



New ARAR System to Develop a Different Type of Learner

Full article. Excerpt featured in Townsville Bulletin

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According to Townsville Grammar School's Director of Studies, Mr Stephen Monk, the key difference in terms of student outcomes with the new ATAR system is the development of university-ready study skills.

"The introduction of ATAR is the biggest educational change for secondary schooling in Queensland since 1992, when we changed from TE scores to the OP system," Mr Monk said.

"The 2019 Year 11 cohort will be the first to receive an ATAR ranking, and more importantly, the first to experience this new curriculum framework which is markedly different to the OP-based system."

Mr Monk said the ATAR model would effectively develop a different type of learner, one that will allow for a smooth transition to tertiary. "ATAR sees us moving from an internally focused assessment model that enabled a 'teach to the test' style, to a system that involves both internal and external assessment, culminating with an external exam, based largely on Year 12 content. This means students will need to develop study skills to learn and retain long-term content.

"At university, exams are often based on semester-long or year-long content, requiring students to have well-developed study habits, and a disposition to learn and retain a depth and breadth of knowledge. Students aiming for an ATAR will be developing these key skills which will see them transition well into the tertiary environment. What we hope is that students will not experience such a stark contrast from secondary to tertiary, where the demands on study and content are quite different. The ATAR system will effectively set our students up for success in completing their degrees and ongoing study as life-long learners.

"Naturally there is some anxiety with this new system; however Year 11 is very much a formative year. This is the time to work closely with students so they are comfortable with the new system and are developing the skills required to ensure success in Year 12 and beyond.

"We are fortunate at Townsville Grammar School in that our teachers are experienced and trained in external assessment, as we have been delivering the International Baccalaureate program for many years, which involves external assessment. However, whilst this gives us a solid platform, it is still an ongoing process to ensure students and parents are well informed, and expectations are in line with the curriculum structure and the assessment requirements."

Mr Monk said he believes that setting the foundations in Year 11 for success in Year 12 is the cornerstone to the successful delivery of the new ATAR system. "We are focusing on providing stability through academic counselling and tracking, ensuring we are providing 360 degree pastoral care so that our students are supported and are as confident as possible navigating this new system.

"We are very much focusing on the benefits of the new senior schooling system, which they will appreciate when they move into the tertiary environment," Mr Monk said.

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