform will be operational to support students seeking to enter higher education in the 2019 academic year. |
| Dec-18 | TACs and interstate applications | TACs | TACs will agree a more comprehensive core suite of standard reports to be produced with consistent content and presentation on admissions to higher education in the 2019 academic year. |

| By when | Category | Who | Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2019 | TACs and interstate applications | TACs | TACs will produce the agreed core suite of standard reports with consistent content and presentation on admissions to higher education in the 2019 academic year. |
| Jul-19 | Consistent information | DET | The Department of Education and Training will implement any necessary changes to data collection through the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) or other related information technology systems, to fully support the collection and reporting of data required to verify and deliver the 'information sets'. |
| Mar-20 | TEQSA guidance | TEQSA | TEQSA will undertake a review and complete an evaluation of sector responses to the HESP report and make recommendations to government on the need for further reforms to embed greater transparency in provider admission policies and processes. |

# Provider timetable at a glance: what providers need to do by when

This section sets out the key milestones and timelines that higher education providers will need to meet in order to deliver the outcomes envisaged in this implementation plan – for achievement, at the latest, by the end of the month indicated.

| By when | Category | Objective |
|---------|----------|-----------|
| Aug-17 | Consistent information | All higher education providers will publish on their websites, or otherwise make readily available:<br>• information about their institutional admissions policies, consistent with the whole-of-institution 'information set' outlined at Appendix C.<br>• information about the admission criteria of each program/course or appropriate cluster of related courses offered by the institution, consistent with the course 'information set' outlined at Appendix D.<br><br>Language used in the 'information sets' will be consistent with the agreed common terminology and, where relevant, ATAR-related thresholds and definitions at Appendix B.<br><br>As an initial step in 2017, a 'best endeavours' approach will be adopted. If it is not possible to implement the agreed presentation of information throughout the institution's website during the stage 1 transition period, at the very least a separate document should be made available in a prominent location on the provider website that presents the requisite information agreed as required in 2017. Where possible, though, providers are encouraged to attempt to go beyond the minimum requirement. |
| | Terminology | Information published by providers and TACs in accordance with the whole-of-institution and course 'information sets' at Appendices C and D will utilise language consistent with the initial set of agreed common terms. |
| | ATAR-related | All providers will adopt the revised definitions and naming conventions for the publication of ATAR-related thresholds and reporting of past year admissions in 'information sets' to inform and support applications relating to the 2018 academic year and beyond. |
| May-18 | Consistent information | All TACs as well as higher education providers will adopt the agreed full 'information sets'. Online information will be available about institution-wide and program/course-specific admission options and entry criteria applicable to prospective students for the 2019 academic year. Information will also be available for inclusion in a national admissions information platform. Institutions should engage as needed with their publication partners to determine their own required timelines. |

| By when | Category | Objective |
|---|---|---|
| May-18 | Terminology | All higher education providers, TACs and the other organisations committing to this implementation plan will adopt usage of the agreed set of common terms, concepts and definitions in their admission-related printed publications and online information to support applicants to study in 2019. |
| | ATAR-related | All providers and TACs will discontinue the publication of ATAR "cut-off", "clearly-in" or other previously reported ATAR threshold figures that do not include the outcomes of all offer rounds for the relevant period. |

# Appendix A: Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group Terms of Reference

The Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group (IWG) will:

***In scope:***

Implementation plan

1   By end May 2017, develop a plan to implement the recommendations from the Higher Education Standards Panel' s *Improving the Transparency of Higher Education Admissions* report, which captures the agreed actions to which higher education sector stakeholders and relevant government agencies commit.

2   Consult with relevant stakeholders to ensure their engagement with and commitment to the terms of the implementation plan.

Information presentation and reporting

3   Develop and endorse a statement of sector intent to adopt principles proposed by the HESP to facilitate transparency of higher education admission policies, processes and practices. (Recommendations 1, 2)

4   Agree the detail of national templates for consistent and comparable presentation by higher education providers, tertiary admission centres and government of higher education provider and course admission pathways, options, requirements and reporting, including any new data collection required to support this. The templates include provision for the publication of information on all ATAR and non-ATAR application and assessment options. (Recommendations 4, 5, 8, 9)

5   Agree the terms of sector-wide engagement with the development by government and other relevant stakeholders of a new national admissions information platform. (Recommendations 7, 10)

Consistent language

6   Agree the admission-related issues for which consistent terminology would be beneficial and develop and endorse the common terminology to be adopted. (Recommendations 3, 6)

ATAR-related definitions

7   Review and agree the naming and definitions for ATAR-related thresholds and reporting, such that these reflect the impact of all rounds of offers for places in higher education (Recommendation 5), including:

   a.   the lowest ATAR admitted to a course in the previous year
   b.   where relevant, the lowest ATAR guaranteed to be accepted in the coming year
   c.   provider, tertiary admission centre and government ATAR-related reporting on offers, acceptances and previous year enrolments.

Interstate application processes

8   Recommend or endorse a proposed national approach to the management of cross-border applications by tertiary admission centres. Consider whether the HESP's recommendations can be achieved while retaining the current arrangement of separate tertiary admission centres in

Admissions transparency implementation plan

different jurisdictions, or if a more consolidated national approach is advisable. (Recommendation 6)

<u>Accountability</u>

9   Endorse and champion an accountability framework to monitor and report on achievement of the sector-wide commitments agreed in the implementation plan. (Recommendation 11)

10  Engage with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency's (TEQSA) development of formal guidance and monitoring of compliance with those commitments. (Recommendations 11, 12)

*Out of scope*

The IWG will help facilitate information flow with stakeholders where necessary, but will not be responsible for the following:

- Implementation by the tertiary admission centres of a more streamlined approach to cross-jurisdictional application processes (Recommendation 6 (part))
- Development of a national admissions information platform (Recommendations 7, 10, 13)

The Department of Education and Training will separately establish a process with relevant stakeholders to develop and implement a new national admissions information platform (website). This will be developed in collaboration with tertiary admission centres and other relevant stakeholders as necessary. (Recommendations 7, 10)

An online guide to usage of the national admissions information platform will be developed to support and enable its use by prospective students, their families, advisers, schools and career educators. (Recommendation 13)

Development of TEQSA's approach to monitoring compliance with the sector's commitments to improved transparency in higher education admissions (Recommendations 11, 12)

Once an implementation plan is developed, TEQSA will develop enhanced guidance on the types of evidence it considers will demonstrate compliance with the transparency requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015.

Further consideration and assessment of the factors and approaches that contribute to student success, completion and attrition rates in higher education (Recommendation 14)

The Higher Education Standards Panel has been tasked with this project in 2017.

*Sub-working groups*

The IWG will have the capacity to form sub-working groups to give detailed focus to technical or more specialised issues, including the agreement and detail of:

- common admissions terminology and definitions
- redefinition of ATAR-related thresholds and indicators to include the impact of all rounds of offers of places in higher education
- common sector-wide templates for the publication of institution level admissions policies and admission requirements, application pathways and other related information applicable to individual courses/fields of study, depending on the context

- streamlined processes for the acceptance and assessment of applications across state and territory borders

## Appendix B: Common terminology and data definitions

This appendix sets out the agreed common terms and data definitions to assist providers in compiling the 'information sets' outlined in Appendix C and D.

These terms and definitions have been committed to by the higher education sector for use in stage 1 of implementing improvements to the transparency of higher education admissions. Appendix B also provides definitions of selected admission-related terms used in this implementation plan.

### 1. Grouping of applicants

The following grouping of applicants is to be used for two key purposes in the whole-of-institution and program/course 'information sets':

- initially directing prospective students, family and others to the admission criteria and other related information that may be most relevant to their circumstances; and
- reporting on the outcomes of past admission periods.

These groupings should not be read as indicating how higher education providers or TACs might actually assess eligibility for applicants in each group as a wide range of academic and non-academic factors can often be taken into account regardless of whether an applicant is a recent school leaver or has been out of school for some time. Rather, the four broad groups relate primarily to the most relevant study or work background of the applicant.

**Group A. Higher education study**

- Applicants whose highest level of study enrolment since leaving secondary education is a higher education course.
- Includes study at university and non-university higher education providers, whether recent (such as students seeking to transfer to another higher education provider or changing course at the same provider) or some time ago.
- Such applicants may have other qualifications also; notably a Year 12 certificate or previous VET qualification. However, their past higher education performance is likely to be most relevant in guiding future application options.
- Includes students who have completed a bridging or enabling course delivered by or on behalf of a higher education provider.

**Group B. Vocational education training (VET) study**

- Applicants whose highest level of study enrolment since leaving secondary education is a VET course.
- Includes study at a public TAFE or other VET provider, whether a qualification was completed or not.
- May have other qualifications such as a Year 10 or Year 12 secondary school certificate.

**Group C. Recent secondary education**

- Applicants whose admission is based mostly on secondary education undertaken at school, TAFE or other VET or higher education provider (Australian or overseas equivalent) within the previous two years.
- Primarily for those who have completed Year 12 within the last two years, but also includes those who may have completed their senior secondary studies with a TAFE or other VET provider within the same timeframe.
- Limiting this group to those completing secondary studies in the two previous calendar years ensures data consistency and meets the need to understand the outcome for the current or near-to-current Year 12 cohort.
- It also seems likely that people who completed Year 12 several years or decades ago will not consider themselves the same as a recent school leaver – they will want to know about people more like them. For the purpose of this grouping, these applicants fall under the "work and life experience" category below.
- This group includes students who may have undertaken or completed some VET or higher education study while still at school.
- It includes applicants whose secondary education was undertaken interstate or overseas.

**Group D. Work and life experience**

- Applicants who left secondary education more than two years previously and have not undertaken VET or higher education study since then.
- "Experience" could include a combination of factors sufficient to demonstrate readiness for higher education. Includes mature age entry, professional experience whether completion of the Special Tertiary Admission Test (STAT) is required or not, community involvement or work experience.
- Applicants may have undertaken non-formal programs that have helped prepare them for tertiary education or are relevant to the proposed higher education field of study.

For data and reporting purposes, each person should be allocated to <u>one category only</u>. Where a person has multiple previous educational outcomes, the following hierarchy should be followed, with the applicant allocated to the first eligible group. If the person has completed:

- some or all of a higher education qualification since leaving school – to Group A.
- some or all of a Certificate IV or higher VET qualification since leaving school – to Group B.
- Year 12 or equivalent in the previous two years (with or without an ATAR awarded) – to Group C.
- none of the above – to Group D.

Many school students undertake VET certificates, commonly certificates II and III but potentially IV. Such study may well be taken into account by a TAC or higher education provider in determining whether to offer the person a place in higher education. For reporting purposes, however, if VET or higher education courses were undertaken while still at school, the person would still fall into the recent secondary education group (Group C).

## 2. Disaggregating recent secondary education leavers category

The "recent secondary education" category is further divided into three subgroups, according to the extent to which the student's ATAR is critical to the assessment of eligibility for admission. The three subgroups are:

i. those assessed on the basis of ATAR alone (OP in QLD) or a selection rank incorporating ATAR-related adjustment factors relevant to the applicant, e.g. equity or subject 'bonus points', reduced ATAR threshold, etc. (includes students admitted on the basis of an International Baccalaureate Diploma score converted to a notional ATAR);

ii. those assessed on a combination of ATAR plus other criteria such as an additional test, interview, audition, portfolio assessment or non-academic attributes;

iii. those assessed on other criteria alone and ATAR was not a factor (e.g. special consideration, audition alone, schools recommendation scheme where no ATAR threshold applies).

In cases where multiple factors contribute to the student's selection rank, institutions will need to make a judgment about the most appropriate category in which to report that student's data. In each case, consistent with the approach used to record data on the basis of admission in the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS), it is the primary basis of admission assessment that should guide the allocation to the three subgroups.

Subgroup (i) is intended to capture students for whom their selection rank was effectively automatically calculated based on their ATAR, demographic and other reported characteristics. For example, if a student is offered a place after having been awarded 'bonus points' for elite sports participation, attendance at a disadvantaged school or to compensate for some personal disruption during exam time, they would be allocated into group (i) as they are admitted primarily on the basis of their ATAR, albeit with some adjustment factors taken into account.

Subgroup (ii) is intended to capture cases where ATAR is a significant factor but another non-ATAR criterion is also significant – examples could include where:

- an audition or portfolio assessment is required for entry to an arts program but the applicant must also meet a minimum ATAR requirement;
- an early offer is made on the basis of non-ATAR criteria such as a school principal's recommendation, dux or prefect award, but a minimum ATAR threshold must be achieved;
- a highly competitive ATAR is required due to limited availability of places but an additional test such as the Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admission Test (UMAT) or Law School Admission Test (LSAT) or similar is also required.

Subgroup (iii) is intended to capture cases where the primary basis of admission is non-ATAR factors. This would include cases where the main evidence considered is:

- individual school subject results, interviews, personal statements or other similar approaches;
- a VET certificate or diploma completed while at school.

It would also include where someone with a low ATAR is admitted primarily on the basis of other factors. For example, if a student with a very low ATAR due to the impact of severe family disruption over several months is offered a place in a course due to a supportive reference from their school principal, the ATAR is clearly not the main element driving the admission. Regardless of whether the

low ATAR may have contributed in some small way to calculation of the student's selection rank by a TAC, it would be unreasonable to include such a student in the ATAR-related subgroups (i) or (ii) as it would distort the reported data. They should be allocated to the non-ATAR subgroup (iii).

HEIMS does not currently capture sufficient information to distinguish whether additional factors besides ATAR, such as an interview, portfolio assessment or audition, are relevant to an admission decision. A future enhancement to HEIMS is planned in order to do this. In the meantime, institutions will need to derive this distinction themselves.

## 3. New ATAR-related thresholds

New ATAR-related threshold figures have been defined in order to address a key concern of the HESP – that the existing commonly reported ATAR threshold figures are open to manipulation and gaming and do not always convey the meaning that some readers assume.

The following new ATAR-related threshold terms are adopted for use in the program/course admission information set where ATAR is a basis for assessing eligibility for admission – either alone or in combination with other factors. Use of the existing terms "ATAR cut-off" and "Clearly-in ATAR" will be discontinued in information supporting applications for the 2019 academic year and beyond.

### A. Lowest ATAR to which an offer was made in [year] (exclusive of any adjustment factors)

This is the lowest "raw" or unadjusted ATAR of an applicant to which an offer of a place was made in the relevant year-to-date. It must include the impact of all offers made regardless of whether or not these included adjustment factors such as equity or subject 'bonus points' or, alternatively, where the ATAR threshold may have been lowered due to equity considerations. It is not just the figure for those who had no adjustments.

This unadjusted figure must <u>always</u> be reported when describing the ATAR profile of applicants offered places or those who enrolled in a course. The reason is that only the unadjusted figure is truly comparable like-for-like between different courses and providers. The algorithms to calculate the selection ranks actually used to determine offers of places are generally different for each institution. A student applying to multiple institutions may have a different selection rank with each one.

Where there is a desire to report a figure that includes the impact of bonus points, etc., in addition to the unadjusted figure, the following term is to be used:

### B. Lowest selection rank to which an offer was made in [year] (including the impact of ATAR and any adjustment factors)

Providers may wish to report the lowest selection rank as a companion to the lowest ATAR figure above. This can be used to demonstrate, for example, that, while some applicants with relatively low ATARs may have been offered places in a course, other factors suggested those students had a higher effective level of academic ability than may be reflected in the ATAR alone.

Applicants applying through a TAC and to most universities are generally allocated a "selection rank" that combines the applicant's ATAR with contributions from all other relevant evidence of aptitude for higher education study – such as any VET or higher education courses undertaken, past

employment experience, community engagement, results from the STAT, etc., plus any equity-related or subject adjustment factors a school leaver may attract. For a recent Year 12 student with no employment experience and no ATAR-related adjustment factors, their selection rank will likely be based solely on their ATAR; however many applicants bring a range of other experiences and evidence that can support their claim to a place in higher education.

It is this selection rank that most universities actually use in determining who to make an offer to – not simply the ATAR. The formulas used to calculate selection ranks, however, are different for each institution and sometimes for different courses within an institution.

Not all institutions use ATAR-related adjustment factors in calculating selection ranks. For those that do not, it is not necessary to publish this figure. For those that do use such adjustment factors, publication of this figure is optional at all times.

**C.    Minimum ATAR/selection rank required for consideration to enter in next intake**

This term may be used where a minimum floor ATAR must be achieved to be considered for admission to a course or institution. Achieving such a minimum ATAR would not provide a guarantee of entry. Indeed, the lowest ATAR offered a place may be much higher. The existence of such a figure, though, signals that no recent secondary education applicant with an ATAR below this figure will be considered.

Not all institutions set a floor or minimum ATAR requirement for courses or the institution as a whole but some do. Use of this threshold is optional and only necessary where it is relevant.

**D.    Guaranteed Entry ATAR/Selection Rank**

This term is for use where achievement of a specified ATAR or selection rank (as appropriate) will guarantee acceptance into a course or institution, subject to any non-ATAR criteria being met, such as prerequisite study or English language proficiency.

Again, not all institutions offer guaranteed admission at a specified ATAR or selection rank threshold but some do. Use of this threshold is optional and only necessary where it is relevant.

## 4.    Definitions of additional key terms used in this implementation plan

The terms below have been used in this implementation plan, with the following meaning:

| | |
|---|---|
| ATAR<br>Australian Tertiary Admission Rank | A ranking from 30 (lowest) to 99.95 (highest) agreed by COAG as a nationally equivalent measure of a person's relative academic ranking within their peer cohort in the year they graduated from senior secondary school. The ATAR is derived from the scaled scores achieved for senior secondary school subjects. The specific calculation used is different in each state and territory but the result is designed to be nationally equivalent. |
| ATAR-related adjustments<br>Adjustment factors | Considerations such as equity or subject 'bonus points' or lowered ATAR thresholds that may be taken into account to |

adjust the effective selection rank of an applicant. The availability and parameters of any such adjustments are determined by institutions themselves and, other than in South Australia, may vary from provider to provider. Adjustments available from South Australian institutions are consistent across all providers.

| | |
|---|---|
| IB<br>International Baccalaureate | International Baccalaureate – formerly known as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) – is an international educational foundation founded in 1968 and headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The IB Diploma program is a senior secondary education curriculum and assessment framework offered by some schools as an alternative to the Australian National Curriculum and overseen by state and territory curriculum and assessment authorities. Australian tertiary admission centres convert IB scores to a notional ATAR or OP, enabling IB students to be ranked for tertiary entrance alongside their peers. |
| OP<br>Overall Position | A Queensland student's position in a state-wide tertiary entrance rank order based on their overall achievement in senior secondary subjects. It indicates how well a student has done compared to all other OP-eligible students in Queensland. Students are placed in one of 25 OP bands from OP1 (highest) to OP25 (lowest). Queensland students seeking admission to higher education in other states can have their OP converted to an ATAR; and vice-versa for interstate students looking to study in Queensland. Queensland will adopt the ATAR instead of the OP for students who commence Year 11 in 2018 and beyond. |
| Selection rank | The actual ranking that tertiary admission centres and most universities use to assess admission to a course. A person's selection rank can include their ATAR, any ATAR-related adjustments such as equity or subject 'bonus points' that they are eligible for, contributions calculated on the basis of work experience or previous non-secondary study, portfolio assessments, results of the Special Tertiary Admissions Test, other supplementary tests, etc. For many recent secondary education leavers, the selection rank may be the same as their ATAR, if no other factors were considered. Because institutions use varying formulas to calculate selection ranks, they are generally not directly comparable. An applicant may have a different selection rank calculated for each course or institution they apply to enter. |

## Appendix C: Whole-of-institution admission information set

**[INSTRUCTIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS**:

**1. What is the main purpose of the whole-of-institution information set?** This information set outlines the collection of information about an institution's admission policies and processes that is considered necessary to enable a prospective student to gauge and compare the general admission criteria, application options and processes and institutional student profile across multiple providers. The key focus is to meet the information needs of prospective students of all backgrounds.

**2. What flexibility is available in compiling and presenting information sets?** Apart from the student profile data table, it is not necessary to use the information set as a strict template. The categories or classes of information and core data to be made available are specified but not the content under those headings. Providers, tertiary admission centres (TACs) and other users must determine how much information to provide in each case and the style of presentation. They may choose to include additional content and adapt the overall presentation to distinguish and reflect the institution's mission, course offerings and approach to information provision.

**3. Where should information sets be located?** This information should be easy for prospective students to find and readily accessible from the institution's own website, whether it is actually hosted on that website or another platform such as a TAC website or course finder tool.

Wherever the information is located, the _specified core information_ of admission criteria, how to apply and enrol, student profile and where to get further information should be presented in such a way that minimises any appearance of difference, where none exists. For example, the same wording should be used to describe admission criteria in a TAC publication as on the provider's own website.

**4. How much information is required?** Only those classes of information that are relevant to the institution are required. If an entry pathway such as ATAR-based admission is not used by the institution, that admission option and the ATAR profile of past offers does not need to be included.

**5. How do we reflect options for prospective students with particular needs?** The most important objective of the information set is to ensure descriptions of all possible application and assessment options, eligibility criteria and special considerations are made available so that prospective students with particular needs or circumstances can easily find out about all of the options and evidence requirements that might help them to get into a course in which they are interested. Students facing disadvantage of one kind or another face particular difficulty in navigating a complex system when alternative rules and options for specified cohorts are spread across different locations.

**6. Are ATAR-related criteria privileged in this information set?** While ATAR-related criteria take up significant space in the information set below, in order to bring more rigour to this important entry pathway, all application and assessment options are equally relevant and important and must be outlined in sufficient detail to ensure prospective students from all academic, economic and social backgrounds and needs can easily find out about the options available to them and criteria they must satisfy to access those opportunities.

**7. What is required in 2017?** Classes of information that are required for inclusion in 2017 are shaded and marked as "_CORE – required in 2017_". Two classes of information – _6. Student and campus services and 7. Financial Assistance_ – are indicated as "_Optional_" and may be included at provider discretion in both 2017 and 2018 onwards.

**DELETE ALL BLUE INSTRUCTION TEXT WHEN COMPLETE]**

# [Name of Higher Education Provider]

## 1.  About [Name of Higher Education Provider] *[CORE – required in 2017]*

[General information about studying at the institution, such as:
- campus locations,
- information about open days (including campus visits),
- important dates (including enrolment dates).
- contact details, including online and in-person options, if available.]

## 2.   Admission criteria *[NB: ordering of A to D is optional]* *[CORE – required in 2017]*

### A.  Applicants with higher education study

[Indicate how students are assessed and selected if they have undertaken higher education, including a description of credit transfer arrangements and recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes.]

*Completed bridging or enabling course*

[Indicate how applicants are assessed if they have completed a bridging or enabling course.]

### B.  Applicants with vocational education and training (VET) study

[Indicate how students are assessed and selected if they have undertaken VET study, including a description of any credit transfer arrangements (e.g. from a partner VET provider) and RPL processes.]

### C.  Applicants with recent secondary education (within the past two years)

*Australian Year 12 students*

[General information on how ATARs are used by the provider and TAC, how International Baccalaureate (IB) ATAR equivalence is generated, and other information of relevance at the institutional level. A note should send prospective students to the relevant course information set for details on specific courses.]

*ATAR-related adjustments*

[Information on the types of adjustments to ATAR-based admissions (e.g. 'bonus points') commonly available for courses at the institution. All types of equity, subject, elite performance or other adjustment factors should be detailed where these are available, including the maximum available for each type and overall. Any other available ATAR-related adjustments or considerations should also be detailed such as any reduction in ATAR threshold applicable for equity considerations where 'bonus points' might not be used.]

*Criteria that may apply in addition to ATAR*

[Information on the range of additional tests, portfolio assessments, auditions or other types of evidence that may be required in some cases, over and above a competitive ATAR.]

*Other admission options*

[Detail all non-ATAR admission options available to recent school leavers. This should include all possible alternative application or assessment options where ATAR is not considered – e.g. special consideration due to disability, illness or family disruption, audition alone where ATAR is not considered, schools recommendation scheme where no ATAR threshold is applied in addition. Elite athlete or performer or community service-related schemes could also be included here if not handled via ATAR-related adjustment factors. As much information as is necessary should be provided to outline all possible assessment options to demonstrate eligibility admission.]

*Interstate Year 12*

[Indicate how students are assessed and selected if they completed Year 12 in another state or territory.]

D. **Applicants with work and life experience**
(includes those who left secondary education more than 2 years ago)
[Populate with information on how students may be assessed if they do not have formal tertiary or secondary educational qualifications, such as through the use of tertiary preparation certificate, special tertiary admissions test (STAT) and other pathway programs. Detail the types of experience or study that will be considered, for example non-formal courses, community involvement, professional or work experience. Where this may vary depending on specific courses this should be stated and prospective students directed to specific course information.]

*Finished secondary education more than two years ago*
[Indicate how students are assessed and selected if they completed Year 12 or otherwise finished their secondary education some time ago and have no tertiary study experience.]

*Bridging and enabling course entry*
[Bridging and enabling course options for applicants with insufficient preparation to commence an award course and where to get more information.]

## 3. Additional information *[CORE – required in 2017]*

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
[Provide information about admission options specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.]

### Domestic applicants with overseas qualifications
[Indicate how Australian citizens or permanent residents with overseas qualifications are assessed.]

### English language proficiency
[Outline the general requirements for proficiency in English that must be met for admission to courses at the institution. Any higher or lower requirements that may apply to specific courses would be detailed in the relevant course information.]

## 4. How to apply *[CORE – required in 2017]*
[Provide information on how to apply for courses (with links to further information as appropriate), including:
- Through a TAC
- Via direct application to the institution
- Via pre-selection ('early offer') arrangements

Also to be included here is general guidance on the overall admissions process, how long the process is expected to take, and how applicants will be notified of decisions.]

## 5. Enrolment *[CORE – required in 2017]*
[Information on the enrolment process once an offer of a place has been received, such as:
- Acceptance of offer
- Advanced standing/academic credit/recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- Deferment
- Fees and charges]

## 6. Student and campus services *[Optional]*
[Information about the services available on campus, including a URL for further information. This section could include information about:
- accommodation
- careers
- chaplaincy
- childcare
- counselling

- exchange programs
- health services
- library/computing services
- learning assistance
- sports and recreation
- student organisations
- services for students with disabilities
- transport
- union
- welfare services.]

## 7. Financial assistance *[Optional]*
[Information on financial assistance available to help with the costs of study, such as:
- Youth and student allowances
- Loans
- Scholarships]

## 8. Student profile *[CORE – required in 2017]*

The table below gives an indication of the likely peer cohort for new students at the institution. It provides data on students that commenced undergraduate study and passed the census date in the most relevant recent intake period for which data are available, including those admitted through all offer rounds, across all Australian campuses, and international students studying in Australia.

[See notes - Numbers less than five should be masked to maintain privacy. Where necessary, an additional cell should also be masked to prevent derivation. The most relevant recent intake period should be either first semester intake or the most recent full year of admissions, depending on which period data are available for.]

| Applicant background | Semester one / Full year intake [year] [i.e. the most relevant recent intake period] | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Number of students | Percentage of all students |
| **(A) Past higher education study** (includes a bridging or enabling course) | n | % |
| **(B) Past vocational education and training (VET) study** | n | % |
| **(C) Recent secondary education:** • Admitted solely on the basis of ATAR (regardless of whether this includes the impact of adjustment factors such as equity or subject bonus points) | n | % |
| • Admitted where both ATAR and additional criteria were considered (e.g. portfolio, audition, extra test, early offer conditional on minimum ATAR) | n | % |
| • Admitted on the basis of other criteria only and ATAR was _**not**_ a factor (e.g. special consideration, audition alone, schools recommendation scheme with no minimum ATAR requirement) | n | % |
| **(D) Work and life experience** (Admitted on the basis of previous achievement other than the above) | n | % |
| **International students** | n | % |
| **_All students_** | **_nn_** | **_100.0%_** |

Notes:     L/N - Low numbers: the number of students is less than 5.
           N/A - Data not available for this item.
           N/P – Not published: the number is hidden to prevent calculation of numbers in cells with less than 5 students.
           [The values of suppressed cells can be approximated by using the totals and subtracting the values of some other cells, but only to within 5 students of the actual number, thereby retaining the confidentiality of the cells marked "L/N".]

## 9. Where to get further information *[CORE – required in 2017]*

[Provide links to other relevant information providers, including but not limited to:

- TEQSA national register [link]
- QILT website [link]
- Relevant TAC website [link]
- Information on appeals and grievance processes [link]
  [for those who may wish to dispute admission or enrolment decisions]

## Appendix D: Program/course admission information set

[**INSTRUCTIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS**:

**1. What is the main purpose of the program/course admission information set?** This information set outlines the collection of information that is considered necessary to enable a prospective student to gauge and compare study options, course admission criteria and their likely student peer cohort across multiple courses, providers and admission options. It can be used to outline the options and criteria for a single course or related group of courses, particularly where the individual courses are very small.

**2. What flexibility is available in compiling and presenting information sets?** Apart from the student and ATAR profile data tables, it is not necessary to use the information set as a strict template. The categories or classes of information and core data to be made available are specified but not the content under those headings.

**3. Should whole-of-institution information be repeated in program/course admission information sets?** As a general rule, it is not necessary to repeat information in the *Course Admission Information Set* about admission criteria and application processes that applies to all courses at an institution and is already set out in the *Whole-of-institution admission information set*. However, where there are entry criteria or application processes that are different from those that generally apply to other courses, they should be detailed here. Institutions are, of course, at liberty to repeat information they feel should be available in both locations.

**4. What level of course aggregation is required for reporting?** The level of program/course aggregation used may be different in different contexts – e.g. at individual program level or for a group of closely related courses that have the same admission criteria. Wherever the information is presented, the *specified core information*, including admission criteria that are specific to the course or group of courses concerned, student profile of recent enrolments and (where relevant) ATAR profile of recent offers should be presented in such a way that minimises any appearance of difference where none exists. E.g., the same wording should be used to describe admission criteria in a tertiary admission centre (TAC) publication as on the provider's website.

**5. Are ATAR-related criteria privileged in this information set?** While ATAR-related criteria take up significant space in the information set below, in order to bring more rigour to this important entry pathway, all application and assessment options are equally relevant and important and must be outlined in sufficient detail to ensure prospective students from all academic, economic and social backgrounds and needs can easily find out about the options available to them and criteria they must satisfy to access those opportunities.]

**6. What is required in 2017?** Classes of information that are required for inclusion in 2017 are shaded and marked as "*CORE – required in 2017*". Information that must be included from 2018 onwards is marked "*CORE – optional in 2017*".

*(Note: "program" and "course" are considered interchangeable terms in this information set.)*

**DELETE ALL BLUE INSTRUCTION TEXT WHEN COMPLETE**]

**[Insert Name of Higher Education Provider]**

**[Insert Name of Program/Course/Course Group]**

## 1. About [Name of Program/Course/Course Group] *[Optional]*
[General information about studying this program, course or course group, such as:
- Course options available, course design, qualifications on offer, accreditations and endorsement of the course/s by professional bodies or other organisations, whether required by law, by the profession itself or purely voluntary.
- Work based learning, internships and work placements available as part of the course.
- Graduate career pathways, postgraduate study pathways
- Facilities and staff, campus information on locations where the program/course/course group is offered.
- Information on bridging and enabling courses that could lead to enrolment in this course]

## 2. Essential requirements for admission *[CORE – optional in 2017]*
[This section is to outline any minimum criteria that all students will need to meet in order to be admitted to this course, regardless of their admission pathway. This should include any course prerequisites or inherent requirements (e.g. physical requirements). Items that do not directly impact admissions but which will be requirements during the course (for instance, working with children checks), may be included as appropriate.]

## 3. Admission criteria *[NB: ordering of A to D is optional] [CORE – introduction and ATAR profile required in 2017 but the rest of section 3 is optional in 2017]*
[Include statement that the general admission criteria that apply to all courses at the institution are relevant (or not, if that is the case) and provide a link to the general admission criteria in the *Whole-of-Institution Admissions Information Set*. Provide links to where course-level criteria are currently published.]

### A. Applicants with higher education study *[Optional in 2017]*
[Information relevant to people who have undertaken any higher education study since leaving school, including academic credit transfer arrangements and any additional criteria (e.g. interview or audition).]

*Completed bridging or enabling course*
[Information relevant to students who have completed a bridging course to develop knowledge in a specific field or discipline that is a prerequisite to this course and students who have completed an enabling or foundation course to prepare them for further university study.]

### B. Applicants with vocational education and training (VET) study *[Optional in 2017]*
[Information relevant to people who have undertaken VET study since leaving school, including formal RPL arrangements etc.]

### C. Applicants with recent secondary education (within the past two years) *[Optional in 2017 apart from ATAR profile, noting link to institution policy and other current information above]*

*ATAR (OP in QLD)-based admission [if relevant]*
*(For applicants who will be selected wholly or partly on the basis of ATAR)*

- Lowest ATAR [/OP] to which an offer was made in [period*]:                n.nn
  (exclusive of any adjustment factors such as equity or subject bonus points)
  [This is the lowest ATAR (excluding adjustments) that was offered a place in the course
  in the most relevant recent intake period for which data are available]

- Lowest Selection Rank to which a recent Year 12 student offer was made in [period*]     n.nn
  (including the impact of any equity or other adjustment factors) [only if relevant]:
  [This is the lowest selection rank (incorporating ATAR plus any adjustments) with which
  a recent secondary student was offered a place in the course in the most relevant recent
  intake period for which data are available]
  *most relevant recent intake period for which data are available – i.e. previous full year or semester one intake*

- Minimum <u>ATAR [/OP]/Selection Rank</u> required for consideration [only if relevant]:　　　XX
  [This refers to any floor below which an application will not be considered by the provider.
  It is not a guarantee of admission. Reference could be made to the Student Profile, below,
  to illustrate this point.]

- Guaranteed Entry <u>ATAR [/OP]</u>/Selection Rank [only if relevant]:　　　XX
  [This refers to a specified level of ATAR (or Selection Rank) at which an offer of
  admission is guaranteed, subject to any non-ATAR criteria being met.]

Other criteria in addition to a suitable ATAR[/OP]
[Details of any admission criteria that may apply ***in addition*** to ATAR criteria:
  - e.g. early offer scheme where there is still a minimum ATAR threshold requirement
  - e.g. requirement to pass an interview or audition.]

*ATAR (OP in QLD)-related adjustments [if different to institution rules]* [Required in 2017]

Details of the types of 'bonus points' and other ATAR-related adjustments commonly available to applicants are set out in the institution's general admissions policy at: [hyperlink institution information].

Also set out here information on any types of adjustments to ATAR-based admissions available that are specific to this course or different to those commonly available for courses at the institution – e.g. subject bonuses available for having studied a related senior secondary subject.]

*ATAR (OP in QLD) [and selection rank] profile for those offered places wholly or partly on the basis of ATAR in [period\*]* [Required in 2017]
*\*most relevant recent intake period for which data are available– i.e. previous full year or semester one intake*

| (ATAR-based offers only, **across all offer rounds**) [Note: this table relates to all students selected on the basis of ATAR alone or ATAR in combination with other factors. To ensure comparability across all providers, the "ATAR" figures used must reflect the original unadjusted figures without the impact of 'bonus points' or other adjustments. "Selection Rank" figures (if used) will reflect the same cohort but including the impact of 'bonus points' or other adjustments. Students selected on the basis of special consideration or otherwise not on the basis of their ATAR should not be included in this table.] | **ATAR (OP in QLD)** (Excluding adjustment factors) [required] [NB: Raw ATAR profile for all students offered a place wholly or partly on the basis of ATAR] | **Selection Rank** (ATAR/OP plus any adjustment factors) [optional / only if relevant] [NB: Selection Rank profile for the same students as in previous column] |
|---|---|---|
| Highest rank to receive an offer \* | n.nn [L/N if< 5 offers] | n.nn [L/N if< 5 offers] |
| 75th percentile rank to receive an offer # | n.nn [N/P if < 25 offers] | n.nn [N/P if < 25 offers] |
| Median rank to receive an offer # | n.nn [N/P if < 25 offers] | n.nn [N/P if < 25 offers] |
| 25th percentile rank to receive an offer # | n.nn [N/P if < 25 offers] | n.nn [N/P if < 25 offers] |
| Lowest rank to receive an offer \* | n.nn [L/N if< 5 offers] | n.nn [L/N if< 5 offers] |

Notes:　　　\* L/N – indicates low numbers if less than 5 ATAR-based offers made
　　　　　　# N/P – indicates figure is not published if less than 25 ATAR-based offers made

[Provide data on the ATAR [and optionally the selection rank) profile of offers made from the most relevant recent intake period. ATAR information must be provided. Selection rank is optional. This information should include all offers made during the relevant intake period where ATAR was a factor in the selection. If year-to-date figures are used – e.g. following the conclusion of first semester intake – the data must include any offers made in the previous calendar year that relate to that intake.

If less than 25 offers were made wholly or partly on the basis of ATAR, only the lowest and highest ranks to receive an offer should be published. If less than 5 offers of places were made wholly or partly on the basis of ATAR, no figures should be published.]

*Other admission options [Optional in 2017]*
*(For applicants who will be selected on a basis other than ATAR)*

[Information on non-ATAR application pathways that may be suitable for recent secondary students, especially those who do not meet or are not required to meet specified ATAR criteria.
- o Pathway 1 – e.g. pre-selection schemes
- o Pathway 2 – e.g. Indigenous admission scheme
- o Pathway 3 – e.g. disability admission scheme
- o Pathway 4 – e.g. elite sports or artistic performance admission scheme, community service
- o Pathway 5 – special consideration (for students whose ATAR achievement has been compromised by specific situations beyond the applicants' control).]

### D. Applicants with work and life experience *[Optional in 2017]*
(includes those who left secondary education more than 2 years ago)
[Information relevant to people applying not on the basis of prior education participation, including admission via the Special Tertiary Admissions Test or any other admission tests, non-formal courses, other pathway programs, and/or on the basis of relevant community, professional or work experience.]

## 4. How to apply *[CORE – Optional in 2017]*
[Provide information on how to apply for courses (with links to further information as appropriate), including:
- Through a TAC
- Via direct application to the institution
- Via pre-selection ('early offer') arrangements.]

## 5. Advanced standing/academic credit/recognition of prior learning (RPL)
### *[CORE – Optional in 2017]*
You may be entitled to credit for prior learning, whether formal or informal. Formal learning can include previous study in higher education, vocational education, or adult and community education. Informal learning can include on the job learning or various kinds of work and life experience. Credit can reduce the amount of study needed to complete a degree.

For further information about credit and recognition of prior learning please see [Link to further information about advanced standing, RPL] or contact [contact details for relevant credit arrangements] [A list of formal RPL agreements that lead into this course could be included or linked to at this point.]

# 6. Student profile *[CORE - required in 2017]*

The table below gives an indication of the likely peer cohort for new students at the institution. It provides data on students that commenced undergraduate study and passed the census date in the most relevant recent intake period for which data are available, including those admitted through all offer rounds and international students studying in Australia.

[See notes - Numbers less than five should be masked to maintain privacy. Where necessary, an additional cell should also be masked to prevent derivation. The most relevant recent intake period should be either first semester intake or the most recent full year of admissions, depending on which period data are available for.]

| Applicant background | Semester one / Full year intake [year] [i.e. the most relevant recent intake period] | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Number of students | Percentage of all students |
| **(A) Higher education study** (includes a bridging or enabling course) | n | % |
| **(B) Vocational education and training (VET) study** | n | % |
| **(C) Recent secondary education:** • Admitted solely on the basis of ATAR (regardless of whether this includes the impact of adjustment factors such as equity or subject bonus points) | n | % |
| • Admitted where both ATAR and additional criteria were considered (e.g. portfolio, audition, extra test, early offer conditional on minimum ATAR) | n | % |
| • Admitted on the basis of other criteria only and ATAR was **_not_** a factor (e.g. special consideration, audition alone, schools recommendation scheme with no minimum ATAR requirement) | n | % |
| **(D) Work and life experience** (Admitted on the basis of previous achievement other than the above) | n | % |
| **International students** | n | % |
| ***All students*** | ***nn*** | ***100.0%*** |

Notes:   L/N - Low numbers: the number of students is less than 5.
          N/A - Data not available for this item.
          N/P – Not published: the number is hidden to prevent calculation of numbers in cells with less than 5 students.
          [The values of suppressed cells can be approximated by using the totals and subtracting the values of some other cells, but only to within 5 students of the actual number, thereby retaining the confidentiality of the cells marked "L/N".]

# 7. Where to get further information *[CORE - required in 2017]*

[Directions and links to other relevant information – e.g. the institution's homepage, the relevant TAC/s, the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website, the National Admission Information Platform (when available).]

[Applicants with atypical application pathways not outlined above (e.g. Baccalaureate or international schooling) should be assisted here.]