How does the preference system work?

One of the benefits of the SATAC system is that you have the opportunity to apply for more than one university course at the same time. This means that you need only complete a single application and supply supporting information once.

You can list up to six courses as preferences in your SATAC application. SATAC will assume that your first preference is the course you most want to study. As long as you are eligible and sufficiently competitive this is the course SATAC will offer you on behalf of the universities. SATAC must base its decision on the information you provide. If you are not eligible or sufficiently competitive to be offered your first preference, SATAC will consider your second preference as if it were your new first preference. If necessary, this process will continue until all of your six preferences are considered.

When processing your preferences

SATAC will treat each preference as a discrete application. Your eligibility and the rank on which you will compete will be determined separately for each course. Because the universities have varying selection rules, your eligibility and rank may vary for each course. This variation will depend upon how your qualifications or other information relevant to your application (e.g. audition score, evidence of relevant work experience) relate to the selection rules for that course.

When making offers on behalf of the universities

SATAC will assume that the order in which your preferences are listed is a reflection of the order in which you would like to be considered for a place in those courses. SATAC will always offer you the highest preference for which you are both eligible and competitive.

If you are not successful in gaining entry to your first preference, you will compete for a place in each of your other preferences in turn on the basis of your eligibility and rank for these courses, regardless of where in your order of preference you or the other applicants have placed them.

Changes of preference and late applications

If you submit an application, add preferences or change the order of preferences after specified dates, some or all of your preferences may not be given equal consideration with the preferences of other (on-time) applicants. Key dates can be found on the SATAC website.

Further information

For further information about eligibility and rank download the fact sheet ‘Understanding how selection works’ from the SATAC website.

Information about equal consideration can be found on the SATAC website.

An example of how the preference system works can be found on the next page...
How does the preference system work?

Example of preferences in a SATAC application

In the example below, Emily, Tom and Alex have all applied for Course C. Let’s assume that:

- all three are South Australian year 12 students - this means their selection rank (shown in brackets next to Course C) is based on their Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) augmented by any bonuses for which they may be eligible
- all three have met the eligibility requirements (i.e. prerequisites) for Course C
- Emily is either not eligible or is not competitive enough to gain entry to her first three preferences
- Alex is both eligible and competitive for Course M, his first preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Course K</td>
<td>1 Course C (67.70)</td>
<td>1 Course M (offer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Course X</td>
<td>2 Course V</td>
<td>2 Course C (85.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Course P</td>
<td>3 Course K</td>
<td>3 Course T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Course C (73.40)</td>
<td>4 Course Z</td>
<td>4 Course G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 No preference</td>
<td>5 Course Y</td>
<td>5 Course W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 No preference</td>
<td>6 Course T</td>
<td>6 Course H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Emily has a higher selection rank than Tom for Course C and will therefore be considered for a place in Course C before him, even though Tom has placed Course C higher in his preference list than Emily
- if there were only one place available in Course C, Emily would receive the offer to it, not Tom
- although Alex has a higher selection rank for Course C than either Emily or Tom, he will not be considered for a place in Course C because he will receive an offer to Course M, his first preference.

You can see from the example that the position of each preference has been used solely as an indicator of the order in which the applicants wish to be considered for their preferences. It has not been used to make judgements about their level of interest in the course and does not affect their selection rank. A lower preference is not a lesser preference.