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Apprentice and trainee completion rates

Katrina Ball

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Apprentice and trainee completion rates

*Katrina Ball
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National Centre for Vocational Education Research

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Key messages

Apprentices and trainees undertake vocational education and training through a contract of training, which is a formal contract between an employer and an apprentice or trainee. This publication reports completion rates for apprentices and trainees who commenced their apprenticeship or traineeship between 1995 and 1999, and attrition rates for more recent commencements.

- ✧ For apprentices and trainees commencing in 1999, the completion rate was 52% for those on their original contract, rising to 55% after taking into account those who had recommenced training for the same qualification with a different employer, and reaching 60% after taking into account those who had changed both qualification and employer.
- ✧ Completion rates have declined for traditional apprentices from 71% for the cohort of 1995 to 60% for the cohort of 1999 (same trade but different employer to that of their original contract).
- ✧ Completion rates have increased for those who were not traditional apprentices from 47% for the cohort of 1995 to 52% for the cohort of 1999 (same trade but different employer to that of their original contract).
- ✧ Completion rates reflect the economy-wide pattern of labour market mobility. The age group with the lowest completion rates is the 20- to 24-year age group, which is also the most job-mobile age group. Occupations such as sales and service workers, which exhibit high rates of labour mobility, also tend to have low completion rates.
- ✧ In more recent years, attrition rates in the first year of an apprenticeship or traineeship have fallen, suggesting that completion rates may be on the increase.

Executive summary

Apprentices and trainees undertake vocational training through a contract of training, which is a formal contract between an employer and an apprentice or trainee. This publication reports completion rates for apprentices and trainees who commenced their apprenticeship or traineeship between 1995 and 1999, and attrition rates for more recent commencements. Training contracts vary in length and can be done on a full-time or part-time basis. In order to take account of how long it takes for an apprenticeship or traineeship to be completed, the latest information available on outcomes of longer duration contracts is for contracts commencing in 1999.

While the majority of apprentices and trainees undertake a single contract of training with a single employer, some will change employer before their training is completed and therefore, may enter into more than one training contract. Also, while some may continue as an apprentice or trainee in the same vocation, others may change their vocation as well as their employer before completing an apprenticeship or traineeship. This report examines completion rates for a single contract of training, a vocation and individual apprentices and trainees.

The aggregate completion rate (for those completing a single contract) declined from 55% for those apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 1995, to 52% for those who commenced in 1999.

The aggregate completion rate will depend on the overall characteristics of apprentices and trainees, which varies from year to year. The mix of apprentices and trainees has changed in response to changes to the apprentice and trainee system. One of the most important changes has been the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships by people employed part-time. This group has continued to grow in importance, with part-time apprentices accounting for 27% of apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 2003. Another factor is the length of the training contract, which varies with the level of qualification being studied and between occupations.

There are a number of demographic factors that influence completion rates. The likelihood of completion is influenced by gender, age, Indigenous status, presence of a disability, highest school level completed, and residential location. The occupation of the apprentice or trainee and the qualification level of the training contract also affect completion rates.

The most important influences on completion rates are Indigenous status, age, highest school level completed and level of qualification of the training contract. For apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 1999, the completion rate (for single contracts) for Indigenous Australians was 43%. Apprentices and trainees in the 15- to 19-year and 20- to 24-year age groups had a completion rate of 49% compared with a completion rate of 61% for those aged over 45 years. The completion rate for apprentices and trainees who completed Year 12 was 54% compared with 47% for those who only completed Year 9. Apprentices and trainees undertaking an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) IV qualification had a completion rate of 57% compared with 48% for those undertaking an AQF II qualification.

There are marked differences in completion rates across occupations, which mirror differences in labour market mobility across occupations. Completion rates vary between trades occupations, with relatively low completion rates in food trades occupations. For apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 1999, the completion rate (for single contracts) for apprentices and trainees employed in foods trades occupations was 34% compared with 61% for those employed in mechanical and fabrication engineering tradesperson occupations. The completion rate for apprentices and trainees employed in advanced clerical and service worker occupations was 68%.

Table 1 shows completion rates disaggregated by 'traditional' apprentices and other apprentices and trainees. For single contracts, completion rates for traditional apprentices declined significantly over time, from 65% for those who commenced their training in 1995 to 52% for those who commenced in 1999, when changes in employer are taken into account. Completion rates for traditional apprentices increased to 71% for those who commenced in 1995, falling to 60% for those who commenced in 1999.

Table 1: Estimated rates of completion by 'traditional apprenticeship' category*, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Single contracts					
Traditional apprenticeships	64.6	61.8	57.0	53.3	51.6
Other	47.2	49.7	51.0	51.9	51.5
All contracts	55.1	53.7	52.6	52.2	51.6
Group of contracts leading to a qualification					
Traditional apprenticeships	71.1	68.3	66.2	62.9	60.4
Other	51.5	51.7	52.4	53.3	53.1
All contracts	60.6	57.2	56.1	55.5	54.6

Note: * Contracts identified as 'traditional apprenticeships' are defined as those contracts in the trades and related workers occupational group at AQF III qualification or above with more than two years expected duration for full-time contracts and more than eight years expected duration for part-time or school-based contracts.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

On the other hand, completion rates for apprentices and trainees who were not in a traditional apprenticeship increased over time, from 47% for those who commenced in 1995, to 52% for those who commenced in 1999, when changes in employer are taken into account. Completion rates for non-traditional apprentices increased to 52% for those who commenced in 1995, rising slightly to 53% for those who commenced in 1999

There has been little change in completion rates for apprentices and trainees employed full-time who commenced their training between 1995 and 1999. The difference in completion rates between those employed full-time and those employed part-time is mainly explained by differences in level of education and occupation. Part-time apprentices and trainees tend to be less well educated before starting an apprenticeship or traineeship and are employed predominantly in service occupations, such as retail sales with high job mobility.

About 60% of individuals who commenced their original contract in the period 1997 to 1999 completed a contract of training, either in their original vocation or in another vocation. Relative differences in completion rates are still apparent for different age groups, those achieving different levels of school attainment, those reporting a disability, Indigenous Australians, and apprentices and trainees from different geographical regions. However, for apprentices and trainees who commenced their original contract in 1999, males have marginally higher completion rates than females.

Introduction

Apprentices and trainees undertake vocational training through a contract of training which is a formal contract between an employer and an apprentice or trainee. A successful completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship requires three steps to be taken. These steps are:

- ✧ completion of formal off-the-job requirements of the apprenticeship or traineeship, which also requires the qualification specified in the contract to be completed
- ✧ completion of the indenture period of the contract of training and meeting the on-the-job requirements as endorsed by the employer
- ✧ once both of these requirements have been met, notification to the state/territory training authority of the successful completion of the contract of training by the apprentice or trainee, together with provision of required evidence of the successful completion of the qualification.

This publication reports completion rates for apprentices and trainees who commenced their apprenticeship or traineeship between 1995 and 1999. As it can take more than four years for some apprenticeships to be completed and then up to a year before the outcome of the apprenticeship is reported by employers to state and territory training authorities, information about completion rates is not yet available for apprentices who commenced after 1999.

There is considerable interest in apprentice and trainee completion rates. Completion of a qualification is particularly important for young people entering employment through an apprenticeship or traineeship. Employers need qualified people with skills relevant to their workforce, and the success of apprenticeships and traineeships is a key indicator of how well their needs will be met.

There have been a number of changes to the apprentice and trainee system that could have altered the overall annual completion rate for apprentices and trainees who commenced their training between 1995 and 1999. In 1994 the 'Working Nation' strategy included National Training Wage traineeships which allowed some traineeships to be fully on the job and encouraged the expansion of traineeships into new areas of the labour market. In addition, traineeships were funded in the same way as apprenticeships for the off-the-job training component of training.

Further changes were made to the apprentice and trainee system in 1998. The training market was opened up to private providers with the introduction of user choice, which allows employers a choice of training provider. Other changes included the expansion of the range of industries available to apprentices into areas such as technology and communications, tourism and hospitality, and the introduction of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

These changes to the system have altered the overall characteristics of apprentices and trainees. The aggregate completion rate will depend, among other things, on the mix of apprentices and trainees, which varies from year to year. A significant change to apprentices and trainees as a group has been the growth in part-time apprenticeships and traineeships. Apprentices and

trainees employed part-time comprised only 2% of all commencing apprentices and trainees in 1995. By 1999 this group comprised 18% of all apprentices and trainees. This group has continued to grow in importance and now accounts for around 27% of apprentices and trainees.

Legislative and administrative requirements governing contracts differ between states and territories. In some states and territories a change in employer requires the original contract to be cancelled and the commencement of a new contract with the new employer.

This publication reports completion rates for three separate groups:

- ✧ single contracts between employers and individuals
- ✧ groupings of contracts leading to a specific qualification because the employer has changed during the apprenticeship or traineeship
- ✧ individuals who have ultimately successfully completed an apprenticeship or traineeship, although they may have moved between occupations.

In the next section of the report the pattern of apprentice and trainee attrition since 1995 is shown to provide some context to the ensuing discussion of completion rates. Methodological issues associated with the derivation of completion rates are then discussed. The following sections report apprentice and trainee completion rates for single contracts, then for groupings of contracts leading to a qualification and finally for an individual. The final section of the report summarises the key findings from the study.

Pattern of attrition

Despite changes that have occurred to the demographic mix of apprentices and trainees and associated contract durations between 1995 and 2003, the pattern of non-completion has been very stable since 1995.

About 10% of people who commence a training contract do not continue past the first three months of their training, and between 16% and 20% do not continue past the first six months.

About 29% cancel or withdraw in the first year of their training. Some of these people will subsequently recommence their training with a new employer in the same occupation. Others may commence a new apprenticeship or traineeship in a different occupation with a new employer.

Table 2: Pattern of reported attrition from apprenticeships and traineeships*, %

Withdrawing within	Year of commencement								
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
1 month	2.8	3.3	3.5	4.5	4.2	3.6	3.2*	2.7*	2.5*
3 months	8.8	10.6	10.6	11.4	10.9	10.2	9.7*	8.8*	8.0*
6 months	16.0	19.0	18.9	19.8	19.7	19.1	18.6*	17.5*	16.2*
1 year	25.1	29.1	29.2	30.0	30.9	30.0	29.6*	28.4*	n/a
2 years	34.1	35.8	35.3	36.1	38.4	38.4	38.1*	n/a	n/a
3 years	38.3	39.0	38.1	38.6	41.0	41.1*	n/a	n/a	n/a
4 years	40.0	40.4	39.2	39.4	41.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
After 4 years	40.1	40.4	39.3	39.5	41.9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
All	40.1	40.4	39.3	39.5	41.9	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: * Caution is recommended when comparing these percentages from more recent years with those from other years due to the effects of lags in reporting cancellations and withdrawals. No allowance has been made for under-reporting of cancellations and withdrawals in contracts that expire and the outcome is unknown.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

Methodological considerations

Rates of completion are often quoted without regard to their derivation or the scope of the population they refer to. Information from various data collections and research surveys often uses different definitions and methodology. In many instances the rates are not comparable because some focus on the individual apprentice or trainee regardless of the training pathway they take, while others focus on the training contract that an individual enters into with an employer.¹

The ideal method of estimating completion rates uses longitudinal data based on commencing cohorts. Apprenticeships and traineeships can take several years to finish and there are often delays before the necessary paperwork is submitted. Contracts not yet finished, or for which the outcome is never known need to be incorporated into the methodology but are usually ignored (see Ray et al. 2000).

Scope and data considerations

The analysis has concentrated on the derivation of completion rates prior to 2000 because of the high proportion of contracts still to finish for recent commencing cohorts. Information is provided on patterns of attrition from apprenticeships and traineeships for recent commencing cohorts and for earlier cohorts that have passed their completion date.

All information appearing in this report is based on data available in the national apprentice and trainee contracts of training data collection managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and submitted by states and territories up to the end of September 2004. Some records were omitted from the analysis owing to inherent problems in contract sequencing in early collections.

Cohort of commencing apprentices and trainees

The method used in this analysis involves tracking the commencing cohort of interest. The training contracts data have been set up to allow the history of an individual to be tracked, together with information pertaining to contracts of training that they have undertaken to seek a specific qualification, and individual contracts with an employer. This allows the final status to be determined for the three groups of interest: a contract with an employer; a group of contracts leading to a specific qualification; and the individual apprentice or trainee.

¹ A detailed discussion of these issues is provided in *Outcomes and completion of New Apprenticeships: At a glance*, NCVER, 2002.

Expired contracts

There has been little information available, to date, on completion rates for apprenticeships and traineeships because of procedural issues surrounding the reporting of data on apprenticeships and traineeships. NCVET has developed a methodology to derive completion rates that takes account of these issues.

Expired contracts are those contracts that pass the expected completion date with the final status unknown. Surveys of expired contracts were undertaken in 2000 and 2002 to investigate apprentice and trainee completions and non-completions. The surveys showed that a significant proportion of expired contracts were full completions (about 37%) or cancellations/withdrawals (30%). The remaining 33% of expired contracts were 'partial' completions (completion of only the off-the-job or on-the-job components) and contracts for which a final status could still not be determined.

Based on the data extracted from the apprentice and trainee contracts of training data collection managed by NCVET, it appears that, for the surveys of expired contracts, under-reporting in completions and in cancellations plus withdrawals has declined, from around 8–9% in 1999 to about 5–6% in 2001.

Deriving completion rates

Estimates of the proportion of a commencing cohort who complete and do not complete have been derived, taking account of the under-reporting of completions and non-completions associated with expired contracts. It is assumed that contracts for which a final status could not be determined have the same outcome distribution as contracts for which a final status was determined in the expired contract surveys. Hence it is assumed that 45% of expired contracts are completions, and 55% of expired contracts are non-completions at the national level.

Completion of a contract

In this section completion rates are reported for discrete contracts of training between employers and apprentices and trainees. The final status for contracts of training starting between 1995 and 2003 is summarised in table 3. The majority of contracts commenced before 2000 have ended in either a reported completion or a non-completion, while a significant proportion of more recent contracts have yet to reach their nominated end date. As a result, the following analysis is based on cohorts of contracts of training starting between 1995 and 1999.

Table 3: Reported final status at 30 September 2004 for contracts of training

Year of commencement	Contracts (000s)	Completion (%)	Non-completion (%)	Expiry (%)	Not finished (%)	Total (%)	Estimated completion rate (%)
1995	73.9	51.2	40.1	8.7	0.0	100.0	55.1
1996	99.5	48.9	40.4	10.5	0.1	100.0	53.7
1997	124.3	46.0	39.3	14.7	0.0	100.0	52.6
1998	163.4	45.4	39.5	15.0	0.1	100.0	52.2
1999	209.1	46.5	41.9	11.5	0.1	100.0	51.6
2000	222.5	45.2	42.1	10.1	2.7	100.0	n/a
2001	239.6	40.3	40.7	7.7	11.4	100.0	n/a
2002	284.1	30.9	36.6	5.6	26.9	100.0	n/a
2003	297.7	13.1	25.9	2.0	59.0	100.0	n/a

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

Completion rates vary from year to year, depending on the mix of the particular cohort of commencing apprentices and trainees. Overall, the completion rate for contracts of training commencing in 1999 was 52%. The aggregate completion rate (for single contracts) declined from 55% for those apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 1995 to 52% for those who commenced in 1999. Completion rates are also influenced by the state of the labour market which may vary by occupation. In a buoyant labour market a partially trained apprentice or trainee may be lured by a higher wage offer to work for another employer and may not recommence their apprenticeship or traineeship.

Contract completion rates and apprentice and trainee characteristics

There are a number of demographic factors associated with completion rates.² Estimated completion rates for contracts of training by apprentice and trainee characteristics are reported in table 4.

Table 4: Estimated rates of completion for contracts of training by apprentice and trainee characteristics, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Sex					
Female	52.8	53.2	53.4	53.9	52.6
Male	55.9	54.0	52.1	51.1	50.9
Age at commencement					
19 years and under	55.0	53.9	51.3	50.3	49.2
20–24	54.7	53.4	51.4	50.5	49.2
25–44	56.2	53.0	54.4	54.6	53.7
45–65	60.1	57.3	64.0	61.0	61.4
Highest school level completed*					
Year 9 or equivalent	39.8	40.2	41.9	44.5	46.6
Year 10 or equivalent	50.9	49.2	49.6	49.3	50.0
Year 11 or equivalent	53.0	52.5	50.9	52.1	50.4
Year 12 or equivalent	60.8	60.5	57.4	55.5	54.3
Not stated	55.6	49.7	53.3	55.0	49.7
Disability					
Students reporting a disability	44.0	44.5	49.5	45.8	45.9
Students reporting they do not have a disability	54.4	52.4	51.3	51.9	51.4
Not stated	56.0	55.4	54.8	55.7	59.6
Indigenous					
Indigenous	41.0	42.1	40.0	39.5	42.6
Non-indigenous	54.1	52.1	51.8	51.6	51.0
Not stated	57.8	57.8	56.8	61.4	61.4
Geographic region					
Capital city	52.9	52.2	51.0	51.1	49.4
Other metropolitan	55.4	53.9	53.1	49.4	51.4
Rural	60.6	57.7	57.0	56.1	56.8
Remote	56.0	52.2	49.0	50.1	51.1
All contracts	55.1	53.7	52.6	52.2	51.6

Note: * Excludes individuals who did not complete Year 9 or equivalent.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

The likelihood of completion is influenced by personal characteristics such as age, Indigenous status, presence of a disability, highest school level completed and residential location. While there are differences in rates of completion between males and females, the net effect is small, other things being equal. The differences between genders can be explained in the main by

² The analysis in this section draws on Ball (2005). The net effect of age, gender, residential location, occupation, full-time/part-time status and qualification level has been determined through regression analysis.

differences in level of education and occupation. This is consistent with only small differences in labour mobility between males and females identified in the 2002 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Mobility Survey (see table 5).

Completion rates differ with age, with those aged over 25 years of age more likely to complete their apprenticeship or traineeship than people in younger age groups. Again, these results are consistent with differences in job mobility between the two groups. The ABS 2002 and 2004 labour mobility surveys suggest that 20 to 24-year-olds are the most job-mobile age group (see table 5). Labour mobility declines with age after 25 years of age. Similarly, apprentice and trainee contract completion rates rise with age after 25 years of age.

Table 5: Job mobility by age and gender, %

Age group	Persons who worked at some time during the year ending Feb 2002			Persons who worked at some time during the year ending Feb 2004		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
15–19	19.0	19.6	19.3	19.2	18.0	18.6
20–24	25.2	26.6	25.8	23.5	25.6	24.5
25–34	20.6	18.3	19.6	19.5	17.6	18.6
35–44	13.5	12.7	13.1	14.7	10.8	13.0
45–54	10.1	9.5	9.9	9.8	7.8	8.9
55–69	5.9	5.3	5.6	7.2	5.2	6.4
All ages	15.2	14.9	15.1	15.0	13.5	14.3

Source: ABS (2002, 2004)

Completion rates rise with level of education. Apprentices and trainees who have completed Year 12 before commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship are more likely to complete their contract of training than those who have not completed Year 12. Completion rates rise consistently as more years of education are completed before an apprenticeship or traineeship is commenced. Level of education attained prior to the commencement of an apprenticeship or traineeship is one of the most important factors influencing completion rates.

Apprentices and trainees reporting a disability have considerably lower completion rates than other Australians. Completion rates for students reporting a disability have improved marginally for those who commenced in 1999 compared with completion rates for those who commenced in 1995.

Indigenous Australians have considerably lower completion rates than other Australians. Completion rates for Indigenous Australians have improved marginally for those who commenced in 1999 compared with rates for those who commenced in earlier years.

Apprentices and trainees living in rural areas have higher completion rates than other apprentices and trainees. Apprentices and trainees living in non-capital city metropolitan areas have higher completion rates than apprentices and trainees living in remote areas and capital cities.

Contract completion rates and employment

Completion rates for apprentices and trainees employed full-time have remained relatively unchanged at 53% for apprentices and trainees who commenced between 1996 and 1999 (see table 6). While there are differences in rates of completion between apprentices and trainees employed full-time and part-time, the net effect is small, other things being equal.³ There was a large decline in the completion rate of part-time apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 1997 (58%) and those who commenced in 1999 (44%).

Table 6: Estimated rates of completion for contracts of training by employment status, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Full-time	54.6	53.4	52.3	52.9	53.2
Part-time	50.8	56.8	58.1	47.5	44.0
All contracts	55.1	53.7	52.6	52.2	51.6

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

The difference in completion rates between those employed full-time and those employed part-time can be explained in the main by differences in level of education and occupation of those employed full-time compared with those employed part-time. Part-time apprentices and trainees tend to be less well educated before starting an apprenticeship or traineeship and are employed predominantly in service occupations such as retail sales. For those who commenced in 1999, 60% of apprentices and trainees employed part-time had not completed Year 12 and 72% of apprentices and trainees employed part-time were employed in intermediate and elementary clerical, sales and service worker occupations.

The likelihood of completion is influenced by contract characteristics such as the occupation of the apprentice or trainee, and the qualification level of the training contract. There are marked differences in completion rates across occupations (see table 7). These differences reflect differences in labour market mobility across occupations. Apprentices and trainees in managerial and professional occupations typically have relatively high completion rates compared with apprentices and trainees in other occupations and have relatively low job mobility (see table 8). On the other hand, elementary sales and service workers are highly job-mobile with 32% of people employed in these occupations reporting that they had spent less than one year in their current job in February 2002. Of those who commenced in 1999, 51% of apprentices and trainees in these occupations completed a contract of training.

Table 7: Estimated rates of completion for contracts of training by occupation, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Managers and administrators	61.9	60.8	60.6	63.2	63.4
Professionals	86.3	59.4	64.4	55.5	60.2
Associate professionals	67.5	60.3	56.1	54.6	55.5
Trades and related workers	54.0	52.2	50.8	49.7	48.0
Mechanical and fabrication engineering tradespersons	68.4	68.7	65.0	63.0	61.1
Automotive tradespersons	57.9	53.4	53.3	54.5	52.6
Electrical and electronics tradespersons	66.4	65.3	64.1	62.1	58.2
Construction tradespersons	53.7	52.4	51.5	48.6	46.7
Food tradespersons	35.3	34.7	33.3	35.5	33.8
Skilled agricultural and horticultural workers	55.3	57.6	52.8	51.8	54.4
Other tradespersons and related workers	47.8	46.6	46.1	45.6	44.9
Advanced clerical and service workers	64.7	57.8	61.6	50.1	67.6
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	58.2	57.0	55.0	54.2	53.0
Intermediate production and transport workers	55.5	54.9	51.9	54.0	59.4
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	57.3	53.7	49.8	55.0	51.1
Labourers and related workers	47.7	47.7	51.9	49.3	49.0
All contracts	55.1	53.7	52.6	52.2	51.6

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Table 8: Labour mobility—under one year in current job, by occupation and gender, %

Occupation	Persons who were working at February 2002			Persons who were working at February 2004		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Managers & administrators	12.5	14.8	13.0	11.0	15.0	12.0
Professionals	19.8	19.5	19.6	18.8	18.6	18.7
Associate professionals	20.1	21.4	20.6	19.7	20.4	20.0
Tradespersons & related workers	18.2	22.9	18.7	20.5	24.1	20.8
Advanced clerical & service workers	23.5	15.6	16.5	22.9	18.3	18.8
Intermediate clerical, sales & service workers	24.6	27.7	26.9	25.8	26.2	26.1
Intermediate production & transport workers	24.3	21.0	23.9	22.9	22.4	22.9
Elementary clerical, sales & service workers	32.1	32.3	32.2	30.5	35.2	33.5
Labourers & related workers	31.6	29.6	30.9	33.4	26.0	30.9
All workers	21.7	24.3	22.9	22.0	23.9	22.8

Source: ABS (2002, 2004)

Completion rates declined significantly for those who commenced over the period 1995 to 1999 for associate professionals (68% in 1995 to 56% in 1999), trades and related workers (54% to 48%), intermediate clerical, sales and service workers (58% to 53%), and elementary clerical, sales and service workers (57% to 51%).

Completion rates vary between trades occupations. Mechanical and fabrication engineering tradespersons consistently had higher rates of completion than other tradespersons for those who commenced over the period 1995 to 1999. Food tradespersons, by comparison, had lower rates of completion than other tradespersons.

Occupational completion rates vary depending on the proportion of apprentices and trainees employed full-time in the cohort, and the length of the contract. Table 9 shows completion rates for full-time apprentices and trainees who commenced in 1999 in contracts of two years and less duration and more than two years duration. Apprentices and trainees employed full-time in contracts of more than two years duration tend to have higher completion rates than those in contracts of shorter duration. The exceptions are apprentices and trainees employed full-time in food tradesperson and skilled agricultural and horticultural worker occupations. There is little variation in completion rates for shorter and longer duration contracts for full-time apprentices and trainees in these occupations.

The national contract of training data collection does not distinguish traditional apprentices from other apprentices and trainees. In this publication 'traditional' apprentices are defined as those contracts in the trades and related workers occupational group at Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) III qualification or above with more than two years expected duration for full-time contracts, and more than eight years expected duration for part-time or school-based contracts.

Table 9: Estimated rates of completion for contracts of training by occupation and duration by full-time status, 1999, %

	Full-time	
	Two years and under	Over two years
Managers and administrators	65.4	*
Professionals	61.9	*
Associate professionals	54.8	68.9
Tradespersons and related workers	39.6	51.6
Mechanical and fabrication engineering tradespersons	41.5	67.4
Automotive tradespersons	42.5	55.2
Electrical and electronics tradespersons	43.4	61.7
Construction tradespersons	34.7	49.2
Food tradespersons	34.8	33.3
Skilled agricultural and horticultural workers	55.9	54.2
Other tradespersons and related workers	41.4	47.4
Advanced clerical and service workers	67.9	*
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	56.0	51.8
Intermediate production and transport workers	63.5	52.6
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	54.7	69.9
Labourers and related workers	50.6	57.7
All contracts	53.6	52.2

Note: * Based on numbers too small to be considered reliable.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, September quarter 2004

Completion rates for traditional apprenticeship contracts of training are shown in table 10. Completion rates for traditional apprentices declined significantly over time, from 65% for those who commenced their training in 1995, to 52% for those who commenced in 1999, for single contracts. On the other hand, completion rates for apprentices and trainees who were not in a traditional apprenticeship increased over time, from 47% for those who commenced in 1995, to 52% for those who commenced in 1999.

Table 10: Estimated rates of completion by 'traditional apprenticeship' category*, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Traditional apprenticeships	64.6	61.8	57.0	53.3	51.6
Other	47.2	49.7	51.0	51.9	51.5
All contracts	55.1	53.7	52.6	52.2	51.6

Note: * Contracts identified as 'traditional apprenticeships' are defined as those contracts in the trades and related workers occupational group at AQF III qualification or above with more than two years expected duration for full-time contracts and more than eight years expected duration for part-time or school-based contracts.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Completion rates for traditional apprentices have declined over time across all trade occupations for those who commenced between 1995 and 1999 (see table 11). The decline in contract completion rates can be explained, in part, by the high demand for tradespeople for construction work and hospitality-related occupations in the lead-up to the 2000 Olympics. During a period of high labour demand, apprentices and trainees undertaking longer-duration training courses may be enticed to change employer by a higher wage offer and therefore not complete their apprenticeship.

The composition of traditional apprentices changed for those commencing between 1995 and 1999. Construction tradespersons accounted for 20% of all traditional apprentices who

commenced in 1995 compared with 26% in 1999. The share of mechanical and fabrication engineering tradespersons declined from 17% to 11% over the period.

Table 11: Estimated rates of completion for trades occupations by 'traditional apprenticeship' category*, %

Tradespersons and related workers occupations	Year of commencement							
	Completion rates				Percentage of group			
	Traditional apprenticeship		Other		Traditional apprenticeship		Other	
	1995	1999	1995	1999	1995	1999	1995	1999
Mechanical and fabrication engineering tradespersons	79.5	68.1	38.6	43.3	16.9	10.7	10.8	9.4
Automotive tradespersons	66.7	54.8	36.5	45.6	18.8	17.4	16.7	12.3
Electrical and electronics tradespersons	75.5	61.7	42.8	43.0	12.8	12.7	8.5	6.6
Construction tradespersons	64.4	49.2	34.2	34.9	20.1	26.4	19.3	12.8
Food tradespersons	46.5	33.2	24.1	34.4	14.0	13.5	22.8	30.5
Skilled agricultural and horticultural workers	62.1	54.0	31.8	55.2	2.6	4.2	2.1	4.8
Other tradespersons and related workers	57.0	47.4	34.6	41.0	14.9	15.2	19.9	22.8
All trade contracts	64.6	51.6	33.2	40.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: * Contracts identified as 'traditional apprenticeships' are defined as those contracts in the trades and related workers occupational group at AQF III qualification or above with more than two years expected duration for full-time contracts and more than eight years expected duration for part-time or school-based contracts.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Completion rates for other (non-traditional) trades apprentices and trainees increased from 33% for those who commenced in 1995 to 40% for those who commenced in 1999, with notable increases in completion rates for food tradespersons, skilled agricultural and horticultural workers, automotive tradespersons and mechanical and fabrication engineering tradespersons.

The composition of other trade apprentices and trainees changed between 1995 and 1999. Food tradespersons accounted for 30% of all other trades apprentices and trainees for those who commenced in 1999, compared with 23% for those who commenced in 1995.

Apprentices and trainees employed in the government sector by the Australian Government, state and local governments and by government business enterprises consistently have considerably higher completion rates than apprentices and trainees employed by group training companies or the private sector (see table 12). Apprentices and trainees employed by group training companies have higher completion rates than those employed by other private sector employers.

Table 12: Estimated rates of completion for contracts of training by employer type, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Private sector	53.0	51.6	51.0	51.4	49.7
Group training scheme	56.1	56.3	54.4	51.8	51.6
Government business enterprise	65.7	78.3	84.7	66.9	86.7
Local government	65.4	58.8	57.2	63.9	69.4
State government	80.2	75.8	68.3	65.4	75.7
Commonwealth Government	73.1	79.2	85.2	78.5	72.4
Not elsewhere classified	72.1	74.6	54.7	39.6	67.6
All contracts	55.1	53.7	52.6	52.2	51.6

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Contract completion rates and qualification level

Table 13 reports contract completion rates by vocational qualification. Apprentices and trainees studying a lower-level (AQF II) qualification are less likely to complete a training contract than apprentices and trainees studying a higher-level qualification. Regression analysis determined that the likelihood of an apprentice or trainee completing a training contract increases as the level of vocational qualification increases (Ball 2005).

Table 13: Estimated rates of completion for contracts of training by qualification level, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
AQF certificate I	40.0	54.7	50.1	49.5	54.0**
AQF certificate II	56.6	53.3	51.5	49.5	47.8
AQF certificate III	54.6	54.1	53.9	53.9	53.0
AQF certificate IV	72.5	61.8	51.7	54.6	57.1
AQF diploma and above	75.7	56.4	67.2	66.6	*
All contracts	55.1	53.7	52.6	52.2	51.6

Notes: * Based on numbers too small to be considered reliable.

** Small numbers compared with earlier years.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

Contract completion rates and contract duration

Table 14 reports contract completion rates by the length of the contract. Completion rates vary with the duration of a training contract. Apprentices and trainees in a training contract of between two and three years are less likely to complete their contract than other apprentices and trainees.

Table 14: Estimated rates of completion for contracts of training by duration of original contract, %

Length of original contract	Year of commencement					
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1999
						<i>Full-time</i>
						<i>Full-time and part-time</i>
Up to 1 year	45.9	49.1	48.6	50.2	50.6	51.2
Between 1 and 2 years	45.6	53.5	60.5	61.8	62.8	61.1
Between 2 and 3 years	53.0	52.6	54.4	41.6	37.2	48.7
Between 3 and 4 years	64.9	60.4	56.0	53.4	51.8	51.9
Over 4 years	79.8	76.8	79.2	72.3	66.6	75.1
All contracts	55.1	53.7	52.6	52.2	51.6	53.2

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

The proportion of apprentices and trainees employed part-time increased considerably for those who commenced in 1999, compared with earlier years. The length of the contract is not an adjusted full-time equivalent measure, but reflects the actual time that an apprentice or trainee is expected to be in training. Part-time apprentices and trainees are mostly in a training contract with an expected duration of between two and three years. Completion rates for apprentices and trainees in a training contract of between two and three years declined from 53% for those who commenced in 1995, to 37% for those who commenced in 1999. However, when only completion rates for full-time apprentices and trainees are considered, the decline was from 53% for those who commenced in 1995, to 49% for those who commenced in 1999.

Completion rates for apprentices and trainees in a training contract of between three and four years also declined considerably between 1995 and 1999. Most apprentices and trainees in this group are in traditional apprenticeships, and the decline in completion rates from 65% for those who commenced in 1995, to 52% for those who commenced in 1999, is of similar magnitude to the decline in rates for traditional apprentices shown earlier in table 10.

Completion of a qualification

In this section completion rates are reported for apprentices and trainees undertaking a particular qualification, irrespective of whether the apprentice or trainee has changed employer. The final status for these contracts is provided in table 15.

Apprentices and trainees may change jobs before they complete the term of their contract. The training contract is broken because there has been a job separation, and in some states and territories, a new contract has to be established when the apprentice or trainee recommences with a new employer.

Table 15: Reported final status at 30 September 2004 for contract groupings leading to the same qualification

Year of commencement	Contract groupings	Completion	Non-completion	Expiry	Not finished	Total	Estimated completion rates
	(000s)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1995	64.7	55.9	33.6	10.5	0.0	100.0	60.6
1996	89.6	51.8	36.2	11.9	0.0	100.0	57.2
1997	116.7	49.0	35.2	15.8	0.1	100.0	56.1
1998	155.5	48.1	35.5	16.0	0.4	100.0	55.5
1999	199.0	49.1	38.8	11.8	0.3	100.0	54.6
2000	211.5	47.1	38.4	10.6	3.9	100.0	n/a
2001	226.6	41.2	37.0	7.9	13.9	100.0	n/a
2002	268.7	31.4	33.4	5.7	29.4	100.0	n/a
2003	282.1	13.0	24.1	2.0	60.9	100.0	n/a

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

The completion rates under this broader definition are of course higher than those we reported in the previous section. The aggregate completion rate (for grouped contracts) declined from 61% for those apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 1995, to 55% for those who commenced in 1999. Table 16 reports rates of completion for contract groupings leading to the same qualification. Relative differences in completion rates, discussed in the previous section, between age groups, different levels of school attainment, apprentices and trainees reporting a disability and other Australians, and between Indigenous Australians and other Australians, and between apprentices and trainees from different geographical regions are still apparent. However, there is little discernable difference in completion rates for males and females who commenced their original contract in 1999.

Table 16: Estimated rates of completion for contract groupings leading to the same qualification by apprentice and trainee characteristics, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Sex					
Female	57.6	56.2	56.3	56.6	54.8
Male	61.7	57.6	55.9	54.7	54.4
Age at commencement					
19 years and under	61.8	59.0	56.6	55.6	54.1
20–24	57.6	54.4	53.2	52.7	51.5
25–44	58.0	53.8	55.6	55.6	55.0
45–65	60.4	57.7	64.9	61.8	62.3
Highest school level completed*					
Year 9 or equivalent	43.0	42.9	44.4	47.0	49.0
Year 10 or equivalent	56.1	52.7	53.6	52.7	53.1
Year 11 or equivalent	59.4	56.6	54.7	55.7	53.8
Year 12 or equivalent	67.1	64.4	60.9	58.8	57.3
Not stated	56.9	49.3	53.8	55.1	50.5
Disability					
Students reporting a disability	48.7	47.3	52.3	48.5	48.5
Students reporting they do not have a disability	60.8	57.6	56.8	55.6	54.5
Not stated	60.8	57.1	55.3	55.8	59.9
Indigenous					
Indigenous	42.9	43.3	41.4	40.4	44.4
Non-Indigenous	60.5	57.2	56.7	55.1	54.2
Not stated	62.0	58.8	56.7	62.9	62.6
Geographic region					
Capital city	58.9	56.3	54.9	54.6	52.5
Other metropolitan	61.0	57.0	56.8	53.4	54.8
Rural	65.2	60.3	59.8	58.8	59.6
Remote	59.4	53.7	50.4	51.6	52.7
All contract groupings	60.6	57.2	56.1	55.5	54.6

Note: * Excludes individuals who did not complete Year 9 or equivalent.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

Table 17 reports completion rates for contract groupings leading to the same qualification for different occupations. Completion rates rise considerably for apprentices and trainees in most trade occupations when contract groupings leading to the same qualification are considered. Most notably, completion rates for apprentices and trainees who commenced in 1999 increase from 34% to 44% for food tradespersons, from 47% to 55% for construction tradespersons, from 58% to 64% for electrical and electronic tradespersons, and from 53% to 60% for automotive tradespersons. Completion rates rise particularly for traditional apprentices. Completion rates for apprentices and trainees who commenced in 1999 increase from 52% to 60%. This indicates that considerable movement between jobs occurs for apprentices in longer-length contracts before they complete their trade qualification.

Notably, there is still a large decline in completion rates over the period for traditional apprentices who commenced their training between 1995 and 1999, when contract groupings leading to the same qualification are considered. Around 71% of traditional apprentices who commenced in 1995 completed compared with 60% of those who commenced in 1999 (see table 18).

Table 17: Estimated rates of completion for contract groupings leading to the same qualification by occupation, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Managers and administrators	65.8	62.1	61.3	64.0	63.9
Professionals	86.9	59.8	65.4	57.2	61.0
Associate professionals	68.4	60.9	57.1	55.8	56.8
Trades and related workers	61.9	58.6	58.7	57.7	55.7
Mechanical and fabrication engineering tradespersons	72.8	71.1	69.2	67.5	65.4
Automotive tradespersons	63.6	57.4	58.4	59.9	59.8
Electrical and electronics tradespersons	72.4	69.4	70.5	68.2	63.8
Construction tradespersons	62.6	61.0	59.7	56.9	54.5
Food tradespersons	45.7	41.5	43.8	46.7	44.2
Skilled agricultural and horticultural workers	59.5	61.1	55.9	54.3	56.7
Other tradespersons and related workers	55.4	54.0	56.5	55.4	52.7
Advanced clerical and service workers	66.2	58.7	61.8	50.9	67.8
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	59.0	57.7	55.7	55.3	53.9
Intermediate production and transport workers	56.3	55.8	52.3	54.4	60.8
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	58.2	54.4	50.2	55.0	52.0
Labourers and related workers	47.5	48.1	52.5	50.0	50.1
All contract groupings	60.6	57.2	56.1	55.5	54.6

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

Table 18: Estimated rates of completion for contract groupings leading to the same qualification by 'traditional apprenticeship' category of original contract*, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Traditional apprenticeships	71.1	68.3	66.2	62.9	60.4
Other	51.5	51.7	52.4	53.3	53.1
All contracts	60.6	57.2	56.1	55.5	54.6

Note: * Contracts identified as 'traditional apprenticeships' are defined as those contracts in the trades and related workers occupational group at AQF III qualification or above with more than two years expected duration for full-time contracts and more than eight years expected duration for part-time or school-based contracts.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999 to 2003)

Completion rates rise a great deal for apprentices and trainees in higher-level vocational qualifications, AQF III and IV, when contract groupings leading to the same qualification are considered (see table 19). The disparity in completion rates for apprentices and trainees studying AQF II and AQF III qualifications increases when contract groupings leading to the same qualification are considered. There is almost a 10-percentage point difference in completion rates between AQF II and AQF III qualifications in most years for those commencing between 1995 and 1999.

Table 19: Estimated rates of completion for contract groupings leading to the same qualification by qualification level, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
AQF certificate I	40.7	54.8	50.1	49.5	54.4**
AQF certificate II	57.0	53.6	51.9	49.9	48.7
AQF certificate III	62.7	60.6	60.6	59.3	57.3
AQF certificate IV	77.9	63.5	53.2	56.7	58.6
AQF diploma and above	75.7	61.0	68.4	67.5	*
All contract groupings	60.6	57.2	56.1	55.5	54.6

Notes: * Based on numbers too small to be considered reliable.

** Small numbers compared with earlier years.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Completion rates rise notably for apprentices and trainees in training programs of between three and four years duration when contract groupings leading to the same qualification are considered (see table 20). Completion rates range between 62% and 70% for those who commenced in the period 1995 to 1999 for apprentices and trainees in training programs of between three and four years duration.

Table 20: Estimated rates of completion for contract groupings leading to the same qualification by duration of original contract, %

	Year of commencement				
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Up to 1 year	49.6	51.2	50.0	51.3	52.0
Between 1 and 2 years	53.0	56.0	62.8	64.6	65.1
Between 2 and 3 years	60.8	59.5	65.2	47.9	41.0
Between 3 and 4 years	70.3	65.7	64.0	61.8	69.5
Over 4 years	82.1	80.6	81.2	75.1	69.5
All contract groupings	60.6	57.2	56.1	55.5	54.6

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1995 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Completion rates for apprentices and trainees

In this section completion rates are reported for apprentices and trainees who have completed an apprenticeship or traineeship, irrespective of whether it was the first apprenticeship or traineeship attempted. While the majority of apprentices and trainees undertake a single contract of training with a single employer, some move between employers but continue as an apprentice or trainee with a new employer in the same vocation. Some individuals may change their vocation as well as their employer before completing an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Tables 21 to 23 report outcomes for individuals who commenced their first apprenticeship in 1997, 1998 and 1999 and who subsequently completed a training contract, regardless of how many contracts of training they entered into. It is not possible to report completion rates for apprentices and trainees who commenced their training before 1997 as the data are not considered to be sufficiently robust to track individuals who changed occupations prior to this time.

Completion rates were 60% for apprentices and trainees who commenced a training contract in 1997, 1998 or 1999 and subsequently completed an apprenticeship or traineeship, irrespective of whether it was their original contract or vocation.

Table 21 reports rates of completion for apprentices and trainees who have completed a contract of training, irrespective of whether it was their original contract or vocation. Relative differences in completion rates, discussed in the previous section, between age groups, different levels of school attainment, apprentices and trainees reporting a disability and other Australians, and between Indigenous Australians and other Australians, and between apprentices and trainees from different geographical regions are still apparent. However, for apprentices and trainees who commenced their original contract in 1999, males have marginally higher completion rates than females.

Table 22 reports rates of completion for apprentices and trainees who initially commenced in a traditional apprenticeship, and rates of completion for other apprentices and trainees. About 70% of all apprentices and trainees who commenced a traditional apprenticeship between 1997 and 1999 completed a qualification. These rates of completion are considerably higher for this group than when rates of completion of their original qualification are considered. This indicates that a high proportion of apprentices and trainees who commence a traditional apprenticeship will not complete their original qualification but will complete another qualification or move to a different vocation. Over 8% of apprentices and trainees who commenced a traditional apprenticeship in 1999 completed a different qualification from the one they initially commenced.

Apprentices and trainees move between employers, qualifications and vocations, irrespective of the level of qualification they may initially undertake. Table 23 reports rates of completion for apprentices and trainees by the qualification level of their original contract. When these completion rates are compared with completion rates for contract groupings leading to a qualification, completion rates rise most notably for apprentices and trainees who were originally enrolled in an AQF I qualification. About 58% and 55%, respectively, of all apprentices and trainees who originally enrolled in an AQF I qualification in 1997 and 1998, completed an

apprenticeship or traineeship, although only half of those in each of the year cohorts completed an AQF I qualification. This suggests that a high proportion of apprentices and trainees who originally enter a training contract at AQF I cancel/withdraw from that contract but re-enter another training contract to train for a higher-level qualification.

Table 21: Estimated rates of completion for individuals by selected demographics, %

	Year of commencement		
	1997	1998	1999
Sex			
Female	59.8	59.6	59.3
Male	60.7	59.5	60.1
Age at commencement			
19 years and under	63.0	62.2	62.2
20–24	55.4	54.7	55.7
25–44	57.7	57.7	57.8
45–65	66.2	63.1	64.0
Highest school level completed*			
Year 9 or equivalent	48.0	50.4	52.8
Year 10 or equivalent	58.2	57.1	58.7
Year 11 or equivalent	59.7	60.5	59.6
Year 12 or equivalent	65.3	62.7	62.4
Not stated	54.4	56.2	52.7
Disability			
Students reporting a disability	58.0	53.7	53.9
Students reporting they do not have a disability	64.2	60.4	59.9
Not stated	55.3	55.8	61.0
Indigenous			
Indigenous	46.2	45.8	48.9
Non-Indigenous	62.6	59.3	59.6
Not stated	57.1	64.7	64.9
Geographic region			
Capital city	59.4	58.6	57.8
Other metropolitan	61.4	57.7	60.9
Rural	64.0	62.9	64.7
Remote	54.5	56.2	57.9
All contract groupings	60.4	59.5	59.8

Note: * Excludes individuals who did not complete Year 9 or equivalent.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1997 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Table 22: Estimated rates of completion for individuals by 'traditional apprenticeship' category for first qualification attempted*, %

	Year of commencement		
	1997	1998	1999
Traditional apprenticeships	72.6	69.8	68.9
Other	56.1	56.6	57.4
All contract groupings	60.4	59.5	59.8

Note: * Contracts identified as 'traditional apprenticeships' are defined as those contracts in the trades and related workers occupational group at AQF III qualification or above with more than two years expected duration for full-time contracts and more than eight years expected duration for part-time or school-based contracts.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1997 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Table 23: Estimated rates of completion for individuals by AQF level for first qualification attempted, %

	Year of commencement		
	1997	1998	1999
AQF certificate I	57.6	54.9	59.9**
AQF certificate II	55.1	54.0	53.3
AQF certificate III	66.3	63.7	62.9
AQF certificate IV	56.3	58.1	61.3
AQF diploma and above	69.5	67.7	*
All contract groupings	60.4	59.5	59.8

Notes: * Based on numbers too small to be considered reliable.

** Small numbers compared with earlier years.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, March quarter 2003 (1997 to 1998); September quarter 2004 (1999)

Conclusions

The aggregate apprentice and trainee completion rate (for single contracts) declined from 55% for those apprentices and trainees who commenced their training in 1995, to 52% for those who commenced in 1999. Because the completion rate is associated with a number of demographic factors and training contract characteristics, completion rates vary from year to year in line with the composition of the cohort of apprentices and trainees. For example, Indigenous Australians and apprentices and trainees who report a disability have lower rates of completion than other Australians.

Completion rates for traditional apprentices declined significantly over time from 65% for those who commenced their training in 1995, to 52% for those who commenced in 1999, for single contracts. Completion rates for traditional apprentices increased to 71% for those who commenced in 1995 and 60% for those who commenced in 1999, when changes in employer (and training contract) are taken into account.

On the other hand, completion rates for apprentices and trainees who were not in a traditional apprenticeship increased over time, from 47% for those who commenced in 1995, to 52% for those who commenced in 1999. Completion rates for non-traditional apprentices increase to 52% for those who commenced in 1995 and 53% for those who commenced in 1999, when changes in employer (and training contract) are taken into account.

Completion rates reflect the economy-wide pattern of labour market mobility. The age group with the lowest completion rates is the 20 to 24-year age group which is also the most job-mobile age group. Occupations such as sales and service workers that exhibit high rates of labour mobility also tend to have low completion rates.

Younger apprentices and trainees, particularly those undertaking longer-duration training courses, tend to move between employers and cancel/withdraw from a training contract. They may later recommence their training with another employer.

Completion rates for full-time apprentices and trainees have not altered markedly for those who commenced between 1995 and 1999. Apprentices and trainees employed part-time tend to have lower completion rates than those employed full-time because, typically, they have completed fewer years of schooling before commencing their training and they are employed predominantly in highly job-mobile occupations.

Completion rates for apprentices and trainees who completed Year 12 before commencing their training are consistently higher than for apprentices and trainees who have completed fewer years of schooling.

Some individuals may change their vocation as well as their employer before completing an apprenticeship or traineeship. About 60% of individuals who commenced their original contract in the period 1997 to 1999 completed a contract of training either in their original vocation or in another vocation.

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Apprentices and trainees undertake vocational education and training through a contract of training, which is a formal contract between an employer and apprentice or trainee. This publication reports completion rates for apprentices and trainees who commenced their apprenticeship or traineeship between 1995 and 1999. Completion rates are provided by gender, age, highest school level, Indigenous ethnicity, presence of a disability, residential region, level of qualification, occupation and length of training contract.

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