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The cut-off is not the ATAR

NOW that HSC students have received their ATARs, many will be wondering whether they’ll be awarded bonus points to boost their chances of getting into their desired course.

Students should keep in mind that course cut-offs are not the ATAR you need. Cut-offs also include bonus points, so they do not necessarily represent the minimum ATAR required for entry into a course.

‘It’s important that students don’t discount their chances of getting into a course based solely on their ATAR and last year’s cut-off,’ says Kim Paino, General Manager of Marketing and Engagement at UAC. ‘Because of bonus points schemes, many students will receive offers to courses even though their ATAR is below the cut-off.’

While universities select HSC students based mainly on their ATAR, they are also interested in looking at other aspects of a student that will be helpful in the selection process for particular courses.

Bonus points can be given for:

- performance in an HSC course relevant to a degree at a particular university, known as a subject bonus (for example, doing well in mathematics may attract bonus points for an engineering course)
- applying for consideration through Educational Access Schemes (EAS)
- living in or attending a school in an area defined by the university, known as a regional bonus
- other achievements such as being school captain, an elite athlete or performer.

The most important thing for Year 12 students to do now is to finalise their course preferences by Friday 6 January 2017 for the Main Round of offers on Wednesday 18 January 2017. Students can check last year’s cut-offs to get a rough idea and also check the information from each institution to see whether they’re eligible for bonus points. If they are, they need to factor that in when finalising their preferences. Some universities also have additional information on their websites about the actual ATARs (not just the cut-offs) of students who received offers last year.

‘Most importantly, students should remember the cut-off for a course is not the ATAR they need to get in, and many students get offers with ATARs below the cut-off. The cut-off is still a useful tool, so long as students understand that it includes bonus points,’ says Ms Paino.

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