

Summary of the 2016 full year higher education student statistics

Student numbers

1. A total of 1 457 209 domestic and international students enrolled at higher education institutions in 2016, an increase of 3.3 per cent from 2015.
2. There were 1 066 073 domestic students in 2016 (73.2 per cent of all students), an increase of 1.8 per cent from 2015. Overseas student enrolments increased by 7.7 per cent over the same period to 391 136.
3. Postgraduate students increased by 3.9 per cent to 401 858 while undergraduate students increased by 2.9 per cent to 1 007 435.
4. More than half of all students enrolled were female (55.4 per cent).
5. Over seventy per cent of students (71.4 per cent) were studying full-time.
6. Over ninety per cent of students were enrolled at Public Universities (90.9 per cent). Public University enrolments increased 2.7 per cent in 2016 (1 324 506 students, up from 1 289 716 students in 2015), while Private University and Non-University Higher Education Institutions increased by 10.2 per cent (from 120 417 students in 2015 to 132 703 students in 2016). In 2016, there were 101 institutions classified as Private Universities and Non-University Higher Education Institutions.

Commencing student numbers

7. Commencements provide an early indicator of how the higher education system evolves over time.
8. The total number of commencing students remained stable in 2016 compared with 2015 (569 064 and 595 220 respectively).
9. Domestic commencements accounted for 69.1 per cent of all commencements (411 228 students), a increase of 1.9 per cent from 2015, while overseas commencements increased by 11.1 per cent to 183 992 students over the same period.
10. Commencing students in enabling courses¹ increased by 21.1 per cent between 2015 and 2016 (19 950 to 24 153), while commencements in non-award courses² increased by 2.5 per cent (17 459 to 17 887) over the same period. Commencements in postgraduate courses increased by 5.2 per cent to 179 042, while undergraduate commencements increased by 3.5 per cent to 374 138.
11. More than half of all commencing students were female (55.7 per cent).
12. Commencements in full-time study increased by 5.1 per cent in 2016 compared with 2015 (429 778 to 451 783 students).

Indigenous student numbers

13. Students who self identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comprised 1.2 per cent of all enrolments in 2016 (up 10.4 per cent from 2015 to 17 815 students) and 1.3 per cent of commencements (up 12.7 per cent from 2015 to 8 225).
14. Increases in Indigenous student numbers were recorded across most broad fields of education, (excluding a decrease of 1.5 per cent for Education. The largest increase was for *Information Technology* (up 16.7 per cent to 329 students).
15. The main fields of education in which Indigenous students were enrolled were *Society and Culture* (5 788 students, or 32.5 per cent of all Indigenous students); followed by *Health* (3 627 students or 20.4 per cent); and *Education* (2 530 students or 14.2 per cent).

¹ A course of instruction that enables a person to undertake a course leading to a higher education award. Enabling courses do not include a course leading to a higher education award or any course that the Minister determines is not an enabling course under the *HESA Act Schedule 1*.

² A program of study which does not lead to an award and which comprises a unit or units of study which: is a unit or units of study from an award course or courses at the higher education institution; and is able to be counted as a credit towards some award course at the higher education institution by all students who complete the unit or units of study.

National priority areas and courses of special interest

16. Commencements in priority area courses in 2016 increased in courses leading to initial registration as nurses (up 7.2 per cent to 23 645 students); in courses leading to registration as a medical practitioner (up 4.6 per cent to 4 292 students); and in courses leading to registration as a dental practitioner (up 2.3 per cent to 672 students).
17. In 2016 there was a decrease in commencing students undertaking courses leading to a registration as a veterinary practitioner (down 5.8 per cent to 646 students). in courses in clinical psychology (down 2.7 to 869) and courses providing teacher training (down 2.6 to 29 961).

Low SES^{3,4}

18. The number of Low SES commencing students in 2016 increased by 0.1 per cent compared with 2015 (from 70 651 to 73 216 students). Commencing Low SES students increased from 17.7 per cent to 18.0 per cent of all commencing domestic onshore students.
19. The total number of Low SES students increased by 3.8 per cent between 2015 and 2016 (from 170 854 to 177 288 students).

Regional and remote^{3,5}

20. The number of commencing students in regional areas increased by 2.4 per cent between 2015 and 2016 (from 81 704 to 83 634 students) and commencing students in remote areas also increased by 1.9 per cent (from 3 856 students in 2015 to 3 931 students in 2016).

Field of Education

21. Increases in the number of commencing students were recorded in some broad fields of education in 2016 compared with 2015, with *Food, Hospitality and Personal Services* up 474.7 per cent; *Information Technology* up 19.0 per cent, *Architecture and Building* up 15.1 per cent Health up 7.3 per cent, Natural and Physical Sciences up 7.0 per cent, , *Creative Arts* up 4.9 per cent, *Engineering and Related Technologies* up 3.9 per cent, *Management and Commerce* up 2.9 per cent. *Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies* up 1.9 per cent, *Society and Culture* up 1.4 per cent
22. Decreases in the number of commencing students were recorded for *Education* (down 2.6 per cent),
23. The largest increase in overseas commencing student was in Information technology up 29.4 Per cent and *Architecture and Building* (up 28.8 per cent). *Management and Commerce* comprised over half of all overseas commencements (90 866 out of 183 992), as well as almost half of all overseas enrolments (190 601 students out of 391 136).

³ Excludes overseas students and domestic students where permanent home address is overseas.

⁴ Low SES postcode measure is based on the students' postcode of permanent home residence, with the SES value derived from the 2011 SEIFA Education and Occupation Index for postal areas, where postal areas in the bottom 25% of the population aged 15-64 being classified as Low SES.

⁵ Regional and remote categories are derived from ASGS classifications.