

# TOP FAST FACTS

**FOR STUDENTS COMPLETING  
YEAR 12 IN 2018 AND 2019**

**YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**



## UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

### What is an OP?

An OP (Overall Position) is a student's position in a statewide rank order based on overall achievement in Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) subjects (Authority subjects). It is used for tertiary entrance purposes only, and indicates how well a student has achieved in comparison to all other OP-eligible students in Queensland. Students are placed in one of 25 OP bands from 1 (highest) to 25 (lowest).

### How do I get an OP?

To get an OP you must study a certain number of Authority subjects and satisfy other requirements including completion of Year 12 and the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test. The basic eligibility requirement is 20 semesters of Authority subjects with at least three subjects taken for four semesters. Authority subjects are based on syllabuses that have been approved and issued by the QCAA.

### How is my OP calculated?

The calculation of your OP begins with the results you receive in the subjects you study in Year 12. These results are reported on your Senior Statement as one of five levels of achievement: Very High Achievement, High Achievement, Sound Achievement, Limited Achievement and Very Limited Achievement. These levels of achievement alone are too broad to calculate OPs. Finer-grained comparisons of student achievement are made using subject achievement indicators (SAIs). SAIs are numbers from 200 to 400, assigned by teachers to OP-eligible students. They show your achievement compared with the achievement of other students in each subject you study in your school.



## YOUR OP QUESTIONS ANSWERED

### My friend and I both got five VHAs.

#### Why did we get different OPs?

Although you both achieved great results, you won't necessarily have the same OP. Not all students awarded VHAs are at the same standard. Some students may be ranked at the top of the VHA range, while others may be placed lower. Your OP and Field Positions (FPs) are based on comparisons of how you achieved compared with other students. These differences are represented by SAIs, which are allocated by your teachers and sent to the QCAA at the end of the year as crucial input for OP calculations. It is important that you check your SAIs to ensure they represent your position in the rank order fairly.

### If I get five SAIs of 400 will I get an OP1?

Not necessarily. In fact, usually not. An SAI of 400 only indicates that you are your school's highest achieving student in a particular subject. You may not be the best student overall in the school, nor among the top students in Queensland.

### Does Year 11 count towards my OP?

In most cases, Year 11 does not count towards your OP. Year 11 focuses mainly on formative assessment that aims to provide feedback on your progress as you develop skills and knowledge in your subjects. However, if you exit a subject in Year 11, those results might still be used in the calculation of your OP if they are higher than the results you achieve in another subject. If you're aiming for an OP, you should do your best in every subject during both years.

If you had lower results in Year 11 than you would have liked, you can improve these results by working hard in Year 12.

### How should I choose my subjects to get a good OP?

The QCAA recommends that you choose the subjects you enjoy and are good at. If you do your best then you will achieve the OP you have earned.

### Are high achievers disadvantaged in a lower-achieving subject-group?

High achievers are not disadvantaged but they must demonstrate considerably better achievement compared to the other students in that subject. A student who wants a good OP must consistently demonstrate outstanding achievement in all subjects. In a low-achieving subject-group, this would be reflected in a large gap between one student's SAI and the SAIs of other students. OP calculations take into consideration both the mean and the mean-difference of the subject-group's QCS Test performance. Low achievers may reduce the average but having a much higher achiever in the group increases the spread, therefore ensuring there is no disadvantage.

### Which subjects are used to calculate my OP?

Your best 20 semesters are used in the calculation of your OP. These are determined after your SAIs have been scaled, so they might not be the subjects you expect.

### Are some subjects worth more than others?

All Authority subjects are treated in the same way in OP calculations, however scaling processes mean that the same result in different subjects can contribute to OP calculations differently. A student can achieve any OP studying any combination of subjects.

### Is there a bias in favour of certain schools?

Students, not schools, are awarded OPs. The procedures followed for the calculation of OPs are exactly the same for students in every school. The quality, application and performance of students are unevenly distributed across schools so different performances at different schools are to be expected.

### Are students in a small group or a small school disadvantaged?

The QCAA has special procedures in place for small groups and small schools to ensure students are neither disadvantaged or advantaged. SAIs are assigned differently and the scaling processes are adjusted to make sure that OPs reflect student performances fairly.

### Does the QCAA allocate the number of OP1s for each school in advance?

The QCAA does not set a quota of OP1s (or any other OP) for a school. OPs and FPs compare students (not schools) across the state, providing a statewide rank order of students for that year. The number of OP1s achieved at a particular school can vary from year to year depending on the level of student achievement and how they compare with students across the state that year. If there is a large number of OP1s in your school in a particular year, it's simply because a large number of high-achieving students attended your school.

### If I do badly on the QCS Test, how will this affect my OP?

Your OP is not based on your individual QCS Test result. QCS Test results contribute to group data used in the scaling processes in OP calculations. While it is very important that you do your best on the QCS Test, it is how well you achieve in your Authority subjects that is most important.

### Do students with five or more VHAs in Authority subjects and an A on the QCS Test automatically get an OP1?

Not all students awarded VHAs are at the same standard. Some students may be ranked at the top of the VHA range, while others may be placed lower.

There are many more students with five VHAs than there are OP1s each year. Historically, students who achieve nothing lower than a VHA in all their subjects usually receive an OP between 1 and 7.

### There are a lot of Visa students in my subject. Will my OP calculations be disadvantaged as a result?

Visa students are not included in the statewide rank order of students that is divided into OP bands. Instead, they receive an Equivalent OP. The QCAA has procedures in place to ensure fairness for all students regardless of whether there are a high number of Visa students. These procedures also ensure that there is comparability between Equivalent OPs and OPs. (Visa students live temporarily in Australia under a short-term visa or a similar authority issued by the Australian Government.)

## YOUR OP QUESTIONS continued ...

**If I am OP-ineligible and I sit the QCS Test, will I bring down the results of the students at my school?**

If you are OP-ineligible, your QCS Test result will not contribute to group results used for calculating OPs for your school. Only the results of OP-eligible students are used in OP calculations. Your QCS Test result will appear on your Senior Statement.

**If I've completed a Certificate IV will I get a better OP?**

Vocational education and training (VET) certificates do not contribute to the calculation of your OP. If you are OP-eligible and you complete a Certificate IV, it will not be combined with your OP or boost your OP. You will receive an OP from your Authority subjects and QTAC may allocate you a Tertiary Selection Rank for your additional qualification. QTAC may consider this rank instead of your OP if it is higher, but it does not affect or change your OP.

**If I am the school dux, will I receive the highest OP in my school?**

While being named dux at your school is a significant achievement, it does not indicate your position in the statewide rank order. The selection of the school dux often does not include QCS Test data or final subject achievement used to calculate OPs. This means that the dux of a school will not necessarily receive the highest OP at that school.

**Last year my school predicted a student would get an OP2 but they got an OP4. How come?**

Although it's important when deciding on tertiary preferences to have a realistic idea of the range of OPs you might receive, the QCAA recommends schools avoid giving precise OP predictions. Schools do not have all of the student achievement information required to make precise predictions until well after Year 12 students finish school. If a prediction was not what was achieved, this does not indicate there is a flaw in the calculation of the OP — it means the prediction was not correct. The QCAA does not predict OPs.

**If I'm sick during Year 12, can I have my OP reviewed and lifted?**

When a student is experiencing difficulty completing their assessment because of illness or particularly difficult circumstances, they can ask their school for special provision. If this is granted, your school will be required to ensure that the conditions of your assessment mean that you have equal opportunity to achieve. The QCAA, however, cannot adjust an OP on the basis that if you had studied under different circumstances you would have achieved a better result. In fairness to all students, your results and your OP must be based on demonstrated achievement, not achievement that might have been demonstrated in other circumstances. If you have experienced illness or difficult circumstances during Year 12, you should contact QTAC to ask them to consider that this may have affected your achievement and your OP.

## FIND OUT MORE

Visit [www.studentconnect.qcaa.qld.edu.au](http://www.studentconnect.qcaa.qld.edu.au)

**Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority**  
 PO Box 307, Spring Hill QLD 4004  
 Level 7, 154 Melbourne Street, South Brisbane  
 T +61 7 3864 0299

