

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. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) uses a two-step process to identify unique student records in *Total VET students and courses 2025*. In this process we use the USI, where available, to match student records. For records without a USI, we use the client identifier within each submission.

Table 1 shows the number of students with subject enrolments and/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 and/or program completions that were reported with a USI by submission pathway, 2025.

Submission pathway	USI reported		USI missing		Total students
	('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)
State training authority	1712.9	97.3	46.8	2.7	1759.7
Board of Studies	152.1	73.6	54.6	26.4	206.7
Direct submitter	4778.8	99.5	23.3	0.5	4802.1
Total	6643.8	98.2	124.6	1.8	6768.5

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.

Values and percentages reflect the data as submitted to NCVER, prior to the application of any derived fields.

Sources: National VET Provider Collection 2025, National VET in Schools Collection 2025.

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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, 2020 to 2025.

Year	Students		
	Before counting process	After counting process	% Removed
2020	5 058 680	4 037 079	20.2
2021	5 635 806	4 407 022	21.8
2022	5 981 032	4 668 459	21.9
2023	6 746 654	5 189 610	23.1
2024	6 832 884	5 279 204	22.7
2025	6 768 465	5 255 626	22.4

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.

Sources: National VET Provider Collection 2025 and National VET in Schools Collection 2025.

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 amounts of duplication within the data.

The student counting process allows us to derive demographic information for each student. In certain products, including the publication and DataBuilder, we can also report training attributes for students, including those who have studied in multiple programs or at different RTOs in a calendar year. For these we can report all training attributes for the student, meaning the sum of these attributes will add to more than the reported total.

For further information on the process of counting students in *Total VET students and courses 2025*, 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>.