

ATAR facts & myths



A decorative border of various colored pencils (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, black, brown, etc.) is arranged in a semi-circle at the top and bottom of the slide. The background is a light teal color with a large white circle in the center.


SESSION OVERVIEW

- ★ What is the ATAR?
- ★ Who is eligible for an ATAR?
- ★ What contributes to the ATAR?
- ★ How is the ATAR calculated?
- ★ Myths and facts



WHAT is the ATAR?


The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank -

- ★ a **numerical measure** of a student's overall academic achievement in the HSC **in relation to** that of other students. It's about **POSITION**.
 - ★ a number between 0.00 and 99.95
(only ATARs above 30 are reported)
 - ★ intended for use by universities to **rank and select school leavers** for admission to university
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WHO is eligible for an ATAR?

To be eligible for an ATAR you must satisfactorily complete at least **10 units** of ATAR courses including at least:

- ★ **eight** units of **Category A** courses
 - ★ **two** units of **English**
 - ★ **three courses** of two units or greater
 - ★ **four subjects**
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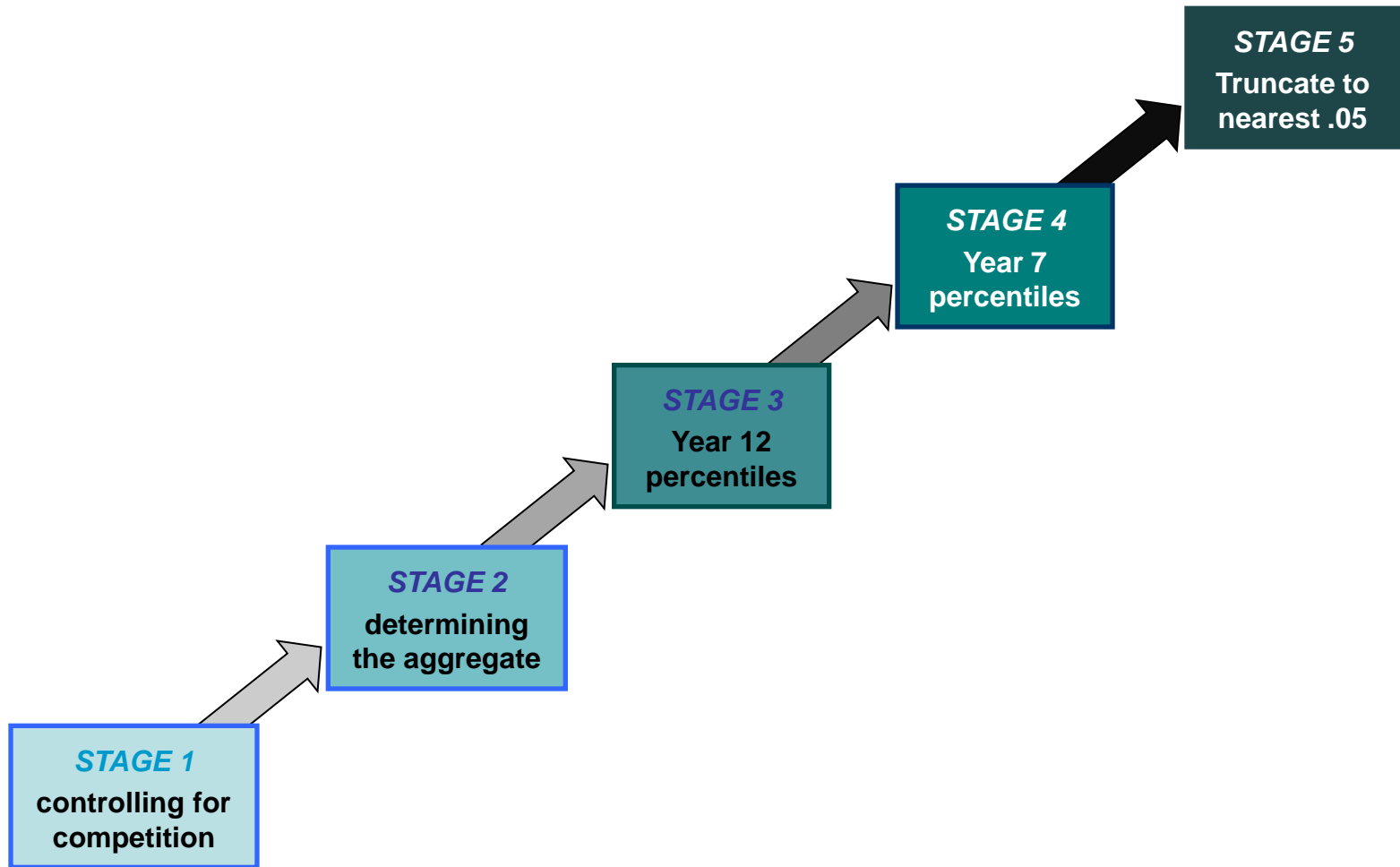


WHAT contributes to the ATAR?

- ★ The ATAR is based on an aggregate of **scaled** marks in **10 units** of ATAR courses comprising:
 - the **best two units of English**
 - the **best eight of the remaining units**, which can include up to two units of Category B courses
- ★ Marks can be **accumulated** over a five-year period, but if a course is repeated, only the **latest** satisfactory attempt is used in the ATAR calculation.
- ★ A scaled mark is calculated **the year the course is completed**.



HOW is the ATAR calculated?





Stage 1 – controlling for competition

For each course, examination marks and moderated assessments are averaged to produce a *raw mark*, which is changed into a *scaled mark*.



Scaled marks are marks students would receive if all the course candidatures were the same.

The scaling algorithm starts from the premise that a student's position in a course depends on:

- how good he/she is in that course, and
- the strength of the competition.

Scaling controls for the strength of competition

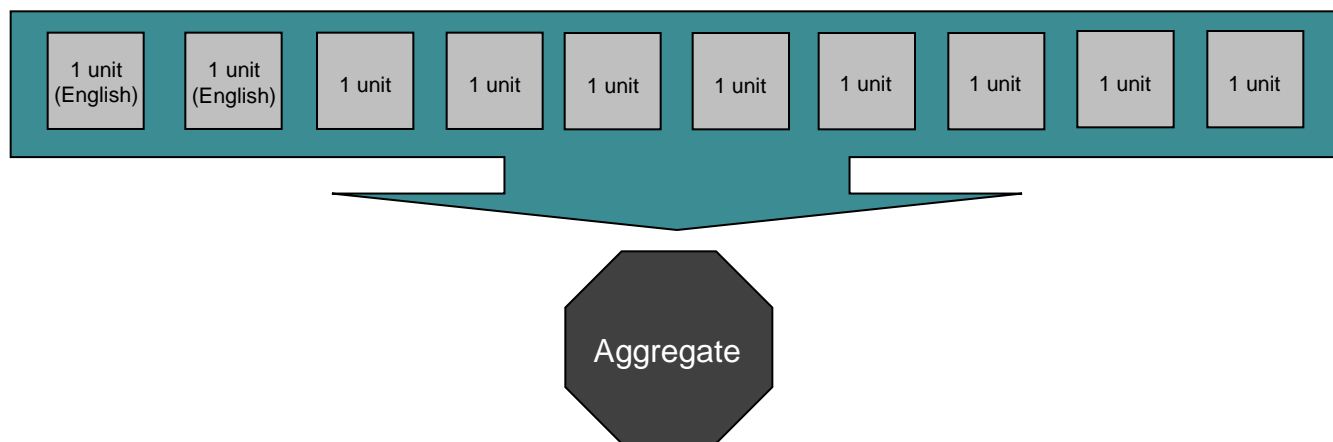




Stage 2 – determining the aggregate

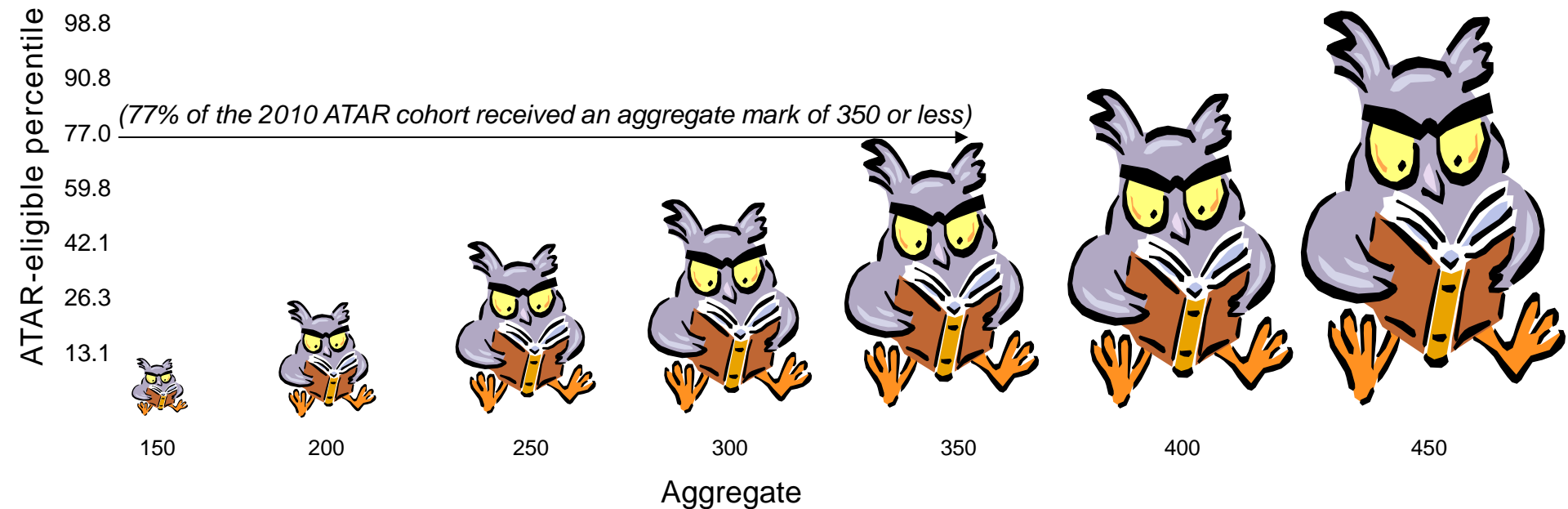
For each student an aggregate mark is formed by adding together the scaled marks of:

- the best two units of English
- the best eight units from the student's remaining courses,
(no more than two units from Category B courses can be included)



Stage 3 –Year 12 percentiles

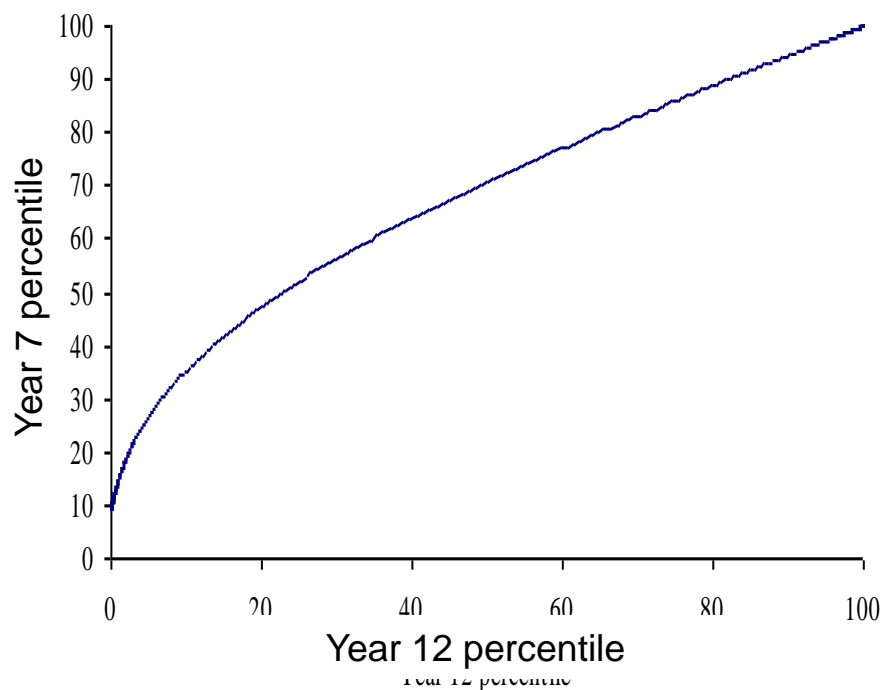
All Year 12 students who are eligible for an ATAR are ranked on the basis of their aggregates. ATAR-eligible percentiles, which show the position of students relative to their ATAR cohort, are then determined for these aggregates.



Stage 4 – Year 7 percentiles

In 2010, 54 221 students received an ATAR out of approximately 80 000 students who started Year 7 with them.

To make NSW ATARs comparable to ATARs calculated in other states, students' positions relative to the TOTAL Year 7 cohort, including those who left before Year 10 and those Year 12 students who were not eligible for an ATAR, are calculated.






Stage 5 – determining the ATARS

When the position of each student relative to the full Year 7 cohort has been determined, the final step is to truncate these percentiles to the nearest 0.05, starting at 99.95.

Here are some examples from the 2010 calculations.

ATAR	Range of percentiles	Lowest aggregate
99.95	99.951-99.999	476.2
99.50	99.501-99.549	455.2
99.00	99.001-99.049	444.8
98.00	98.001-98.049	430.0






Myth or Fact?

I can study certain subjects (such as Extension Maths and Physics) to maximise my ATAR.

MYTH

The only way you can maximise your ATAR is by achieving the highest possible assessment ranks and exam marks in all the courses you study. You can achieve high HSC marks and a high ATAR regardless of the courses you study or the school you attend.

FACT





Myth or Fact?

If I am studying 11 units, the single-unit course won't be counted in my ATAR calculation.

MYTH

All your courses are converted to single units, and the best 8 units (after your best 2 units of English) are used to calculate your ATAR.

FACT





Myth or Fact?

I will get a higher ATAR if I study Advanced English than I will if I study Standard English.

MYTH

Your ATAR is determined by your POSITION in the courses you study. It is possible to achieve high HSC marks and a high ATAR regardless of your choice of courses.

FACT





Myth or Fact?

I can work out my ATAR from my trial or HSC marks.

MYTH

The ATAR is about position, and even high HSC marks don't necessarily mean a high position and therefore a high ATAR.

FACT


Fred and Laura's results show the large difference in ATARs arising from much smaller differences in HSC marks.





Fred and Laura

Course	HSC mark	Percentile	HSC mark	Percentile
Biology	70	38	80	70
Business Studies	70	35	80	66
English Advanced	70	9	80	47
Mathematics	70	27	80	55
Modern History	70	25	80	62
Visual Arts	70	15	80	54
ATAR	57.05		80.15	



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Further information ...

- ★ www.uac.edu.au/undergraduate/atar/
- ★ Report on the Scaling of the 2010
NSW Higher School Certificate
- ★ The Australian Tertiary Admission
Rank in NSW – A technical report