School Curriculum and Standards Authority

Explanation about how school marks and ATAR course examination marks are used in the calculation of the combined scores

Introduction

Information about the achievement of a student who completes a pair of units in a Year 12 ATAR course comes from two sources:

- the student's mark submitted by the school to the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) (school mark out of 100), **and**
- the student's mark from the ATAR course examination set by the Authority.

These marks are used to calculate the student's combined score.

For all Year 12 ATAR courses with a practical examination (oral, performance, portfolio or production), for the pair of units, schools are required to submit to the Authority:

- a school mark out of 100 (weighted for each component), **and**
- a school mark out of 100 for the written component, **and**
- a school mark out of 100 for the practical component.

A student who completes a Year 12 ATAR course examination is issued with an ATAR course report[1], which lists the following:

- a school mark
- a moderated school mark
- an examination mark
- a combined score
- a standardised combined score.

These notes explain how, for each ATAR course, a school mark and ATAR examination mark are used to create a course combined score.

School marks

A student's school mark for a course is the course mark out of 100 submitted by the school.

ATAR examination marks

At the end of the year, the Authority conducts ATAR course examinations.

Each ATAR course examination is set by an independent expert panel. This ensures the examinations reflect the syllabus and are a fair test of student achievement.

A student's examination is independently marked by at least two qualified markers under the supervision of team leaders and/or a Chief marker. The markers have access only to the Western Australian student number. A student's name and school are not known to the markers. If the marks allocation is outside of tolerance at a question, section or paper level, then a team leader and/or Chief marker will re-mark a student's paper before the final ATAR examination marks are decided.

Statistical moderation of school marks

It is unlikely that the school marks for a course at different schools are comparable.

[1] This excludes non-school candidates.

Statistical moderation of school marks in a course places them on the same scale as the ATAR course examination marks at the school for that course. Thus, the ATAR course examination marks of students at all schools for the same course are comparable, and the statistically moderated school marks for the same course are comparable across all schools.

The ranking of students according to the moderated school marks is the same as their ranking according to the un-moderated school marks, regardless of whether the school's marks are moderated up or down.

For a Year 12 ATAR course with both a written and a practical component, statistical moderation is applied separately to both the written school marks and to the practical school marks. ATAR course written examination marks are used for the moderation of the written school marks, and ATAR course practical examination marks are used for the moderation of the practical school marks.

Calculating the combined mark

A student's combined mark is calculated for each written and practical component.

For an ATAR course with only a written examination, a student's combined mark for the written component is the average of the ATAR course written examination mark and the moderated school mark for the written component.

For an ATAR course with a practical examination, a student's combined mark for the practical component is the average of the ATAR course practical examination mark and the moderated school mark for the practical component.

Calculating the combined score

A student's combined score for an ATAR course with a written component only is the same as the student's written combined mark for that course.

It cannot be assumed that, for courses with both a written and a practical component, the combined marks for the written component and the combined marks for the practical component of a course are on the same scale. As a result, the combined marks for each component of a course are statistically equated.

A student's combined score for an ATAR course with both a written and a practical component is calculated as the weighted average[2] of the statistically equated combined scores of the two components.

For a detailed explanation of the processes used to moderate school marks and to calculate combined scores, see https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/assessment/examinations.

Calculating the scaled score for an ATAR course (for tertiary admission)

Scaling adjusts for differences in difficulty between courses and aims to ensure that, in terms of access to university, students are not disadvantaged if they choose to study difficult courses. It cannot be assumed that the combined scores for different ATAR courses are on the same scale. Therefore, the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) applies the average marks scaling (AMS) method to equate the combined scores of all students (provided by the Authority) and calculate scaled scores.

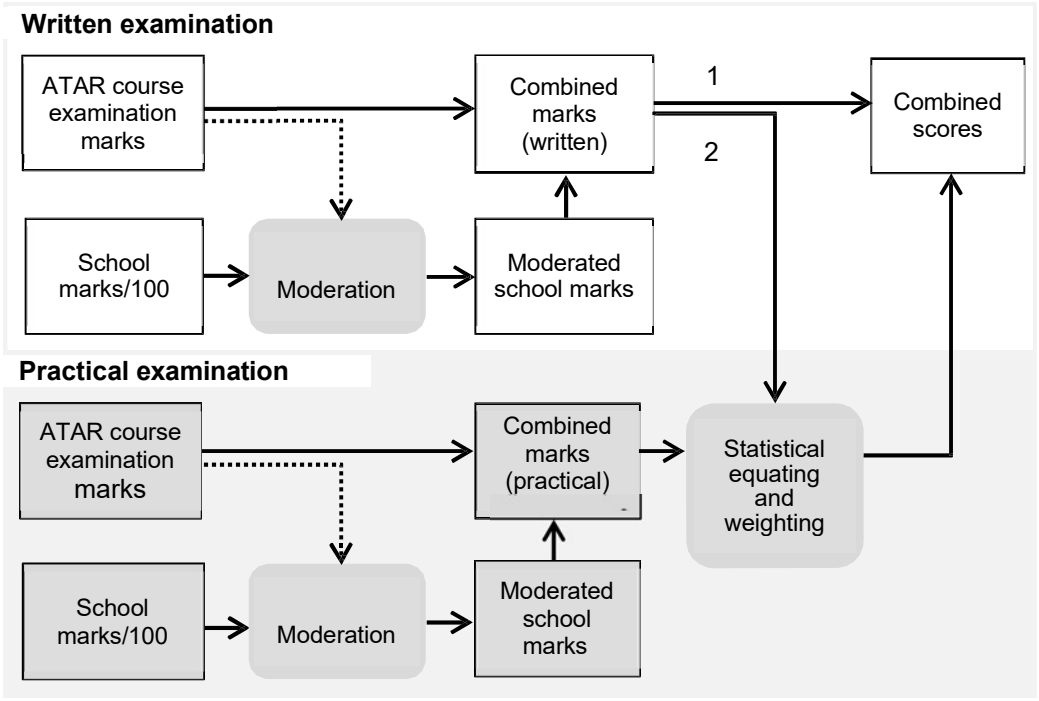
The scaled scores from all courses are on a common scale and are used to calculate the Tertiary Entrance Aggregate (TEA) and the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) for university admission purposes.

More detailed information about the calculation of scaled scores, the TEA and the ATAR is available on the TISC website at www.tisc.edu.au.

[2] For Year 12 courses with a practical component, the weightings of the combined marks are specified in the course syllabus.

The Authority's post-examination process

The diagram below shows the steps in the post-examination process for calculating combined marks and combined scores.



1 – courses with written component only
2 – courses with written and practical components

Standardised combined scores

Students' combined scores are standardised so that the distribution of these scores has a mean close to 60 and a standard deviation close to 14. The standardised combined scores are used by the TISC in the marks adjustment process.