

# Visa student procedures: Equivalent Overall Positions (OPs) and Field Positions (FPs)

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# Introduction

Under the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Regulation 2014, only Australian citizens and permanent residents are eligible for a tertiary ranking. This means that most students who are studying in Queensland secondary schools on an overseas visa are not eligible for an Overall Position (OP) and Field Positions (FPs).

To allow users of the Tertiary Entrance Statement to judge these students' relative academic achievements, the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) provides **equivalent OPs and FPs** to eligible students. This publication explains how we calculate these. The discussion is aimed primarily at schools. Students needing information on the tertiary ranking process should speak to their schools.

It should be noted that the QCAA's role regarding tertiary admissions is limited to providing details of students' achievement to help in the selection process. Questions regarding overseas student quotas, the compilation of tertiary selection ranks, and admission procedures should be directed to the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) or the relevant tertiary institution.

## Who can receive an equivalent OP and FPs?

Visa students must meet the same eligibility requirements as domestic students regarding OPs and FPs. Visa students must:

- complete study in 20 semester units of Authority subjects
- complete three of those subjects for four semesters each
- attend all four sessions of the QCS Test.<sup>1</sup>

Students who meet these requirements but who do not qualify for OPs and FPs because of their residency status (i.e. they are living temporarily in Australia under a short-term visa or similar authority issued by the Australian Government) can receive an equivalent OP and FPs.

## Definition of a visa student

For OP calculation purposes, visa students are those who live temporarily in Australia under a short-term visa or a similar authority issued by the Australian Government. A visa student is not an Australian citizen (through naturalisation or otherwise) or a permanent resident of Australia; if a student is a permanent resident of Australia (with a visa or not) they are not classed as a visa student for the purposes of tertiary entrance procedures. The student's country of origin or reason for residing in Australia does not determine whether they are classified as a visa student.

The following may be included in the visa student category:

- scholarship, exchange or government-sponsored students from any overseas country
- children of foreign diplomats
- children of parents who are in Australia as temporary residents (for instance, business people who work in Australia for a limited period of time and who do not have Australian permanent residency or citizenship)
- private students and students admitted under the full-fee payment scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> Visa students must also meet the same eligibility requirements for the Queensland Certificate of Education as domestic students. See the QCAA website [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au) for further details.

# Why are procedures different for visa students?

Because the QCS Test is designed for Queensland students and assumes knowledge of standard Australian English and an awareness of the Australian cultural context, visa students may not achieve as well on the QCS Test as domestic students with comparable results in school-based assessment.

The QCAA's procedures help ensure that, if visa students do not perform on the QCS Test as expected, given their within-school results, the QCAA can still calculate scaling parameters (i.e. a mean and mean difference) for the whole group. These procedures allow visa students to be placed within the school rank order but recognise that their contribution to scaling is not as expected.

The calculation of equivalent OPs and FPs is underpinned by the following principles:

1. Visa students are not included with the number of domestic students allocated to OP and FP bands.
2. When a visa student completes a combination of Authority subjects in a Queensland school that makes them eligible for an equivalent OP, the school can compare the student with the domestic OP-eligible students in the school. This assessment allows the QCAA to estimate the student's academic achievement relative to domestic OP-eligible students. An equivalent OP and FPs can then be calculated.

## How are equivalent OPs and FPs calculated?

The general procedures for calculating equivalent OPs and FPs are described below. There are some variations in schools or subjects with relatively high numbers of visa students (see the next section: *Visa schools and visa subjects*).

### Step 1: Schools assign SAIs

In subject groups classified as small or intermediate (<14 students), schools follow the same prescribed procedures for both visa students and domestic students.

For large subject groups ( $\geq 14$  students), schools assign SAIs between 200 and 400 to all students in the group, including visa students and domestic students.

When SAIs are displayed to students, visa students must be included. A visa student may be assigned the SAI of 200 or 400.

## Step 2: First stage of scaling — QCAA scales SAIs

Visa students' results do not generally contribute to any of the group scaling parameters used in this step, namely, the subject-group SAI and QCS Test scaling score means and mean differences. The SAIs of all students (visa and domestic students) are scaled using the parameters derived from the results of the OP-eligible domestic students.

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### SAI scaling — General procedure

- SAIs for visa students who are eligible for an equivalent OP and FPs are ignored in the scaling process.
  - The QCAA uses the QCS mean and mean difference of the OP-eligible domestic students to scale SAIs for **both** OP-eligible domestic students **and** visa students eligible for an equivalent OP and FPs.
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## Step 3: QCAA calculates OAIs

The QCAA calculates an overall achievement indicator (OAI) for each visa student by combining and averaging their scaled SAIs from their best five subjects or their best 20 semesters (subject to eligibility requirements). The selection of the best scaled SAIs for visa students follows the same principles as for domestic students. A similar process is used to calculate field achievement indicators (FAIs).

## Step 4: Second stage of scaling — QCAA scales OAIs

The QCAA scales OAIs to the school's scaling parameters (the school's QCS Test mean and mean difference). There is no second stage of scaling for FAIs. The visa students are not included in this stage of scaling.

## Step 5: QCAA determines equivalent OP and FPs

The QCAA uses the scaled OAI and FAIs to determine a visa student's academic achievement relative to the domestic students in the state. For example, if a visa student had the same scaled OAI as a domestic student with an OP15, the visa student would be given an equivalent OP15.

## Visa schools and visa subjects

There are exceptional cases where scaling parameters are determined for the entire group because there are a large number of visa students and the existence of extra information should not be ignored.

- A **visa school** is one that has more than 10 visa students eligible for equivalent OPs and FPs, and this number is larger than 20 per cent of the OP-eligible domestic school population.
- A **visa subject** is one where the number of visa students eligible for equivalent OPs and FPs is larger than 20 per cent of the OP-eligible domestic subject cohort, and there are 10 or more OP-eligible students. The visa subject category does not apply at visa schools or at small schools.

## Step 1: Schools assign SAIs

The procedure used in visa schools and subjects is the same as the general procedure described previously.

## Step 2: First stage of scaling — QCAA scales SAIs

### Visa subjects

Suitable scaling parameters are found by using the SAI information from the school. Scaling parameters (QCS Test mean and mean difference) for visa subjects are then determined, using the QCS Test results of the OP-eligible students and the relative placing in the school rank order of the visa students that are part of that group.

### Visa schools

For each visa student, the QCAA looks at the QCS Test results of all students in the state with similar results in a similar combination of subjects. The mean of the QCS Test results for these other students is taken to be the 'expected' result of the visa student. The difference between the 'expected' and the actual result is obtained. These differences are combined for all visa students at the school to obtain a measure of how different the visa students' actual QCS Test results are from the 'expected' results.

If the actual QCS Test results of the visa students are lower than the 'expected' results — and before the visa students' QCS Test results are included in the OP calculation — then each result is adjusted in keeping with this group difference. Results are never adjusted downwards. Following scaling, the results of OP-eligible domestic students are rechecked to ensure that their OPs and FPs remain consistent with their QCS Test results (excluding visa students). Because the levels of achievement of visa students are used in scaling, extra moderation is performed to check that their levels of achievement are accurate. The QCAA selects visa students in each subject group and sends their work to verification. District panels review their work and report to the QCAA.

### Visa school procedures — Key points

- Parameters are determined to scale all SAIs (those of the OP-eligible domestic students and those of the visa students eligible for equivalent OPs and FPs).
- All information provided by the school is used for all students so placements are more accurately determined; extra moderation is performed on visa students' work.
- The achievement of visa students eligible for an equivalent OP and FPs is compared to all other students in the state with similar levels of achievement in similar subjects; QCS Test parameters are determined using this information.
- Scaling parameters are found using the QCS Test results of OP-eligible domestic students and the within-school achievement of visa students eligible for equivalent OPs and FPs.

## Step 3: QCAA calculates OAIs

The procedure used in visa schools and subjects is the same as the general procedure described previously.

## **Step 4: Second stage of scaling — QCAA scales OAls**

For **visa subjects**, the second stage of scaling proceeds but the visa students are not included.

For **visa schools**, a process that is equivalent to the one used in the first stage of scaling (Step 2) for finding scaling parameters is carried out.

## **Step 5: QCAA determines equivalent OP and FPs**

The procedure used in visa schools and subjects is the same as the general procedure described previously.

## **Tertiary Entrance Statements**

The equivalent OP and FPs are recorded on the visa student's Tertiary Entrance Statement with the note that 'Overall Position and Field Positions obtained are equivalent to those of Australian students'.

## **More information**

Students with questions about equivalent OPs and FPs should contact their schools. Questions regarding overseas student quotas, the compilation of tertiary selection ranks, and admission procedures should be directed to the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) or the relevant tertiary institution.