



# National Student Outcomes Survey 2025 — technical notes

National Centre for Vocational  
Education Research

This document was produced as an added resource for further information on *VET student outcomes 2025*, and is an added resource for further information. The report is available on NCVER's Portal: <<https://www.ncver.edu.au>>.

## Publisher's note

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# Introduction

*VET student outcomes 2025* provides a summary of the outcomes of students who undertook nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) during 2024 using data collected between June and August 2025. The figures are derived from the National Student Outcomes Survey, which is an annual survey of VET students.<sup>1</sup> The National Student Outcomes Survey collects information on VET students' reasons for training and their employment outcomes, satisfaction with training and further study outcomes.

This document provides information about the National Student Outcomes Survey.

## Survey scope

The 2025 National Student Outcomes Survey was designed to report on the outcomes of students who undertook nationally recognised VET delivered by registered training organisations (RTOs) in Australia. Students are considered in scope of the 2025 survey if:

- they were enrolled and had some contact hours in 2024, and
- they completed at least one subject during 2024, and
- they were 15 years of age or older on 30 May 2025.

Out of scope of the 2025 survey are:

- international students
- students who undertook recreational, leisure or personal enrichment courses
- students under 15 years of age, and
- students from correctional facilities.

## Student group

To reflect the training undertaken in the VET system (figure 1), the survey has been segmented by training type, by:

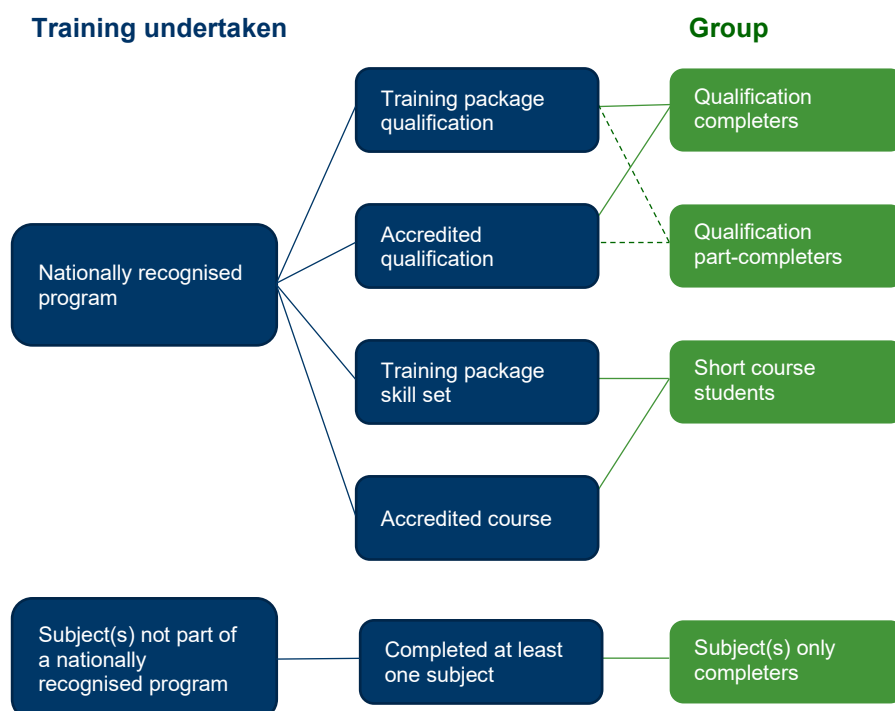
- Qualification completers: students who completed a training package qualification or an accredited qualification.
- Qualification part-completers: students who enrolled in but only completed part of a training package qualification or an accredited qualification (and are no longer undertaking that training).
- Short course students - students who completed, or who enrolled in but only completed part of a training package skill set or accredited course (and are no longer undertaking that training)

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to attachment A: history of the survey.

- Subject(s) only completers: students who completed one or more subjects not delivered as part of a nationally recognised program<sup>2</sup> and who are no longer undertaking training in the VET sector.

Figure 1 National Student Outcomes Survey group definitions, 2025



Prior to 2025, short course students were reported as two student groups: short course completers and short course part-completers. In 2025 these students were combined into one group for reporting, however, were sampled as two separate groups in 2025. Any mention of short course part-completers in this document refers to the sampling group. For further information, refer to *Weighting* in the *Estimation* section of this document.

Due to lags in reporting, it is not possible to identify from the sampling frame 'actual' qualification part-completers and 'actual' short course part-completers; that is, those students who are no longer undertaking that training. Instead, samples were drawn for potential part-completers, which included students continuing in the training. The final status of respondents is determined through the survey responses. Similarly, it is not possible to identify from the sampling frame 'actual' subject(s) only completers; that is, those students who completed one or more subjects and who are no longer undertaking training in the VET sector. The final status of these respondents is determined through survey responses. For further information, refer to the *Classification by student type* in the *Estimation* section of this document.

<sup>2</sup> Subjects not delivered as part of a nationally recognised program include stand-alone nationally recognised subject enrolments and enrolments in nationally recognised subjects that are delivered as part of a non-nationally recognised program.

# Questionnaire design

The 2025 National Student Outcomes Survey collected data on students’:

- main reason for training and whether they achieved that reason
- employment characteristics before and after training
- further study activity
- opinions of, and satisfaction with, the training and training provider
- the main reason for not continuing with the training (applicable to qualification part-completers and short course part-completers)
- what would have needed to change to encourage completion (applicable to qualification part-completers and short course part-completers)
- suggestions for improvement.

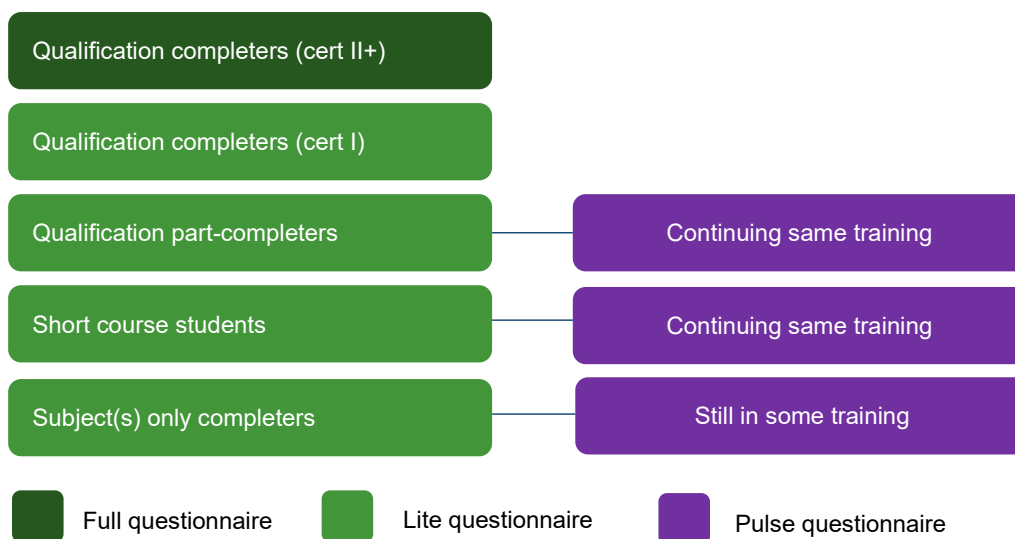
The 2025 questionnaire suite was designed to ensure students received only questions relevant to them. The questionnaires included:

- pulse questionnaire for continuing students (approximately 5 minutes)
- short questionnaire, referred to as the ‘lite’ questionnaire (5 to 10 minutes)
- full questionnaire (approximately 10 minutes).

Qualification completers received either a full or lite questionnaire depending on the qualification they completed. Those who completed a certificate I received the lite questionnaire and those who completed a certificate II or above received the full questionnaire (figure 2). Those initially identified as part-completers who indicated through the survey they were continuing in that training received the pulse questionnaire, as did subject(s) only completers indicating through the survey they were doing further VET. All other student groups received the lite questionnaire.

Figure 2 Questionnaires received by group, 2025

### Groups surveyed



Because most groups did not receive the full questionnaire, the following measures are available only for certificate II and above qualification completers in 2025, as the questions used to derive these measures were only asked in the longer questionnaire:

- recommend the training
- training provider type of further study
- employed in first full-time job, started after training
- median income after training
- industry of employment before and after training
- basis of employment before and after training
- labour force status before training.

There were several changes to the questionnaire in 2025<sup>3</sup>, the main ones being:

- 'Reason for not continuing the training' - changes to response categories which may impact on comparisons between estimates from 2025 and previous years.
  - The category 'Personal reasons' was removed and the following categories added: 'I moved location', 'Illness/health related', 'Family reasons', 'Financial reasons' and 'Too many pressures on my time'. These responses have been combined into 'Personal reasons' in the summary variables.
  - The categories 'I learnt the skills needed for my job', 'I achieved my training goals' and 'I completed all the training I intended when I enrolled' were removed and replaced with 'I got what I wanted from the training'.

<sup>3</sup> For further information on the changes, refer to attachment B: Question changes from 2024 to 2025.

- New questions were added for part-completers on what would need to change to encourage completion of the training and the main thing that would need to change to encourage completion.

The 2025 questionnaires can be viewed from the publication page at:

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/vet-student-outcomes>.

Information on students was also obtained from the 2024 National VET Provider Collection and 2024 National VET in Schools Collection, which was combined with survey responses. The information included details of students' personal characteristics and some training information.

## Reference period

Students were asked to provide information with respect to two reference periods. The first reference date was 30 May 2025. Students were asked to supply information on labour force status and employment characteristics.

The second reference period covered the six months before starting the training. Students were asked to supply information on labour force status and employment characteristics.

# Survey methodology

The 2025 National Student Outcomes Survey was designed to provide estimates for several purposes, including (where the population size was sufficient) reporting for student types by:

- provider type (TAFE institutes, schools, private training providers, universities and community education providers) at the national level
- provider type (TAFE institutes and private training providers) at the state/territory level
- funding source (government-funded and fee-for-service) at the state/territory level.

In addition to these reporting requirements, the 2025 National Student Outcomes Survey was designed to provide qualification level data for all qualifications with 300 or more qualification completers nationally and RTO level data for RTOs with:

- 100 or more qualification completers
- 100 or more short course completers
- 550 or more qualification part-completers
- 250 or more short course part-completers
- 550 or more subject(s) only completers.

## Population

The population includes all students in scope of the survey and is derived from the National VET Provider Collection and National VET in Schools Collection, which are managed in accordance with the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS).<sup>4</sup> The collections hold details on students, the training undertaken, and their achievement. The information is sourced from student enrolment records that are submitted to NCVET either directly from training providers or via state training authorities (STAs) or via Boards of Studies. The survey population was extracted for the data submitted as at 2 April 2025.

### Removing duplicate training activity

Due to overlaps in the organisations submitting data, it is possible for the same training activity to be reported multiple times. A de-duplication process is applied to identify and remove duplicates when extracting the survey population, where the same activity is reported for the same training provider in the same year via different data submitters. The de-duplication process requires an exact match on all the following fields:

- encrypted name identifier
- date of birth
- gender
- training organisation identifier
- program identifier
- subject identifier
- activity start date.

When duplicate training activity is identified, the following hierarchy is applied such that only the training activity at the highest hierarchy level is retained in the survey population:

- data submitted by STAs (to the National VET Provider Collection)
- data submitted by RTOs (to the National VET Provider Collection)
- data submitted by Boards of Studies (to the National VET in Schools Collection).

### Selecting one record within an RTO

Some students undertook more than one program and/or subject within an RTO. In such cases, the following hierarchy is applied so that the student is retained in only one student type within the RTO after duplicate training activity is removed:

- qualification completer
- short course completer
- potential qualification part-completer
- potential short course part-completer
- potential subject(s) only completer.

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<sup>4</sup> For further information regarding the National VET Provider Collection and National VET in Schools Collection, please refer to Australian vocational education and training statistics explained at <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vet-statistics-explained>>.

Some students undertook more than one program or subject within the same student type. Where a student undertook more than one program within the qualification completer, short course completer, potential qualification part-completer or short course part-completer populations, the following sorting hierarchy is applied to the selection to ensure one record for each student is selected at each RTO<sup>5</sup>:

- Where a student had completed/part-completed two or more programs, the record with the highest level of education is selected.
- Where a student had completed/part-completed two or more programs at the same level of education, the record with the highest number of program enrolment hours is selected.
- Where a student had completed/part-completed two or more programs with the same number of enrolment hours, the record with the highest field of education is selected.
- Where a student had completed/part-completed two or more programs with the same field of education, the record with the highest program identifier is selected.
- Where a student had completed/part-completed two or more programs with the same program identifier, the record with the highest survey contact status is selected.
- If multiple records remain, the first record in the list is selected.

Where a student completed more than one subject in the potential subject(s) completers population, the following sorting hierarchy is applied to the selection to ensure one record for each student is selected at each RTO:

- Where a student completed two or more subjects, the record with the highest number of subject enrolment hours is selected.
- Where a student completed two or more subjects with the same number of subject enrolment hours, the record with the most recent date of completion is selected.
- Where a student completed two or more subjects with the same date of completion, the record with the most recent commencement date is selected.
- Where a student completed two or more subjects with the same date of commencement, the record with the government-funded record is selected.
- If multiple records remain, the first record is selected.

## Sampling frame

The sampling frame refers to the de-duplicated records from the population available for surveying and for which contact details could be obtained. This section describes the methodology used to create the sampling frame.

Some students completed training across multiple RTOs. In such cases, a hierarchy was applied to retain only one record for surveying in the sampling frame to reduce respondent burden. This was achieved by applying a similar hierarchy as per the methodology to retain only one student within an RTO. For details of the hierarchy, refer to the *Selecting one record within an RTO* section.

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<sup>5</sup> For further information on the data elements that are used for sorting and selecting records for sampling, refer to <https://www.ncver.edu.au/rto-hub/statistical-standard-software/avetmiss-data-element-definitions-edition-2.3>.

The sampling frame was then restricted to those students who were not deceased, and who were available for surveying as reported in the 'survey contact status'<sup>6</sup> field in the 2024 National VET Provider Collection and 2024 National VET in Schools Collection.

The sampling frame was also restricted to records for which student contact details could be obtained. This includes students with a unique student identifier (USI) or whose contact details could be sourced from STAs or from the contact details reported to NCVET (refer to the *Source of contact details* section in this document for more information). In 2025, a trial was conducted using a flag provided by NSW to exclude students who were still in training from the sampling frame. While a considerable number of those sampled in SOS are typically found to still be in training, this exercise aimed to assess the usefulness of having this information in advance and to explore whether similar data could be obtained from other jurisdictions in future years to improve the sampling process. The sample was drawn after these exclusions were made to the frame.

## Sampling design

The sample was selected in five parts, with independent samples drawn for each student type.

All records in the sampling frame were selected for the sample for qualification completer and short course students.

For potential qualification part-completers and potential subject(s) only completers, a random sample was selected for the core survey, and then a further random sample was selected for an apprentice and trainee top-up from those not sampled in the core potential qualification part-completers sample.

The sample design for the core survey was a stratified random sampling design with strata defined by cross-classifying state/territory (eight levels), provider type (five levels at a national level: TAFE institutes, universities, schools, community education providers, or private training providers and two levels by state and territory: TAFE institutes and private providers) and funding source (two levels: government-funded or fee-for-service).

In addition, all potential qualification part-completers from an RTO with 550 or more students on the frame were included in a certainty stratum<sup>7</sup>. Similarly, all potential subject(s) only completers from an RTO with 550 or more students on the frame were included in a certainty stratum. Within the non-certainty strata, units were selected using systematic probability proportional to size sampling. The size measure was used to increase the chance that units from targeted RTOs were sampled. Before sampling, units were sorted by provider type, funding source, age, gender, broad field of education, and Indigenous status to ensure the sample was representative with respect to these variables. Within the potential qualification part-completers group, units were also sorted by apprentice/trainee flag to allow for better representation of apprentice and trainees.

After the core sample was selected, the sample for the apprentice and trainee top-up was selected from the remaining units using a census to provide required precision levels.

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<sup>6</sup> For further information on the Survey contact status field, refer to <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/rto-hub/statistical-standard-software/avetmiss-data-element-definitions-edition-2.3>>.

<sup>7</sup> All records in the certainty stratum are surveyed.

## Source of contact details

Students' contact details (i.e., name, address, telephone/mobile numbers and email address) for the selected sample were sourced from STAs, the Office of the Student Identifiers Registrar (OSIR) or NCVER (from the *Client Postal Details* file submitted to the National VET data collections).

Three STAs provided contact details for training activity they submitted. The OSIR and NCVER provided the contact details for all remaining students, with the OSIR only able to provide the contact details for students that had a USI.

Following the provision and cleaning of contact details, survey invitations were sent to 990 851 students (table 1).

**Table 1 The number of students in the population and sampling frame and the number of students invited to complete the 2025 survey by student type at sampling**

Student type at sampling	Population	Sampling frame <sup>1</sup>	Survey invitations sent <sup>2</sup>
Qualification completers	663 513	563 219	554 091
Potential qualification part-completers	531 944	405 956	134 972
Potential Short course students <sup>3</sup>	146 621	123 158	120 698
Short course completers	86 814	77 967	76 783
Potential short course part-completers	59 807	45 191	43 915
Potential subject(s) only completers	3 887 173	2 878 360	181 090
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 229 251</b>	<b>3 970 693</b>	<b>990 851</b>

Note: 1. The sampling frame refers to the de-duplicated records from the population available for surveying and for which contact details could be obtained.

2. The fieldwork contractor undertakes cleaning of the contact details and removes records with invalid contact details. As a result of the cleaning, the number of survey invitations is lower than the sampling frame numbers, even for student groups whereby all students in the frame were selected for surveying.

3. Whilst the groups 'Short course completers' and 'Short course part-completers' were combined for reporting, they were still separate for population and sampling.

## Fieldwork

Fieldwork commenced on 2 June 2025 and concluded on 10 August 2025. The 2025 data were collected by way of a self-enumeration online questionnaire or a telephone interview. The details of the fieldwork methodology are provided below.

### Financial incentive

A financial incentive, managed by the fieldwork contractor, was offered as a means of increasing the response rate. To meet the requirements of the South Australian Lotteries Act 2019, parental consent to participate in the prize draw was required for those aged 15 to 17 years and residing in South Australia. To meet this requirement, questions were added to the survey for those aged 15 to 17 years to determine the state/territory in which they currently resided, and if they resided in South Australia, to seek parental consent to be entered into the prize draw.

A rolling prize draw structure was used to maximise early response rates by offering more chances to win the earlier the survey is completed. Ten prize draws were conducted, timed to coincide with reminder activity, with winners selected at random (table 2).

**Table 2 Prize draw details, 2024**

Prize draw	Close date	Prize draw details	Total prize value
1	11/6/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
2	18/6/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
3	25/6/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
4	2/7/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
5	9/7/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
6	16/7/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
7	23/7/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
8	30/7/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
9	6/8/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
10	10/8/25	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 Visa gift-cards	\$4 000

## Personalised letter

The personalised letters contained a unique login code and a QR code enabling direct access to the online survey. Students with a ‘mailing address only’ or ‘a mailing address and a mobile’ were sent a hard-copy letter inviting them to complete the survey. The invitation letters were lodged with Australia Post on 30 May 2025. A second batch of letter invitations were lodged with Australia Post on 6 June 2024 for students with an ‘email and mailing address’ where the email invitation had bounced or with ‘email, mailing address and mobile’ where the email and mobile invites bounced.

Students with a ‘email, mailing address and mobile’, ‘email and mailing address’ and ‘mailing address only’, who had not responded to the survey several weeks after the survey commenced were sent a hard-copy reminder letter. A cost-saving improvement was made to the fieldwork methodology to delay this reminder letter for students who were predicted to respond well to the email and SMS reminders, based on response rates in prior survey years. The high responders included females aged 15 to 19 years or 45 years and over, who had an email address, mobile and mailing address. As a result of this improvement, the reminder letters were sent at various stages as per the following schedule.

- Students classified as high responders received the reminder letter approximately six weeks after the initial invitation contact, with the letters lodged with Australia Post on 23 July 2025.
- All other students received the reminder letter approximately three to four weeks after the initial contact inviting them to complete the survey, with letters lodged with Australia Post on:
  - 30 June 2025 for students residing in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory
  - 9 July 2025 for students in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

Students with a ‘mailing address only’ who had not responded to the survey approximately six weeks after the initial contact were sent a third hard-copy letter, lodged with Australia Post on 23 July 2025.

For further information on the content of the letters, refer to the invitation supporting documents at the publication page at: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collections/student-outcomes/vet-student-outcomes>.

## Email communications

This email invitation contained a unique login code and an embedded link with direct access to the online survey. An invitation to complete the survey online was sent to all students with a valid email address from 2 to 5 June 2025.

Ten reminder emails with the embedded link to the online survey were sent to students who had not completed the survey. These emails were timed to coincide with a weekly prize draw.

The content of invitation and reminder emails varied slightly, with different themes used to encourage survey participation, ranging from the importance of the survey to the chance to win a prize.

## SMS communications

Students with a 'mobile only' were sent an SMS invitation to complete the survey on 2 June 2025. Those with a 'mailing address and mobile' were sent an SMS invitation on 6 June 2025, delayed to coincide with the letter. Following these initial SMS communications, up to six SMS reminders were sent to all students with a valid mobile number who had not completed the survey.

## Telephone follow-up

Telephone interviewing commenced approximately five weeks after the initial survey invitations were sent with the aim of increasing survey responses. Approximately 10,000<sup>8</sup> students completed the survey over the telephone to boost responses in low responding groups (for example young males) and in key reporting groups where more responses were required to meet the precision requirements of the survey design.

## Privacy

All students were sent a link to the privacy collection notice. The privacy notice complied with the Australian Privacy Principles and provided further information on how personal information would be managed and protected. The privacy collection notice can be viewed from the publication page at: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/vet-student-outcomes>.

Students' names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses were used by the fieldwork contractor during the fieldwork stage. The fieldwork contractor worked with external service providers for printing and collation services and email distribution services. The fieldwork contractor provided students' contact details to the external providers for the purposes of administering the survey. Contact details of students held by the fieldwork contractor or the external providers for the purpose of this survey are destroyed upon conclusion of the project.

## Response rate

The response rate is defined as the total number of questionnaires completed, expressed as a percentage of the total number of in scope selections<sup>9</sup>. National response rates were:

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<sup>8</sup> Includes approximately 4,000 telephone interviews funded by a State Training Authority

<sup>9</sup> Out of scope selections comprise students who contacted the survey fieldwork contractor to indicate they did not undertake the training they were being surveyed about.

- 33.7% for qualification completers
- 29.3% for potential qualification part-completers
- 27.6% for potential short course students
- 23.0% for potential subject(s) only completers.

Details of the response rates achieved at the national level are shown in table 3.

**Table 3 Survey response summary by student type at sampling, 2025 (%)**

Survey response	Qualification completers		Potential qualification part-completers		Potential short course students		Potential subject(s) only completers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Survey invitations sent	554 091	100.0	134 972	100.0	120 698	100.0	181 090	100.0
<b>Completed</b>	<b>186 642</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>39 533</b>	<b>29.3</b>	<b>33 337</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>41 646</b>	<b>23.0</b>
Sample loss/other response <sup>1</sup>	72 815	13.1	19 238	14.3	17 510	14.5	30 103	16.6
Refused/ unsubscribed	60 220	10.9	14 804	11.0	17 180	14.2	24 740	13.7
No response	234 414	42.3	61 397	45.5	52 671	43.6	84 601	46.7

Note 1. Sample loss and other responses include students whose hardcopy mail was returned to sender and/or whose electronic communication bounced; those who contacted the survey contractor's helpdesk with a query after the survey had closed and students who contacted the survey contractor's helpdesk to indicate they were of ill health and could not complete the survey.

Table 4 shows the response rates by type of contact details available to send survey invites/reminders.

**Table 4 Survey response rates by type of contact details by student type at sampling, 2025 (%)**

Type of contact details <sup>1</sup>	Qualification completers	Potential qualification part-completers	Potential short course students	Potential subject(s) only completers
Email, address and mobile	37.3	33.5	31.2	26.3
Email and address	10.9	7.2	7.2	4.2
Email and mobile	14.7	12.3	11.2	8.2
Email only	5.1	4.3	4.1	2.7
Address and mobile	19.4	18.2	15.4	10.5
Address only	11.2	8.7	6.1	5.6
Mobile only	4.6	7.2	3.6	4.8
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>29.3</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>23.0</b>

Notes 1. The type of contact details is based on the contact details post-fieldwork whereby groups are re-classified to adjust for students whose mail/email or SMS was reported as returned to sender or bounced.  
2. The total includes students who completed the survey via a telephone interview using a landline and who originally had another mode of contact that was returned to sender/bounced.

Table 5 shows the response rates for students by state or territory of student residential address.

**Table 5 Survey response rates by state and territory of residence by student type at sampling, 2025 (%)**

State/territory of residence	Qualification completers	Potential qualification part-completers	Potential short course students	Potential subject(s) only completers
New South Wales	33.1	28.7	25.3	22.4
Victoria	31.5	30.9	28.8	24.2
Queensland	34.6	26.5	25.9	22.4
South Australia	37.9	35.2	32.0	25.6
Western Australia	34.5	29.4	27.4	20.8
Tasmania	36.5	32.7	33.9	27.6
Northern Territory	29.3	21.3	26.6	19.1
Australian Capital Territory	37.1	32.5	30.2	25.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>29.3</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>23.0</b>

# Estimation

## Classification by group

Qualification completers and short course completers were classified as per the sampling frame (National VET Provider and National VET in Schools collections).

On completion of the fieldwork, potential qualification and short course part-completer respondents were classified into one of the following groups: Actual qualification part-completers, Actual short course students or continuing in the same training, based on the answer to the question: ‘Are you still enrolled in the training?’ (Question 1 in the 2025 survey, only answered by potential part-completers).

On completion of the fieldwork, potential subject(s) only completer respondents were classified into one of the following groups: Actual subject(s) only completers or still in some training, based on the answer to the following question: ‘Are you currently enrolled in any other training with a TAFE institute, TAFE division of a university, registered private provider or adult and community education provider?’ (Question 4 in the 2025 survey, only answered by potential subject-only completers).

Part-completers classified as continuing in the same training or subject(s) only completers still in some training were excluded from reporting. Table 6 shows the final reporting status of all student respondents by their student type at sampling.

**Table 6 Reporting status of all student respondents by student type at sampling, 2025**

Reporting status	Student type at sampling					Total	
	Qualification completers	Short course completers	Potential qualification part-completers	Potential short course part-completers	Potential subject(s) only completers	Number	%
Qualification completers	186 642	na	na	na	na	186 642	62.0
Actual qualification part-completers	na	na	22 352	na	na	22 352	7.4
Qualification part-completer continuing in the same training	na	na	17 181	na	na	17 181	5.7
Actual short course students	na	21 597	na	8 941	na	30 538	10.1
Short course continuing in the same training	na	na	na	2 799	na	2 799	0.9
Actual subject(s) only completers	na	na	na	na	36 772	36 772	12.2
Subject(s) only completers still in some training	na	na	na	na	4 874	4 874	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>186 642</b>	<b>21 597</b>	<b>39 533</b>	<b>11 740</b>	<b>41 646</b>	<b>301 158</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Throughout all NCVET-published resources, the terms ‘qualification part-completers’ and ‘short course students’ exclusively refers to those defined as ‘actual qualification part-completers’ and ‘actual short course students’; that is those who are no longer undertaking that training. Similarly, the term ‘subject(s) only completers’ refers to ‘actual’ subject(s) only completers; that is those who are no longer undertaking training in the VET sector.

## Weighting

The sample of respondents may not accurately represent the population due to known sources of bias such as unequal probability of selection, as well as other sources of bias such as non-response. The weighting procedure attempts to minimise bias so that the weighted sample represents the population and can be used to produce accurate estimates.

Since 2020, the Student Outcomes Survey has classified students into five groups, including short course completers and short course part-completers. However, analysis of 2020-2023 data revealed that a large proportion of those recorded as short course part-completers (around 83-88%) reported having completed their training. Further investigation showed that these “self-identified completers” were concentrated within a small number of RTOs and programs, suggesting inaccuracies in provider-reported completion data rather than reporting delays.

To address this misclassification and improve population estimates, short course completers and part-completers were combined into a single group at the weighting stage from 2025, with this change back-cast to 2020 to maintain comparability. Weights were recalibrated to reflect the merged group and account for demographic and completion differences, providing a more accurate representation of the short course student population.

The weighting procedure was undertaken separately for each of the four main groups (noting the merging of the short course completer and part-completer groups) through the following steps:

1. A base weight was calculated for each sampled unit in each of the five samples as the inverse of the probability that unit was selected in the sample.

2. A raking procedure was used to adjust the weights to account for non-response and to ensure weighted marginal distributions matched population marginal distributions in each group.

Variables chosen for raking were those that were important predictors of non-response, as well as key reporting variables:

- provider type (five categories: schools, TAFE institutes, universities, community education providers and private training providers)
- state/territory of residence (eight categories: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory)
- funding source (two categories: government-funded and fee-for-service)
- gender (three categories: male, female and other/unknown)
- age group (five ranges: 15 to 19 years, 20 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 49 years and 50 years and over).
- Indigenous status (two categories: Indigenous and non-Indigenous)
- language spoken at home (two categories: English and non-English)
- country of birth (four categories: Australia, other English-speaking countries, other countries and not stated)
- highest level of education (nine categories: Bachelor's degree or higher, Advanced diploma or associate degree, Diploma, Certificate IV, Certificate III, Certificate II, Certificate I, Year 12 and below and other/none/unknown)
- qualification level (four categories: Certificate I/II, Certificate III/IV, Diploma or higher and other)
- remoteness (four categories: major cities, inner/outer regional, remote/very remote and unknown)
- Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) (six categories: extreme disadvantage, high disadvantage, average disadvantage, slight disadvantage, low disadvantage and unknown).

Not all the variables were used for weighting every sampling group. Only those showing significant effect on the response rate or reporting factors were considered for each group.

A trimming mechanism was involved when raking weights in order to avoid extreme weights, such as when the marginal weighting constraints are difficult to satisfy. The post-trimming after each raking step trimmed weights that were too large or too small. A new raking step was executed to re-calibrate the weights to the marginal control cell totals. The final set of weights meet both the raking constraints and the trimming constraints.

## Reliability of estimates

Two types of error are possible in an estimate based on a survey: non-sampling error and sampling error. Non-sampling error may occur for reasons such as non-response bias, incorrect responses, interviewer errors, attrition and processing errors. Non-response bias occurs when the characteristics of those not responding to the survey differ to the those responding to the survey in relation to the variables or items of interest. Non-response can affect the reliability of results and can introduce bias.

Sampling error occurs because estimates are calculated from a sample of the population, rather than the entire population. The estimates may differ from the true population value (that is, the value if the

whole population had been sampled and responded to the survey) as well from estimates that would be produced if a different sample had by chance been selected.

By convention, a 95% confidence level is used to judge the amount of sampling error in an estimate. The confidence interval for an estimate is calculated using the formula:

$$\text{estimate} \pm 1.96 \times \text{SE}$$

where SE is the standard error of the estimate returned by SAS software (the standard error is an estimate of how much variation there is expected to be in a published estimate from one sample to another, based on the randomness of sample selection), taking into account the sampling design and population size. The chance that a 95% confidence interval contains the true population value is 19 in 20.

The half-width of the confidence interval, " $1.96 \times \text{SE}$ ", is often referred to as the *margin of error*. The margins of error reported by NCVER are calculated using a finite population correction to adjust the variance of estimates to better reflect the survey population. The margin of error allows data users to view the amount of certainty (or error) in a reported measure sourced from information provided by a sample rather than a population.

For further information refer to the Fact sheet: interpreting survey results, available from the publication page on NCVER's website at: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collections/student-outcomes/vet-student-outcomes>.

# Attachment A: History of the survey

The National Student Outcomes Survey was first conducted in 1995 and has been conducted annually by NCVER since 1997.

## 1995 (conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics), 1997 and 1998

- The survey was known as the Graduate Destination Survey and was a census of TAFE graduates with a qualification involving at least 200 hours or one semester of training.

## 1999

- The survey was renamed the Student Outcomes Survey and remained a census of graduates with a qualification involving at least 200 hours or one semester of training.
- For the first time, a small sample of module completers<sup>10</sup> was introduced. The survey was also expanded to include students from community education, private training and other government providers.
- Separate questionnaires were used for graduates and module completers.
- Only information on TAFE students was published.

## 2000, 2001 and 2002

- A sample survey of graduates and module completers. For graduates, the minimum training length condition was removed.
- Separate questionnaires continued to be used for graduates and module completers.

## 2003

- The option to complete the survey via the internet was introduced.
- Students selected as module completers who identified themselves as graduates were reported as graduates. Previously, responses of these people were collected, but not used in reporting. At the aggregate level, this change made no difference, but for sub-populations the effect may be greater.

## 2004

- For the first time the same questionnaire was used for graduates and module completers.

## 2005

- Information on government-funded students from community education and private training providers was published for the first time.

## 2006, 2007 and 2008

- No changes were made.

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<sup>10</sup> Defined as students who completed at least one subject/module and left the VET system.

## 2009

- A new recognition of prior learning (RPL) question block was included in the survey, replacing the one used previously.

## 2010

- No changes were made.

## 2011

- For the first time those with email addresses were invited to complete the survey online via email and/or a primary approach letter rather than being sent a hard-copy questionnaire.

## 2012

- For the first time ALL respondents received a primary approach letter inviting them to complete the survey online at the first mailing, rather than a hard-copy questionnaire. As in previous years, those with an email address also received an email invitation. Hard-copy questionnaires were only sent to those who did not complete online by a certain date.
- Students selected as potential module completers who identified themselves as graduates were modelled to determine final status. Previously, responses of these students were reported as graduates. Data were backdated to 2005.

## 2013

- Sampling changed from proportional allocation to sampling based on more balanced sampling error across institutes for the main survey variable, labour force status after training. The target sampling error for graduates was 4% and 8% for module completers, per institute.

## 2014

- The scope was expanded to include students from all jurisdictions who completed their training with a community education provider. This resulted in information being collected for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. Prior to 2014 only students from community education providers in New South Wales and Victoria were included in the survey.

## 2015

- Survey responses from fee-for-service students from community education providers were excluded from reporting and the summary publication was renamed Government-funded student outcomes. Data were backdated to 2006.
- Module completers were renamed to subject completers. The terminology was applied back to 2005.

## 2016

- The survey was expanded to report on the outcomes of students who completed their qualification on a fee-for service basis through private providers.
- The questionnaire was revised to a shorter, more user-friendly version that could be used on mobile devices. This questionnaire was implemented in 2016 for all students (TAFE institutes, universities, other government providers, private training providers and community education providers).

- As a result of shortening the questionnaire, the questions used to classify subject completers were streamlined, and the classification of subject completers was improved. Data for subject completers in previous years were backdated to 2006 using this improved derivation.

## 2017

- The expanded survey scope, which includes fee-for-service students from private training and community education providers, was applied to subject completers.
- International onshore VET qualification completers were included as an additional component of the National Student Outcomes Survey.
- The reminder postcard and the hard-copy questionnaire were removed from the contact methodology.
- Students under 18 years of age were excluded from scope. Data from previous years were back-cast.
- Government-funded training was broadly defined as all activity delivered by government providers and government-funded activity delivered by community education and private training providers. In 2017 the scope of government-funded training was revised and data for previous years were back-cast. Government-funded training now includes only Commonwealth and state/territory government-funded training (either Commonwealth or state-recurrent funding, Commonwealth specific-purpose funding or state-specific funding) from all training providers. All fee-for-service activity from training providers has been excluded.
- The derivation of qualification completers and subject completers changed to be more in line with administrative data. Previously, due to lags in the reporting of a large number of qualifications completed to the National VET Provider Collection, government-funded students who were sampled as subject completers were reported as qualification completers if they self-reported completing a qualification and were deemed eligible for that qualification via a logistic regression model. From 2017, those who self-report completing a qualification, are reported as subject completers, as per the administrative data (or sample selection). Data were back-cast for 2016, the year the data quality improvement is first seen. For further information, refer to the technical paper ‘Student Outcomes Survey: self-reported qualification completer model review’, available at: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/student-outcomes-survey-self-reported-qualification-completer-model-review>.

## 2018

- Non-respondents with a mailing address were sent a hard copy letter approximately four weeks after the initial email contact. This represents a change to the previous methodology where the hard-copy letter was sent to all students at the commencement of the survey.
- Additional questions were funded by a state training authority and were asked of the students who received government-funding in the relevant state/territory.
- In 2018, more RTOs received data about their students’ satisfaction and training outcomes than in previous years. The 2019 survey was designed to provide data for all RTOs with:
  - 100 or more domestic qualification completers in 2017, and/or
  - 860 or more domestic potential subject completers in 2017.

## 2019

- In 2019, the scope of the survey was modified to cover students who completed nationally recognised VET delivered by RTOs in Australia. Students who undertook non-nationally recognised training were excluded from the survey. The revised survey scope has been applied to qualification completers in 2017 and 2018.
- Following a trial in 2018, the 2019 questionnaire was revised. The changes included:
  - minor changes to question wording to questions on ‘further study after training’ and ‘level of further study after training’
  - changes to question wording and a change from an agreement scale to a satisfaction scale for questions on satisfied with teaching and assessment and satisfied overall
  - a change in the order of the satisfied with teaching and assessment questions to appear after the developed problem-solving, improved writing skills and improved numerical skills bank of questions
  - the inclusion of a new category in the job-related benefits item of ‘gained extra skills for my job’
  - new questions added on ‘improved numerical skills’ and ‘better job after training’.
- In 2019, NCVET conducted a national Apprentice and Trainee Experience and Destination (ATED) Survey that was integrated with the 2019 National Student Outcomes Survey. The surveys ran concurrently. Key National Student Outcomes Survey questions were included in the ATED questionnaire alongside other questions specific to apprentices and trainees. Where a student was sampled for the National Student Outcomes Survey and the ATED Survey, they were invited to participate in one survey only—ATED. Following a mode effects analysis, the responses to the National Student Outcomes Survey questions for students sampled for both surveys were merged back into the National Student Outcomes Survey dataset. As a result of this approach, apprentices and trainees sampled for both surveys did not answer all questions in the National Student Outcomes Survey.

## 2020

- In 2020, students aged 15 to 17 years and those undertaking VET in Schools were included in the survey.
- Following a review of the subject completer group, the 2020 survey was designed to report by the following student types:
  - qualification completers (previously known as graduates, no definition change)
  - short course completers
  - qualification part-completers
  - short course part-completers
  - subject(s) only completers.
- Due to significant changes in the way student groups are reported in the 2020 survey, time-series information is not available for the following student groups: short course completers, short course part-completers and subject(s) only completers. A two-year time-series was available for qualification part-completers.
- To minimise burden and ensure students only answer questions relevant to them, new questionnaires were administered to students depending on the amount of training they had undertaken. The

questionnaires include a pulse questionnaire for students continuing in training, a full questionnaire for those who completed a certificate II or above qualification and a shorter version of the questionnaire for all other students.

- There were some questionnaire changes in 2020, including:
  - a change to the response scale for recommend the training provider and recommend the training from a ‘Yes / No’ response option to a ‘Very likely’ to ‘very unlikely’ response scale. The results from a trial of this change in scale suggest that the 2020 responses for these questions may differ to prior years due to the changes in question wording and the results are not comparable with prior years.
  - new categories added for items on ‘further study after training’, ‘employment after training’ and ‘looking for work’ to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on study being cancelled, delayed or postponed, on being employed but temporarily stood down and on not looking for work due to COVID-19.

## 2021

- There were some changes to the 2021 questionnaire including:
  - minor revisions to existing questions on who paid for the training and reasons for not continuing training
  - the addition of new questions on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on training
  - the removal of questions and categories on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment and further study
  - the addition of questions for apprentices and trainees, leading to a new publication suite titled ‘Apprentice and trainee outcomes’ that is released to the public in the year following the survey.

## 2022

- There were some changes to the 2022 questionnaire including:
  - revisions to some existing questions, such as questions on job after training, job-related benefits and why dropped out of training
  - questions were added to the pulse questionnaire
  - questions on online learning and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were revised with some questions removed and some new questions added
  - questions on country of birth, language other than English spoken at home, indigenous status, disability and prior education were removed from the longer questionnaire answered by Certificate II and above qualification completers and the data was sourced from the administration collections
  - the question on personal benefits was asked of all participants
  - the additional questions funded by a state training authority in the 2021 survey were removed. These included questions on course selection, work placement, assessment and assistance from the training provider.

## 2023

- There were some changes to the 2023 questionnaire including:
  - the question on which month and year training was completed was removed
  - questions on online learning and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were removed.

## 2024

- From 2024, the international student component of the survey was not conducted.
- There were some changes to the fieldwork methodology including:
  - the first reminder letter was delayed for students predicted to respond well to email and SMS reminders, based on response rates in prior survey years. This included females aged 15 to 19 years or 45 years and over who had an email, mobile and mailing address.
  - the parental letter, sent in prior years to students aged 15 to 17 years with a mailing address, was removed.

## 2025

- Following a review of the short course completers and part-completers, the 2025 survey was designed to report by the following student types:
  - qualification completers (no change)
  - short course students (combining short course completers and short course part-completers)
  - qualification part-completers (no change)
  - subject(s) only completers (no change).
- The sample for the apprentice and trainee non-completers was expanded to include all those in the population who were flagged as being an apprentice and trainee non-completer to allow data at the jurisdictional level
- There were some changes to the 2025 questionnaire including:
  - changes to the response categories for Reason for discontinuing training
  - the addition of new questions for part-completers on what would need to change to encourage them to complete

# Attachment B: Question changes from 2024 to 2025

This attachment outlines only the questions that have changed between 2024 and 2025. To view all questions in the 2025 questionnaire, refer to the questionnaire support document (available from the publication page at: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/vet-student-outcomes>).

**Table B1 Question changes from 2024 to 2025<sup>1</sup>**

2024 question	2025 question
<p>What was your <b>main</b> reason for choosing <b>not</b> to continue the training?</p> <p><i>Please select one option only</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I changed jobs or started a new job</li> <li>2. I lost my job</li> <li>3. I learnt the skills I needed for my job</li> <li>4. I achieved my training goals</li> <li>5. I started other training</li> <li>6. The training no longer related to my plans</li> <li>7. The training was not what I expected</li> <li>8. The training timetable was not flexible enough</li> <li>9. Problems with the work placement</li> <li>10. Family or personal reasons</li> <li>11. I completed all the training I intended when I enrolled</li> <li>12. Other reason (<i>please specify</i>)</li> </ol>	<p>What was your <b>main</b> reason for choosing <b>not</b> to continue the training?</p> <p><i>Please select one option only</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I changed jobs or started a new job</li> <li>2. I lost my job</li> <li>3. I got what I wanted from the training</li> <li>4. I started other training</li> <li>5. The training no longer related to my plans</li> <li>6. The training was not what I expected</li> <li>7. The training timetable was not flexible enough</li> <li>8. Problems with the work placement</li> <li>9. I moved location</li> <li>10. Illness/health related</li> <li>11. Family reasons</li> <li>12. Financial reasons</li> <li>13. Too many pressures on my time</li> <li>14. Other reason (<i>please specify</i>)</li> </ol>
<p>Did you undertake any of the &lt;insert training details&gt; as part of your senior secondary schooling <b>at a school, a TAFE institute or another training organisation?</b> &lt;multiple response, unless choose no&gt;</p> <p><i>Please select all options that apply</i></p> <p>Yes – at my school</p> <p>Yes – at another school</p> <p>Yes – at a TAFE institute</p> <p>Yes – at another training provider</p> <p>No – &lt;exclusive option if selected&gt;</p>	<p>Did you undertake any of the &lt;insert training details&gt; as part of your senior secondary schooling? &lt;multiple response, unless choose no&gt;</p> <p><i>Please select all options that apply</i></p> <p>Yes – at my school</p> <p>Yes – at another school</p> <p>Yes – at a TAFE institute</p> <p>Yes – at another training provider</p> <p>No – &lt;exclusive option if selected&gt;</p>
	<p><b>Changes to training to encourage completion</b></p> <p>Asked of qualification part-completers and short course part-completers if Q2 = 2 and Q3 <math>\neq</math> 3</p> <p>29A. Based on your experiences, what would have needed to change to encourage you to complete the training?</p> <p><i>Please select all options that apply</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My work situation (<i>e.g. my hours of work etc.</i>)</li> <li>2. The content of the course</li> </ol>

3. The workload of the course
4. The quality of the teaching staff
5. Better support from the provider/trainer
6. The flexibility of the course in terms of its time of delivery
7. The flexibility of the course in terms of its method of delivery (e.g. location, online)
8. My personal situation
9. A reduced level of fees or flexibility of payment options for the course
10. Other (please specify)
11. Nothing would have encouraged me to complete the training <exclusive option if selected>

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Asked where more than one response given at 29A

29B. What would be the main thing that would have needed to change to encourage you to complete the training?

*Please select one option only*

1. My work situation (e.g. my hours of work etc.)
2. The content of the course
3. The workload of the course
4. The quality of the teaching staff
5. Better support from the provider/trainer
6. The flexibility of the course in terms of its time of delivery
7. The flexibility of the course in terms of its method of delivery (e.g. location, online)
8. My personal situation
9. A reduced level of fees or flexibility of payment options for the course
10. Other <please set to response given at 29A>

---

What is the level of this new course?

**Note:** If you commenced in more than one course, please report the one that you think is most important.

Bachelor degree or higher

Advanced diploma or associate degree

Diploma

Certificate IV

Certificate III

Certificate II

Certificate I

Secondary school qualification (e.g. mature age, night school, etc.)

Statement of attainment

Other (please specify) <please set a limit to require at least 4 characters>

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Where did you enrol to do this study?

**Note:** If you are doing external study please report the organisation you are studying with, e.g. university, TAFE institute.

University

TAFE institute

TAFE division of a university

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What is the level of this new course?

**Note:** If you commenced in more than one course, please report the one that you think is most important.

Bachelor degree or higher

Advanced diploma or associate degree

Diploma

Certificate IV

Certificate III

Certificate II

Certificate I

Secondary school qualification (e.g. mature age, night school, etc.)

Statement of attainment (e.g. Responsible Service of Alcohol)

Other (please specify) <please set a limit to require at least 4 characters>

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Where did you enrol to do this study?

**Note:** If you are doing external study please report the organisation you are studying with.

University

TAFE institute

TAFE division of a university

Private provider

Private provider

Adult and community education provider

Adult and community education provider

Secondary school

Secondary school

Other <capture of verbatim response not required>

Other <capture of verbatim response not required>

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Note 1. Red text indicates changes in question wording between 2024 and 2025.