



Scaling Summary

Why Scaling Matters for the ATAR

The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is used by universities to compare students with a range of abilities studying thousands of different combinations of Year 12 courses in hundreds of schools across Western Australia. A marks adjustment process which includes moderation, standardisation, and **scaling** is used to place results from different ATAR courses onto a common scale. This makes the ATAR fair and equitable for all eligible students.

Key messages for students

- Choose ATAR courses that interest you
- Choose ATAR courses that match your strengths
- Choose ATAR courses that support your future study or career directions
- Do your best in every ATAR course.

If you're aiming for a high ATAR, doing your best in ATAR courses you'd prefer to study is often more effective than picking ATAR courses that have historically scaled higher.

Australian State Tertiary Admissions Centres produce equivalent ATARs

All Australian State admissions centres use scaling so that universities can compare students fairly, even when students study different year 12 course combinations and across different State education systems. The key idea is the same for every State/Territory:

Scaling helps create a fair comparison between students studying different ATAR courses.

What is scaling?

Scaling adjusts course results so students taking different courses can be compared fairly. It helps make sure a student's ATAR is not helped nor harmed because of the ATAR courses they choose.

For example:

- Some ATAR courses may have many very high-performing students.
- Other ATAR courses may have students with a wider range of results.
- Without scaling, students in each ATAR course could have an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

How does scaling work in Western Australia?

In Western Australia scaling looks at the level of academic competition in each ATAR course by assessing the **average academic performance of the students in each ATAR course**.

This means:

- If the students in a particular course perform very strongly across their other ATAR courses, that course's marks may scale up.
- If the students in a particular course perform less strongly across their other ATAR courses, that course's marks may scale down.

This approach allows us to compare the "strength of the group" studying each course fairly and equitably.

For example:

- Imagine two students each score 75 in two different ATAR courses.
- In the first course, most students perform better than average in their other ATAR courses, meaning the academic strength of that group is higher than average.
- In the second course, most students perform lower than average in their other ATAR courses, meaning the academic strength of that group is lower than average.
- Ranking a **score** of 75 equivalent to each other in those circumstances is not fair nor equitable.
- **Scaling** adjusts these scores so the **ranking** of individual student performance is fairer and more equitable across all students studying ATAR courses.

Notably:

- Scaling does **not** mean a course is “better” or “harder” than any other.
- The score of each student in an ATAR course is adjusted up or down to reach the required scaling outcome for that course in that year.
- Scaling is designed to help universities compare students fairly and equitably.

Important elements of scaling

1. Scaling is about fairness

Scaling helps ensure that students who perform equally well overall receive similar ATAR outcomes, even if they studied different courses.

2. Scaling does NOT measure how “hard” a course is

A course does not scale up simply because people think it is difficult. Instead, scaling looks at how students in that course perform across all their ATAR courses in that year.

3. Your ranking in a course does not change

If you were 100th in the State in an ATAR course prior to the scaling step, you will still be 100th in the State after scaling. Scaling will not change your ranking in an ATAR course. **It changes how your scaled course score contributes to your ATAR.**

4. The ATAR is a rank, not a score

An ATAR of 80 does not mean your course results averaged 80. It means you performed better than 80% of people in WA of your age group in that year.

Other resources associated with scaling on the TISC website include:

About ATAR <https://www.tisc.edu.au/static/guide/atar-about.tisc>

Marks Adjustment process <https://www.tisc.edu.au/static-fixed/statistics/misc/marks-adjustment-process.pdf>

Scaling statistics <https://www.tisc.edu.au/static/statistics/scaling/scaling-index.tisc>

Help videos <https://www.tisc.edu.au/static/guide/video.tisc#scaling>

FAQs https://www.tisc.edu.au/static/guide/faq.tisc#marks_adjustment

Average Marks Scaling, technical explanation <https://www.tisc.edu.au/static-fixed/statistics/misc/average-marks-scaling.pdf>

School leaver entry criteria <https://www.tisc.edu.au/static/guide/admission-req-sleaver.tisc>