



Choosing Senior Subjects

It is important to choose senior subjects carefully as your decisions may affect your success at school, your feelings about school, and also your level of preparedness or eligibility for particular training or tertiary study after school. Even though there are many factors to consider, choosing your program of study can be made easier if you go about the task logically, and follow a set of planned steps.

OVERALL PLAN

As an overall plan, it is suggested that you choose subjects which:

- you enjoy
- you have achieved in or feel confident of achieving good results
- reflect your interests and abilities
- help you reach your career and employment goals
- will develop skills, knowledge and attitudes useful throughout your life.

These are quite general points, so it's wise to look in more detail at the guidelines below.

GUIDELINES

1. Find out about occupational pathways

It is helpful if you have a few career ideas in mind before choosing subjects. If you are uncertain about this at present, then select subjects that will keep several career options open to you. Your guidance officer or school counsellor will be able to help you get started.

You will also need to find out about the various pathways you can take to obtain qualifications you will need to

get a job in the occupational areas in which you are interested. Once you know about the different pathways, you can select the most appropriate one for you.

The following resources are available in schools and give you information about occupations and the subjects and courses needed to gain entry to these occupations.

Australia's national career information service, called *myfuture*, at <http://www.myfuture.edu.au>

The *Job Guide* accessed at <http://www.jobguide.dest.gov.au>.

Brochures from industry groups provide information on the various pathways to jobs within these industries – start with the Industry Skill Councils at <http://www.isc.org.au/>

Job and careers planning – Department of Education, Training and the Arts' website at http://www.trainandemploy.qld.gov.au/client/jobs_and_careers/job_career_planning/

The *Career Information Service* at <http://www.cis.qsa.qld.edu.au/>

What Next? is a publication by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) focusing on the pathways available for students completing Year 10 at <http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/yrs1to10/what-next.pdf>

The *QTAC Guide* is useful for information on tertiary courses offered through the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

The *Tertiary prerequisites 2010* book, provided by QTAC to all Year 10

students, provides information on subjects required for entry to tertiary courses offered through QTAC in the year 2010.

Pathways to further education and training is a handout which provides general information about the Australian Qualifications Framework. Ask your guidance officer for this handout.

Tertiary entry: Internal Year 12 students without OPs is a handout that is available from QTAC's website at <http://www.qtac.edu.au>. It explains how students who are not eligible for an Overall Position (OP) can gain entry to tertiary courses through QTAC.

The *Queensland TAFE Handbook* is available at <http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/>.

Going to uni: higher education for students in Australia at <http://www.goingtouni.gov.au>

2. Find out about the subjects offered by your school

Your school will offer the following types of subjects:

Authority subjects

- These subjects, approved by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), are offered state wide in Queensland secondary schools and colleges. Achievements in these subjects are recorded on the Queensland Certificate of Education and are used in the calculation of OPs and selection ranks. Some Authority subjects may have accredited vocational education modules embedded in them. These modules will also appear on your Queensland Certificate of Education.
- Students who do not achieve Sound Achievement or better in a Year 10 subject may find related

Authority subjects in Years 11 and 12 difficult.

- Your OP is dependent on how well you achieve in your subjects. You need to choose subjects in which you have the best chance of doing well and which you will enjoy.
- Many Authority subjects may be taken in Year 11 without prior study of similar subjects. It would be very difficult, however, to attempt subjects such as Mathematics B or C, Chemistry, Physics, Music and languages without successful background study in related Year 10 subjects.

Authority-registered subjects

- Authority-registered subjects are those based on QSA developed Study Area Specifications or developed by the school for which a school's study plan or work program is accredited. Achievements in these subjects are recorded on the Queensland Certificate of Education. They are not used in the calculation of an OP but may be used in the calculation of a tertiary selection rank. Authority-registered subjects emphasise practical skills and knowledge relevant to specific industries.

Vocational education and training (VET)

- Student achievement in accredited vocational education modules (whether embedded in Authority or Authority-registered subjects) is based on industry-endorsed competency standards and is recorded on the Queensland Certificate of Education. The Queensland Certificate of Education is recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), and this may give advanced standing towards a traineeship or apprenticeship and/or credit on entry to courses

at TAFE institutes and other registered training organisations.

Recorded subjects

- A Recorded subject is a subject other than an Authority or Authority-registered subject, offered by a school or other educational institution and approved by the QSA. Recorded subjects include approved TAFE subjects or qualifications from specialist-accredited agencies, e.g. in music or dance.

3. Check out each subject fully

Take these steps to ensure you understand the content and requirements of each subject:

- Read subject descriptions and course outlines provided by your school.
- Talk to heads of departments and teachers of each subject.
- Look at books and materials used in the subject.
- Listen carefully at subject selection talks.
- Talk to students already studying the subject.

4. Choose a combination of subjects that suits your needs and abilities

Traps to avoid

- Do not select subjects simply because someone has told you that they “will help you get a better OP”.
- Consider other peoples’ opinions of the subjects but do not make your decision on these only. Check the subjects out for yourself.

VET

Consider taking subjects with VET modules embedded in them if:

- The subject relates to or could provide a pathway to a job that attracts you.
- Success in the subject may give you advanced standing (credit) in a

higher-level course in which you are interested.

- You are interested in the subject and think you would enjoy studying it.

Tertiary entrance

If you wish to study degree or diploma courses at university or TAFE after Year 12:

- Ensure you select the prerequisite subjects required for your preferred courses. These are listed in *Tertiary prerequisites 2010*.
- Most students gain entry to university on the basis of an OP. To be eligible for an OP, in the 4 semesters of Years 11 and 12 you must complete 20 semester units of Authority subjects (the equivalent of 5 subjects). At least three subjects must remain unchanged throughout Years 11 and 12. You must also sit for the Queensland Core Skills Test.
- A small number of Year 12 students who are ineligible for an OP gain entry to tertiary courses on the basis of a selection rank. Most of these students apply for diploma and advanced diploma courses.

School-based apprenticeships and traineeships

You may have an opportunity to complete Year 12 and begin an apprenticeship or traineeship while you are still at school.

Be sure that you understand that apprenticeships and traineeships are legally binding formal agreements. When you sign these you are agreeing to particular work and training requirements, as is your host employer.

Check all documents carefully with a teacher and a trusted adult to ensure that you fully understand what is

required of you, the school, and the employer in the agreement.

5. Be prepared to ask for help

If you and your parents are still uncertain about the combination of subjects you have chosen, check again with some of the many people available to talk to – teachers, heads of departments, guidance officers or counsellors. Don't be afraid to seek their assistance. They are all prepared to help.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following brief explanation of terms may help make subject selection easier. Seek further clarification if needed from your school.

- **Advanced standing** refers to the credit granted to a student towards an accredited course or training program on the basis of previous study, experience or competencies held.
- **Articulation** is the process used to progress from one level of qualification to another.
- **The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)** shows all the qualifications issued in post-compulsory education in Australia and how these qualifications relate to each other.
- **Credit transfer** recognises previous formal study or training based on documented evidence of achievement. For instance, modules assessed as competent in Authority and Authority-registered subjects may attract credit towards study in a TAFE qualification.
- **Field Positions (FPs)** rank order positions in a field against all other students eligible for a result in that field. These are dimensions of study that emphasise particular knowledge and skills. FPs are used for tertiary entrance only when there is a need to select students from within an OP band.
- **Overall Position (OP)** indicates students' rank order position in the state reported in bands from 1 (highest) to 25. See your guidance officer or school counsellor for details of eligibility rules for an OP.
- **Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)** is a school-based qualification awarded to young people at the completion of the senior phase of learning, usually at the end of Year 12. It confirms a student's achievement of:
 - a significant amount of learning
 - a set standard of achievement
 - meeting literacy and numeracy requirements.
- **Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test** is conducted over two days in third term for Year 12 students. To be eligible for an OP and FPs you must sit the QCS Test. If you are not eligible for an OP or FPs the test is voluntary. For students not eligible for an OP, sitting for the test may improve your selection rank.
- **Prerequisite.** A subject or qualification required for eligibility for entry to a particular course of study or employment.
- **Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC)** acts on behalf of universities, TAFE institutes and some private institutions to publish course information and to receive and process applications.
- **Recognition of prior learning (RPL)** is the process used to assess the competencies a person has gained from past experience and training. RPL is a form of assessment and each person is treated individually.

- **Recommended (or desirable) subjects** are not essential, but are likely to make future courses easier to understand and increase chances of success.
- **Selection ranks** are calculated for tertiary applicants who are not school leavers or who are Senior

students not eligible for an OP. For non OP eligible Senior students, the selection rank is determined by results recorded on the Queensland Certificate of Education and the Queensland Core Skills Test. Ranking is from 99 (highest) to 1 (lowest).

USEFUL INTERNET SITES

Education Queensland Curriculum Exchange for Students

http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/curriculum_exchange/students/secondary

Department of Education, Training and the Arts - Job and career planning section

http://www.trainandemploy.qld.gov.au/client/jobs_and_careers/

Australia's National Career Information Service - *myfuture*

<http://www.myfuture.edu.au>

Year 12 – what next?

<http://www.year12whatnext.gov.au/>

Going to uni: higher education for students in Australia

<http://www.goingtouni.gov.au>

Career Information Service

<http://www.cis.qsa.qld.edu.au/>

Queensland Studies Authority

<http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/>

Job Guide

<http://www.jobguide.dest.gov.au/>

Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre

<http://www.qtac.edu.au/>

TAFE Queensland

<http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/>

Seek Career Resources including the Interview Guide Wizard

<http://www.seek.com.au/career-resources/>

Australian Apprenticeships

<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/default.asp>

Queensland's career events

<http://www.careersevent.com/>

Preparing for the senior phase of learning: What next?

<http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/yrs1to10/what-next.pdf>

Planning your pathway to a QCE

http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/learning_priorities/qce/docs/qce-planning-pathway.pdf