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Australian Qualifications Framework lower-level qualifications: Pathways to where for young people?

John Stanwick
National Centre for
Vocational Education Research

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Pathways to where for young people?

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Key messages

This report investigates the outcomes from lower-level qualifications (certificates I and II) for young people aged 15 to 24 years. The data analysed were largely derived from two of the national data collections held by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

The findings indicate that vocational and further study outcomes for young people from certificate I and II qualifications could be described as fair, at best, with some variations to these findings according to age, gender and certificate level.

- Young people's rates of completing courses at certificate levels I and II are relatively low. It has been projected that about 33% who enrolled at certificate I level complete a course with 43% at certificate II level.
- The minority who complete (graduates) receive reasonable employment outcomes in the 15 to 19-years age group, while they were less reasonable for the 20 to 24-years age group. Over a third of all graduates reported no job-related benefits from the course.
- Reasonable proportions of graduates enrolled in further study at a higher level within six months after the course, with about a third of certificate I graduates and 43% of certificate II graduates doing so. Similar proportions of graduates completed a further qualification within 30 months after their initial training (28% and 40% respectively), although not always at a higher level.
- Subjects-only completers, who form the majority of students at both certificate I and II levels, do not receive as good employment outcomes as graduates. Subjects-only completers were also more likely than graduates to report no job-related benefit from the course. Subjects-only completers were less likely than graduates to enrol in further study at a higher level, or to complete an additional qualification.
- Preparatory courses, which form a substantial proportion of enrolments at certificate I level (about 47%), do not have good outcomes either in terms of employment or further study. Preparatory courses may, however, have other short-term benefits, which could lead to employment or further study outcomes at a later date.

Executive summary

This report investigates the outcomes from lower-level Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications (certificates I and II) for young people (aged 15 to 24 years). These qualifications are aimed at developing basic vocational skills or preparatory access skills. They may also lead to further study. A prime motivation for young people undertaking these qualifications is to facilitate transition into the labour market.

Data were analysed primarily from two of the national data collections held by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). The 2003 Student Outcomes Survey was used to investigate employment and further study outcomes, as well as young people's motivations for undertaking lower-level AQF qualifications. These data were supplemented by longer-term outcome information from NCVER's 2004 Down the Track Survey of young people. The NCVER's National VET Provider Collection (for 2002 and 2003) was the other main data collection used to gain a picture of where certificate I and II qualifications sit in terms of overall enrolments, and also the projected rates of completion for these courses; that is, what proportion of students graduate.

Throughout the report, outcomes are analysed for both graduates (full course completers) and non-graduates ('subjects only' completers), for both certificate I and certificate II level programs, for males and females, and for those aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years. Outcomes were also analysed for students who had enrolled in preparatory courses at certificate levels I and II. Where relevant, outcomes from certificate III courses are used to provide comparative 'benchmark' data, as this qualification level is considered to be the core of the vocational education and training (VET) system.

Findings

The findings on outcomes should be considered in the context of young people's motivations for undertaking certificate I and II courses. The data indicate that very small proportions (less than 10%) of young people undertook their course for further study reasons. The majority of students reported that they undertook the course for employment-related reasons, while a significant proportion reported personal interest as a motivation, particularly those who undertook single subjects within the full certificate I and II qualifications. Females were found to be more likely to report personal interest and further study as motivations.

A key finding of the research is that few young people who enrol in certificate I and II courses complete. Our analyses projected that about 33% of certificate I students eventually complete a course, while about 43% of certificate II students do. Young people in the 15 to 19-years age group are considerably more likely to complete a course than those in the 20 to 24-years age group.

When we looked at employment outcomes from these courses, we found that there were reasonable outcomes for 15 to 19-year-old graduates in terms of gaining full-time employment—there were about 25 percentage points more employed full-time after the course than before the course. They were not as good for 20 to 24-year-olds where there was an 11-percentage points' difference in terms of those employed full-time before the course and those employed full-time after the course. They were also not as good for subjects-only completers, where there was generally less than 10 percentage points difference between those employed full-time before the course and those

employed full-time after the course. As we noted earlier, these subjects-only completers formed the majority of young people undertaking certificate I and II courses.

The investigation of employment outcomes also included analyses of young people who reported career advancement benefits, namely increased earnings and promotion. These were found not to be significant outcomes of these courses, with the exception of 20 to 24-year-old certificate II graduates, where about a quarter of young people reported these benefits.

The proportions of young people reporting no job-related benefit from the course were quite substantial at the certificate I and II levels. We found that over a third of graduates reported no job-related benefit from the course. The proportions were even higher for subjects-only completers, where over 40% of certificate I subjects-only completers and over a half of certificate II subjects-only completers reported no job-related benefit from the course. Subjects-only completers comprise the majority, which means that large proportions overall reported no job-related benefit from the course.

Our research also investigated the degree to which young people go on to further study after undertaking certificate I and II level courses and subjects. First of all we estimated the proportions enrolling in further study at a higher level six months after the initial course; following this, the proportions completing a further qualification 30 months after the initial training were estimated. These analyses showed that over 40% of graduates at certificate II level and a little over a third of graduates at certificate I level had enrolled in further study at a higher level. Within 30 months after the initial training, about 40% of certificate II graduates and 28% of certificate I graduates had completed a further qualification, either at the same or higher level. It is important to remember, however, that graduates formed the minority of young people who had undertaken certificate I and II courses.

By comparison, less than 10% of subjects-only completers overall enrolled in further study at a higher level. We also found that only about 8% of certificate I and 18% of certificate II subjects-only completers had completed a further course within 30 months after the initial training.

Finally, we investigated the outcomes of young people undertaking preparatory courses using the mixed field category from the National VET Provider Collection as a proxy for preparatory courses. These formed a substantial proportion of enrolments at certificate I level (about 47%) and about 10% of enrolments at certificate II level. Overall, outcomes from these courses appeared quite poor. Students in these courses are projected to have very low rates of completing courses (about 25% at certificate I level and 28% at certificate II level). They have poor employment outcomes, with few gaining full-time employment after the course, and in addition, it is estimated that considerably less than 20% enrol in further study at a higher level. The preparatory nature of these courses needs to be kept in mind, however, with students possibly gaining other shorter-term benefits from the courses, such as increased self-esteem and confidence, which may facilitate their going on to employment or further study at a later time.

Conclusions

Outcomes for young people from certificate I and II level VET programs could be described as fair. While there are some reasonable full-time employment outcomes for 15 to 19-year-old graduates (about 25 percentage points more employed full-time after the course than before), they were not quite as good for 20 to 24-year-old graduates (about 11 percentage points more employed full-time after the course than before the course). Subjects-only completers, who were projected to form about 67% of young people at certificate I level and 57% at certificate II level, did not have overall as good employment outcomes as graduates (generally less than ten percentage points more were employed full-time after the course than before the course). We also found that significant proportions reported no job-related benefit from the course. In addition, only a minority of young people were projected to enrol in further study at a higher level (just under a quarter), or to complete a further qualification. As well, the immediate and further study outcomes for young people enrolled in preparatory courses were quite poor, although it needs to be kept in mind that preparatory courses may offer other benefits.

Introduction

Background and purpose

Lower-level Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications (certificates I and II) were introduced with the aim of developing basic vocational skills and knowledge leading to employment (generally at lower skill level positions), and for those already employed, possibly some career advancement-related benefits. They were also intended to provide pathways to further study.

Lower-level qualifications can also be undertaken to provide preparatory access. By this we mean courses aimed at providing basic skills (such as literacy and numeracy) that will facilitate acquisition of employment-related skills, and/or access to further studies. It is noticeable from our data that large proportions of certificate I students enrol in these courses (about 46%), while about 10% of students at certificate II level also enrol in these preparatory courses.

This paper examines the extent to which these purposes are realised for young people (aged 15 to 24 years old).

The main questions to be addressed by this research are:

- ✧ To what extent do certificate I and II qualifications lead to employment?
- ✧ To what extent are certificate I and II qualifications being used as pathways to further study?
- ✧ To what extent do preparatory courses lead to employment and/or further study outcomes?

We begin by contextualising certificate I and II qualifications in terms of total enrolment numbers and anticipated hours of training for young people. We also contextualise the discussion by providing information on students' motivations for undertaking these qualifications (or parts thereof).

Then, outputs from certificate I and II qualifications are examined over the 2002–03 period to give an impression of the rates of completion for young students enrolling in these qualifications. Note that, while this paper provides information on rates of completion, its scope does not include an analysis of the effect that student characteristics may have on the rates of completing courses.

The discussion on outcomes which follows examines outcomes for both graduates and those who complete less than a full qualification (referred to throughout the report as 'subjects only' completers). The discussion on outcomes primarily focuses on employment and further study outcomes. To complete the picture on outcomes, we provide information on students who reported having received no job-related benefits from their course. Where relevant, data relating to certificate III courses are provided as 'benchmark' data. Certificate III courses are the core of the vocational education and training (VET) system in Australia and are often more directly aimed at direct employment outcomes (for example, through New Apprenticeships in the trades) than certificate I and II qualifications.

Following the discussion on outcomes of certificate I and II courses for young people overall, there is an examination of outcomes for the subset of students enrolled in preparatory-type courses. As mentioned earlier, there are substantial numbers of enrolments in these courses at lower AQF levels. The paper finishes with an overall conclusion on the outcomes of certificate I and II courses for young people.

Method

To analyse outcomes, we used data from the 2003 Student Outcomes Survey compiled by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), which is limited to students who undertook courses at technical and further education (TAFE) colleges. This survey allowed us to examine, six months after the completion of the course, the employment outcomes from the course—gaining employment and career advancement—for both graduates and subjects-only completers. There is also information on further study undertaken by graduates. In addition, from this survey we have information on students' motivations for undertaking the course (post hoc), and on the extent to which young people reported no job-related benefits from the course for both graduates and subjects-only completers.

We also used data on student outcomes from NCVER's Down the Track Survey. This survey gathered information on longer-term outcomes (30 months down the track) of TAFE students who finished their initial training in 2001. For the purposes of this paper, we used information from this survey on further qualifications undertaken and completed by students within 30 months of the initial training. It is, however, a small sample survey, making detailed breakdowns of the data unviable.

In order to gain a picture of the proportion of students in the 15 to 24-years age group completing an award (graduates), data from the NCVER National VET Provider Collection on students were used. Using a starting cohort of students in 2002, and matching this to students' activity in 2003, we can get an impression of the extent to which young people starting in 2002 had completed an award by the end of 2003; the extent to which they had completed subjects; and the proportion of anticipated hours used. We can also examine the proportion of students who enrolled in higher-level study in 2003, and also, the proportion who exited the system in 2003 with no award. Using a two-year timeframe is reasonable for lower-level courses as they are of fairly short duration, even if undertaken on a part-time basis. NCVER's National VET Provider Collection was also used to provide basic information on enrolment patterns for certificate I and II students.

Total enrolment numbers for young people

To provide a background of where certificate I and II qualifications sit overall for young people, tables 1 and 2, based on the 2002 National VET Provider Collection, summarise activity, firstly, by total student enrolments, and secondly, by hours associated with the course. The data collected cover the public VET system in Australia—TAFE (about 85%) and other providers (about 15%).

These tables show that certificate I and II enrolments accounted for one-third of all enrolments among those aged under 25 in 2002, but only a quarter of total anticipated hours of training. We can also see that, at certificate I level, 62% of enrolments fell outside training packages. The majority of these enrolments outside training packages were for mixed field (or preparatory) courses (68.5% of enrolments).

When we look at all certificate I and II enrolments, we see that a substantial proportion comprised students in the 15 to 24-years age group. About 40% of all enrolments at certificate I level were for this age group (or 28% were 15 to 19 years, and 12%, 20 to 24), while 48% of all certificate II enrolments were (33% were 15 to 19 years of age and 15%, 20 to 24).

Table 1: Enrolments by qualification level for 2002 for students aged under 25 (number and proportion)

Qualification level	Advanced diploma		Diploma		Cert. IV		Cert. III		Cert. II		Cert. I		Other*		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	**No.**	**%**
Training package	6 324	1.6	34 448	9.0	38 473	10.0	159 400	41.5	123 508	32.2	21 760	5.7	0		**383 913**	**100.0**
Nationally accredited	22 247	7.1	36 563	11.6	31 005	9.9	61 124	19.5	51 233	16.3	35 870	11.4	76 171	24.2	**314 213**	**100.0**
Total	**28 571**	**4.1**	**71 011**	**10.2**	**69 478**	**10.0**	**220 524**	**31.5**	**174 741**	**25.0**	**57 630**	**8.3**	**76 171**	**10.9**	**698 126**	**100.0**

Note: * 'Other' refers to a variety of other levels of qualifications falling outside the certificate I to advanced diploma range. It includes graduate certificates and diplomas, bachelor degrees, and school education. However, the largest proportion of these enrolments (about 89%) is defined as 'statement of attainment not identifiable by level'. In addition to the data in table 1, there were also 89 782 locally accredited enrolments. These enrolments are for non-AQF courses and are not nationally accredited.

Table 2: Effort by total number of anticipated hours by qualification for 2002 for students under 25 (%)

Qualification level	Advanced diploma	Diploma	Cert. IV	Cert. III	Cert. II	Cert. I	Other	Total
Training package	3.1	16.7	12.5	41.3	23.2	3.2	0.0	**100.0**
Nationally accredited	13.0	18.1	12.5	19.3	13.7	9.3	14.1	**100.0**
Total	**7.5**	**17.3**	**12.5**	**31.5**	**18.9**	**5.9**	**6.4**	**100.0**

Outcomes for young people

Context

Nearly two-thirds (65.4%) of certificate I enrolments were male students (67.4% for 15 to 19-year-olds and 60.4% for 20 to 24-year-olds). There was a fairly even gender split at certificate II level, with 50.6% of enrolments being male students (49.4% for 15 to 19-year-olds and 53.4% for 20 to 24-year-olds).

We also have information on students' motivations for undertaking the course.[1] What stands out in table 3 are the low proportions of students reporting further study as their main motivation. This is curious given that these qualifications are, at least in part, designed to serve as pathways to further study. A significant proportion said that they undertook the course for personal interest[2], considerably more than at our benchmark certificate III level. We can also see that students at certificate I level were more likely to cite personal interest as a motivation, as were students in the 15 to 19-years age group. When these data are analysed by gender (see table 20 in appendix I), we clearly see that females were considerably more likely to report personal interest as the motivation for undertaking the course, particularly at certificate I level, and were also slightly more likely to state further study as a motivation.

Table 3: Motivations for students undertaking lower-level qualifications

	Graduates				Subjects-only completers			
	Employment-related	Further study	Personal interest	**Total**	Employment-related	Further study	Personal interest	**Total**
Certificate I								
15 to 19 yrs	59	6	35	**100**	48	3*	50	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	65	10	26	**100**	60	3*	37	**100**
Certificate II								
15 to 19 yrs	58	8	34	**100**	52	7	40	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	76	6	18	**100**	66	4*	30	**100**
Certificate III								
15 to 19 yrs	71	8	22	**100**	67	6	27	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	84	4	11	**100**	76	5	19	**100**

Note: * Figure should be treated with caution as the relative standard error is greater than 25%.
Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

Rates of completion

We can examine the extent to which students who commenced a certificate I or II qualification in 2002 had completed an award by the end of 2003 (see table 4). This provides an estimate of the

[1] Note that this information is derived from NCVER's Student Outcomes Survey administered six months after the course.

[2] Younger students indicating that they undertook the course for personal interest needs to be treated with some caution. In some cases they may indicate this because they were not clear on their motivations for the course or someone told them to do it. In older age categories it is more likely that, when people indicate that they undertook the course for personal interest, this is exactly what they mean.

proportion of students who completed a course, albeit only over a two-year period.[3] This information is important as it provides an indication of what proportion of students are graduates, and what proportion are subjects-only completers. The outcomes data to follow are discussed in terms of both graduates and subjects-only completers.

Table 4: For students commencing in 2002, enrolment status end 2003 (%)

	Certificate I			Certificate II		
	15 to 19 yrs	20 to 24 yrs	**Total**	15 to 19 yrs	20 to 24 yrs	**Total**
Completed an award	26.9	19.0	**25.7**	35.6	27.1	**34.3**
Were doing a higher-level qualification in 2003, no award	13.4	8.0	**12.7**	5.9	5.2	**5.8**
Still enrolled in certificate I or II in 2003, no award	6.4	8.4	**6.7**	11.1	11.2	**11.2**
Enrolled in course below certificate I or II 2003, no award	2.4	2.6	**2.4**	2.4	2.7	**2.4**
Not enrolled in 2003 and no award received	50.9	62.0	**52.5**	45.0	53.8	**46.3**
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: NCVER's National VET Provider Collection 2002–03

The key feature of this table is that a minority of students who had commenced certificate I or II qualifications in 2002 had completed an award by the end of 2003. This feature was more pronounced at certificate I level and also for the 20 to 24-year-old age group. Conversely, large proportions of students had not received an award and were not enrolled at the end of 2003. The table also indicates that about one-fifth of certificate I and II students were still in the system at the end of 2003, with some proportion of these having enrolled in higher-level courses.

When this information is also examined in terms of effort, or anticipated hours of training, a slightly different picture emerges, whereby completers accounted for a higher proportion of hours than those who exited without an award. At the certificate I level this amounted to 39.4% of hours for completers and 28.7% for exiters without an award, while at certificate II level, the proportions were 46.0% and 29.1% respectively. To complete this picture, continuing students who had not completed an award accounted for 31.9% of hours at certificate I level and 24.9% of hours at certificate II level.

We can also calculate the overall proportion of subjects completed for those who had completed an award and for those who exited the system without an award. That is, we can get a measure of the extent to which people complete subjects.

Table 5 shows that there is a marked difference in the rate of completing subjects by those completing an award by comparison with those who do not—about a 30% differential throughout the categories shown in the table. Hence, those who did not complete awards also do not complete as many subjects. This is also consistent with the proportion of anticipated course hours (shown above) completed by those not completing an award.

[3] These proportions do not account for people not enrolled in 2003 who re-enter the system at a later time.

Table 5: Rates of completing subjects over 2002–03 (%)

	15 to 19		20 to 24		15 to 24	
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II
Completed an award during 2002–03	88.2	85.9	91.2	93.9	88.4	86.7
No award and not enrolled in 2003	59.4	57.7	58.0	64.4	59.3	58.5

Source: NCVER's National VET Provider Collection 2002–03

Longer-term rates of completing courses

Table 3 provided information on the status of students at the end of 2003, including those who were still in the system. Using Markov chain analysis[4], we can project[5] proportions of students who eventually complete a qualification[6], or alternatively, do not complete a qualification. More detail on this procedure is contained in appendix 2.

Table 6 quite clearly shows that the majority of students are unlikely to complete a course, more so at certificate I level and also the 20 to 24-years age group. The data are also consistent with findings by the Queensland Department of Employment and Training (2005), which indicated that, of the just under two million people who had accessed Queensland's public VET system since 1996, 77% had not completed a full qualification. Comparing males and females (see table 21 in appendix 1), it can be seen that females were more likely to complete courses across both age groups and certificate levels.

This information is relevant to the discussion of outcomes that follows, as the outcomes will be discussed both in terms of those who have completed a course (graduates) and those who have not (subjects-only completers). Table 6 suggests that, in terms of the overall system, subjects-only completers accounted for about two-thirds of the system at certificate I level and a little under 60% at certificate II level. These proportions will be used to try to gain a system-wide view for some of the outcomes discussed below.

Table 6: Projected completion rates in the longer term (%)

	15 to 19		20 to 24		15 to 24	
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II
Completed a course	34.6	44.2	23.5	33.5	32.9	42.6
Did not complete a course	65.4	55.8	76.5	66.5	67.1	57.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Derived from NCVER's National VET Provider Collection 2000–03

Employment and further study outcomes

We will now analyse the outcomes of young people who had undertaken certificate I and II courses. For this age group outcomes are primarily focused on either gaining employment or going onto further study at a higher level.

[4] This analysis predicts probabilities of long-term outcomes (in this case, completers and non-completers) based on what has happened previously. We use status as of 2003 as a basis for the long-term predictions.

[5] Note that this projection assumes that completers and non-completers have the same characteristics, which is not necessarily the case. However, it is still useful as a guide to proportions who eventually complete a course.

[6] Some of these maybe at a higher level than the course in which originally enrolled in 2002.

Employment outcomes

Table 7 presents information on gaining employment in three different ways. Firstly, there are data on the difference between the proportion of people employed before the course and six months after the course is completed. For people not employed before the course, there are also data on the proportion employed six months after the course. These data are examined in terms of both full-time and part-time employment. Full-time employment is seen as the primary employment outcome, although it is recognised that, for some people, part-time employment is more desirable. Finally, there are data on those who report that they 'got a job' as a benefit of the course. Throughout, certificate III course data are used as benchmark data.

Table 7: Employment outcomes for young people (%)

	15 to 19-year-olds			20 to 24-year-olds		
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III
Difference between employed before training and after training						
Graduates						
Employed full-time	26	24	32	11	11	29
Employed part-time	-10	-9	-15	0	-8	-16
Subjects-only completers						
Employed full-time	4	9	19	16	3	16
Employed part-time	-4	0	-9	-7	-4	-12
Not employed before course but employed after						
Graduates						
Employed full-time	24	24	34	16	24	53
Employed part-time	16	21	21	16	17	13
Subjects-only completers						
Employed full-time	11*	17	25	28*	13*	31
Employed part-time	15*	21	23	**	14*	16
Stated 'got a job' as a benefit of the course						
Graduates	48	37	42	31	32	42
Subjects-only completers	37	18	29	15*	22	30

Notes: * Figure should be treated with caution as the relative standard error is greater than 25%.
** Data not reported, as fewer than five responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

There are a few patterns emerging from the data presented in this table. Firstly we can examine the employment outcomes of graduates. There are reasonable proportions of 15 to 19-year-old certificate I and II graduates who gain full-time employment after the course, although less than the benchmark certificate III group. The table also shows a movement from part-time employment before the course to full-time employment after the course for this age group. High proportions of certificate I and certificate II 15 to 19-year-old graduates also reported 'got a job' as a benefit of the course.

Employment outcomes are not so good for 20 to 24-year-old certificate I and II graduates. They do not perform anywhere near as well as certificate III graduates across all three measures used, nor are their employment outcomes as good as their 15 to 19-year-old counterparts.

The table also provides data on the employment outcomes of subjects-only completers. We saw earlier that at the certificate I and II levels, the majority of students do not complete a full qualification, so the outcomes of subjects-only completers are important in the context of the overall system. For the 15 to 19-year-old age group, full-time employment outcomes are not good. They do not receive as good outcomes as certificate III subjects-only completers, and have substantially poorer

outcomes than those who graduate. One anomalous figure, however, is the proportion of 15 to 19-year-old certificate I subjects-only completers reporting 'got a job' as a benefit of the course (37% did so), which is higher than that for the benchmark certificate III subjects-only completers (29%). A possible explanation for this is that, at certificate I level, more may be reporting getting a part-time job as a benefit by comparison with those at certificate III level.

The picture for 20 to 24-year-old subjects-only completers is a little different. Here we see that, at certificate I level, full-time employment outcomes are only slightly poorer than their certificate III counterparts, and better than those at certificate II level.[7] At certificate II level, outcomes are considerably poorer than those at certificate III level.

We can also comment on differences in employment outcomes between males and females (refer to tables 22 and 23 in appendix 1). Males gain considerably better full-time employment outcomes than females for the 15 to 19-years group, both for graduates and subjects-only completers. The difference is more pronounced at the certificate I level. For graduates aged 20 to 24 years, there is little difference in full-time employment outcomes between males and females. These data are limited for subjects-only completers; however, males appear to have better outcomes.

There are a few things that can be said overall about employment outcomes. Firstly, when compared with the benchmark certificate III level, there are reasonable employment outcomes for graduates aged 15 to 19 years. These outcomes are poorer for graduates aged 20 to 24 years. Employment outcomes for subjects-only completers are not as good as their certificate III counterparts and substantially poorer than those for graduates. Comparing males and females, we see that males overall have better employment outcomes than females. The best employment outcomes overall at certificate I and II levels are for 15 to 19-year-old male graduates.

While gaining employment is likely to be the main employment-related motivation for young people undertaking certificate I and II level qualifications, for those already employed there may be some career advancement benefits. Table 8 uses the categories of 'increased earnings' and 'promotion' as benefits of the course from NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes to obtain a measure career of advancement.

Table 8: Career advancement benefits from the training course

	15 to 19-year-olds			20 to 24-year-olds		
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III
Graduates						
Increased earnings	14	17	32	10	27	45
Promotion	8	15	14	7*	22	21
Subjects-only completers						
Increased earnings	**	8*	12	25*	3*	18
Promotion	**	6*	7	**	7*	12

Notes: * These figures need to be treated with caution as they have relative standard errors of greater than 25%.
** Data not reported, as fewer than five responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

The table shows that only small proportions of certificate I and II graduates stated career advancement benefits, and they were substantially less likely to do so than the benchmark certificate III level. The only exception to this is that the proportion of certificate II graduates reporting

[7] This result needs to be treated with some caution due to the relatively high standard errors associated with the certificate I and II 20 to 24-year-old subjects-only completer data.

promotion as a benefit was on a par with certificate III graduates. Across age groups and certificate levels, increased earnings was more likely to be a benefit than was promotion.

A comparison of career advancement benefits by gender (see table 24 in appendix 1) shows that there was little difference between males and females in the proportion reporting these benefits for 15 to 19-year-old graduates. Male graduates aged 20 to 24 years were a little more likely to report career advancement benefits than their female counterparts, but overall, the gender differences were not large.

The data for subjects-only completers on career advancement are difficult to comment on due to the relatively high standard errors associated with the data, but there do not seem to be significant benefits.

No job-related benefits from the course

We can also get some idea of the proportion of people who reported no job-related benefits from the course six months after the training. Once again, we used the estimated proportions of graduates and subjects-only completers derived earlier to try to get an overall picture. Data for certificate III graduates and subjects-only completers are included, although we do not have projected proportions of graduates for this group.

Table 9: Proportions reporting no job-related benefit from the course

	15 to 19 years			20 to 24 years		
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III
Graduates						
Projected proportion of graduates	34.6	44.2	N/A	23.5	33.5	
Proportions reporting no job-related benefit	34	38	29	44	33	19
*Graduates reporting no job-related benefit as a proportion of all students***	*11.8*	*16.8*	*N/A*	*10.3*	*11.1*	*N/A*
Subjects-only completers						
Projected proportions of subjects-only completers	65.4	55.8	N/A	76.5	66.5	N/A
Proportions reporting no job-related benefit	42	59	53	44	56	42
Subjects-only completers reporting no job-related benefit as a proportion of all students	*27.5*	*32.9*	*N/A*	*33.7*	*37.2*	*N/A*
Estimated proportion of all reporting no job-related benefits**	**39.3**	**49.7**	**N/A**	**44.0**	**48.3**	**N/A**

Notes: * This proportion is taken from table 6, which estimates the proportion of students who complete a qualification in the longer term.
** This row is the product of the previous two rows.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

The data in the table estimate that substantial proportions of all certificate I and II students reported no job-related benefit from the course. Those who had undertaken certificate II courses were more likely to do so, with just under a half reporting no job-related benefit. This difference is largely explained by the high proportions (well over a half) of certificate II subjects-only completers reporting no job-related benefits from the course. Overall, subjects-only completers were more likely than graduates to report no benefit from the course. When we look at these data by gender (see table 25 in appendix 1), we see that female graduates were more likely to report no job-related benefits than male graduates. However, there is no clear picture by gender for subjects-only completers.

So far we have analysed employment outcomes of certificate I and II courses. However, students also undertake courses at this level as pathways to further study, despite only a small proportion of students stating this motivation for study (see table 3). The next section provides an analysis of data relating to students' further study.

Pathways to further study

There is information on further study from the perspective of two time periods. Firstly, there are data from NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes on further study for graduates six months after the initial training. In addition, there is information on students who had not completed a course but who were enrolled in a higher-level course at the end of 2003—these data are used to provide some estimate of subjects-only completers going on to higher-level study, as the Student Outcomes Survey did not sample subjects-only completers who had enrolled in further study.

Secondly, there is information from NCVER's Down the Track Survey on qualifications completed by graduates and subjects-only completers within 30 months after the initial training. Note that the information from this survey refers to a 2001 cohort of students rather than a 2002 cohort used for the other analyses. However, it is the only information available on longer-term study outcomes and provides useful information.

Table 10: Estimated proportions going on to further study at a higher level (%)

	15 to 19-year-olds		20 to 24-year-olds	
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II
Graduates				
Projected percentage of graduates as a proportion of all students	34.6	44.2	23.5	33.5
Percentage of graduates who went on to further study at a higher level	33.5	42.9	35.2	43.2
*Graduates going on to study at a higher level as a proportion of all students***	*11.6*	*19.0*	*8.3*	*14.5*
Subjects-only completers				
Projected percentage of subjects-only completers as a proportion of all students	65.4	55.8	76.5	66.5
Had not completed a course by end 2003 but enrolled at a higher level	18.4	9.1	9.8	7.0
*Subjects-only completers going on to study at a higher level as a proportion of all students***	*12.0*	*5.1*	*7.5*	*4.7*
Estimated percentage of all students enrolling in further study at a higher level	**23.6**	**24.1**	**15.8**	**19.2**

Notes: * This proportion is taken from table 6, which estimates the proportion of students who complete a qualification in the longer term.
** This row is the product of the previous two rows.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003; National VET Provider Collection 2002–03

We see that about a quarter of 15 to 19-year-old students are estimated to have gone on to further study, while somewhat less than 20% of 20 to 24-year-olds did so. Given that the 15 to 19-year-old group is the primary group in transition from school to work, this result is perhaps not surprising. Overall, it is a minority (no more than a quarter) who enrol in higher-level courses six months after the initial training.

We can also compare males and females, although for graduates we were only able to look at those going on to further study (as opposed to further study at a higher level, see table 26 in appendix 1).[8] These data show that female graduates were more likely than male graduates to go on to further study, although males were slightly more likely to be enrolled at a higher-level course at the end of 2003.

We can also look at longer-term data on graduates and subjects-only completers completing a further qualification. Although these data refer to a 2001 cohort of students, we will still use the same estimated proportions of graduates and subjects-only completers as previously. This allows us to get a ballpark impression of what proportion of all students completed a further qualification at a higher level.

Table 11: Proportions of 15 to 24-year-olds completing a further qualification within 30 months after initial training (%)*

	Certificate I	Certifcate II
Graduates		
Estimated percentage of graduates as a proportion of all students	32.9	42.5
Proportion of 2001 graduates completing a further qualification	28.2	39.8
Graduates going on to further study as a proportion of all students	*9.3*	*16.9*
Subjects-only completers		
Estimated percentage of subjects-only completers as a proportion of all students	67.1	57.5
Proportion of 2001 subjects-only completers completing a further qualification	7.8**	18.3
Subjects-only completers going on to further study as a proportion of all students	*5.2*	*10.5*
Estimated percentage of all students completing a further qualification	**14.5**	**27.4**

Notes: * Only data for the 15 to 24-year age group are presented as the sample size of the Down the Track Survey did not make further age breakdowns practicable. For similar reasons, there are no gender breakdowns. In addition, the data were too sparse to estimate proportions of subjects-only completers obtaining qualifications at a higher level.
** This figure needs to be treated with caution as it has relative standard errors of greater than 25%.

Source: NCVER's Down the Track Survey 2004

The table indicates that a substantial proportion of students who had initially undertaken a certificate II qualification completed a further qualification, and almost twice as many as their certificate I counterparts. The table also indicates that students who graduated in 2001 were much more likely to complete a further qualification than those who were subjects-only completers.

For graduates, there are also data on the proportion completing further qualifications at a higher level (not shown in the table). For those initially completing a certificate I qualification, 14.4% completed a qualification at a higher level, while for those initially completing a certificate II qualification, 29.0 % completed a qualification at a higher level.

Overall, the data on further study indicate that certificate II qualifications are more likely to be used as a pathway to further study than certificate I qualifications. In addition, graduates were more likely go on to further qualifications than subjects-only completers. Part of the reason for this may be nesting of awards, that is, for some courses qualifications build on each other. For example, you may need to complete a certificate II before proceeding on to a certificate III.

[8] This is because there were high standard errors associated with higher-level study by gender, hence making it problematic in interpreting the data.

Young people undertaking preparatory-type courses

Significant proportions of certificate I and II students enrol in preparatory-type courses. In this section we examine the outcomes of students enrolled in these courses using the mixed field category of education as a proxy for preparatory courses.[9] Little activity in preparatory courses occurs above certificate II level as they are aimed at providing basic skills.

NCVER's National Data Collection indicates that, in 2002, mixed field enrolments accounted for 46.5% of enrolments at certificate I level for young people (or 45% for 15 to 19-year-olds and 51% for 20 to 24-year-olds). By contrast, for young people, mixed field enrolments formed only 9.8% of enrolments at certificate II level (10% for 15 to 19-year-olds and 9% for 20 to 24-year-olds). In absolute terms however, there were 26 847 enrolments at certificate I level in mixed field courses for 15 to 24-year-olds in 2002, and 17 142 enrolments at certificate II level.

To provide further context on these courses, we show data on the motivations of students for undertaking these courses.

Table 12: Motivations for mixed field students undertaking lower-level qualifications (%)

	Graduates				Subjects-only completers			
	Employment-related	Further study	Personal interest	**Total**	Employment-related	Further study	Personal interest	**Total**
Certificate I								
15 to 19 yrs	49	16	35	**100**	55	**	41	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	68	9*	23	**100**	58	**	35*	**100**
Certificate II								
15 to 19 yrs	34	32	34	**100**	38	26	36	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	51	20	29	**100**	62	**	29*	**100**

Notes: * Figure should be treated with caution as the relative standard error is greater than 25%.
** Data not reported, as fewer than five responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

Table 12 indicates that, while the majority of 20 to 24-year-old graduates and subjects-only completers indicated employment-related reasons as the main motivation for study, this was less the case for 15 to 19-year-olds where further study or personal interest were significant motivations. In particular, a minority of 15 to 19-year-old certificate II graduates and subjects-only completers indicated employment-related reasons as a motivation for study.

The main contrast between the motivations of mixed field students and all students (see table 3) is that much higher proportions of mixed field students at certificate II level indicated further study as the motivation for study.

[9] 'Mixed field' courses are defined as those that develop basic skills such as literacy and numeracy and develop an understanding of key competencies needed for job searching, employment and personal survival (see ABS 2001, p.193).

Rates of completion

We can also get an indication of the outputs of people who enrolled in mixed field studies in terms of whether they had completed an award or had gone on to higher-level courses.

Table 13: Mixed field students commencing in 2002 by their enrolment status end 2003 (%)

	Certificate I			Certificate II		
	15 to 19 yrs	20 to 24 yrs	**Total**	15 to 19 yrs	20 to 24 yrs	**Total**
Completed an award	21.0	10.1	**19.0**	22.1	17.6	**21.4**
Were doing a higher-level qualification in 2003, no award	11.8	8.1	**11.0**	7.5	5.8	**7.2**
Still enrolled in certificate I or II in 2003, no award	7.3	13.3	**8.4**	11.6	10.0	**11.4**
Enrolled in course below certificate I or II 2003, no award	2.8	2.8	**2.8**	5.1	5.4	**5.2**
Not enrolled in 2003 and no award received	57.1	65.7	**58.8**	53.7	61.2	**54.8**
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: NCVER's National VET Provider Collection 2002–03

We can see from this table that small proportions of mixed field students completed an award over the time period, and the majority exited the system with no award. This picture was more pronounced at the certificate I level and for the group aged 20 to 24. Compared with certificate I and II students overall, we see that mixed field students were considerably less likely to complete an award and more likely to exit the system without an award.

In terms of effort (anticipated hours), students who completed a course at certificate I level accounted for 30.6% of course hours, which was less than the 33.7% of anticipated hours for those who exited the course with no award. Continuing students comprised the highest proportion of anticipated hours (35.7%). At certificate II level, course completers accounted for 34.4% of course hours, while those who exited without an award accounted for 35.5% of course hours. By comparison, continuing students who had not completed an award contributed 30.1%.

We have seen that relatively few mixed field students completed courses over the 2002–03 period. There are also data that show the rate at which these students completed subjects, as indicated in table 14.

Table 14: Rates of completing subjects for mixed field students (%)

	15 to 19		20 to 24		15 to 24	
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II
Completed an award during 2002–03	83.6	74.7	86.5	84.4	83.8	75.6
No award and not enrolled in 2003	56.3	44.5	60.5	46.5	56.9	44.7

Source: NCVER National VET Provider Collection 2002–03

One thing that stands out in this table is the low rate of completing subjects for certificate II students exiting the system without an award. These students completed fewer than half the subjects undertaken. Even for certificate II students completing courses, subjects were only completed at a rate of three out of every four. Subject completion rates were better for certificate I students. However, at both certificate I and II levels, they were not as good as for certificate I and II students overall.

Longer-term rates of completing courses

Table 15 provides information on longer-term rates of completing courses for mixed field students using the same procedure as for all certificate I and II students.

Table 15: Projected rates of completing courses in the longer term for mixed field students (%)

	15 to 19		20 to 24		15 to 24	
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II
Completed a course	27.0	29.1	13.5	22.3	24.5	28.0
Did not complete a course	73.0	70.9	86.5	77.7	75.5	72.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Derived from NCVER National VET Provider Collection 2002–03

Over the longer term, less than 30% of certificate I and II mixed field students are projected to complete a course. They are considerably less likely to complete courses than certificate I and II students overall (8.4% points less likely at certificate I level and 14.6% points less likely at certificate II level). The proportions completing and not completing mixed field courses need to be kept in mind in the discussion of employment and further study outcomes to follow.

Outcomes from mixed field courses

The analyses of outcomes of mixed field courses examine employment outcomes. In table 16 mixed field outcomes at certificate III level are not reported, as there were few mixed field enrolments at this level. Furthermore, we do not provide gender breakdowns for outcomes from mixed field courses due to the relatively high standard errors associated with doing so.

Table 16: Employment outcomes for mixed field students (%)

	15 to 19-year-olds		20 to 24-year-olds	
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II
Difference between employed before training and after training				
Graduates				
Employed full-time	4	7	8*	-5
Employed part-time	3	-4	13	10
Subjects-only completers				
Employed full-time	-4*	-1*	14*	10*
Employed part-time	-2*	10	-2*	-6*
Not employed before course but employed after				
Graduates				
Employed full-time	6*	9*	**	**
Employed part-time	21	12	23	19*
Subjects-only completers				
Employed full-time	0*	**	**	**
Employed part-time	18*	21*	**	**
Proportion stating 'got a job' as a benefit of the course				
Graduates	46	29	36	28*
Subjects-only completers	57	24*	**	0*

Notes: * These figures need to be treated with caution as they have relative standard errors of greater than 25%.
** Data not reported, as fewer than five responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

The data in this table indicate that gaining full-time employment was not a major outcome of these courses, either for graduates or subjects-only completers. The table suggests that part-time employment was a more likely outcome of these courses. The high proportion of 15 to 19-year-old certificate I graduates and subjects-only completers reporting that they got a job as a benefit of the course appears anomalous, but it may be that they are reporting that they gained part-time, rather than full-time employment.

When we compare mixed field employment outcomes to the outcomes from certificates I and II overall for young people, we see that they are much poorer. This result is not entirely unexpected, given that preparatory courses are aimed at gaining employment-related skills rather than employment per se. We can see if these findings are reflected in the proportions of students who, six months after the training, report no job-related benefit from the course.

Table 17: Estimated proportions of mixed field students reporting no job-related benefit from the course (%)

	15 to 19 years		20 to 24 years	
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II
Graduates				
Projected proportion of graduates[1]	27.0	29.1	13.5	22.3
Proportions reporting no job-related benefit	35.0	38.0	42.0	31.0*
Graduates reporting no job-related benefit as a proportion of all students[2]	*9.5*	*11.1*	*5.7*	*6.9*
Subjects-only completers				
Projected proportions of subjects-only completers[1]	73.0	70.9	86.5	77.7
Proportions reporting no job-related benefit	**	45.0*	73.0	49.0*
Subjects-only completers reporting no job-related benefit as a proportion of all students	*N/A*	*31.9*	*63.1*	*38.1*
Estimated proportion of all reporting no job-related benefits[2]	**N/A**	**43.0**	**68.8**	**45.0**

Notes: 1 This proportion is taken from table 15, which estimates the proportion of students who complete a qualification in the longer term.
2 This row is the product of the previous two rows.
* These figures need to be treated with caution as they have relative standard errors of greater than 25%.
** Data not reported, as fewer than five responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

From the data in the table, it can be seen that high proportions of mixed field students reported no job-related benefit from the course. Subjects-only completers were more likely to report no job-related benefit. It is not clear however, that students who undertook preparatory courses were more likely to state that they received no job-related benefits from the course than were all young certificate I and II students.

In addition to vocational outcomes, it would be expected that these courses would be used as pathways to further study. Proportions of mixed field students going on to higher-level study in the short term are shown in table 17. We are not able to show longer further study outcomes from the Down the Track Survey due to limitations with the sample size of this survey.

Table 18: Proportions of mixed field students going on to further study at higher levels (%)

	Certificate I	Certificate II
Graduates		
Projected percentage of graduates as a proportion of all students*	24.4	28.1
Percentage went on to further study at a higher level	26.4	24.6
*Graduates going on to study at a higher level as a proportion of all students***	*6.4*	*6.9*
Subjects-only completers		
Projected percentage of subjects-only completers as a proportion of all students*	75.6	71.9
Had not completed a course by end 2003 but enrolled at a higher level	13.8	9.1
*Subjects-only completers going on to study at a higher level as a proportion of all students**	*10.4*	*6.5*
Estimated percentage of all students enrolling in further study at a higher level	**16.8**	**13.4**

Notes: * This proportion is taken from table 15, which estimates the proportion of students who complete a qualification in the longer term.
** This row is the product of the previous two rows.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

It can be seen from the estimates in the table that something less than 20% of all certificate I and II mixed field students had enrolled in higher-level courses. Mixed field students were also less likely to enrol in further study than all certificate I and II students (see table 9), at least in the shorter term. This result is contrary to students' stated motivations for undertaking the course where they were somewhat more likely to state further study as a motivation than were all certificate I and II students.

Overall, outcomes from mixed field courses appear to be quite poor for young students. They also have rates of completing courses and subjects lower than for all certificate I and II students. However, given the preparatory nature of these courses, students may receive benefits other than those that are directly vocational. Dawe (2004), in a study on students who re-enrol in enabling courses, found that important shorter-term outcomes of these courses are increased self-esteem, confidence and motivation, which may enable them to go on to employment or further study.

Summary and conclusions

In this paper we have analysed employment and further study outcomes for young people who have undertaken certificate I and II qualifications. In doing so we have also analysed data on students' motivations for undertaking the course, as well as the extent to which students reported receiving no job-related benefit from the course. The main points from these analyses are summarised in table 19.

One of the key findings emerging from this paper, however, is that few people complete courses at this level. Using Markov chain analyses to project the proportion of students completing courses in the longer term, we found that about a third of certificate I students and a little over 40% of certificate II students complete a course (although there are higher proportions in terms of anticipated course hours), with females slightly more likely to complete courses than males. This means that over half of the participants overall are subjects-only completers, a point to bear in mind when examining the major findings in table 19. Subjects-only completers also have lower rates of completing subjects, which may mean that they may have characteristics different from graduates. For example, they may be more likely to be early school leavers. As mentioned earlier, the scope of this paper does not include an analysis of the effect of characteristics of students in completing courses.

Overall, we see that there are reasonable employment outcomes for graduates, mainly for the 15 to 19-year-old group. There are also further study outcomes for some graduates, mainly at certificate II level. However, employment and further study outcomes for subjects-only completers are generally not good, remembering that this group forms over half of the system at certificate I and II levels. This is reflected in the high proportions of subjects-only completers reporting personal interest as a motivation for study, as well as the high proportions indicating they received no job-related benefit from the course.

Comparing outcomes by certificate level, we see that certificate I students were more likely to report personal interest as a motivation for undertaking the course than their certificate II counterparts. They were also less likely, by about ten percentage points, to complete courses. This is a substantial difference. Employment outcomes were marginally better for graduates and 15 to 19-year-old subjects-only completers at certificate II level. Nevertheless, higher proportions of certificate II students reported no job-related benefit from the course. This may in part be related to the high proportions of certificate I 15 to 19-year-olds reporting 'got a job' as a benefit of the course. As was suggested earlier, certificate I graduates and subjects-only completers may have reported gaining part-time employment as a benefit of a course to a greater extent than their certificate II counterparts. A stronger finding is that certificate II graduates and subjects-only completers were more likely to enrol in and complete qualifications at a higher level than their certificate I counterparts.

As discussed in the previous section, a large proportion of certificate I enrolments are for preparatory courses (while only about 10% of certificate II courses are). We saw that students enrolled in preparatory courses did not have good employment or further study outcomes, and had low rates of completing courses. However, given the intention of these courses, we cannot discount other possible benefits of these courses, for example, self-esteem, confidence and acquisition of employment-related skills.

On balance then, vocational and further study outcomes from certificate I and II courses could be described as fair. We have seen the low rates of completing these courses over the two-year period

examined. We have also seen that there are some reasonable employment outcomes for graduates, when compared with their certificate III counterparts. However, employment outcomes for subjects-only completers were not so good, with these forming the majority of young people who had undertaken certificate I and II courses. In addition, quite high proportions reported no job-related benefits from the course. We have also seen that a minority of students go on to further study at higher levels, and finally that there are poor employment and further study outcomes for mixed field students.

Table 19: Main points relating to outcomes of lower-level courses for young people

	Graduates	Subjects-only completers
Motivation to do course	Very low proportions (10%) reported further study as a motivation, while quite high proportions reported personal interest as the motivation, particularly for 15 to 19-year-olds. 20 to 24-year-olds were more likely to report employment-related reasons as a motivation. Students at certificate I level were more likely to report personal interest as a motivation. In terms of gender, females were also more likely to report personal interest and further study as a motivation.	Very low proportions reported further study as a motivation; however, high proportions stated personal interest, higher than for graduates. 20 to 24-year-olds were more likely than 15 to 19-year-olds to report employment-related and less likely to report personal interest as a motivation. Students at certificate I level were more likely to report personal interest as a motivation. Females were also more likely to report personal interest as a motivation.
Employment-related outcomes	There were reasonable outcomes in terms of gaining employment for 15 to 19-year-olds, although they were not so good for 20 to 24-year-olds. Males had better full-time employment outcomes than females. Career advancement was not a significant outcome, with 20 to 24-year-olds at certificate II level most likely to realise these. Graduates at the benchmark certificate III level obtained better employment-related outcomes than those at certificate I or II level.	Employment outcomes were not good overall, with the possible exception of 20 to 24-year-olds at certificate I level. Males had better full-time employment outcomes than females. There were no substantial career advancement benefits. Subjects-only completers at the benchmark certificate III level obtained better employment-related outcomes than those at certificate I or II level.
No job-related benefits	About a third of graduates reported no job-related benefit from the course. Females were more likely to report no job-related benefit. Graduates at the benchmark certificate III level were less likely to report no job-related benefits from the course.	Over 40% of certificate I subjects-only completers and over a half of certificate II subjects-only completers reported no job-related benefit from the course. Subjects-only completers at the benchmark certificate III level were less likely to report no job-related benefits from the course.
Further study	Quite a few graduates enrolled in further study at a higher level, more so than indicated by students' motivations to do the course. In the longer term, about 30% of certificate II graduates and 15% of certificate I graduates completed a course at a higher level. The graduates however, only form a small proportion of the overall cohort (about 33% at certificate I level and 43% at certificate II level). Females were more likely to go on to further study.	Overall quite low proportions went on to further study at a higher level. Rather low proportions also went on to complete a further qualification, particularly at certificate I level.

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Appendix 1: Gender breakdowns

Motivation for study

Table 20: Motivations for students undertaking lower-level qualifications (%)

	Graduates				Subjects-only completers			
	Employment-related	Further study	Personal interest	**Total**	Employment-related	Further study	Personal interest	**Total**
Males								
Certificate I								
15 to 19 yrs	66	5	29	**100**	46	2*	51	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	76	9	15	**100**	63	4*	33	**100**
Certificate II								
15 to 19 yrs	63	8	29	**100**	57	5*	38	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	78	6	16	**100**	69	3*	28	**100**
Certificate III								
15 to 19 yrs	77	5	18	**100**	74	5*	21	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	89	3	9	**100**	81	4*	15	**100**
Females								
Certificate I								
15 to 19 yrs	38	10	52	**100**	50	3*	47	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	47	11	42	**100**	54	1*	45	**100**
Certificate II								
15 to 19 yrs	54	8	39	**100**	47	10	43	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	75	6	19	**100**	63	5*	32	**100**
Certificate III								
15 to 19 yrs	66	10	24	**100**	62	6*	32	**100**
20 to 24 yrs	76	8	16	**100**	71	5*	24	**100**

Note: * These figures need to be treated with caution as they have relative standard errors of greater than 25%.
Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

Longer-term rates of completing courses

Table 21: Projected longer-term rates of completing courses (%)

	15 to 19		20 to 24		15 to 24	
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. I	Cert. II
Males						
Completed a course	34.0	41.7	20.7	30.5	32.3	39.8
Did not complete a course	66.0	58.3	79.3	69.5	67.7	60.2
Females						
Completed a course	35.7	46.3	27.1	36.7	34.0	45.0
Did not complete a course	64.3	53.7	72.9	63.3	66.0	55.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Derived from NCVER's National VET Provider Collection 2002–03

Employment outcomes

Table 22: Male students gaining employment after the course (%)

	15 to 19-year-olds			20 to 24-year-olds		
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III
Difference between employed before training and after training						
Graduates						
Employed full-time	32	27	39	11	10	38
Employed part-time	-11	-8	-16	3	-10	-19
Subjects-only completers						
Employed full-time	7*	11	18	21	7	22
Employed part-time	3	-4	3	-6*	-5	-12
Not employed before course but employed after						
Graduates						
Employed full-time	29	33	47	17	28	71
Employed part-time	14	14	13	14*	15	7
Subjects-only completers						
Employed full-time	12*	23	32	38*	19*	41
Employed part-time	13*	18	26	**	23*	16*
Reported 'got a job' as a benefit of the course						
Graduates	56	39	40	36	31	44
Subjects-only completers	28*	17	40	18*	31	34

Notes: *These figures need to be treated with caution as they have relative standard errors of greater than 25%.
**Data not reported, as fewer than five responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

Table 23: Female students gaining employment after the course (%)

	15 to 19-year-olds			20 to 24-year-olds		
	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III	Cert. I	Cert. II	Cert. III
Difference between employed before training and after training						
Graduates						
Employed full-time	10	23	25	10	12	13
Employed part-time	-5	-10	-14	-5	-7	-9
Subjects-only completers						
Employed full-time	0*	8*	20	3*	-2	9
Employed part-time	-13	3	-19	-7*	-3	-11
Not employed before course but employed after						
Graduates						
Employed full-time	6*	15	22	15*	22	22
Employed part-time	23	28	28	20	18	24
Subjects-only completers						
Employed full-time	**	11*	19	**	**	18*
Employed part-time	19*	23	20	**	8*	17*
Reported 'got a job' as a benefit of the course						
Graduates	21	35	44	21*	34	36
Subjects-only completers	51	20	20	**	12*	24

Notes: * These figures need to be treated with caution as they have relative standard errors of greater than 25%.
** Data not reported, as fewer than five responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

Career advancement-type benefits

Table 24: Career advancement benefits for males from the training course (%)

	15 to 19-year-olds						20 to 24-year-olds					
	Cert. I		Cert. II		Cert. III		Cert. I		Cert. II		Cert. III	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Graduates												
Increased earnings	14	14	19	16	38	27	11	8*	29	24	50	34
Promotion	7	9*	15	15	17	12	9*	**	25	19	20	21
Subjects-only completers												
Increased earnings	9*	**	11*	4*	23	3*	26*	**	**	**	23	11
Promotion	**	**	6*	**	7*	8*	**	**	13	**	13	11

Notes: M = Males and F = Females
* These figures need to be treated with caution as they have relative standard errors of greater than 25%.
** Data not reported, as fewer than five responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

No job-related benefits from the course

Table 25: Proportions reporting that they received no job-related benefit from the course (%)

	15 to 19 years						20 to 24 years					
	Cert. I		Cert. II		Cert. III		Cert. I		Cert. II		Cert. III	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Graduates												
Projected proportion of graduates*	34.0	35.7	41.7	46.3	N/A	N/A	20.7	27.1	30.5	36.7	N/A	N/A
Proportions reporting no job-related benefit	30.0	49.0	37.0	39.0	25.0	33.0	39.0	53.0	34.0	33.0	15.0	26.0
*Graduates reporting no job-related benefit as a proportion of all students***	*10.2*	*17.5*	*15.4*	*18.1*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*8.1*	*14.4*	*10.4*	*12.1*	*N/A*	*N/A*
Subjects-only completers												
Projected proportions of subjects-only completers*	66.0	64.3	58.3	53.7	N/A	N/A	79.3	72.9	69.5	63.3	N/A	N/A
Proportions reporting no job-related benefit	44.0	38.0	63.0	53.0	44.0	61.0	49.0	***	42.0	71.0	35.0	52.0
Subjects-only completers reporting no job-related benefit as a proportion of all students	*29.0*	*24.4*	*36.7*	*28.5*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*38.9*	*N/A*	*29.2*	*44.9*	*N/A*	*N/A*
Estimated proportion of all reporting no job-related benefits**	**39.2**	**41.9**	**52.1**	**46.6**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**47.0**	**N/A**	**39.6**	**57.0**	**N/A**	**N/A**

Notes: * This proportion is taken from table 6, which estimates the proportion of students who complete a qualification in the longer term.
** This row is the product of the previous two rows.
*** Data not reported as less than 5 responses in this cell.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003

Further study outcomes

Table 26: Estimated proportions going on to further study six months after initial training by gender (%)

	15 to 19-year-olds				20 to 24-year-olds			
	Cert. I		Cert. II		Cert. I		Cert. II	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Graduates								
Projected percentage of graduates as a proportion of all students*	34.0	35.7	41.7	46.3	20.7	27.1	30.5	36.7
Percentage of graduates who went on to further study	47.0	59.0	57.0	59.0	49.0	53.0	52.0	56.0
*Graduates going on to further study as a proportion of all students***	*16.0*	*21.1*	*23.8*	*27.3*	*10.1*	*14.4*	*15.9*	*20.6*
Subjects-only completers								
Projected percentage of subjects-only completers as a proportion of all students*	66.0	64.3	58.3	53.7	79.3	72.9	69.5	63.3
Had not completed a course by end 2003 but still enrolled at a higher level	19.2	16.8	10.1	8.2	10.5	9.2	6.7	7.4
*Subjects-only completers going on to study at a higher level as a proportion of all students***	*12.7*	*10.8*	*5.9*	*4.4*	*8.3*	*6.7*	*4.7*	*4.7*

Notes: * This proportion is taken from table 4, which estimates the proportion of students who complete a qualification in the longer term.
** This row is the product of the previous two rows.

Source: NCVER's Survey of Student Outcomes 2003 and National VET Provider Collection 2002–03

Appendix 2: Projected longer-term rates of completing courses

To project longer-term rates of completing courses, we used a fairly simple Markov chain approach. This approach makes the assumption that completers and non-completers have the same characteristics. It also does not account for students dropping out of the system and reappearing at a later date. In addition, some will complete a course at a higher level than that in which they were originally enrolled in 2002. For the purposes of this exercise, we are assuming that the current patterns will remain the same in the future. However, the intention of this analysis is to give some idea of rates of completing courses, rather than exact measurements.

Using data on the status of students at the end of 2003 contained in tables 4 (for all certificate I and II students) and 13 (for mixed field students), three possible states were derived. These were completed a course, continuing, and not completed and no longer enrolled. We used this as the starting point. We can then derive a 3_3 matrix showing all possible states at time t and time t+1. As an example, the initial matrix derived from certificate I 15 to 19-year-olds in table 4 is shown below. Each row of the matrix must add to 1 as each row covers all possible states.

	Completed	Continuing	Not completed	**(t+1)**
Completed	1	0	0	
Continuing	0.269	0.222	0.509	
Not completed	0	0	1	
(t)				

The matrix is interpreted as follows. For students who had completed, they receive a value of 1 for completed at time t+1 and 0 for continuing and not completed—students who had completed by the end of 2003 will still have the state of completed in future time periods. For students who have not completed, they receive a value of 1 for not completed at time period t+1. Here we are using the assumption that students who had exited the course without completing at time t do not reappear at future time periods. The continuing row is the one we particularly want to focus on for this estimation procedure. What this row is saying is that, of students who are continuing at time t (0.222 of the students), 0.269 will have completed at time t+1, 0.509 exited, and a further 0.222 still continuing. These proportions are distributed to those already completed and those who have left the system without completing. Hence at time t+1 we have 0.329 completed, 0.049 still continuing and 0.622 exiting the system without completing. We can then undertake the same procedure to project those who have completed, are continuing or have exited the system at time t+2.

In the longer term, all continuing students either complete or exit without completing, that is, the proportion of continuing students approaches 0. For the purposes of our exercise, we stopped at time t+6 as the proportion of continuing students at time t+6 was very close to 0. More generally, if we label the matrix above as **P**, we can derive longer-term states by calculating $\mathbf{P}^n$. In our exercise, we derived $\mathbf{P}^6$. This gave a longer-term proportion of 0.346 completed and 0.654 exiting without completing for certificate I 15 to 19-year-olds.

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