

Summary of the 2012 full year higher education student statistics

Student numbers

1. A total of 1 257 722 domestic and international students enrolled at higher education providers (HEPs) in 2012, an increase of 3.0 per cent from 2011.
2. There were 934 110 domestic students in 2012 (74.3 per cent of all students) an increase of 5.1 per cent from 2011. Overseas student enrolments decreased by 2.7 per cent over the same period to 323 612.
3. Postgraduate students increased by 1.8 per cent to 327 768 while undergraduate students increased by 3.6 per cent to 891 832.
4. More than half of all students enrolled were female (55.8 per cent).
5. Over seventy per cent of students (70.3 per cent) were studying full-time.
6. Over ninety per cent of students were enrolled at public universities (93.2 per cent). Public university enrolments increased 3.0 per cent in 2012 (1 171 737 students, up from 1 137 511 students in 2011), while private provider enrolments also increased by 3.0 per cent (85 985 students at 91 providers in 2012, up from 83 497 students at 88 providers in 2011).

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 increased by 4.0 per cent to 509 766 in 2012 compared to the same period in 2011. Domestic commencements accounted for 72.6 per cent of all commencements, an increase of 7.4 per cent from 2011, while overseas commencements decreased by 3.9 per cent to 139 452 students over the same period.
9. Commencing students in enabling courses¹ increased by 7.4 per cent between 2011 and 2012 (16 247 to 17 447), while commencements in non-award courses² decreased by 5.0 per cent (17 283 to 16 413) over the same period. Commencements in postgraduate courses increased by 2.8 per cent to 150 364, while undergraduate commencements increased by 5.0 per cent to 325 542.
10. More than half of all commencing students were female (56.3 per cent).
11. Commencements in full-time study increased by 3.9 per cent in 2012 compared to 2011 (361 143 to 375 093).

Indigenous student numbers

12. Students who self identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comprised 1.0 per cent of all enrolments in 2012 (up 7.0 per cent to 12 632 students) and 1.1 per cent of commencements (up 8.2 per cent to 5 824).
13. Increases in Indigenous student numbers were recorded across most broad fields of education where students were enrolled. The largest increase was in *Mixed Field Programs* (up 19.1 per cent to 617 students).
14. The main fields of education in which Indigenous students were enrolled were *Society and Culture* (4 061 students, or 32.1 per cent of all Indigenous students); followed by *Health* (2 532 students or 20.0 per cent); and *Education* (2 225 students or 17.6 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 ACT HESA 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 provider; and is able to be counted as a credit towards some award course at the higher education provider by all students who complete the unit or units of study.

National priority areas and courses of special interest

15. Commencements in priority area courses in 2012 increased in courses leading to registration as a veterinary practitioner (up 19.2 per cent to 558 students); in courses providing initial registration as nurses (up 9.3 per cent to 17 862 students); in courses for initial registration in teacher training (up 8.0 per cent to 30 457 students); in courses in clinical psychology (up 5.4 per cent to 761 students); and in courses leading to registration as a dental practitioner (up 3.5 per cent to 616 students).
16. In 2012, there was a decrease in commencing students undertaking courses leading to registration as a medical practitioner (down 10.2 per cent to 3 430 students).

Low SES³⁴

17. Low SES commencing students in 2012 increased by 9.1 per cent compared to the same period in 2011 (from 56 593 or 16.6 per cent of all commencing domestic onshore students to 61 759 or 16.9 per cent of all commencing domestic onshore students), while all low SES students increased by 6.8 per cent (from 136 953 to 146 198 students).

Regional and remote³⁵

18. Commencing students in regional areas in 2012 increased by 6.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2011 (from 70 465 to 75 012 students), while commencing students in remote areas increased by 7.0 per cent to 3 660 students.

Field of Education

19. Increases in the number of commencing students were recorded across most broad fields of education in 2012 compared to the same period in 2011, with *Natural and Physical Sciences* (up 10.8 per cent); *Mixed Field Programs*⁶ (up 10.6 per cent); *Health* (up 7.2 per cent); *Education* (up 6.3 per cent); *Society and Culture* (up 4.8 per cent); *Information Technology* (up 4.2 per cent); *Creative Arts* (up 3.1 per cent); *Engineering and Related Technologies* (up 3.0 per cent); and *Management and Commerce* (up 1.3 per cent). Decreases were recorded for *Food, Hospitality and Personal Services* (down 59.6 per cent); *Non-award courses*² (down 5.0 per cent); *Architecture and Building* (down 0.8 per cent); and *Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies* (down 0.1 per cent).
20. The largest increase in overseas student numbers was in *Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies* with commencements up 2.2 per cent to 1 432 students and all enrolments up 8.4 per cent to 3 626 students. *Management and Commerce* comprised over half of all overseas commencements (71 168 out of 139 452) as well as over half of all overseas enrolments (164 468 students out of 323 612).

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.

⁶ *Mixed Field Programs* provide general and personal development education.