



All about ATAR

@ MINDARIE SENIOR COLLEGE

Welcome

Starting at a new school can be daunting, especially when you may not have a good understanding of what it is to be an “ATAR student”.

You may have heard that it is “hard” or “difficult”, but the reality is, if you put in the work to stay on top of your content and build good study habits, *you can achieve success*. Your previous results have shown that this is right pathway for you. Celebrate your previous success and use it to build your confidence as you start this exciting program!

One thing that sometimes makes ATAR feel “harder” is that in Years K-10, you may not have had to study, or even had much homework! Year 10 might even have been easy for you. It’s important for you to understand the expectations associated with an ATAR Pathway and that, initially, it can feel difficult or different- that’s normal. That’s also why we’ve made this guide; to help you prepare for success as an ATAR student.

Don’t read this whole booklet at once! It’s something you can work your way through over a few days as you settle into your ATAR Pathway.



ATAR EXPLAINED

Wondering what an ATAR is and why you might need one? If you're at high school and are thinking about starting university, an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is one way to gain direct entry into university.

An ATAR is a number between 0 and 99.95 and represents your position amongst all the other year 12s in Western Australia. It is a rank, *not* a score or mark. For example, an ATAR of 75 means you have performed better than 75% of year 12s in WA.

How is an ATAR calculated?

- The four highest scores achieved in your Year 12 ATAR Courses (made up of a combined Course and WACE exam mark) are added together to become your Tertiary Entrance Aggregate (TEA).
- Your TEA is then ranked against all other Year 12s in WA. This is your ATAR.
- Every course has a minimum ATAR to qualify and apply.

ATARs are equivalent from every state, so an ATAR of 75 in New South Wales will still be 75 in Western Australia for example.

What's the difference between an ATAR and a selection rank?

Your ATAR tells you how you've been positioned compared to other year 12 students, while your selection rank is your ATAR plus any adjustments. ¹

Where does the calculation come from?

The Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) calculates your ATAR based on your school-based results and your final WACE examinations (external exams). The score is made up of 50% of your school mark and 50% of your external examination mark for each course. There is scaling and moderation applied to give you a final ATAR.

Examinations

Exams can be daunting; it can help to frame College-based exams as opportunities for practice. You wouldn't run a marathon without training. In the same way, you needn't sit your external WACE exams without some practice, first. At end of each semester of Years 11 and 12 you will sit exams, for a total of four school-based exam periods. These can vary in weighting from 15%-50% of your school mark. The aim of these is to give you multiple opportunities to prepare yourself for your final exams.

To find out more about ATAR and university applications you can go to the TISC website [here](#).

¹ ATAR explanation taken from: <https://www.murdoch.edu.au/study/pathways-to-uni/high-school/understanding-atar> (2023)

WHO IS ATAR FOR?

ATAR Courses are provided to ensure that students who are capable are challenged by their education. Just because you do ATAR doesn't mean you are locked in to selecting a university course. Yes, achieving an ATAR score is the most direct way to enter university, but there is no requirement to go if you're not ready or aren't sure what it is you want to do.

The Department of Education released its Senior School Metrics in 2022. It suggests that highly capable students in Year 9 NAPLAN, should be on a path which enables them to gain direct entry to university. You can see this prediction below:

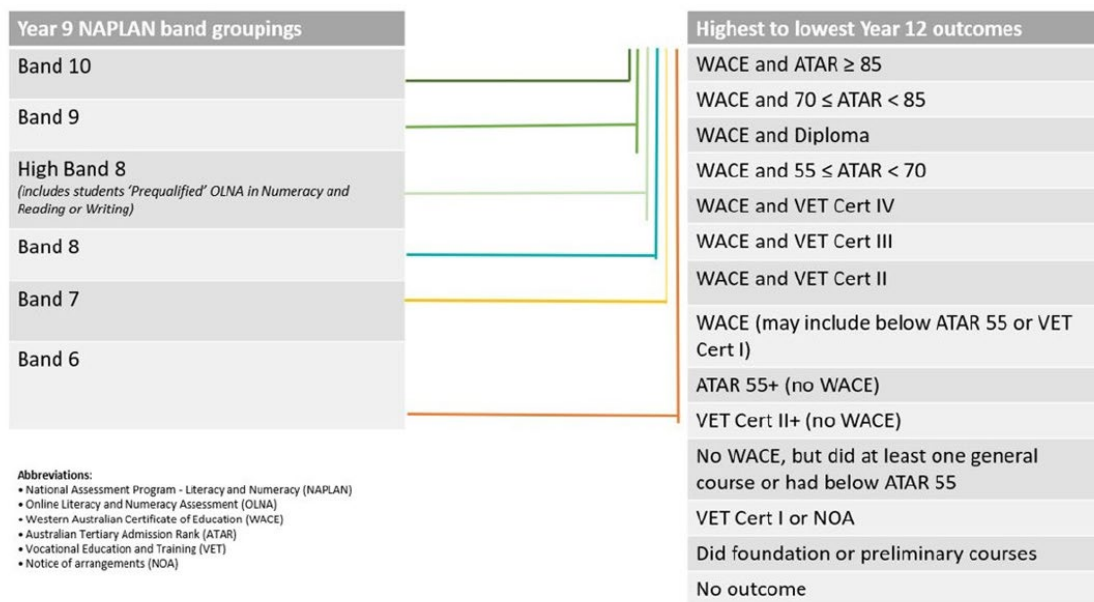


Figure 1. Progress and achievement metric.

The progress and achievement metric provides an illustration of student journeys from Year 9 to Year 12. This metric is based on the actual and potential Year 12 cohort, which includes students who were enrolled or attended Year 12 in the cohort year and students who were enrolled or attended Year 11 in the year prior to the cohort year.

Year 9 NAPLAN band groupings are based on each student's highest achieved result in either the Reading, Writing or Numeracy assessments. Students with a highest Year 9 NAPLAN result of band 8 who also prequalified for OLNA Numeracy and either OLNA Reading or Writing are classified as High band 8.

A hierarchy of student outcomes is shown relative to each NAPLAN grouping.

Regardless of whether you aim to achieve university entrance or not, the ideal scenario in Australia is for students to complete the most challenging courses they are able to. That means that if you can, you should. You never know where life will take you, and you want to ensure the best possible outcome for yourself. 46% of Australians aged 25-40 hold a Bachelor's degree and will set themselves up for a retirement without reliance on the pension². Unfortunately, based on predicted market information, most workers who are employed in low-skilled jobs will never be able to afford their own home. It might seem a long way away, but doing the best you can in the most challenging courses you can, will pay off when it comes to the kinds of work you may be qualified for in the future.

² <https://propertyupdate.com.au/the-importance-of-education-in-australias-knowledge-economy/>

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

An ATAR Pathway is a direct Pathway to university. The idea of choosing and completing an ATAR Pathway can seem a lot at first. It can be tempting to “take the easy road” and opt out of challenging yourself. While that might initially seem like a good strategy, plenty of research and data tells us otherwise. Students will always be better off if they work-hard and continue to push themselves in challenging courses.

Let's look at some of the reasons capable students should aim to choose and stick with an ATAR Pathway.

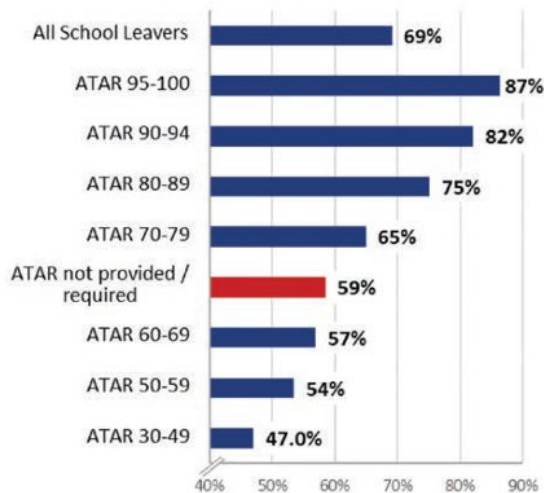
The 2023 Report on *ATAR's Rising Relevance*³ compiled by Rob Joseph analyses current data on student success at university. It shows that **three in ten students do not complete their degree within six years and almost one in five drop out before finishing.**

Incomplete studies can be costly, leaving students with HECS-HELP debts for courses without attaining a qualification. Universities can, unfortunately, admit students who might not be prepared for high-level studies. While you certainly *can* gain entry into university through alternative means- will these pathways prepare you adequately for the rigour of university level studies?

The Report also provides an argument for ATAR as the “best predictor of university success”. This means that, if you succeed in ATAR, you are more likely to succeed in your first-year subjects at university. Students who gain entry via an alternative pathway are twice as likely to drop out in their first year.

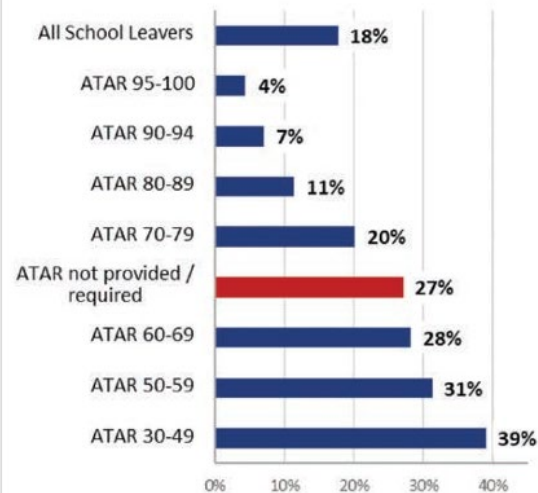
Students admitted on a non-ATAR basis have lower than average completion rates, and higher than average attrition rates.

SIX-YEAR COMPLETION RATE BY ATAR, 2022



Source: Australia Government Dept. of Education, Higher Education Statistics

SIX-YEAR ATTRITION RATE BY ATAR, 2022



Source: Australia Government Dept. of Education, Higher Education Statistics

³ https://www.cis.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/AP44_-_ATARs-rising-relevance.pdf

THEORY AND PRACTICAL

It's no secret that ATAR courses are going to be assessed more heavily on theory work. But what is theory? And what does the theory/practical split look like?

What does **theory** work/assessment look like?

- Research (in textbooks and online)
- Notetaking
- Completing problems, exercises, and sample questions
- Planning and drafting
- Practice writing
- Formative assessments

What does **practical** work/assessment look like?

- Investigations and testing theories in Science Labs
- Adapting recipes for special dietary needs in Food Labs
- Demonstrating human movement concepts in Physical Education
- Rehearsing a production in Drama

Course	% of theory assessed	% of practical assessed
ATAR Food Science and Technology	80%	20%
ATAR Physical Education Studies	70%	30%
ATAR Chemistry	75%	25%

Note: Not all courses will have a practical component.



HOMWORK VS. STUDY

Something that might surprise students is that study and homework are different.

Homework: work assigned to you by your teacher that needs to be completed for the next (or a future) class.

Study: a program of revision that is student directed where you work to memorise and understand course content in preparation for tests and examinations.

In an ATAR course you will be expected to dedicate time to **both** of these activities. Students who do not commit to both homework and study can quickly find themselves falling behind. Creating good work habits early in your senior secondary journey can support your success in an ATAR Pathway.

The recommended hours of study per week, *per subject* is about 3-4 hours (5 ATAR courses = 15-20 hours per week)- in addition to homework. Early in the year you may not need as many hours but, as content increases and there is more to revise, you'll be thankful that you set yourself up for the peak times (like exams)!

What could a typical week look like for an ATAR student?

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00	Attending classes at College		Study at home or College	Attending classes at College		Study (flexible throughout day)	Study (flexible throughout day)
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00	Travel, snack & break		Free time	Travel, snack & break		Free time (work/sports/social) or Study depending on Weds/Weekend hours	Free time (work/sports/social) or Study depending on Weds/Weekend hours
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00	Dinner with family					Night off	
7:00	Study						
8:00	Free time or Study depending on Weds/Weekend hours						
9:00	In bed- no devices!						

You'll notice that our sample student schedule has flexible time that can be used to work, sports or connecting with friends and family. You need to remember that if you are enrolled in a school, you are primarily a *full-time student* and school should be made a priority. But, we do know that students play sports, have casual jobs or do volunteer work and this can be a tricky balance. We encourage sports and work as they contribute to your physical, mental and financial wellbeing, and that's why it's important to *plan* your week thoughtfully. There is plenty of free time built into this timetable which can be used for employment, recreation, and self-care. Ensure that you can make time in your schedule for everything you commit to.

Even if class/homework is not being assessed, it is essential to building your understanding of the content. You are expected to participate in all class activities and complete all work.

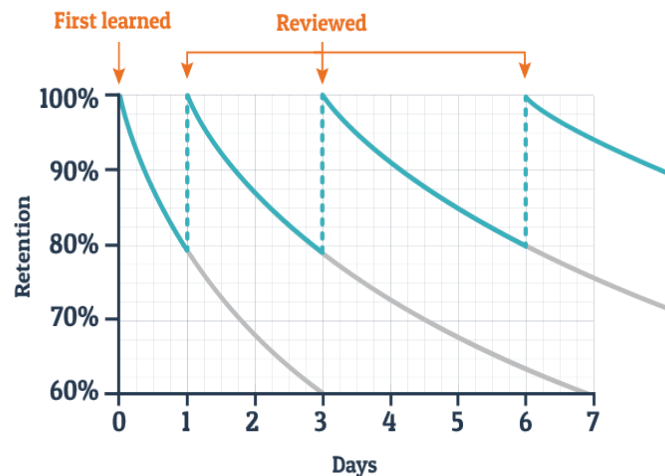
Note to parents: this might mean that you need to support your child a bit more financially, (and be forgiving with "chores"!) so that they can dedicate their time to study rather than working part-time hours- particularly on a Wednesday. Have a conversation about what this looks like for your family and the expectations you would have of your child if you make this trade-off.

The Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve

The forgetting curve is a mathematical formula by Hermann Ebbinghaus that originated in 1885. The curve demonstrated the rate at which information is forgotten over time if we don't attempt to retain it.

Learners will rapidly lose their memory of learned knowledge in a matter of days or weeks unless the information is consciously reviewed.

Typical Forgetting Curve for Newly Learned Information



Some studies suggest that humans forget approximately 50% of new information within an hour of learning it! That goes up to an average of 70% within 24 hours.⁴

⁴ <https://www.learnupon.com/blog/ebbinghaus-forgetting-curve/>
<https://practicalpie.com/ebbinghaus-forgetting-curve/>

THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS TO GET INTO UNIVERSITY- WHY SHOULD I TRY?

Of course, it might be relatively 'easy' to get into university via alternative entry- but tutors and lecturers might not be as interested in taking time to support your individual performance in the same way that your Senior College teacher are.

While you're at the College, you can access one-on-one support from expert teachers who genuinely want you to achieve and see success.

Here are some reasons to use that support and work hard while you're at the College:

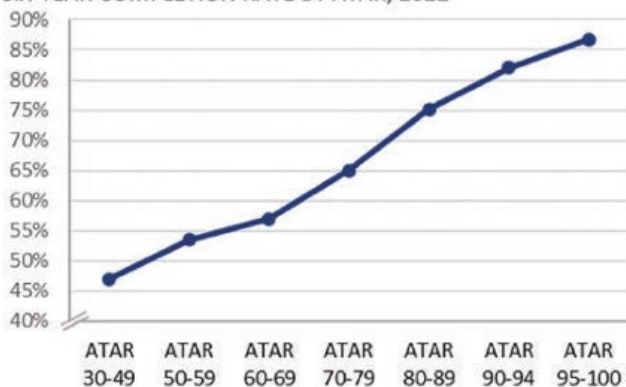
1. Low-ATAR students are more likely to fail [university] subjects⁵:

It might sound harsh, but the data in the *ATAR's Rising Relevance Report* shows that students who do not achieve in their ATAR courses (and perhaps gain entry to university another way), are more likely to fail subjects at university. Universities will offer alternative entry pathways, but if you have not put in the groundwork in Years 11 and 12, the reality of university level studies can be a rude awakening.

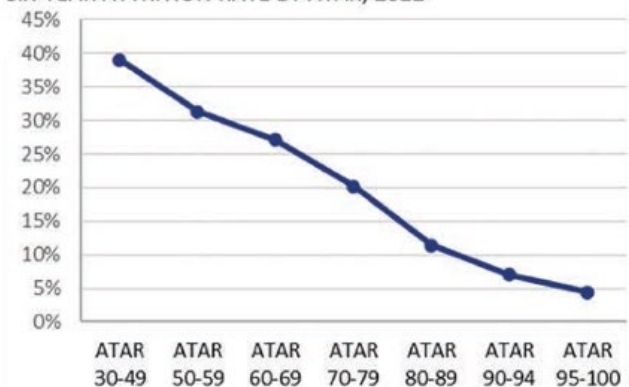
Pushing yourself to achieve your absolute best, and ensuring a well-planned study routine to stay on top of your work and deeply understand your content, can ultimately mean more success in your chosen pathway.

Lower ATARs are associated with lower completions and higher attrition rates.

SIX-YEAR COMPLETION RATE BY ATAR, 2022



SIX-YEAR ATTRITION RATE BY ATAR, 2022



Source: Australia Government Department of Education, Higher Education Statistics

⁵ https://www.cis.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/AP44_-ATARs-rising-relevance.pdf

2. The entry score for your chosen course could change without notice:

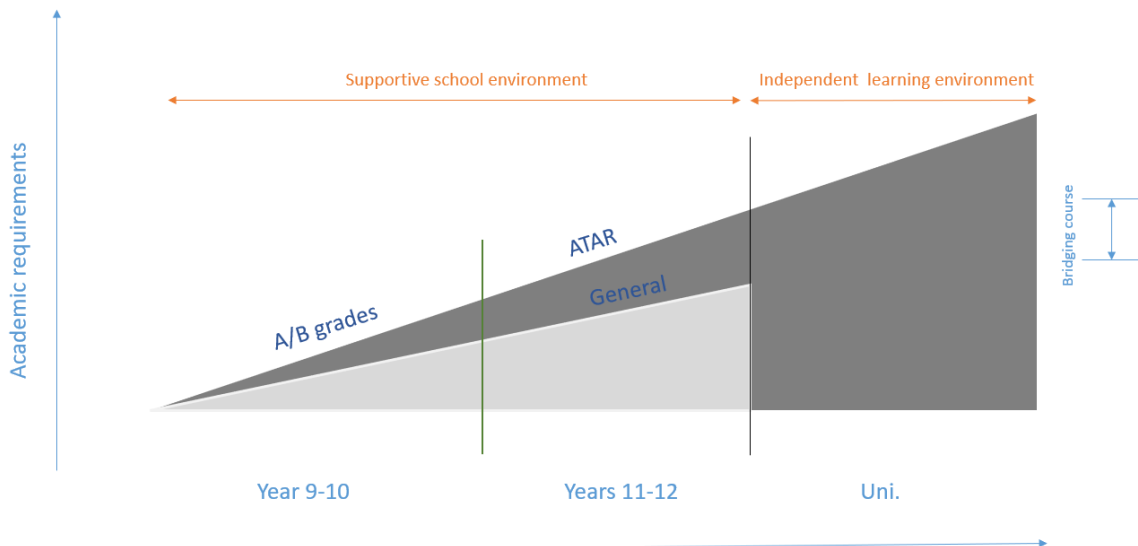
When you work out your predicted ATAR, you can compare it to the minimum entrance scores for those courses at your chosen university to gauge the likelihood of receiving an offer. However, the minimum score is based on *past* student results. When your own statewide cohort sits the examinations, and their final scores are calculated, the ATAR score for some courses may change based on the demand. So, if more students want to enter a course, the places will fill faster, and the cut-off for entry will rise.

Look at the examples below for some changes to ATAR cut-offs in 2022.

University	Course	Minimum estimated ATAR	Lowest ATAR offered a place
Curtin	Bachelor of Education (Secondary Education) - Science Education in Chemistry	70.00	81.25
	Bachelor of Science (Science) in Earth Science	70.00	88.50
	Bachelor of Mine and Engineering Surveying*	70.00	94.15
ECU	Bachelor of Education (Secondary) - Biological Science Education	70.00	88.00
	Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Media and Communications (double degree)	70.00	91.65

3. The long way round:

Putting in the time and effort to gain direct entry to university will pay off when you can start your course immediately and know that you are well-prepared to tackle the challenges it will bring. While there are many 'easier' pathways, they can take longer, cost more money, and you'll need to get there without the support systems offered by a school. If you're capable it makes far more sense to try hard and get where you want to go much faster- before you are left to do it all by yourself.





WHAT ABOUT A STUDY PERIOD?

Year 11s are not routinely granted study periods on their timetable. There are a few reasons for this. One of them is WACE requirements. You need to be enrolled in, and complete, 20 Course Units over two years and enrolling in 12 of these units (6 courses) in Year 11 gives us the flexibility to offer a study period in Year 12.

Study will not be granted to students who do not demonstrate an ability to use the time wisely. Students must demonstrate that they know *how* to study (by achieving A or B grades) in their courses. Generally, a student not meeting the standard doesn't demonstrate effective use of study time. Students that learn study techniques, and apply them, can achieve well, and are seen as being able to use additional time effectively. Never count on being granted a study period; they are a privilege not a right.

Study Techniques

At the College, we offer many opportunities for students to find study skills that work for them through presentations created specifically for those choosing an ATAR Pathway. We can give you all the advice in the world, but if you don't put it into practice- it won't work.

Check out the links below for some effective ways to study that aren't just highlighting words in a textbook.

[Top 10 Tips on how to study smarter, not longer](#)

[10 Effective Study Techniques to Try This Year](#)

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE

Ensuring you have time to reset throughout the week is crucial to staying well and on top of your commitments. Even when you're in the 'study block' of your weekly timetable, you should avoid doing hours and hours without a break for your mind and body.

Consider these ways to keep healthy and well throughout the year:

- Get enough **sleep**. The Centre for Disease Control and Protection recommends that young people 15-18 years old get at least 8-10 hours of sleep per night.
- Be **active**. This doesn't have to mean playing organized sport or going to the gym; it can be as simple as taking a morning walk or going for a bike ride with friends.
- Fuel your body with **nutritious meals and foods**. It's easy to fall into a pattern of eating foods that provide you with little in the way of nutrition when all your friends are buying burgers. Balance these kinds of foods out with foods that fuel your body and give you long energy: wholegrains, fruits, vegetables, protein and healthy fats.
- On that note, remember to stay fueled all day by starting with a **breakfast** that will help you to focus in your early morning lessons and get you through to break time.
- According to the National Institutes of Health, dehydration can impact short-term memory and attention. Drinking about 2-2.5 litres of **water** per day will ensure your body and mind are functioning at their best.
- Factor in **downtime**. When we're busy our brains are in an aroused state. Downtime allows it to return to homeostasis (being balanced). This looks different for everyone; spending time with family and friends, engaging in hobbies, or reading a good book. When we give ourselves time to take a break, our brains have a chance to sift through data, enhance creative thinking, boost mood and increase attention.



WHO CAN YOU GO TO FOR SUPPORT?

The College has both academic and pastoral care teams who can give you advice, help you to set goals, or just listen to you while you get something off your chest. You can easily make appointments with these people through the Front Office, Student Services, or Careers.

Mentor Teacher

Your Mentor teacher will check in with you on your attendance, behaviour and academic progress. If you feel like something isn't right (whatever it may be!) and you're looking for a starting point, your Mentor can listen and refer you to the appropriate support.

Manager of Student Studies- Karen Hart

Ms. Hart monitors student performance at the College. If you're not on the right track, then you might be requested to attend a meeting with Ms. Hart to discuss strategies moving forward, or to consider a change of pathway. Ms. Hart organises our Elevate study presentations, exam booster sessions, and can do a WACE check in or help you to calculate your predicted ATAR. She also oversees our University Preparation Course.

Student Services Team

Our Student Services Team is made up of many people who can support you throughout your College journey. If you're referred to Student Services by a teacher or your Mentor, then they will collaborate on who is the best person to see depending on what is going on for you. They may also engage with your parent/caregiver to ensure that everyone is on the same page in ensuring the best outcome for you.

Manager of Careers- Tracey Loughnan

Ms. Loughnan is a wealth of information when it comes to university requirements, alternative entry to university, career information and Certificate courses. You might like to check in with her if you have a career in mind but need some direction on how to get there and what your options are.



WHAT PATHWAY SUPPORT DOES MINDARIE SENIOR COLLEGE OFFER?

At Mindarie Senior College, we have been supporting young people to achieve their goals for over 20 years. We know what it takes to achieve success after senior secondary schooling, so we make sure you have all the tools you need to **Pursue Personal Excellence**:

- **Expert teachers-** Our teachers invest their time in developing deep understandings of the courses they deliver. Because they can focus purely on the senior secondary syllabus, they can continue to refine their content and best prepare you for those all-important examinations.
- **Range of courses-** When you're interested in what you do and it speaks to the goals you have for yourself, it makes the learning more meaningful. At Mindarie Senior College, we can offer a broad range of ATAR courses as a result of our senior secondary focus. With so many courses on offer, you're sure to find something that suits your needs and interests
- **Wednesday tutorials and support sessions-** Our teachers can be available on Wednesdays if you feel that you need some individual support to develop your understandings. There are also several permanent help-sessions available that you can 'drop-in' to without needing to pre-schedule. The Library is always open to provide a quiet place to get together for group study (or get some individual work done away from the distractions of home!).
- **ATAR Mentors-** If you are on an ATAR Pathway, you will be placed in a specific ATAR Mentor Group. This will give you the support of like-minded students. Specific ATAR assemblies run in Mentor time giving you updates and information important to you in your ATAR journey.
- **Regular ATAR calculations** – during Mentor you will calculate your predicted ATAR each term so you can see how you are progressing on being able to get into that university course you are aiming for.
- **Moodle-** Our College is a BYOD school. All students are expected to have a device which ensures access to College online resources. Having access to Course content when you're on exam break, on Wednesdays, or if you are unable to attend College due to illness, means that you have 24/7 access to whatever you need to reinforce your understanding.

- **Exam booster sessions-** Our expert teachers provide these sessions closer to exams to ensure that you are able to clarify your understanding prior to sitting exams. They are a good opportunity to revise core content and ask any questions that might be raised in your study program.
- **Elevate-** These sessions literally help you to “elevate” your performance. Top ATAR students who are now at university come out to the College and teach you about what the best students do when they are studying to get top marks. Learn the difference between effective and ineffective study techniques. Study better NOT longer.
- **Mastermind-** Mindarie Senior College provides subsidised access to Master Classes which have a focus on exam and ATAR-style questions and provide strategies on how to prepare for assessments in order to achieve the best results. These programs are proven to be effective in giving students the skills and confidence to tackle assignments and better prepare them for success in exams.





WHAT DO OUR STUDENTS SAY?

We asked some Year 12 ATAR students what advice they would give to their Year 11 selves if they could go back in time and do it all again. Here's what they said:

- Do practice tests, ask for help!
- I wish I had revised past topics throughout the year in preparation for exams.
- If you pay attention in class and ask questions, you will do great!
- More study is required than in Year 10. Make sure you prepare early for upcoming assessments. Try to compete with the top student in your class.
- It's a lot of work compared to Year 10, but it's manageable. Practice papers are actually really helpful.
- Put in the effort- it's worth it. Your grades might drop a little compared to Year 10, that's normal and shows that you need to push yourself.

We are excited to partner with you on this exciting journey. Hopefully, this guide has helped you to better understand and prepare for your chosen pathway. We encourage you to engage with this advice to make your final years of senior schooling a success.

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