# Counting students in 'total VET activity'

Vocational education and training (VET) by nature is diverse, spanning a wide range of learning engagements from full-time programs across multiple years, short 'skill set' programs, to single subject enrolments. Student participation can also be wide ranging, with some students receiving training from multiple training providers within the same year.

Prior to 2015, if a student was enrolled with more than one training provider during a collection period, it was possible for them to be counted more than once. From 1 January 2015, all new and continuing students undertaking nationally recognised VET in Australia are required to have a unique student identifier (USI) to receive a qualification or statement of attainment. The USI is a randomly generated alpha-numeric code recorded against any nationally recognised training undertaken and remains with an individual for life.

The implementation of the USI provides a mechanism with which to better count students. NCVER uses a two-step process to identify unique student records in Total VET students and courses 2019. In this process we use the USI, where available, followed by a count of distinct client identifiers within each submission for the residual data.

Table 1 shows the number of students with subject enrolments or program completions that were reported with a USI and without, by submission pathway. Note that no reporting scope has been applied to figures in this table.

**Table 1**  **The number of students with subject enrolments or program completions that were reported with a USI by submission pathway, 2019**

| Submission pathway | USI reported | | USI missing | | Total students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ('000) | % | ('000) | % | ('000) |
| State training authority | 1 842.1 | 95.2 | 93.8 | 4.8 | 1 935.8 |
| Boards of studies | 119.0 | 63.2 | 69.3 | 36.8 | 188.2 |
| Direct submitter | 3 321.7 | 98.6 | 45.6 | 1.4 | 3 367.3 |
| **Total** | **5 282.7** | **96.2** | **208.7** | **3.8** | **5 491.4** |

Note:   Includes all reported training activity. Does not take into account training activity that is exempt from reporting a USI. No reporting scope has been applied to the figures in the table.
The total student number reported for Boards of studies is post deduplication of training activity and is therefore lower than the reported number of VET in Schools students.
Sources: National VET Provider Collection 2019, National VET in Schools Collection, 2019.

Table 2 provides the number of students before and after the two-step process for counting students, and prior to the total VET publication scope being applied.

**Table 2**     **Student counts before and after application of the two-step student counting process**

| Students | | |
|---|---|---|
| Before counting process | After counting process | % removed |
| 4 773 444 | 4 181 125 | 12.4 |
| 5 183 510 | 4 337 994 | 16.3 |
| 5 280 668 | 4 363 587 | 17.4 |
| 5 289 043 | 4 247 485 | 19.7 |
| 5 491 358 | 4 380 867 | 20.2 |

Note:    Includes all reported training activity. Does not take in to account training activity that is exempt from reporting a USI. No reporting scope has been applied to the figures in the table.

Sources: National VET Provider Collection, 2015—19, National VET in Schools Collection, 2015—19.

Caution must be used when comparing year-on-year student counts and participation rates, due to varying rates of USI provision and differing rates of reporting client identifiers where USI is not available. It is worth noting, that although instances of missing USIs are decreasing over time, the number is unlikely to reach zero while valid exemptions exist. In addition, it is possible for students to have multiple USIs and although a mechanism exists to account for this in the USI Transcript Service, it can result in small numbers of duplication within the data.

The student counting process has been applied to student numbers in all *Total VET students and courses 2019* data products and tools. It has, however, only been applied to a limited number of demographic variables and for this reason some data products and tools do not contain student counts (for example, they are not available in VOCSTATS).

It is also important to note that the information presented in the 'Atlas of total VET' data visualisation tool pertains to the student's usual residence, which is based on the statistical area level 2 (SA2). Using the SA2 of the student's usual residence as the basis of analysis means that there will be differences in training activity counts at the state or territory level from those published in *Total VET students and courses 2019*, where information is primarily reported on the state or territory of where the training was delivered.

For further information on the process of counting students in *Total VET students and courses 2019*, refer to the technical paper *Counting students in total VET students and courses*, available at

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/796213/Technical-paper-Counting-students-in-Total-VET-students-and-courses.pdf>.