

Student intentions 2011: technical notes – support document

NCVER

This document was produced as an added resource for the report *Student intentions 2011* and is for further information. The report is available on NCVER's website:
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>.

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Introduction

Student Intentions 2011 presents information on the intentions of students enrolled to start a vocational education and training (VET) course in February 2011. Along with July, February is a peak commencement period for VET, and was selected to provide a sufficient sample for survey purposes. This is the first time the survey has been conducted.

The survey was conducted by telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) between May and July 2011. A total of 10 873 interviews were completed, averaging 15 minutes in length. The Social Research Centre (SRC) conducted the interviews on behalf of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

Scope

The Student Intentions Survey covered students who enrolled to start a VET course at certificate I level or higher in February 2011.

The survey includes students enrolled:

- to start a VET course in February 2011
- in publicly or privately funded training delivered by a TAFE institution
- in publicly funded training delivered by private providers in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory (coverage was limited to jurisdictions from which publicly funded enrolment data could be provided by State Training Authorities directly to NCVER).

The survey excludes students enrolled in:

- the same course of training from a previous year (continuing students)
- module only enrolments
- recreation, leisure and personal enrichment courses (non-vocational programs)
- privately funded training delivered by private providers
- training delivered at overseas campuses of Australian VET institutions
- training delivered by adult and community education (ACE) providers
- training delivered in schools
- publicly funded training delivered by private providers in South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory

Also excluded from the survey were students aged under 15 years at February 2011.

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed to answer the following research questions:

- Do students intend to complete their course of training?
- Do student intentions change over the course of their training?
- What influences students' intention to complete the training?

Reference period

Students were asked to provide information on the training they were to commence in February 2011. Questions about students' current employment and further study/training situations were also asked.

Survey methodology

Sample frame

The NCVER compiled the survey sample frame using module enrolment information provided by State Training Authorities (STAs) and (where this was not possible) individual TAFE providers under the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS), Release 6.0.

The STAs and TAFEs provided NCVER with the details of all students enrolled to start a VET course in February 2011 at certificate I level or higher. They provided this information at the module/subject level. Thus, if a student was enrolled in 10 modules as part of a certificate IV, the student would be represented 10 times in the data file with a record for each module. Each student record contained a:

- RTO identifier
- student identifier
- qualification/course identifier
- module/subject identifier
- flag to indicate whether the student had started the module/subject in 2011 or was continuing from a previous year.

We then removed records that were out-of-scope of the survey, i.e. the records of students who started their course before February 2011. Where one or more modules associated with a qualification had a start date prior to 1 February 2011, we considered all records associated with that qualification out-of-scope and removed them from the sample frame.

So that each student stood only one chance of selection within an RTO, we reduced the number of records by applying the following criteria:

- where a student had multiple records for the same qualification, we retained one record to represent that qualification. In the case of the student represented 10 times for modules associated with a certificate IV, we would retain one record to represent the certificate IV.
- where a student was enrolled in one or more qualifications at the same RTO, we retained only one record, selected at random, to represent the student.

Without a unique student identifier, it was not possible to determine whether a student had enrolled with more than one provider.

Sampling

The sample was designed to produce estimates at the Australia level with a 5% margin of error. States and territories were invited to provide additional funds for state/territory or institute level information. All Victorian TAFEs and selected TAFEs in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory elected to do so.

After removing students under the age of 15, those in scope of the survey were randomly selected, stratified by institute groupings (table 1). Grouping were based on whether TAFEs provided additional funds for institute level information and the availability of data from STAs of students training with private providers. A total of 23 086 students were selected to participate in the survey with the aim of achieving 10 660 interviews. The national target, without state/territory and institute support, was 4 800 interviews.

Table 1 Survey sample selections and target number of interviews

Provider category	Population	Sample selections	Target number of interviews
TAFEs requiring institute level information (26 strata)	118 858	18 845	8 629
Other TAFEs (1 stratum)	73 943	2 371	11 80
Private Providers (1 stratum)	17 272	1870	851
Total	210 073	23 086	10 660

Contact details of all selected students were supplied to the fieldwork contractor by the STAs or TAFEs. They provided the name, address, telephone numbers and email address of the student, the college or institution ID, field of education, and course qualification ID.

Field work

Fieldwork was conducted in three phases. A personalised primary approach letter (PAL) was sent approximately three days before initial telephone contact was made. A copy of the letter can be found at <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publication/2425.html>>. The aim of the letter was to reassure potential respondents of the legitimacy of the survey and maximise the response rate. An 1800 (free call) number was also set up and details printed on the letter for respondents to call to obtain further information about the survey, make an appointment for interview, or opt out of the survey. Telephone interviewing was conducted between May and July 2011.

Weighting

All percentages published have been derived based on stated responses. As the survey was undertaken as a sample rather than a census, responses have been weighted to the total population of students enrolled to start a course in February 2011, the target population for the survey.

Data are weighted by age (5 categories: 15-19, 20-24, 25-34, 35-44 and 45 years +) within selected institute groupings (29 groups).

Reporting

Findings are reported for two groups of students based on respondents' answers to the survey: those who intend to complete the course at enrolment and those who intend to complete subject(s) only.

Survey response

Telephone interviews were attempted with 23 086 students. Of those in scope of the survey, interviews were completed with 10 873 students, giving an overall response rate of 49.5% (table 2).

Table 2 Survey response summary

Survey response	Number	%
Students selected	23 086	na
In scope selections	21 957	100.0
Responded	10 873	49.5
Did not respond	11 084	50.5
Ineligible numbers	2 025	9.2
Refused/terminated	2 114	9.6
Non-contactable ^a	5 459	24.9
Other out of scope ^b	887	4.0
Other ^c	599	2.7

Notes

a Includes those where engaged, answering machine or no answer after 6 or more attempts

b Includes those away during survey period, respondent not known at address, respondents unable to do the survey, etc

c Includes invalid completes and unused appointments

Privacy

All students were assured of complete confidentiality. No information has or will be released in a way that will enable identification of any individual. Students' names, addresses, and telephone numbers were only used by the fieldwork contractor during the fieldwork stage. Contact details have not and will not be given to any other persons, organisations or departments. Any student contact details held by the fieldwork contractor for the purpose of this survey were destroyed at the conclusion of the project.

Survey data

The 2011 Student Intentions Survey collected data on students’:

- Personal and training characteristics
- Reasons for choosing training type/training provider
- Intentions to complete course/qualification
- Reasons behind intentions
- Satisfaction and benefits from training
- Employment status
- Further study and future training intentions
- Understanding of aspects of VET
- Attitudes towards undertaking the training

In addition to the information from the survey, information was also obtained from the sampling frame, discussed in the survey methodology section. This included additional details of students’ personal characteristics and the training they undertook.

A summary of the main findings is published. For more information on the questions asked within the survey and the derivation of variables, see the questionnaire and data dictionary at <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2425.html>.

Additional information is available, subject to reliability and confidentiality constraints, for the following data items.

Personal characteristics

Personal characteristics were obtained from both the sampling frame and questionnaire; from the frame, these items include student age, sex, country of birth, disability status, Indigenous status, postcode and students speaking a language other than English at home. From the questionnaire, these items included proficiency in English, current living arrangement, parental education history and highest prior educational attainment.

Training characteristics

Some details of students’ training characteristics were obtained from the sampling frame; they include the course name and qualification.

Information on mode of training delivery was collected in the questionnaire.

Employment characteristics

Students were asked about their employment status both at the time of training, and their current status. For those employed, information on full- and part-time, and employee/self-employed status, is available. Information on training relevance to students' current job is also available.

Further study activity

Further study activity relates to any study done after the training started in February 2011. It includes whether the respondent enrolled in any other study, if the study is related to the previous training, the qualification level, and type of institution.

Satisfaction

Students who completed their training, were still in training, or discontinued their training were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their training.

Reliability of estimates

Two types of error are possible in an estimate based on a survey: sampling error and non-sampling error. Non-sampling error may occur for reasons such as non-response bias, incorrect responses, interviewer errors, attrition, and processing errors. Sampling error is a measure of the variability that occurs because a sample rather than the entire population responds to a survey.

Estimates from the Student Intentions Survey are subject to sampling variability. This is because they are based on information provided by a sample rather than a population. The estimates may differ from those produced if all students enrolled to start a course in February 2011 had been included and responded to the survey. The standard error is one measure of the likely difference. Standard errors enable us to calculate confidence intervals, or significance levels, for the estimates. By convention, a 95% confidence interval is applied in judging the reliability of survey estimates. That is, there are 19 chances in 20 that the estimate obtained from the sample will be within two standard errors of the true population value (i.e. the value if the whole population is surveyed).

Confidence intervals are provided in the data tables. Please refer to <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2425.html>.