NCVER

Which rate and why?

VET qualification completion rates present three different rates; this fact sheet can help you decide which rate you should use and why.

NCVER publishes different completion rates for different purposes:

- Use the observed rate (after four years) when comparing cohorts or assessing system performance
- Use the observed rate (to date) when looking at the latest status of a particular cohort
- Use the projected rate when seeking an early indication of likely outcomes for recent cohorts

NCVER's standard reporting focuses on rates that are sufficiently mature to support meaningful interpretation and comparison.

Observed methodology

The observed methodology is a simple calculation of the number of completions divided by the number of reported commencements. It is expressed as either a completion rate (after four years) or the proportion completed 'to date', referred to as the completion rate (to date).

What is the difference between the completion rate (after four years) and 'to date'?

To allow for fair comparisons between diverse commencing cohorts (i.e., enrolments grouped together based solely on when they started), NCVER uses a fixed-reference period between commencement and completion that captures most completions.

This fixed-reference period is four years after the commencement year.

Some completions may take longer and are reported to NCVER after four years. These completions are outside the four-year reference period and are reported in 'to date' rates.

The following represents the 2019 commencing cohort, where 100 qualifications commenced. During the four-year period, there were 45 completions, a year later an additional 10, another year later an additional five. The table below demonstrates the impact on the two rate types.

Rate type	2024 publication	2025 publication	2026 publication
Completion rate (after 4 yrs)	45 / 100 = 45%	45 / 100 = 45%	45 / 100 = 45%
To date	45 / 100 = 45%	55 / 100 = 55%	60 / 100 = 60%

This work has been produced by NCVER on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments, with funding provided through the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

A completion rate that uses a fixed-reference period, such as four years, is the most appropriate measure for comparing the performance of different commencing cohorts.

The 'to date' completion rate, i.e. the proportion completed up until the end of 2025, is not timebound and is continually updating with every year of data NCVER receives; some cohorts are informed by many years, others few. It could be misleading to compare the performance of different cohorts with the 'to date' rates.

Why have a 'to date' rate if they cannot be compared?

The 'to date' rate provides valuable point-in-time insights for individual commencing cohorts.

For commencing cohorts, with more than four years of reporting e.g., commencements in or before 2019, it is possible to see the latest completion rate. This rate can include activity that took longer than four years to complete, such as part-time commencements or contract-based training, where their success or otherwise would be obscured.

For more recent commencing cohorts, depending on the course, many students are still undertaking training and have not yet had sufficient time to complete. While early results can provide useful insights for specialist analysis, they are not sufficiently mature for broad interpretation or comparison. For this reason, NCVER does not routinely publish completion rates for the most recent commencing cohorts.

Projected completion rate

The projected completion rate provides an early indication of how a commencing cohort is likely to complete once students have had sufficient time to complete their training.

Recent cohorts have not yet had enough time for all students to complete their training, so their final completion rates are not yet known. The projected rate uses historical patterns and current completion activity to estimate the eventual completion rate for a cohort.

Which rate should I use?

NCVER uses the completion rate (after four years) as its primary published measure because all cohorts are assessed over the same timeframe, making results suitable for comparison. More recent cohorts may still have large numbers of students in training and therefore do not yet provide a stable basis for interpretation.

The other rates have a distinct purpose and can support the sector's understanding of performance in specific contexts.

Why doesn't NCVER routinely publish completion rates for the most recent cohorts?

As outlined earlier, NCVER does not routinely publish 'to date' rates for the most recent commencing cohorts because many students are still undertaking training and final outcomes are not yet known. As a result, the rates may not provide a reliable basis for broad

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interpretation or comparison. While not routinely published, these rates remain available from NCVER for specialist analytical and research purposes.

Effect of apprenticeships and traineeships on completion rates

Apprentice and trainee outcomes are unique. While VET qualifications can be undertaken as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship, completing an apprenticeship or traineeship requires finishing the training contract and gaining the required skills, with the employer and VET provider both confirming the set of training requirements have been met.

NCVER does not specifically identify qualifications undertaken as part of an apprenticeship or a traineeship in the VET qualification completion rates publication. Trade-based apprenticeships and traineeships often take six years or more to complete, whereas VET qualification completion rates use a four-year reference period to compare cohorts, accounting for training that is predominantly not delivered as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

NCVER recommends instead referring to the *Apprentice and trainee completion rates* publication for these rates, which are presented at three distinct levels: individuals, apprenticeships and traineeships, and contracts of training.

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