

# UPGRADE PATHWAYS TO TERTIARY COURSES IN QLD



The term 'tertiary' usually refers to courses above certificate level (that is, diploma, advanced diploma, associate degree, degree and postgraduate courses). The most known and understood pathway for entering tertiary courses in Queensland is directly from Year 12 using an OP or, for students who are not eligible for an OP, a QTAC selection rank. This, however, is just one of the many pathways that can be used to gain entry to tertiary courses in Queensland.

Information about the different pathways is useful if you don't gain entry to your most preferred course directly after Year 12. It is also useful for people who leave school, gain employment and, at a later stage, wish to apply for a tertiary course.

Tertiary institutions have different rules. Because of this you are strongly advised to contact the institution you want to enter to check that the pathway you choose can be used to gain entry into the course you want.

## ***Which institutions offer tertiary courses?***

The following is a list of the types of institutions that provide tertiary courses in Queensland.

- Universities
- TAFE institutes
- Private institutions

These institutions may offer subsidised places called Commonwealth supported places and/or full-fee places.

## ***How do you apply for tertiary courses?***

Many institutions use the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) to administer their application and offer processes. A list of these institutions can be found in the *QTAC Guide*. You must apply to QTAC for entry to courses listed in the *QTAC Guide*.

You can apply for most interstate courses through the tertiary admissions centre in each state (except Tasmania). Contact information for these centres can be found in Section 1 of the *QTAC Guide*. Note that pathways to tertiary study in other states may differ from those in Queensland.

Apply directly to the relevant institution for all courses not processed by QTAC or to an interstate tertiary admissions centre.

## ***How are applicants selected for tertiary courses through QTAC?***

There are often more applicants than available places for many of the courses you can apply for through QTAC. Consequently, entry to these courses is competitive. Institutions use specific selection criteria to decide which applicants will be offered entry to their courses.

Selection is based on:

- meeting prerequisites, and
- merit.

Prerequisites can include Year 12 Authority subjects or alternatives acceptable to the institution, a folio, an interview, an audition, or the completion of a specific qualification. Not all courses have prerequisites. However, if a course has prerequisites (check in the *QTAC Guide*) you must meet them in some way acceptable to the institution or you will not gain entry to the course.

'Assumed knowledge' and 'Recommended study' are not prerequisites. These terms are used to inform you of the foundation knowledge you will need to be successful in the course.

Merit for most current Year 12 students is an OP. For every other QTAC applicant, including Year 12 students who are not eligible for an OP, merit is a QTAC selection rank. A rank is a number assigned to a completed qualification or level of performance to date in an incomplete course.

Ranks are on a scale from 1 to 99 (highest). In most cases, QTAC schedules are used to allocate ranks. However, some institutions have their own schedules. An example of a QTAC schedule is on the inside of the back cover of the *QTAC Guide*. This schedule provides points of comparison between OPs, interstate ranks and QTAC selection ranks.

The rank for Year 12 students who are not eligible for an OP is based on the results of their best 20 semester units from their Queensland Certificate of Education and, if available, their results on the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test.

Applicants can apply for up to six courses on their QTAC application. Most applicants receive one offer only. Applicants are offered their highest course preference for which they meet all the requirements (i.e. prerequisites and merit).

### ***What qualifications can be used for tertiary entry?***

- Year 12 (internal or external) or equivalent studies
- Tertiary level studies (diploma, advanced diploma, associate degree, degree)
- Bridging and preparatory courses
- Certificates III and IV
- Formal qualifications in music, dance, speech and drama, or languages
- Job related qualifications, e.g. trade, traineeship
- Employment
- Personal competency statement
- Results on an approved admissions test, e.g., the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT)

Most institutions use the results on the Queensland Certificate of Education and the Tertiary Entrance Statement for current Year 12 students. However, other qualifications may be used (e.g. music certificates, a completed traineeship). Check with the institution about which qualifications will be accepted.

A QTAC applicant may have several ranks depending on the qualifications submitted. These ranks are not combined. STAT is an exception in some very specific cases. These ranks are used to compare applicants with different qualifications using the same scale. The first rank is usually the rank used when selecting applicants for courses. The rules of the institutions offering the courses you apply for determine the order of your ranks.

The minimum rank required (the cut-off score) for entry to a course in any given year is not usually predetermined. It depends on the number and standard of applications and the number of quota places available in the course. Consequently, the cut-off scores can change each year upwards or downwards.

### ***Other pathways to tertiary courses***

When deciding which pathway best suits you it is important to consider the following:

- The admission rules of the institution to which you want to gain entry.
- Your learning style. Some pathways are very theoretical while others are more practical. Some pathways might involve distance education and require solitary study and much self-discipline.
- The amount of advanced standing you might be given into your preferred course.
- The cost. Some pathways require that you pay full fees.
- Access to the course. To access some pathways you may have to move away from home.
- Your interests. Choose a pathway you can be committed to.

The following information describes the most commonly used pathways to tertiary study in Queensland other than entry at the completion of Year 12. When investigating the pathways further always ask about the cost, as some of the pathways may be offered on a full fee basis.

### ***Year 12 studies***

#### **Repeat Year 12 (Internal Senior<sup>1</sup>)**

If you repeat Year 12, the OP or rank given at the completion of your repeat year is based on the results gained in the repeat year only. Repeat students are considered for tertiary entry on the basis of their best OP or rank. They are not penalised for repeating Year 12 by Queensland institutions (this may not be the case in other states).

New subjects studied for two semesters in the repeat year will meet the subject prerequisites for all tertiary institutions in Queensland except The University of Queensland (UQ). Students should write to the admissions office of this institution to

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<sup>1</sup> Internal Senior results are based on continuous school-based assessment throughout Years 11 and 12.

check whether they will meet subject prerequisites based on two semesters only.

### Re-entry Year 12 (Internal Senior)

Re-entry students are those who enrol in Year 12 at least three years after they normally would have completed Year 10. They are not required to complete Year 11 (although this is probably advisable). The results of re-entry students are treated in the same way as for repeat students.

### External Senior

External Senior is different from Internal Senior in that the results that appear on the Queensland Certificate of Education are gained by sitting for state wide examinations conducted in November by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA). According to QSA regulations, only those aged 19 or over or those who have previously completed Year 12 can sit for more than three External Senior subjects in any one year.

External Senior can be studied full-time or part-time at secondary colleges, other centres for continuing secondary education, some private institutions, and by distance education through the Brisbane School of Distance Education.

The number of External Senior subjects required to gain a rank depends on your age, results from previous Year 12 studies (if attempted), and the rules of the institution you wish to enter. Institutional rules include minimum age requirements which vary from institution to institution. **It is critical that you check with the institution to find out its admission policy relevant to external senior.**

There are three ways External Senior can be used as a pathway to tertiary entry.

#### (i) Completed External Senior

Applicants who are over 21 years of age and have never completed Year 12 complete five subjects while those who are under 21 years of age and have never completed Year 12 complete four subjects.

#### (ii) Partial External Senior

Applicants who meet QTAC's age requirements may complete one, two or three External Senior subjects to gain a rank. Results from STAT can be combined with this rank. Not all institutions accept this rank.

#### (iii) Combined Mode

This pathway combines one to four External Senior subjects with the rank derived from previous Year 12 results. The greater the number of External Senior subjects taken, the less impact the previous Year 12 results have on the calculation of the new rank.

### Interstate and overseas secondary qualifications

All institutions participating in the QTAC process recognise standard Year 12 qualifications from all states and territories in Australia. The inside back cover of the *QTAC Guide* provides an example of the schedule that is used to assign an equivalent QTAC selection rank to interstate results.

Overseas secondary qualifications acceptable to the institution are given a rank according to the schedule for the country from which the qualification comes. Where English has not been the medium of instruction, applicants are required to show English proficiency in a way acceptable to the institution they want to enter. For example, they might be asked to provide a result on a standardised English language test such as IELTS. Check with the institution about its English proficiency requirements.

### ***Tertiary studies***

For entry to most tertiary courses, the successful completion of one full-time year (or equivalent part-time) of another tertiary course is sufficient for upgrading purposes. An exception to this is TAFE diploma and advanced diploma courses where it is advisable to complete the qualification. Some institutions will accept results from less than one full year of tertiary level study but the schedules used to assign ranks from less than one year of study are not as generous. Check with the institution you wish to enter for its rules on this and for the rank you might obtain from an incomplete year.

UQ has its own schedule for allocating ranks to tertiary study. If you are upgrading to a very competitive course at UQ, you are advised to consider upgrading at this institution.

### Diploma

In general, diploma courses tend to be more practical and 'hands on' than degree courses. In most cases (but not all) entry to diploma courses is less competitive than to degree courses.

Diploma courses may be competency-based (i.e., pass/fail) or graded. To optimise your upgrade potential, it is highly recommended that you enrol in a graded diploma and complete it. A **completed** diploma course with passing results is given a rank of 82 (similar to OP 9) by most institutions and may also lead to advanced standing (credit) in a degree level course, depending on the course and the rules of the institution. The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) gives a rank of 87 (similar to OP 7) for a completed AQF diploma. Results on STAT can be combined with the rank from a competency-based diploma. UQ will combine results from the QCS Test for current Year 12 students.

### Advanced diploma

Advanced diploma courses are usually longer and contain more theory than diploma courses. They may be competency-based or graded. A full-time year of an advanced diploma with passing results is awarded a rank of 91 (similar to OP 6) by most institutions and may lead to advanced standing in a degree course, depending on the course and the rules of the institution (it is recommended that you **complete** an advanced diploma to obtain the maximum upgrade). QUT gives a rank of 93 (similar to OP 5) for a completed AQF advanced diploma. Results on STAT can be combined with the rank from a competency-based advanced diploma. UQ will combine results from the QCST for current Year 12 students.

### Degree

One full-time year (or part-time equivalent) of a degree with passing grades is awarded a rank of 93 (similar to OP 5) by most institutions. Higher results will be awarded a higher rank. Advanced standing into the new course may be possible depending on the course used for upgrading and the institution's rules. A year of a degree at a regional institution, where OP and rank cut-offs tend to be less competitive, is a pathway that some students successfully use to gain entry to their preferred course.

### **Certificate courses**

A completed Certificate III can be given a rank of 68 (similar to OP 15) and a completed Certificate IV a rank of 74 (similar to OP 12). Results on STAT can be combined with the rank from competency-based Certificates III and IV. UQ combines Certificate III and IV study with the QCST for current Year 12 students. You apply

directly to TAFE for most certificate courses. It is important to note that the ranks allocated to certificate courses may not be sufficient to gain entry to degree courses and some diploma courses. Check with the institutions about how they will use ranks derived from certificate courses. For example, Griffith University (GU) does not currently use ranks from Certificates III and IV as a first order rank for applicants who have completed Year 12.

Some institutions may offer certificate courses which provide a pathway to tertiary level courses at that institution, e.g. GU's Certificates of Continuing Education, and certificates at UQ's Gatton Campus.

### ***Bridging and Preparatory studies***

The results of a range of bridging and preparatory courses can be given a rank for entry to tertiary courses. Specific schedules are used to allocate ranks to these courses. Not all of these courses are accepted by all institutions. Check with the institution you wish to enter about the acceptability of the course and the rank you might potentially get from doing the course. The following are examples of bridging and preparatory courses.

- **Certificate IV in Adult Tertiary Preparation** – available at many TAFE institutes, secondary colleges and some private institutions. See website <http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/>. Select 'Find a course' and do a search for this course (you will need to select 'Access to education and employment' for the Industry type).
- University of Southern Queensland's **Tertiary Preparation Program** – see website <http://www.usq.edu.au/tpp> or phone 1800 269 500.
- Learning Network Queensland's **Unilearn** – see website <http://www.unilearn.net.au> or phone 1800 177 189.
- Central Queensland University's **Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS)** – see website <http://www.steps.cqu.edu.au> or phone 4150 7067.

Several institutions provide preparatory and bridging programs specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Contact the institution you want to attend to enquire about these courses.

## **Employment, Job related qualifications, Personal competencies (PCA) and STAT**

As part of alternative entry, QTAC applicants can be allocated ranks on the basis of their employment, life experiences and achievements (PCA), job related qualifications (e.g., trade certificate) and results on STAT depending on the rules of the institution to which they want to gain entry. Potential applicants considering such pathways are advised to contact the institution/s to which they want to gain entry to check the institution's admission rules and requirements.

### **Special admission schemes**

Most institutions have special admission schemes. These include access and equity schemes, regional preference schemes, ATSI schemes and school recommendation schemes. Read about the various schemes in Section 2 of the *QTAC Guide* and contact the relevant institution/s for further information.

### **Special consideration of educational disadvantage (SCD)**

Educational disadvantage refers to circumstances beyond your control that have affected previously satisfactory academic results and have not been compensated for by the school or certifying authority. The types of circumstances considered are those related to equality of opportunity, disability and health, and compassionate and other circumstances. You apply for SCD through QTAC.

### **Further information**

This handout provides an introduction to the most common pathways available to gain entry to tertiary courses in Queensland. Before making a

decision about the pathway you wish to follow, you will need to obtain more information.

Further information about these pathways can be obtained from:

- The admission offices of the tertiary institutions (i.e., universities, TAFE institutes, and private providers). The QTAC website has links to institutions that use its services.
- The QTAC website at <http://www.qtac.edu.au> (information sheets can be downloaded)
- QTAC email – use the QTAC website enquiry service
- *QTAC Guide* which is given to all Year 12 students in Queensland. It can also be purchased from QTAC and from many newsagents.
- QTAC Information Services on P: 3858 1222
- School guidance officers and career counsellors
- *Pathways to Tertiary Study* (a publication that can be purchased from QTAC)
- Attending institution Open Days, Career Markets, and the Brisbane Tertiary Studies Expo (TSXPO). See institution websites for information about Open Days. Information about Open Days and Career Markets is also available from the News and Events section of the QSA website at <http://www.cis.qsa.qld.edu.au>.