

your marks



These notes explain what happens to your school marks and examination marks to produce your Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) course scores. It also explains why combined marks are scaled before the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre calculates your Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

WACE course scores

A student who completes a WACE course examination is issued with a course report (this excludes private candidates). The report shows the student's achievement in relation to the achievements of other students in that stage of the course and in relation to established standards.

Under these standards, a WACE course score:

- of 75.0 or more represents excellent achievement
- between 65.0 and 74.9 represents high achievement
- between 50.0 and 64.9 represents satisfactory achievement
- between 35.0 and 49.9 represents limited achievement
- of 34.9 or less represents inadequate achievement.

Your WACE course scores are reported in your WACE course reports, which also provide additional information about your achievements at school and in the WACE examinations for a course/stage. These notes are designed to assist your understanding of how your school marks and examination marks are used to create a WACE course score for each course/stage in which you sat the WACE examination.

Statistical adjustment of marks

For each course/stage, the marks adjustment process assists in ensuring the state-wide comparability of WACE course scores, even though the same unadjusted school marks in different schools are not likely to represent the same level of achievement.

Information about the achievement of a student who sits a Stage 2 or Stage 3 WACE course examination comes from two sources:

- the student's mark submitted by the school to the Council (school mark out of 100), and
- the student's mark from the WACE examination set by the Council.

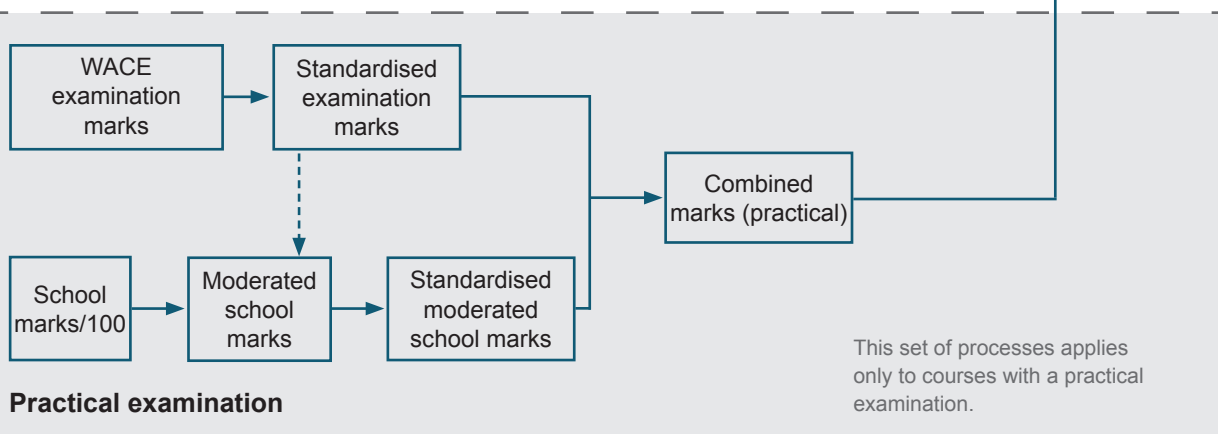
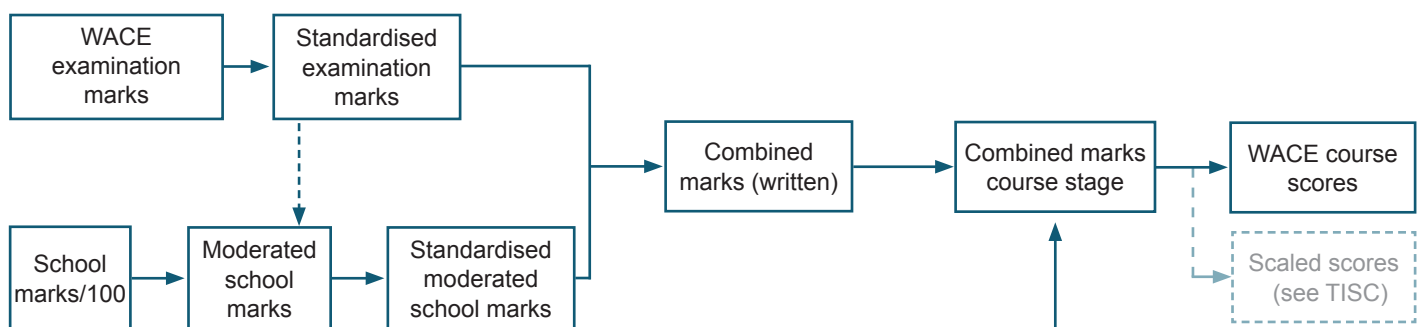
These marks are used to calculate the student's combined mark and, subsequently, the student's

- WACE course score, and
- scaled score (used by the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre for university admission).

The diagram below summarises the sequencing of the processes used for a course/stage with only a written examination component, and also for a course/stage with both a written examination component and a practical examination component.

The information on the back page provides a more detailed description of the processes used in the Council's marks adjustment process.

Written examination



This set of processes applies only to courses with a practical examination.

Figure 1 Marks adjustment process

Standardisation and statistical moderation

Within a course/stage, the processes of standardisation and statistical moderation enable school marks and WACE examination marks to be combined so that students' results can be fairly compared within the course/stage and across calendar years.

Standardising the WACE examination mark

The WACE examination mark is standardised because WACE examinations vary in difficulty from year to year, and from course to course. Standardisation adjusts for these differences in the difficulty of achieving the same WACE examination mark.

For courses with practical examinations, written examination marks and practical examination marks are standardised separately.

Standardisation ensures that no student is disadvantaged if a WACE examination is harder than usual in the year they sit their examination. If an examination is more difficult than usual, a student's standardised examination mark in that course/stage may be higher than the student's examination mark. If, on the other hand, an examination is less difficult than usual, a student's standardised examination mark in that course/stage may be lower than the student's examination mark.

As a result of standardisation:

- the distribution of standardised marks is the same, regardless of calendar year, course or stage
- the top student in each course at each stage is given a standardised mark of 100
- the average standardised examination mark is approximately 60.

Statistically moderating the school mark

It is unlikely that the school marks for a course/stage at different schools are comparable. However, the standardised examination marks of students at all schools are on the same scale and are therefore comparable. Statistical moderation of school marks places them on the same scale as the standardised examination marks at the school. Thus, statistically moderated school marks for a course/stage are comparable in all schools.

A student's moderated school mark is likely to be different from the student's school mark. The bigger the difference, the bigger the gap between the scale used by their teacher when marking school assessment tasks and the scale of the standardised examination marks for the pair of units studied.

The ranking of students according to the moderated school marks is the same as their ranking according to the unadjusted school marks, regardless of whether the school's marks are moderated up or down.

For all course/stages with a practical examination, the written school marks are moderated using the written examination marks and the practical school marks are moderated using the practical examination marks.

Standardising the moderated school mark

The set of state-wide moderated school marks is also standardised using the same process as is used to standardise the WACE examination marks (see above).

Calculating combined marks

A student's combined mark for a course/stage with only a written examination is the average of the student's standardised examination mark and standardised moderated school mark.

A student's combined mark for a course/stage with both a written examination component and a practical examination component is the weighted average of the combined marks calculated for each component. These weightings are given in the syllabus for the course/stage.

Calculating the WACE course score

A student's combined mark for a course/stage is used to determine the student's WACE course score which provides an assessment of achievement in terms of the standards for the course at that stage.

Each year, a group of experienced educators matches the annual distribution of combined marks for a course/stage with five standards of achievement for the course/stage – Excellent, High, Satisfactory, Limited and Inadequate.

Combined marks at the boundaries of the standards (Excellent/High, High/Satisfactory, Satisfactory/Limited and Limited/Inadequate) are linked to WACE course scores of 75, 65, 50 and 35 respectively. Based on these points, all other combined marks for the course/stage are converted into WACE course scores. The proportion of students in each achievement band (i.e. at the standards of Excellent, High etc.) varies from course to course and stage to stage. It may also vary from calendar year to calendar year, depending on the overall performance of students in a course/stage in a particular year.

Standards are specific to each stage of a course, and there is no direct comparison between WACE course scores for the two stages of a course. Standards also are specific to each course, and there is no direct comparison between WACE course scores for different courses at the same stage.

A student's WACE course score is likely to differ from the student's school, examination and combined marks for a course/stage.

For a detailed account of the processes used to standardise examination marks, moderate school marks, and produce WACE course scores, see www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Senior_Secondary/WACE_Examinations/Your_Marks.

Calculating the scaled score (for tertiary admission)

Scaling adjusts for differences in difficulty between courses and aims to ensure that, in terms of access to university, students are not disadvantaged if they choose to study difficult course/stages. The Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) and the Curriculum Council apply the average marks scaling (AMS) method to the combined course marks (see above) of all students who have completed at least four course/stages. This method uses the overall achievements, in other courses, of the group of students studying a particular course/stage to adjust the combined marks of the course/stage to create 'scaled' scores.

A student's scaled score for a course/stage is likely to be different from the student's school mark, examination mark and combined mark. Because scaled scores from all courses are on a common scale they are used to calculate the Tertiary Entrance Aggregate (TEA) and the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) for university admission purposes.

Further information

For more information about standardisation and moderation please visit the Council website at www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Policy/Assessment.

For more information about scaled scores go to www.tisc.edu.au/tiscguide/marks_adjustment_process_for_uni_adm.pdf.