



TISC Consultation on Year 12 course incentives – Discussion Paper Summary

Introduction

Throughout 2023, the TISC Board discussed the inclusion of incentives for specific ATAR courses in Western Australia's Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) calculation. Notably, WA is the only State that incorporates bonuses for certain Year 12 subjects into the ATAR calculation.

Recognising WA's approach and its impacts, the Board decided to remove bonus points from the ATAR calculation starting with Year 12 students in 2026. However, following stakeholder feedback, the implementation was postponed to 2027.

TISC acknowledges the need to review these incentives to ensure sustainable participation in crucial Year 12 subjects. This paper informs stakeholders of current approaches in WA and other states, provides data on WA's current incentive approach, and invites public submissions on potential future incentive models.

Understanding the ATAR

The ATAR compares the performance of thousands of students across various subjects in a fair and timely manner.

The ATAR is a rank position among the total WA Year 12 school-leaving age population, i.e., not just those enrolled in Year 12 or taking ATAR courses. For example, an ATAR of 75.00 means the student performed better than 75% of all people of Year 12 school-leaving age in that year.

Calculation of the WA ATAR

In WA, the ATAR is calculated from ATAR course scaled scores based on the Tertiary Entrance Aggregate (TEA). The TEA is the sum of a student's best four scaled scores plus bonuses of 10% for: the best Language other than English, Mathematics Methods, and Mathematics Specialist scores. Bonuses are included even if the 'bonus' courses are not among the top four scores.

The maximum TEA in WA is 430, which requires top scores in four courses, including LoTE, Methods, and Specialist. This approach incentivises students to study bonus courses. However, students who do not study bonus courses are disadvantaged as they can only achieve a maximum TEA of 400. The TEA is then converted to an ATAR.

Data on Current Incentives (2020-2023)

Key statistics on the bonus incentives in WA from 2020 to 2023 include:

1. **Number of Students Receiving Bonuses:** 6,946 students received bonuses for Methods, Specialist, or LoTE courses.
2. **Geographical Distribution:** Most bonus recipients attend schools in the Perth metropolitan area.
3. **School Types:** There are comparable numbers of students from government and non-government schools receiving bonuses.

Incentives in Other Australian States

In other states, incentives are applied after the ATAR calculation to create a Selection Rank, for example:

- **New South Wales:** Selection rank adjustments vary by institution and course.
- **South Australia/Northern Territory:** Adjustments to the ATAR based on eligible subjects to create a selection rank.
- **Victoria:** Adds increments for various additional achievements as part of ATAR calculation, with post- ATAR adjustments varying by institution and course creating a course selection rank.

Importance of Reviewing WA's Incentive Approach

WA's incentive approach favours students taking LoTE, Methods, and Specialist courses. Concerns from stakeholders about removing bonus points include declining enrolments in bonus courses and the impact on students planning their studies based on current criteria.

TISC recognises the need to design incentives that do not unfairly advantage nor disadvantage any group of students. The goal is to support a diverse range of Year 12 subjects important to WA's future without skewing ATAR results.

Conclusion

TISC wishes to collaborate with stakeholders to develop fair and effective incentives for Year 12 subjects, ensuring these incentives have a neutral impact on students not taking incentivised courses, whilst increasing ATAR course participation. Feedback will help shape a system that supports key disciplines and maintains fairness in university admissions.

Consultation Questions

1. What is your view on providing incentives to ensure sufficient numbers of students are studying Year 12 courses that align with the changing needs of Western Australia's economy and society?

Assuming incentives for particular Year 12 courses are continued:

2. How can Western Australia best incentivise Year 12 students to study particular Year 12 courses/fields of education?
3. What impact(s) would those approaches have on other Year 12 students, teachers, academics, schools, tertiary institutions, and other stakeholders?
4. How would you ensure any incentives for Year 12 students to study particular Year 12 courses/fields of education have a neutral impact on Year 12 students studying those courses/fields of education without an incentive?
5. What other approaches to incentivise final year secondary students to study particular courses or fields of education in use elsewhere in Australia or in other countries could be of interest to Western Australia?
6. What are preferred approaches for selecting Year 12 courses/fields of education to be incentivised?

Make a submission

The TISC Board invites all interested stakeholders to make a submission on this discussion paper via email to info@tisc.edu.au including your name, organisation (as required), role, and address.

Submissions are due by 30 August 2024. Any submissions received after this date will be considered at TISC's discretion.

Submissions can be made either individually or on behalf of your organisation. Where you make a submission on behalf of your organisation, you are confirming that you have the associated authority to make that submission.

Unless requested otherwise, all submissions will be treated as public documents. This means we can choose to publish the submission if required.

If you do not consent to the publication of all or part of your submission, you must state this when you submit your response. This includes if you consent to the publication of your name or organisation.

Where consent is provided, TISC reserves the right to edit, publish, or not publish at its discretion.