



High-use training package qualifications: childcare



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INTRODUCTION

This report explores the context and causes of some of the similarities and differences between the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC30113) and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC50113). Both of these childcare qualifications have the notional occupational outcome of childcare worker. Yet, their enrolment trends, delivery, student profile and graduate outcomes display distinct differences.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enrolments in the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care have surpassed those of the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care in recent years, but both are popular qualifications, with almost 130 000 combined enrolments between them in 2016. The factors potentially causing this growth in enrolments and the preference for the higher-level qualifications are: the introduction of mandatory standards for childcare, the introduction and scaling-back of training entitlements and the availability of VET FEE-HELP student loans.
- Delivery of the certificate III is mostly classroom-based, while the diploma utilises more electronic- and employment-based approaches. The best load pass rates are achieved by those accessing employment-based training, while pass rates for electronic-based training tend to be lower.
- Students studying the certificate III tend to be younger and have lower levels of prior education than diploma students, reflecting the former's role as a mandatory minimum qualification for all childcare workers. However, there are also proportionately more students with a bachelor degree studying the certificate III, which suggests people may be changing careers.
- A higher proportion of Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care graduates were employed after training compared with Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care graduates (a higher proportion of which had enrolled in further study after training). Many graduates of the diploma were already working as a childcare worker and were seeking to improve their skills: many achieved an increase in earnings, status or a promotion after completing their qualification.

TRENDS IN ENROLMENT

In recent years, enrolments in the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care have exceeded enrolments in the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Combined, the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care and Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care were the most popular qualifications in 2016 with almost 130 000 enrolments between them. Enrolments in both qualifications have increased since 2014, the first year for which data on total VET activity are available. Enrolments in the diploma more than doubled between 2014 and 2016, while enrolments in the certificate III increased by more than half.

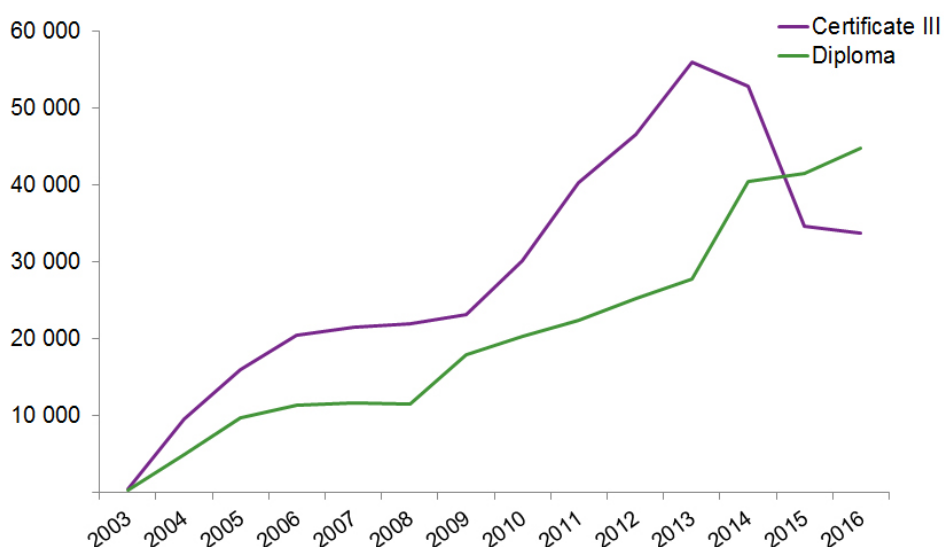
Table 1 Total VET program enrolments within each early childhood education and care qualification, 2014–16

	2014	2015	2016
Certificate III	34 186	51 952	54 267
Diploma	34 903	67 395	74 996

Note: Data on total VET activity are only available from 2014 onwards.
Source: NCVET (2017b, 2017c).

The longer-term trends in government-funded enrolments indicate that, between 2003 and 2014, enrolments in the certificate III (and the qualifications it superseded) were higher than in the diploma (and the qualifications it superseded).

Figure 1 Government-funded program enrolments within each early childhood education and care qualification, 2003–16



Note: Cert. III includes enrolments in CHC30113 and the qualifications it superseded: CHC30712, CHC30708 and CHC30402. Diploma includes enrolments in CHC50113 and the qualifications it superseded: CHC50908 and CHC50302. Earlier related qualifications are not included (such as CHC30399) because they were not superseded by CHC30113.
Source: NCVET (2017b, 2017c).

Introduction of the National Quality Framework (NQF)

The National Quality Framework for children's education and care (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority 2017) specified that, from 1 January 2014, educators working with children under school age must hold or be actively working towards an approved qualification (which includes the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care). Since the introduction of the framework in 2012, mandatory minimum ratios of educators to children, which vary according to age and jurisdiction, have been introduced. These measures are likely to have contributed to the increase in enrolments since 2012 as new and existing staff gained the necessary qualifications to meet these new standards.

National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform

The adoption of the National Partnership Agreement (Department of Education and Training 2017c) in 2012 may also have contributed to the growth in government-funded enrolments (primarily in the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care). The agreement formalised the introduction of entitlement schemes to guarantee access to government-subsidised training under certain conditions (which vary between jurisdictions). In some cases, these schemes only guarantee a certificate III level qualification. In many instances, these schemes have subsequently been restricted, which has probably contributed to the decline in government-funded enrolments since 2013. For further information, see Atkinson and Stanwick (2016).

Availability of VET FEE-HELP

The decline in government-funded enrolments in the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care occurred at the same time as the expansion of VET FEE-HELP student loans. Students were potentially choosing the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care over the certificate III because of the availability of an income-contingent loan for the diploma. There was a similar number of enrolments in both qualifications in 2014, but since then the growth in the diploma has been much greater (59% and 115%, respectively).

In 2014 there were 9220 VET FEE-HELP assisted enrolments in the diploma (26% of all enrolments), with 23 895 in 2015 (35%) and 15 844 in 2016 (21%) (Department of Education and Training 2015, 2016, 2017b). The increase in the number of VET FEE-HELP assisted enrolments between 2014 and 2015 represented 45% of the overall increase in enrolments in the diploma.

Most training delivered by private training providers

In 2016, both the Diploma and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care were predominantly delivered by private training providers. When combined, TAFE (technical and further education) institutes and private providers were responsible for around 90% of enrolments in each course.

Table 2 Enrolments within each early childhood education and care qualification by provider type, 2016 (%)

	TAFE	University	School	Community education provider	Enterprise provider	Private training provider
Certificate III	31	2	2	8	1	56
Diploma	27	1	0	7	1	63

Source: NCVER (2017b, 2017c).

The proportion of enrolments in the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care at private training providers and TAFE institutes has remained relatively stable since 2014. In contrast, private training providers have increased their share of enrolments in the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. TAFE institutes were the majority provider for the diploma in 2014, but their share has fallen almost by half (in line with declines in government-funded enrolments). The numbers underlying these proportions indicate that enrolments at TAFE institutes have increased each year, but the increase was greater at private training providers.

Table 3 Enrolments within each early childhood education and care qualification by provider type, 2014–16 (%)

	Certificate III			Diploma		
	TAFE	Private training provider	All other types	TAFE	Private training provider	All other types
2014	35	53	12	50	42	8
2015	30	56	14	32	58	10
2016	31	56	13	27	63	10

Note: 'All other types' includes universities, schools, community education providers and enterprise providers.

Source: NCVER (2017b, 2017c).

DELIVERY OF THE QUALIFICATIONS

Different providers and different types of delivery

The Diploma and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care were mostly delivered in classroom-based settings (55% and 64% of hours, respectively), while the proportion of hours that were electronically-based was similar for both qualifications (10% and 11%, respectively). The proportion of employment-based delivery was higher for the diploma (18% compared with 13% for the certificate III), which might be attributable to a greater proportion of the diploma students already employed in a childcare centre and seeking to further their qualifications.

To further examine the differences in delivery between TAFE institutes and private training providers the following analysis examines the delivery of the unit of competency ‘Provide care for children’ (CHCECE003). This is a core unit in both the certificate III and diploma, meaning that it offers a good basis for the comparison.

For the certificate III, TAFE institutes and private training providers placed a similar emphasis on classroom-based delivery. A higher proportion of hours was delivered electronically at TAFE institutes, while employment-based delivery was higher at private training providers compared with other providers. TAFE institutes, which tend to be larger organisations, may possess the necessary resources and infrastructure for electronic delivery, whereas private training providers, generally smaller, may have the capacity to be more flexible in offering training in the workplace. For the diploma, private training providers had a greater emphasis on classroom-based delivery, whereas TAFE institutes placed a greater emphasis on electronic delivery.

The best pass rates were achieved in employment-based delivery, with electronic delivery rates lagging behind.

Table 4 Hours of delivery within qualification and provider type by delivery type of the unit CHCECE003, 2016 (%)

		Classroom	Electronic	Employment	Other
Certificate III	TAFE	61	19	11	10
	Private training provider	63	6	17	15
	All other types	71	8	9	12
Diploma	TAFE	30	37	20	12
	Private training provider	59	6	16	19
	All other types	69	12	10	9

Source: NCVER (2017b, 2017c).

Load pass rates were higher for classroom- and employment-based delivery and lower for electronic-based delivery.

The different delivery profiles may have been due to the location demographics of the student cohort rather than a deliberate choice by the providers. A higher proportion of hours was delivered electronically to students residing outside major cities; for example, 28% of hours for the certificate III at TAFE institutes (compared with 14% in major cities) and 11% of hours for the diploma at private training providers (compared with 5% in major cities). Employment-based delivery was higher for the diploma students outside major cities (23% of hours compared with 16% of hours in major cities for TAFE institutes and private training providers combined).

High pass rates for employment-based delivery

The previous section demonstrates that there are differences in the way the certificate III and diploma are delivered to students across provider types. This section considers the load pass rate (see ‘Load pass rates’ box for the definition). The load pass rate is explored across different delivery types to examine whether students have higher pass rates in particular types of training. Overall, the load pass rates were higher for classroom- and employment-based delivery and lower for electronic-based delivery and similar across both qualifications.

Load pass rates

The load pass rate is the ratio of hours studied by students who passed their subjects to the total hours committed to by all students who passed, failed or withdrew from the corresponding subjects (Bednarz 2012). It is a measure of the ratio of subject passes to the total number of subjects started, weighted for the number of hours associated with each subject. Lower load pass rates may indicate issues such as changes in students’ employment or personal circumstances, or the training not being what they expected.

Table 5 Load pass rates within each early childhood education and care qualification by delivery type, 2016

	Classroom	Electronic	Employment	Other
Certificate III	79	63	82	72
Diploma	82	62	83	62

Source: NCVET (2017b, 2017c).

Private training providers had a higher overall load pass rate than TAFE institutes in the certificate III (79% and 72%, respectively). This was also the case for the diploma, with load pass rates of 77% and 72%, respectively.

Considering delivery types, the highest load pass rates across both qualifications and TAFE institutes and private training providers were achieved by:

- employment-based delivery of the certificate III and diploma by private training providers (89% and 87%, respectively)
- other types of delivery for the diploma by TAFE institutes (85%)
- classroom-based delivery for the diploma and certificate III by private training providers (83%).

Table 6 Load pass rates within each early childhood education and care qualification and provider type by delivery type, 2016

		Classroom	Electronic	Employment	Other
Certificate III	TAFE	73	70	66	77
	Private training provider	83	45	89	66
	All other types	82	77	81	93
Diploma	TAFE	74	64	69	85
	Private training provider	83	54	87	52
	All other types	83	77	78	89

Note: 'All other types' includes universities, schools, community education providers and enterprise providers.

Source: NCVET (2017b, 2017c).

Electronic delivery of the certificate III by private training providers had the lowest load pass rate (45%). The data underlying that rate show that amongst those who did not pass, 89% of hours were committed to by students who withdrew from those subjects and 11% by those who failed. By contrast, for electronic delivery of the certificate III by TAFE institutes, only 63% of hours were committed to by students who withdrew and 37% by those who failed. This difference in withdrawal and failure rates is worthy of further research to determine the possible causes and remedies.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND GRADUATE OUTCOMES

Many Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care students were already working in childcare and seeking to gain extra skills, while Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care students were more likely to be new to the field.

Demographics

Enrolments in the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care were spread fairly evenly across the three age groups, which spanned 14 to 49 years, whereas in the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care they were more concentrated in the two age groups spanning 20 to 49 years. Students still attending school were responsible for 18% of the enrolments in the certificate III (1% in the diploma). After accounting for this, the certificate III students were still predominantly younger than the diploma students. These age profiles suggest that the certificate III was more commonly studied by school leavers seeking to enter the workforce.

Table 7 Enrolments within each early childhood education and care qualification by age (years), 2016 (%)

	14–19	20–29	30–49	50–64	65 and over
Certificate III	32	30	31	6	<1
Of those not attending school	19	36	37	7	<1
Diploma	9	41	42	7	<1

Source: NCVET (2017b, 2017c).

There was a higher proportion of enrolments in the certificate III by students not employed (49%) compared with the diploma (39%). Amongst those not attending school, 37% of enrolments in the certificate III and 29% in the diploma were by unemployed students (12% and 9% were not in the labour force, respectively).

Table 8 Labour force status by students not attending school and enrolled in early childhood education and care qualifications, 2016 (%)

	Certificate III	Diploma
Employed	51	61
Unemployed	37	29
Not in the labour force	12	9

Source: NCVET (2017b, 2017c).

Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care students tended to have a higher level of previous education than the certificate III students. Amongst the subset of those not attending school, 14% of enrolments in the diploma were by students with an education level below Year 12 equivalent, compared with 29% of enrolments in the certificate III. At higher levels of education this was reversed: 12% of enrolments in the certificate III were by students with a bachelor degree or above compared with 9% in the diploma (of those not attending school). These students may have been seeking a career change or other job opportunities.

Table 9 Previous highest education level by students not attending school and enrolled in early childhood education and care qualifications, 2016 (%)

	Certificate III	Diploma
Bachelor degree and above	12	9
Certificate III to advanced diploma	21	49
Year 12	38	27
Below Year 12 equivalent	29	14

Source: NCVET (2017b, 2017c).

Employment outcomes for graduating diploma students were significantly better than for certificate III students.

Graduate outcomes

Using data from the most recent National Student Outcomes Survey, conducted by NCVET in 2017 (NCVET 2017a), the employment and further study outcomes of graduates from the Diploma and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care can be analysed. The following analysis is based on students who graduated from one of those two qualifications some time in 2016. This analysis is based on survey data (instead of the administrative data used in earlier sections) so only statistically significant differences are highlighted.

The employment outcomes for graduates of the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care were significantly better than for graduates of the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education, notwithstanding the intentions of the graduates. A higher proportion of:

- the diploma graduates were employed after training (80% compared with 71%)
- the diploma graduates found the training relevant to their job (93% compared with 86%).
- the certificate III graduates went on to further study (36% compared with 20%).

Reasons for training

The main reason for undertaking training for graduates of the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care was getting a job (44%), followed by trying for a different career (17%). By contrast, graduates of the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care also undertook training to get a job (29%), but many also did so to gain extra skills for their job (22%). This reflects that a higher proportion of the diploma graduates were already employed as a childcare worker before training (61% compared with 30% of the certificate III graduates).

Job-related benefits of training

Most early childhood education and care qualification graduates who were employed after training were employed as childcare workers (69% of the diploma graduates and 71% of the certificate III graduates). This is reflected in the job-related benefits reported by graduates of the certificate III such as getting a job (52%) and getting a new or changed job (19%). Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care graduates also reported getting a job (34%) and getting a new or changed job (17%). Many graduates of the diploma reported getting an increase in earnings (28%) and getting a promotion or increased status (25%), which reflects that many were already employed as childcare workers.

The findings suggest that the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care is generally used as a pathway into the early childhood education and care sector, while the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care is used to improve employment prospects once a person is already working in the sector. Most graduates are employed after training in a relevant occupation, although more certificate III graduates continue on with further study. The strong occupational connection and the requirements of the National Quality Framework seem to underpin the positive employment outcomes of the qualifications.

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