



# TOP FAST FACTS

**YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**



**QCAA**

Queensland Curriculum  
& Assessment Authority

## 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. It is used for tertiary entrance purposes only, and indicates how well a student has done 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 semester units of credit in 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 get in the subjects you study in Year 12. These results are reported on your Senior Statement in terms 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 because you did not compete against other students to achieve these results. 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 doing just well enough to get a VHA. Your OP and Field Positions (FPs) are based on comparisons with other students. These differences are reflected in your SAIs, which are allocated by your teachers and sent to 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 the 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 which aims to provide feedback on your progress as you develop skills and knowledge in your subjects. However, each subject has its own assessment pattern and even if you exit a subject in Year 11, those results might still be used in the calculation of your OP. You can find out how each subject is assessed by checking your school's QCAA-approved work program. If you're aiming for an OP, you should do your best in every subject during both years. However, even if you had lower results in Year 11 than you would have liked, you can improve these results by working hard in Year 12 and improving your ranking in each of your subjects.

### 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 provided they 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 average and the spread 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 QCAA subjects are treated equally in OP calculations. What matters in OP calculations is not the subject that you study but how well you do in relation to the competition in that subject. A student can achieve an OP1 or an OP25 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 not 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 rank) 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 by students at a particular school can vary from year to year depending on the level of student achievement and how they rank compared 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 doing just well enough to get a VHA. There are more students with five VHAs than there are OP1s. Historically, students who achieve nothing lower than a VHA in all their subjects usually receive an OP between 1 and 6.

### 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 OP rankings. Instead, they are given an Equivalent OP. The QCAA has special procedures in place to ensure that domestic students are not disadvantaged in subject-groups and school-groups with 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 for 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 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 and will be used towards your Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) Tertiary Selection Rank if it improves your rank.

**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 a QTAC Tertiary Selection Rank for your additional qualification. This rank can be considered in addition to your OP 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. Rather, it is an indication of the way that your school sees your achievements in relation to other students at your school. The selection of the school dux does not include QCS Test data used in the calculation of OPs. So 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 advises schools against giving precise predictions. When making OP predictions, schools don't have access to the precise information used by the QCAA to calculate OPs. The QCAA does not know what method your school used to predict the OP so we cannot comment on the accuracy or otherwise of its calculations. However, the fact that your school's prediction was not what was achieved does not indicate there is a flaw in the calculation of the OP.

**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 apply for special provision. If this is granted, your school will be required to make special arrangements to ensure you have equal opportunity to achieve. The QCAA, however, does not 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, the Queensland Certificate of Education and the Tertiary Entrance Statement must show demonstrated achievement, not achievement that might have been demonstrated in other circumstances. Another form of special consideration may be offered by QTAC in relation to tertiary entrance. It is best to contact QTAC to inform them of your circumstances and request consideration.

## FIND OUT MORE

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

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