Understanding how selection works

If you are thinking about applying for university entry it’s important that you understand how university selection works. This fact sheet explains how the universities select applicants for their postgraduate courses.

Important things you need to know

1. What are the entry requirements for a postgraduate course?
2. What are your chances of selection?
3. What is the difference between eligibility and rank?

1. What are the entry requirements for a postgraduate course?

Entry requirements tell you what qualifications and/or experience you need to be considered for a place in a postgraduate course. Some courses even state a minimum academic achievement level for entry, such as a credit average or similar.

Entry requirements vary between postgraduate courses, and being eligible to apply for one course does not automatically make you eligible to apply for another.

Information about the entry requirements for each course is given in the course description in postgraduate course search, so it’s important that you check these details carefully when applying.

Where a higher education level qualification such as a Bachelor degree or equivalent is required for entry, you must either:

- have undertaken higher education level study at an Australian institution
- or
- have undertaken study overseas at a level recognised as the equivalent of Australian higher education level study.

Some courses have additional application requirements that must be met in addition to the entry requirements, such as submitting a portfolio, attending an interview, or submitting a clinical placement form. It’s important that you follow the instructions for any additional application requirements by the stated deadlines or your application may not be given equal consideration for selection. A definition of equal consideration can be found on the SATAC website.

Many courses also include a statement under alternative entry. This explains the university’s policy, if any, on considering applicants who don’t meet the normal entry requirements for the course.

Higher education study undertaken overseas

If you have studied at higher education level overseas, SATAC will use the guidelines agreed to by the universities to assess your study and determine its equivalence to higher education level study offered by Australian institutions.

SATAC can give you advice over the telephone and/or in person (for more complex cases) if you are unsure of the equivalence of your overseas higher education study. You should contact SATAC as early as possible to allow the maximum time for dealing with your enquiry.

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2 What are my chances of selection?
Your chances of being selected in a postgraduate course depend on whether your qualification(s) meet the entry requirements. For some high-demand or competitive courses your chances will also depend on how many places the course has available, how many other applicants have applied, and how competitive your qualification is against the other eligible applicants who are also applying.

3 What is the difference between eligibility and rank?
For many postgraduate courses, all eligible applicants (those who meet the entry requirements) will be selected. For competitive courses, eligible applicants must be ranked to determine a merit order for selection.

Ranking is normally based on academic merit. To rank applicants SATAC must calculate a Grade Point Average (GPA). This is done for each higher education level course you have studied at an Australian higher education institution (or overseas equivalent) for the equivalent of one semester full-time or longer. Selection is usually based on your best GPA.

You can find information on the method for calculating a GPA in the fact sheet Calculating a Grade Point Average (GPA) available from the SATAC website.

For some courses, ranking may be based on other criteria such as an audition or interview score or a combination of academic and other criteria.