



Australian Government  
Department of Education,  
Skills and Employment

# Undergraduate applications, offers and acceptances 2020

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## Introduction

### Purpose of the report

To identify trends in numbers of applications, offers and acceptances and the characteristics of applicants, which are leading indicators of the response of universities to the demand for higher education in 2020.

This report analyses data on applications, offers and acceptances for university admission for the first semester of the 2020 academic year, as of 14 May 2020.

### Overview of the data

Data are derived from the University Applications and Offers Data Collection. The data refer to domestic undergraduate student applications, offers and acceptances as of 14 May 2020. It consists of data on:

- applications and offers processed through Tertiary Admissions Centres (TACs), and
- applications made directly to universities and resulting offers.

The full data is available in visual analytics form on the department's website, along with previous Applications and offers reports and data at: <https://www.education.gov.au/undergraduate-applications-offers-and-acceptances-publications>

In 2007, the Queensland government introduced an additional year of schooling before Year 1 with only a half-cohort of students enrolling that year. As a result of the Queensland half-year cohort effect, the number of Year 12 students in Queensland in 2019 was around 30 per cent less than the previous year leading to lower applications for higher education among Queensland school leavers in 2020. Figures in this report showing the change in applications between 2019 and 2020 exclude applications and offers from the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) due to the need to compare 'like with like'. Inclusion of QTAC data would have led to a national fall of 1.2 per cent in applications and a 1.7 per cent reduction in offers in 2020.

### Acknowledgements

The department would like to thank all officers of TACs and universities for submitting high quality applications and offers data for the 2020 academic year.

## Highlights

### Application numbers

- The actual number of individuals applying either through a TAC (excluding Queensland TAC applicants) or directly for a university place in 2020 was 287,528, an increase of 0.9 per cent on the previous year. This follows a decrease of 1.3 per cent in 2019.
- Direct applicants made up 38.1 per cent of total applicants in 2020.

### Offer numbers

- There were 237,126 unique offers made in 2020, an increase of 0.6 per cent on the previous year. This follows a decrease of 1.5 per cent in 2019.
- Direct offers accounted for 35.8 per cent of total offers in 2020.

### Offer rate

- The offer rate measures the way in which universities choose to respond to student demand.
- In 2020 the offer rate was 82.5 per cent, down from 83.6 per cent in 2019 and 83.8 per cent in 2018.

**Table 1: Growth in applicants and offers and, offer rate, 2010-2020**

Australia	Applicants	Offers	Offer rate
2010			80.2 per cent
2011	3.3 per cent	4.0 per cent	80.8 per cent
2012	2.4 per cent	4.9 per cent	82.8 per cent
2013	2.3 per cent	4.2 per cent	84.4 per cent
2014	2.6 per cent	1.8 per cent	83.8 per cent
2015*	3.2 per cent	2.9 per cent	84.2 per cent
2016*	1.7 per cent	0.8 per cent	83.7 per cent
2017	1.6 per cent	0.1 per cent	82.5 per cent
2018	-2.6 per cent	-1.9 per cent	83.8 per cent
2019	-1.3 per cent	-1.5 per cent	83.6 per cent
2020**	0.9 per cent	0.6 per cent	82.5 per cent

\*Excluding WA data for the 'half-year' Year 12 cohort effect in 2015.

\*\* Excluding Queensland data for the 'half-year' Year 12 cohort effect in 2020.

### Acceptances and deferrals

- There were 167,438 applicants who accepted an offer in 2020, a decrease of 3.9 per cent compared with 2019.
- Of all applicants who received offers in 2020, 18,691 or 11.2 per cent deferred their offer, higher than the deferral rate of 10.2 per cent in 2019.

## Breakdown by key factors

### State and territory

- Except the ACT (-8.6 per cent) and Victoria (-5.9 per cent), all states and territories recorded an increase in applications. Tasmania recorded the largest increase (26.3 per cent), followed by New South Wales (5.4 per cent), Queensland (4.5 per cent), Northern Territory (2.4 per cent), Western Australia (0.3 per cent) and South Australia (0.2 per cent).
- Compared to 2019, the following states and territories recorded negative growth in offers, ACT (-9.6 per cent), Victoria (-4.8 per cent), SA (-1.6 per cent) and WA (-0.5 per cent). Tasmania (21.3 per cent), NSW (4.0 per cent), Queensland (3.8 per cent) and NT (1.6 per cent) recorded positive growth in offers.
- The offer rate in 2020 was 82.5 per cent, a decrease of 1.2 percentage points from the previous year. Tasmania recorded the highest offer rate, 89.4 per cent, while on the other hand Victoria recorded the lowest offer rate, 78.4 per cent, in 2020.
- Offer rates decreased in all states and territories except Victoria (1.0 percentage points) in 2020. Queensland recorded the largest decrease in offer rate (-4.8 percentage points), followed by Tasmania (-3.5 percentage points), SA (-1.5 percentage points), NSW (-1.1 percentage points), ACT (-0.8 percentage points), NT (-0.6 percentage points) and WA (-0.5 percentage points).

### Year 12 and Non-Year 12 applicants

- Nationally, Year 12 applicants increased by 0.3 per cent in 2020 while the number of non-Year 12 applicants increased by 1.3 per cent.
- Nationally, Year 12 applications represented 38.2 per cent of total applications.
- The number of offers to Year 12 applicants increased by 2.0 per cent while the number of offers to non-Year 12 applicants increased by 0.6 per cent.
- Nationally, Year 12 offers represented 40.8 per cent of total offers.
- The offer rate for Year 12 applicants was 88.0 per cent which was higher than the offer rate of 79.0 per cent for non-Year 12 applicants.

### Field of education

- Nationally, the most popular broad field of education (in terms of the number of applications) in 2020 was Health (74,780 applicants or 26.0 per cent of all applicants). This was followed by Society and Culture (69,036 applicants or 24.0 per cent) and Management and Commerce (32,516 applicants or 11.3 per cent).
- Fields of education that recorded strongest growth in applications in 2020 were Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies (10.8 per cent), followed by Information Technology (9.8 per cent), Natural and Physical Sciences (3.1 per cent), Society and Culture (2.3 per cent), Education (2.0 per cent), Health (1.7 per cent), Engineering and Related Technologies (1.1 per cent) and Architecture and Building (0.7 per cent).

- On the other hand, fields of education that experienced the largest declines in applications were Creative Arts (-5.8 per cent) and Management and Commerce (-5.1 per cent).
- Society and Culture received the largest number of offers (58,941 or 24.9 per cent of total offers). This was followed by Health (53,518 or 22.6 per cent of total offers).
- Except Management and Commerce (-5.9 per cent) and Creative Arts (-5.0 per cent), all broad fields of education recorded increases in offers in 2020. Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies recorded the largest increase in offers (13.8 per cent), followed by Information Technology (10.1 per cent), Engineering and Related Technologies (5.3 per cent), Architecture and Building (2.9 per cent), Education (2.3 per cent), Health (1.6 per cent), Society and Culture (0.9 per cent) and Natural and Physical Sciences (0.8 per cent).
- Natural and Physical Sciences had the highest offer rate at 94.2 per cent, a decrease of 2.1 percentage points in 2020. Health had the lowest offer rate of 71.6 per cent in 2020. Engineering and Related Technologies experienced the largest increase in the offer rate in 2020 of 3.5 percentage points to 86.9 per cent.

### Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)

- The average ATAR of applicants receiving an offer decreased marginally from 77.4 in 2019 to 77.0 in 2020.

**Table 2: Average ATAR for those receiving an offer, 2010- 2020**

Average ATAR	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All Courses	79.9	78.9	78.4	77.7	76.7	76.5	76.4	76.6	76.5	77.4	77.0

- In 2020, 27.0 per cent of all offers made to applicants were for those with an ATAR of at least 70.05. Offers to applicants who achieved an ATAR above 90 accounted for 9.8 per cent of all offers.
- The share of offers for applicants in the ATAR band 50.00 or less remained steady at 2.5 per cent, the same as in 2019.
- The share of offers for applicants with no ATAR or who were non-Year 12 applicants was 60.5 per cent in 2020, up from 60.1 per cent in 2019.
- Offer rates for applicants in the ATAR band 50.00 or less have increased from 41.1 per cent in 2014 to 53.3 per cent in 2020.
- The offer rates for the top three ATAR bands (deciles) have remained relatively steady within a range of 97 per cent to 99 per cent.
- Note the likelihood of an applicant with a low ATAR receiving an offer has recorded a greater increase than an applicant with a higher ATAR. In part, this is because offer rates for applicants with a higher ATAR are starting from a higher base so there is less scope for an increase in offer rates.
- Fields of education with an above average share of offers for applicants in the ATAR band 90.00 or more were Engineering and Related Technologies (23.2 per cent), Natural and Physical Sciences (18.7 per cent) and Management and Commerce (11.9 per cent).
- Fields of education with an above average share of offers for applicants in the ATAR band 50.00 or less were Architecture and Building (4.5 per cent), Information Technology (4.1 per cent),

Education (3.8 per cent), Management and Commerce (3.4 per cent), Society and Culture (3.2 per cent) and Creative Arts (3.1 per cent).

### **Underrepresented groups**

- In 2020, applicants from a low SES background recorded a larger increase (2.8 per cent) in applications than applicants from a medium SES background (0.8 per cent). However, applicants from high SES backgrounds decreased by 0.1 per cent.
- In 2020, offers to applicants from a low SES background increased by 2.1 per cent, followed by those from a medium SES background (0.3 per cent) and high SES background (0.1 per cent).
- Applicants from a low SES background were less likely to receive an offer. Their offer rate was 80.1 per cent compared with 81.9 per cent for applicants from a medium SES background and 84.9 per cent for applicants from a high SES background in 2020.
- In 2020, applications from metropolitan residents increased by 0.7 per cent while applications from non-metropolitan residents increased by 1.8 per cent.
- Similarly, offers made to metropolitan applicants increased by 0.5 per cent compared with an increase of 1.2 per cent in offers made to non-metropolitan applicants.
- Applications from non-metropolitan residents were more likely to result in an offer compared with applications from metropolitan residents, 84.3 per cent and 81.9 per cent respectively.
- Nationally, there were 6296 applicants from an Indigenous background, an increase of 7.7 per cent compared with 2019. This represents 2.2 per cent of all applications.
- Offers to Indigenous applicants increased by 6.9 per cent to 4987 in 2020.
- 79.1 per cent of applicants from an Indigenous background had attracted an offer in 2020. This is a decrease of 0.6 percentage points compared with the same period last year. The offer rate for non-Indigenous applicants was 82.9 per cent in 2020, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points over 2019.

### **University groups**

- The Regional Universities Network (RUN) and Australian Technology Network (ATN) recorded positive growth in applications, 3.3 per cent and 2.9 per cent, respectively in 2020. On the other hand, Innovative Research Universities (IRU) (-1.1 per cent) and the Group of Eight (Go8) (-0.8 per cent) recorded decreases in applications.
- In terms of offers, a similar pattern was observed among the university groups. ATN (2.5 per cent) and RUN (1.7 per cent) recorded positive growth in offers. Go8 (-3.6 per cent) and IRU (-0.1 per cent) observed decreases in offers.
- Applications to Go8 universities and ATN universities were least likely to receive an offer in 2020, offer rates of 71.7 per cent and 76.7 per cent respectively, reflecting the higher entry requirements at these universities.
- The offer rate decreased for all university groups, except IRU, in 2020: The Go8 universities (-2.1 percentage points), followed by RUN universities (-1.4 percentage points) and ATN universities (-0.3 percentage points). The IRU universities recorded an increase in offer rate (0.9 percentage points).



## Data Qualifications

The data referred to in this report contains applications and offers for domestic undergraduate university places through TACs and universities as of 14 May 2019.

It should be noted that:

- Applications and offers data in this report refer to TAC data and applications made directly to universities.
- Only applications made to Table A institutions and University of Notre Dame Australia (Table B) are included in the analysis.
- The data does not include applications from overseas students.
- All references to “applications” (in TAC data) in this report relate to highest preference applications.
- A small proportion of applicants make applications to more than one TAC resulting in some double counting of applicants.
- All references to “2020” in this report relate to the 2020 submission through TACs and the data submission on applications made directly to universities as of 14 May for the first semester of the 2020 academic year.
- All references to “Year 12” applicants in this report relate to applicants who attempted an ACACA Year 12 program or the International Baccalaureate in the year of application.
- While completing Year 12 and gaining a tertiary entrance score is the most common way to gain entry to university, TACs and universities take a number of other qualifications into consideration, particularly for adults applying who have not recently completed Year 12. Some pathways to gaining entry to a university degree include sitting the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT), articulating from certificate and/or diploma level studies in vocational education and training (VET), university bridging or foundation programs and previous higher education (completed or commenced).
- In 2007, the Queensland government introduced an additional year of schooling before Year 1 with only a half-cohort of students enrolling that year. As a result of the Queensland half-year cohort effect, the number of Year 12 students in Queensland in 2019 was around 30 per cent less than the previous year leading to lower applications for higher education among Queensland school leavers in 2020. Figures in this report showing the change in applications between 2019 and 2020 exclude applications and offers from the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) due to the need to compare ‘like with like’ as a result of the Queensland half-year cohort effect. Inclusion of QTAC data would have led to a national fall of 1.2 per cent in applications and a 1.7 per cent reduction in offers in 2020, noting this is like comparing ‘apples with oranges’.
- 2015 applications and offers data were affected by the ‘half-year’ Year 12 cohort in Western Australia (WA). It relates to the effect of the ‘half-year’ cohort arose due to the Western Australian State Government changing the starting age for school children in 2003. The change

was legislated by the WA School Education Act of 1999. Until 2003, children began Year 1 at the beginning of the calendar year when they turned six. From 2003, children began Year 1 if they turned six between 1 July of the previous year and 30 June of the year they started school. This policy change was introduced as a one-off. That is, there was no staggered implementation across years, which meant that in 2003 only children born between 1 January 1997 and 30 June 1997 started school. This small cohort worked its way through the school system reaching Year 12 in 2014. The Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC – the TAC in WA) estimated that it is more likely that the number of students with an ATAR was around 60 per cent of the size of a normal cohort of students. This is considerably impacted WA's university application numbers for the 2015 academic year.

## Glossary

Term	Definition
Australasian Curriculum Assessment Certification Authorities (ACACA) Year 12 programs	Each State has its own approved Year 12 program. ACACA is the national body responsible for monitoring senior secondary curricula and certification in Australia and New Zealand. ACACA Year 12 programs may be undertaken in schools, VET institutions or higher education providers. Current programs by state are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NSW Higher School Certificate</li> <li>• Victorian Certificate of Education,</li> <li>• Queensland Certificate of Education</li> <li>• Queensland Senior Certificate</li> <li>• Western Australian Certificate of Education</li> <li>• South Australian Certificate of Education</li> <li>• Tasmanian Certificate of Education</li> <li>• ACT Year 12 Certificate</li> <li>• Northern Territory Certificate of Education.</li> </ul>
Current Year 12 applicant	An applicant who attempted an ACACA Year 12 program or the International Baccalaureate in the year of application.
Offer rate	The offer rate is a percentage calculated as the number of valid offers made to applicants with at least one valid preference divided by the number of applicants with at least one valid preference.
University Groups	
Australian Technology Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curtin University of Technology</li> <li>• RMIT University</li> <li>• University of South Australia</li> <li>• University of Technology, Sydney</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
Group of Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monash University</li> <li>• The Australian National University</li> <li>• The University of Adelaide</li> <li>• The University of Melbourne</li> <li>• The University of New South Wales</li> <li>• The University of Queensland</li> <li>• The University of Sydney</li> <li>• The University of Western Australia</li> </ul>
Innovative Research Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charles Darwin University</li> <li>• Flinders University of South Australia</li> <li>• Griffith University</li> <li>• James Cook University</li> <li>• La Trobe University</li> <li>• Murdoch University</li> <li>• Western Sydney University</li> </ul>
Regional Universities Network (RUN)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Queensland University</li> <li>• Southern Cross University</li> <li>• Federation University of Australia</li> <li>• University of New England</li> <li>• University of Southern Queensland</li> <li>• University of Sunshine Coast</li> <li>• Charles Sturt University</li> </ul>

#### Table A universities not aligned to a University Group

- Australian Catholic University
- Deakin University
- Edith Cowan University
- Macquarie University
- Swinburne University of Technology
- University of Canberra
- The University of Newcastle
- University of Tasmania
- University of Wollongong
- Victoria University
- Queensland University of Technology

\*Charles Sturt University (CSU) joined RUN on 29 May 2019. Hence, data for CSU are included in the RUN for 2019 and 2020 for comparison purposes.