

STUDENTS 'MORE THAN ATAR'

Life skills required for uni entrance

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The Australian National University in Canberra will become the first university in Australia to introduce admission requirements in the form of "skills" that have potentially been acquired playing sport or doing volunteer and paid work, or even caring for a disabled relative.

All Australian school-leavers planning to apply next year for ANU places starting in 2020 will have to demonstrate they meet a minimum threshold in these skills, as well as achieving the ATAR level required for specific courses.

Applicants will be recognised for three skills from a range of seven, including communication, community engagement, inclusion and awareness of diversity, personal responsibility, teamwork, inclusiveness and creative and critical thinking.

A database will set out the required skills and the recognised fields where they can be attained.

ANU vice-chancellor Brian Schmidt said the requirements recognised that Australian students were more than "just a score".

"We know they are passionate, ... have unique skills (and) gain experience through community service, volunteering, working part-time, participating in school leadership, excelling in sports, gaming, performance, competitions and more," he said.

"We also know sometimes life pans out differently for some students. Some have to work to support themselves, or care for their family or face other challenges. These are all important life skills and we will consider these factors alongside ATAR marks."

As well as the new skills re-

quirements, ANU will require all Australian students planning to begin university in 2022 to have studied both maths and English.

Marnie Hughes-Warrington, ANU deputy vice-chancellor (academic), said the university had been testing the skills requirement plan for some time, and she believed it would be fairer than relying solely on ATAR scores. "We looked around the world; we've done it with an Australian twist so it's quite transparent, and we have published the schedule (database)", she said.

"We've let students know exactly what we are looking for so they can meet that minimum threshold. What we don't want is CV-stacking. We won't be asking for personal statements from students. We want this to be fair, transparent and as objective as possible."

She added that the skills requirement was a "very low" minimum threshold.

The new model will also constitute an early admission process for ANU, Professor Hughes-Warrington said.

School-leavers will apply to ANU in March when they are in Year 12; successful applicants will receive conditional offers from the university in August. They will still need to meet the ATAR or IB entry requirements for their preferred course.

"We're basically just codifying what they already do in school: volunteer work, school council, debating, sports, activities — a whole range of activities fit the bill," Professor Hughes-Warrington said. "My view is all of our students pretty much are doing this already, regardless of where they come from. In due course we probably will roll this out to international students."