



What is a QCE and how does my teen get one?

Making the most of the senior years.



Key points

- The Queensland Certificate of Education is awarded at the end of Year 12 to students who complete enough learning.
- Students need to earn at least 20 points to get the certificate.
- Students can earn points for doing different school subjects and courses, as well as programs outside of school.
- Staying at school to the end of Year 12 can improve young people's chances of going on to further study or finding work after school.
- Working with your teen's school can help your teen make good decisions about their future.

The senior years at high school can feel both exciting and daunting for teens. They have a lot to grapple with dealing with study, friendships and home life, while also planning for their future. Working towards a Queensland Certificate of Education offers many interesting learning pathways and can help students set themselves up for a successful life after school.

So what's the Queensland Certificate of Education?

- The Queensland Certificate of Education, or QCE as it is known for short, is the qualification Queensland students receive at the end of Year 12 if they complete enough learning.
- It is awarded by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority.
- Students earn credits (points) for the learning they complete.
- Students need at least 20 credits to receive the certificate.
- Students earn different points depending on what subjects, courses or qualifications they complete.
- A QCE is different from an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) which is a national system used to rank students who want to go to university.

Does every student get a QCE?

No. To get a QCE, a student must complete a set amount of learning worth a minimum of 20 credits (points) from a combination of subjects and courses. Students are awarded credits based on the learning pathways they take. For example, students can gain their credits from school subjects or courses, vocational education and training qualifications, or through recognised studies.

What subjects and courses contribute to a QCE?

There are lots of exciting opportunities available for young people embarking on their senior years of study. Students working towards a QCE can choose from senior school subjects, vocational education and training, workplace and community learning, and university subjects undertaken while at school.

General subjects

General subjects prepare students for university, further education, study and work and include subjects like English, General Mathematics, Ancient History, and Biology. These subjects contribute to an ATAR, and may need to be studied to gain entry to some university courses. Use the QTAC

course search to learn more about the subject requirements for different courses.

Applied subjects

Applied subjects focus on practical skills and prepare students for further education, training and work. Subjects include Essential English, Business Studies, Industrial Technology Skills, and Tourism.

Short courses

Short courses suit those students interested in pathways to vocational education and training or work when they leave school. Examples include short courses in literacy, numeracy, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

VET prepares students for work through practical learning. Around 60 per cent of Queensland senior students achieve VET qualifications. Some of the most popular courses are business, information and communication technology, hospitality, construction, fitness, and sport and recreation.

Other courses

These courses allow students to study a particular area of interest through recognised certificates and awards or university subjects studied while at school.

You can read more about the subjects and courses that can contribute to your child's QCE.

Does my teen need a QCE?

Receiving a QCE is a great accomplishment that recognises the learning achievements of young people. With 96.5 per cent of Queensland students achieving a QCE or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement in 2019, many employers expect young people to have a QCE. A QCE may also be needed to gain entry to some vocational education and training courses.

However, if your teen doesn't quite make it and misses out on a QCE, this doesn't mean all is lost. Staying at school until the end of Year 12 can make all the difference for a young person, even if they don't achieve a QCE. We know from research that young people who leave school early do not have the same chance of success as those who complete Year 12. In fact, for every three young people who leave school early, one of those young people will not be in study or work in the year after they leave school. We also know that school provides an important social network for teens and can help keep them connected and motivated.

Students who miss out on a QCE but manage to 'stick in there' to graduation have already improved their

prospects.

If your teen doesn't quite get the points they need, talk to the school about what they can do. They may be able to complete some additional courses outside of school or come back early the next year to complete the credits they need.

When you and your teen talk about their future, let them know that while staying at school might sometimes seem hard, sticking at it and working towards a QCE will help set them up for a great start to their life after school.

Work with your teen's school

Working with your child's school can help your teen get the support they need to make decisions about their future. The school guidance officer, along with your teen's teachers, can help you and your teen. In Year 10, the team at your child's school will work with you and your teen on their Senior Education and Training Plan (or 'SET plan' for short). This process is the ideal time to explore the different options available to your teen during their senior years so they can work towards their career goals and achieve their QCE.

Download the tip sheet: Conversation starters for parents



Department of Education

Conversation starters for parents

There's a lot to think about when your teen is making decisions about their future. Working with your teen's school to solve with you can support your teen. Here's some conversation starters you can use to help you get the information you and your teen need to make the right choices for their senior years.

Helping your teen work out what they want to do

- 1. What does your teen like to think about when reading? (Media, literature, etc.)
- 2. Are there any careers or subjects that interest them or seem to be a good fit for them?
- 3. Can they see any work experience or work-based learning opportunities in their own school?
- 4. How do you think your teen will spend their senior years?

If your teen is thinking about social media, education and training (SET) courses

- 1. Can they see the value of SET courses and why are they important?
- 2. Can they see the value of SET courses and get an idea of what they can do?
- 3. Do they know what SET courses are supported by the state based on future job opportunities?
- 4. Can they see the value of SET courses and how they can help their own decisions?

If your teen is choosing school subjects

- 1. Are there any subjects they like best or worst in their current school?
- 2. What are the differences between a general subject and an applied subject?
- 3. Can they see the value of subjects and how they can help their own decisions?
- 4. Do they know enough about subjects or courses to get a good understanding of how they will help their own decisions?

If your teen wants to enrol in a SET course

- 1. How much do SET courses cost?
- 2. Are SET courses subsidised by the school or the government?
- 3. How can they get help to make their own decisions?
- 4. How can they get help to make their own decisions?

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Download tip sheet: Different pathways for different young people



Different pathways for different young people

Every young person is different and needs to find a learning pathway that works for them. Young people can study school subjects, do vocational education and training courses, or do a mix of both. Here are some stories about different young people and the different pathways they've taken during their senior years.

Aysha's story

About Aysha

Aysha was struggling at school and getting by in school subjects without feeling too tired, until Year 10. At Year 10, she became engaged with her teacher who has significant experience about pathways. Since that time, Aysha has had complete permission to be on site days with friends. She supports herself financially and also has to balance her work and school commitments. Due to her manufacturing experience, Aysha was unable to meet up with the demands of her study pathway in Year 11, a pathway which she had hoped would help her gain entry to university. She finished her subjects and she has chosen to credit transfer her QCE trial year.

After school

Aysha's results put her at risk of not achieving her QCE at the end of Year 12 but her school supported her to continue to a vocational education and training pathway where she could receive her credits while continuing to study some general subjects. She could then take completed three subjects, Business Mathematics, Practical Science and English, and also a work-based certificate 1 and 2 in Business, or Certificate 1 in Business Studies, and a Certificate 1 in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways.

What next for Aysha?

Aysha can complete her VET courses and gain her school subjects, she will receive 15 credits and gain her QCE, which will allow her to go on to further study or employment after she finishes school.

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