



# VET student outcomes 2021: explanatory notes

National Centre for Vocational  
Education Research

This document was produced as an added resource for further information on *VET student outcomes 2021*. The report is available on NCVER's Portal: <<https://www.ncver.edu.au>>.

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# Explanatory notes

## Scope

- 1 *VET student outcomes 2021* provides a summary of the outcomes of students who completed nationally recognised VET delivered by registered training organisations (RTOs) in Australia during 2020, using National Student Outcomes Survey data collected in mid-2021.
- 2 Historically the National Student Outcomes Survey included graduates (students who completed a qualification) and subject completers (students who completed at least one subject and left the VET system without obtaining a qualification). To better reflect the training undertaken in the VET system, the number of groups surveyed from 2020 has expanded to cover:
  - Qualification completers: students who completed a training package qualification or an accredited qualification (previously known as graduates, no definition change to this group).
  - 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 completers: students who completed a training package skill set or an accredited course.
  - Short course part-completers: students who enrolled in but only completed part of a training package skill set or accredited course (and are no longer undertaking that training).
  - Subject(s) only completers: students who completed one or more subjects not delivered as part of a nationally recognised program and who are no longer undertaking training in the VET sector.
- 3 Out of scope of the *VET student outcomes 2021* suite of products are:
  - international students
  - students who undertook recreational, leisure or personal enrichment (short) courses
  - students from correctional facilities.
- 4 Since 2019, the National Student Outcomes Survey has collected data on students who completed nationally recognised VET delivered by RTOs. The revised survey scope has been applied to qualification completers in 2017 and 2018.
- 5 Students aged 15 to 17 years were out of scope of the 2017 to 2019 surveys. To enable comparisons over time, all data up to and including 2019 exclude students under 18 years of age. Students 15 years and older are included in data from 2020.
- 6 From 2020, the survey was expanded to include VET undertaken by senior secondary students.
- 7 Results should be treated with some caution when comparing survey estimates from 2020 and onwards with prior years on ‘labour force status before and after training’ and ‘relevance of training to job after training’ due to the inclusion of students aged 15 to 17 years from 2020. The inclusion of students aged 15 to 17 years only had a minor impact on the national estimates for other key survey measures.

## Definitions and derivations

- 8 The percentage of students satisfied with various aspects of their training and the training provider (e.g teaching, assessment, training provider’s facilities, learning resources, support services, training

provider's location, support provided in the transition to online learning and the training overall) is based on the proportion of respondents reporting that they are 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with the relevant questionnaire item. The percentage of students who developed problem-solving skills, improved writing skills and improved numerical skills is based on the proportion of respondents reporting that they 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' with the relevant questionnaire item.

- 9 The percentage of students who would recommend their training provider is based on the proportion of respondents reporting 'Very likely' or 'Likely' with the relevant questionnaire item.
- 10 'Improved employment status after training' is defined as either employment status changing from not employed before training to employed after training *or* employed at a higher skill level after training *or* received a job-related benefit. An individual may have reported a positive response to more than one measure contributing to improved employment status after training.
- 11 'Employed at a higher skill level' is based on those employed before training who are employed in an occupation with a higher skill level after training, in comparison with their occupation before training. The base includes those not employed after training. In *VET student outcomes* publications and data products released prior to December 2019, the proportion employed at a higher skill level was based on those employed before and after training.
- 12 'Better job after training' is based on those employed before training, who reported they are employed in a better job/role than their previous job/role.
- 13 'Employed in the same job, improved skill' is based on the proportion of respondents who answered the question on whether they were in a better job as 'not applicable, I'm still in the same job/role'. They were considered to have an improved skill if they reported a job-related benefit of 'gained extra skills for my job'.
- 14 Job-related benefits are based on those employed after training, who reported receiving a job-related benefit from the training, including: set up or expanded their own business, got a promotion, increased earnings, or other job-related benefits. From 2019, a new category was included for 'gained extra skills for my job'.
- 15 'Achieved main reason for training' is based on the proportion of respondents reporting that the training 'fully' or 'partly' helped them to achieve their main reason for training.
- 16 Students enrolled in a qualification or short course who undertook both government-funded and fee-for-service subjects are reported as 'Government-funded'.
- 17 For subject(s) only completers, the only 'further study' included is at non-VET providers such as universities, as by definition subject(s) only completers have left the VET system.
- 18 'Program level of education' refers to the level of the completed qualification (for the qualification completers) or the level of the qualification that was enrolled in but only partially completed (for the qualification part-completers).
- 19 'Undertook a work placement (not part of an apprenticeship or traineeship)' is sourced from survey responses.
- 20 'Training was part of senior secondary schooling' is sourced from survey responses and is based on those aged 15 to 19 years.
- 21 'Training shifted to online learning' includes training and work placements that shifted online during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 22 'Reason for not continuing training due to COVID-19' is based on the proportion of respondents reporting that the main reason for not continuing was 'fully' or 'partly' due to COVID-19.
- 23 Percentages on 'challenges during online learning' sum to more than 100% as respondents can choose more than one response category.
- 24 The categories of 'COVID-19 pandemic challenges' and 'Mental health challenges' in 'challenges during online learning' are derived from the free text comments provided in the 'Other, please specify' item of the question.

## Reporting changes

- 25 Due to significant changes in the way student groups are reported from the 2020 survey, time-series information prior to 2020 is not available for the following student groups: short course completers, short course part-completers and subject(s) only completers. A three-year time-series is available for qualification part-completers.
- 26 Prior to 2020, the provider type variable category of 'private training providers' included enterprise RTOs. From 2020, the provider type variables have been revised to include the following categories:
- TAFE institutes
  - universities
  - community education providers
  - private training providers
  - schools
  - enterprise RTOs.

The change to the private training provider category in 2020 had only a minor impact on the national estimates compared with 2019 estimates where private training providers and enterprise RTOs were combined.

- 27 From 2020, information on whether training was part of an apprenticeship or traineeship was sourced from the National VET Provider and National VET in Schools collections. Prior to 2020, apprentice and trainee status was sourced from survey responses. An analysis of the impact of the change suggests employment outcomes and improved writing skills for apprentices and trainees in 2020 compared with 2019 and prior years should be treated with caution due to an over-representation in prior years of students who speak a language other than English at home when the derivation is based on survey responses.
- 28 There was a change to the derivation of 'enrolled in further study at a higher level' in 2021. The change was backdated to previous years in the *VET student outcomes 2021* DataBuilder and, as a result, the margins of error may differ to those published in the previous *VET student outcomes 2020* DataBuilder. The change has no impact on estimates.

## Questionnaire changes

- 29 There were several revisions to the 2021 questionnaire, including:
- A new category of 'Problems with the work placement' was included in the reasons for not continuing the training question.

- A new question was added on whether the reason for not continuing training was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- New questions were added on whether the COVID-19 pandemic delayed work placements and on-the-job training during 2020.
- New questions were added on whether training shifted to online learning during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the support received to assist this transition and the challenges faced during online learning.
- Questions and categories on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on further study and employment outcomes were removed.

30 There were several revisions to the 2020 questionnaire, including:

- The response scale for recommend the training provider and recommend the training changed from a 'Yes/No' response option to a 'Very likely to very unlikely' 5 point response scale. As a result of this change, the results from 2020 are not comparable with prior years. The percentage of students who would recommend their training provider or training is based on the proportion of respondents reporting 'Very likely' or 'Likely' with the relevant questionnaire item.
- The inclusion of a category in the reasons for not continuing the training item of 'I completed all the training I intended to when I enrolled'.
- The inclusion of new categories in the reasons for training item of 'To obtain credit points towards my senior secondary schooling' and 'To obtain credit points towards my senior secondary schooling'.
- New questions were added for students aged 15 to 19 years on whether training was undertaken as part of the senior secondary certificate and if so, whether training for main VET subjects was completed in the workplace.
- New questions were added on who paid for the training and satisfaction with the RTO's location, learning resources, facilities and support services.

31 From 2020, most student groups did not receive the full questionnaire to reduce student burden. This means the following measures are available only for certificate II and above qualification completers, 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
- basis of employment before and after training
- personal benefits
- labour force status before training.

32 Following a trial in 2018, the 2019 questionnaire was revised. The changes include:

- 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’.

33 Results from the 2018 trial suggest the following 2019 survey estimates are not comparable with prior years due to the changes in question wording:

- received at least one job-related benefit
- improved employment status after training (derived from ‘received at least one job-related benefit’).

Also that responses for the following 2019 survey estimates may differ to prior years due to the changes in question wording:

- satisfaction with teaching
- satisfaction with assessment
- satisfaction with overall quality of training.

## Australian Bureau of Statistics data

34 Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is an ABS-developed product that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. This publication uses the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD). Further information on SEIFA can be found at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/seifa>>.

35 Student remoteness is based on the Access/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+), produced by the Hugo Centre for Population and Housing, the standard ABS-endorsed measure of remoteness. For more details of ARIA+ refer to <<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/hugo-centre/services/aria>>.

36 Occupation is defined by the Australian and New Zealand Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), version 1.2 (2013). This is an Australian Bureau of Statistics classification that identifies occupations according to their primary purpose (ABS cat.No.1220.0). Matching between the intended occupation of the training activity and the occupation after training occurs at the ANZSCO sub-major group level.