

abc of scaling

Scaling and the ENTER:
a simplified explanation

Victorian Tertiary
Admissions Centre

40 Park Street
South Melbourne
VIC 3205
Enquiries: 1300 364 133

Some background

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) administers the two senior secondary certificates available for Victorian students. The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is awarded for the successful completion of secondary education and provides pathways into tertiary education, training and work. The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a practical work related certificate and provides pathways into training, apprenticeships and work.

The Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) administers the application and offer process for tertiary institutions in Victoria— universities, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes and independent tertiary colleges.

To assist tertiary institutions in selecting students VTAC provides an overall measure of each student's performance across all their Year 12 studies. This overall measure is the Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER).

The following explanation will assist you in understanding how your ENTER has been calculated. For a detailed explanation of the scaling and ENTER calculation process, please refer to the publication, ENTER into Tertiary Study available at:
www.vtac.edu.au/pdf/publications/enterbook.pdf

Tertiary selection

Each year more than forty thousand students who complete their secondary education apply for tertiary courses. In the majority of the 3000 plus courses offered, there are more applicants than there are places. Each institution therefore needs to select from the applicants list, those who will receive offers. Selection officers in the institutions handle this process.

VTAC administers the application, selection and offer processes, and provides information about the applicants (including VCE and VCAL results) to the selection officers. In selecting students, selection officers largely use information about each applicant's VCE performance. The information used, and how it is used, varies from course to course.

First, you must meet the minimum tertiary entrance requirement. For universities and independent colleges this is usually satisfactory completion of the VCE including the completion of Units 3 and 4 in one of the VCE English studies in the same year. The same minimum requirement applies for most TAFE courses, however it does vary between institutions.

Second, you must meet any VCE prerequisites for the course. Students not satisfying the prerequisites are generally not considered for the course.

The third factor used in selection is an overall measure of how well you performed in all your VCE studies compared



with all other VCE students. This measure is called the Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER) and is developed for the purposes of tertiary selection only. The ENTER is only calculated for students who have completed their VCE and have met tertiary entrance requirements.

The ENTER is not the only mechanism used for tertiary selection, and it is not used for all VCE applicants. A number of courses use a range of other selection mechanisms such as interviews, performance auditions, assessment of folios and tests such as aptitude tests. Other criteria may include performance in prerequisite studies or other studies relevant to the course. Applications for special consideration are also taken into account.

All universities are committed to considering about 20% of applicants on a broader range of criteria than just the ENTER. Around 75% of university offers are made mainly on the ENTER each year, with the remaining 25% using a range of additional criteria and factors.

TAFE institutes and independent tertiary colleges normally use a range of criteria including the ENTER and interviews and generally do not select mainly on the ENTER.

What counts towards the ENTER?

The ENTER is based on up to six VCE results. The results do not all have to be from the one year. The ENTER is calculated using:

- » your best score in any one of the English studies plus
- » the scores of your next best three studies (which together with the English make the 'Primary Four'), plus
- » 10 percent of the scores for any fifth and sixth study which you may have completed (these are called increments).

If you have the Primary Four you will be eligible for an ENTER. VTAC will use up to six results in calculating the ENTER. If you have more than six results, the six scores that give the highest ENTER are used.

Studies used in the calculation of the ENTER may be taken over any number of years, however the time taken to complete VCE studies may be taken into account by institutions.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs

VET programs included in the VCE Unit 1 to 4 framework contribute to the ENTER in the same way as VCE studies. Scored Unit 3 and 4 VET sequences are deemed equivalent to VCE Unit 3 and 4 sequences.

Un-scored Unit 3 and 4 VCE VET sequences may count as a fifth and/or sixth increment which is calculated from the average of the Primary Four scores.

Where the VCAA has granted block credit at Units 3 and 4 level, recognised VET or Further Education qualifications at AQF3 or above are eligible for inclusion as a fifth or sixth study increment in the calculation of the ENTER. This increment is calculated as for un-scored Unit 3 and 4 VCE VET sequences



Approved Tertiary (Extension) Studies in Schools

Students undertaking an approved Tertiary Extension Study in Year 12 can include the result in place of a sixth study, provided that the first five studies were all completed at Units 3 and 4.

An increment will be awarded for the Extension Study, depending on the level of results achieved:

- » If your results over all units place you in the top 20% of students doing that Extension Study, you are eligible for an increment of 5.5 points.

- » If your results place you above 60% but not above 80% of all students, you are eligible for an increment of 5.0 points.
- » If you pass all units, but your results do not place you above 60% of students, you are eligible for an increment of 4.0 points.
- » If you do not pass all units, you are not eligible for an increment.

Restrictions

There are some restrictions on how certain combinations of studies may be counted for your ENTER.

In each of the study areas of English, mathematics, history, information technology, LOTE (Languages other than English) music and VET:

- » at most two results can contribute to the Primary Four
- » at most three results can contribute to the ENTER, the third being counted as a 10% increment for a fifth or sixth study

If your ENTER incorporates an Extension increment from any of the study areas of mathematics, English, LOTEs, music, history or computer science/information technology then no more than two VCE results from the same study area can be used in the calculation of the ENTER.

There are other specific restrictions where two or more studies have similar content, or where studies have been combined.

For further information refer to the appropriate VICTER or www.vtac.edu.au/pdf/publications/victcr2009.pdf

How is the ENTER calculated?

The following process is used to calculate each student's ENTER.

1. All VCE Study Scores are scaled to adjust for the fact that it is more difficult to obtain a high study score in some studies than others. The scaled Study Scores are called ENTER Subject Scores.

An *ENTER Aggregate* is calculated by adding:

- » your best ENTER Subject Score in any one of the English studies, plus
- » the ENTER Subject Scores of your next best three studies, plus
- » 10 percent of the ENTER Subject Score for a fifth study (where available), plus
- » 10 percent of the ENTER Subject Score for a sixth study (where available);

The Scores contributing to the Aggregate are subject to the study restrictions described above.

The ENTER Aggregate is a number between 0 and something over 210.

2. All eligible students are then ranked in order of their ENTER Aggregate, and a percentage rank is assigned to distribute students as evenly as possible over a 100 point scale. All students with the same ENTER aggregate receive the same percentage rank. If a number of students are tied on a particular aggregate the number that receives the corresponding percentage rank may increase.
3. Finally, the percentage rank is converted to an ENTER, which is the estimate of where the student came in the relevant age group, taking account of the students who have successfully completed VCE as well as those who moved or left school before Year 12.

The ENTER is a number between 0 and 99.95 in intervals of 0.05. The highest rank is 99.95, the next highest 99.90, and so on. The lowest automatically reported rank is 30.00, with ranks below 30.00 being reported as 'less than 30'.

A complete list of your studies and ENTER subject scores, used in the calculation of your ENTER are included on the back of your ENTER statement.



Why are VCE results scaled?

Each of your Study Scores provided by the VCAA is calculated from the total marks you received for each graded assessment in that study. The Study Scores for all studies are reported on a scale of 0 to 50 with an average score of 30.

The VCE Study Score is not a score out of 50. It is a ranking or relative position which shows a student's performance compared with all other students who took that study in the same year. A student with a VCE Study Score of 30 is in the middle of the cohort, or has performed better than about half of all students. A student with a VCE Study Score of 40 has performed better than about 91% of all students who did that study.

What this means is that the middle student in any study will have a VCE Study Score of 30, regardless of how strong the other students were in the study and how difficult it was to achieve the middle ranking. VTAC's role is to provide a way of ranking students that is fair to students even though they have taken different studies.

Where the student competition in a study is strong, VCE Study Scores need to be adjusted upwards; otherwise students in that study would be disadvantaged.

Similarly, in a study where the student competition is weaker, the Study Scores need to be adjusted downwards; otherwise students doing that study would be advantaged. Scaling ensures that it is equally easy to attain a high ENTER regardless of the combination of studies a student undertakes.

This is not always well understood and many students believe that to achieve their best possible ENTER they need to choose studies that are scaled up. This is not true and may even work against you.

If you choose a study that you are not very good at simply because it will be scaled up, the VCE Study Score you receive will be a lot lower than what you could expect in a study you are good at and that interests you. Yes, your score will be scaled up, but it is unlikely that your scaled ENTER Subject Score would be any higher than if you had chosen a more suitable study, even one that is scaled down.

The way to ensure that you achieve your best ENTER is to choose your studies according to what you are interested in; what you are good at; and what studies you need for future study.

The calculation of the ENTER is a complicated process, but it is the fairest system developed by experts which

- » allows students to undertake the studies they want and
- » enables tertiary institutions to compare students who have completed different combinations of VCE studies.

The use of the ENTER guarantees that all studies are treated equally and provides you with a common score for tertiary selection across Australia.

How does scaling work?

VTAC adjusts the Study Scores for each study to take account of how strong the students were in the study and how difficult it was to achieve the middle ranking. The strength of competition in each study is measured by how well the students performed in all their other studies.

In each study, the study scores are adjusted so that the overall level of scores in that study matches the scores obtained by the same group of students in all of their other studies.

For example, in Economics in 2005 the average VCE Study Score was 30, but the students averaged 32 for their other studies. This shows that the students who did Economics in 2005 were of above average strength in their other studies. Therefore the scaling process adjusted the Study Scores upwards so that the average ENTER Subject Score for Economics was set at 32.

The 2005 Psychology students averaged 28 in their other studies, therefore the scaling process adjusted the study scores downwards so that the average ENTER Subject Score for Psychology was 28.

In some studies the scaling process produces ENTER Subject Scores that are greater than 50. However, the minimum ENTER Subject Score cannot go below zero.

VCE studies are always scaled in the year in which they were undertaken (this may not necessarily be in the year in which you receive your ENTER).

This scaling process is carried out each year for each VCE study and VCE VET program for which there is a study score. There are no pre-determined outcomes – the adjustments are based on the performance of students each year. Nevertheless, the process is very stable and there is very little difference from year to year in terms of the scaled ENTER Subject Scores.

Mathematics and LOTE

Mathematics

VCE Mathematics studies are designed to cater for students of differing abilities and interests. Specialist Mathematics is the most difficult, followed by Mathematical Methods and then by Further Mathematics.

To ensure that students undertaking the more difficult Mathematics studies are not disadvantaged, Mathematical Methods is compared to Further Mathematics and adjusted up as and if necessary. Similarly Specialist Mathematics is compared to Mathematical Methods and adjusted up as and if necessary.

Languages Other Than English (LOTEs)

As a result of government policy to encourage the study of LOTEs, each LOTE is adjusted up by adding five to the initial ENTER Subject Score average. All students of a LOTE receive an adjustment, but it is not a uniform adjustment.

For example a student achieving a perfect VCE Study Score of 50 is guaranteed an ENTER subject score of 50, with the maximum ENTER subject score only going above 50, when the average score is very high (the scaled mean plus twice the scaled standard deviation exceeds 50). Published means for each LOTE include this adjustment.

Other variables

Previous VCE studies

VCE studies are always scaled in the year in which they were undertaken (this may not necessarily be in the year in which you receive your ENTER).

Further VCE study

Accumulation of a further VCE Study Score (or study scores) may lead to the calculation of a new ENTER. Ranking for courses will be based on the highest ENTER achieved. VTAC will, however, inform course selection authorities of all of your VCE results – including those not contributing to your ENTER.

Notional ENTER

A 'Notional ENTER' is used to rank students who have a previous Year 12 (other than VCE) or some other qualification (e.g. the International Baccalaureate). Previous Victorian Year 12 results (prior to 1992) are calculated and ranked in the same manner as described above.

A Notional ENTER is created for:

- » all applicants who successfully completed a full Victorian Year 12 attempt prior to 1992
- » all applicants who (without having successfully completed a full Victorian Year 12 attempt prior to 1992) have for the first time, at least four VCE study scores and VCE (HSC) 'Group 1' subjects, or their predecessors in combination including any one of the English group (i.e. at least four scorable subjects)
- » all International Baccalaureate students who qualify for the IB Diploma in the current year

Note: Only Victorian IB students who sit the GAT will be issued with a Notional ENTER statement.

Interstate use of the ENTER

If you have applied to other Australian states you will be considered on the basis of your ENTER.

Interrupted study status

Applicants granted official interrupted study status by the VCAA should seek advice from VTAC about the applicability of rules and provisions in this publication. In general, the rules that require completion of Units 3 and 4 in the one year do not apply to applicants granted such status in the studies concerned.

example of an aggregate calculation

| Year | Study | Study score | ENTER subject score | 2005 Aggregate contribution | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 2005 | Political Studies | 44 | 45.99 | 45.99 | Primary Four (3) |
| 2005 | Philosophy | 42 | 43.54 | 43.54 | Primary Four (4) |
| 2005 | Mathematical Methods | 34 | 40.07 | 4.0 | Increment (6) |
| 2005 | Music Performance: Group | 36 | 34.18 | Seventh study not used | |
| 2005 | English | 47 | 47.26 | 47.26 | Primary Four (1) |
| 2004 | Psychology | 42 | 41.11 | 4.11 | Increment (5) |
| 2004 | Japanese (Second Language) | 48 | 51.84 | 51.84 | Primary Four (2) |
| Aggregate | | | 196.7 | (truncated at 1 decimal place) | |
| 2005 ENTER | | | 99.25 | | |

Remember, there is no pass or fail ENTER. Every VCE student who receives an ENTER has successfully completed the VCE. An ENTER of 50 is not the pass rank, nor is it the average rank. An ENTER of 50 means you have performed better than 50% of the state age cohort.

Note: The above example is only to show how the figures relate to the final ENTER, it is not current to this year and is only a sample.