

## Summary of the 2017 full year higher education student statistics

### Student numbers

1. A total of 1 513 383 domestic and international students enrolled at higher education institutions in 2017, an increase of 3.9 per cent from 2016.
2. There were 1 081 945 domestic students in 2017 (71.5 per cent of all students), an increase of 1.5 per cent from 2016. Overseas student enrolments increased by 10.3 per cent over the same period to 431 438.
3. Postgraduate students increased by 6.4 per cent to 427 685 while undergraduate students increased by 3.0 per cent to 1 037 373.
4. More than half of all students enrolled were female (55.5 per cent).
5. Over seventy per cent of students (71.3 per cent) were studying full-time.
6. Over ninety per cent of students were enrolled at Public Universities (90.5 per cent). Public University enrolments increased by 3.4 per cent in 2017 (1 369 423 students, up from 1 324 506 students in 2016), while Private University and Non-University Higher Education Institutions increased by 8.5 per cent (from 132 703 students in 2016 to 143 960 students in 2017). In 2017, there were 97 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 relatively stable in 2017 compared with 2016 (619 084 and 595 220 respectively). Domestic commencements accounted for 67.3 per cent of all commencements (416 371 students), an increase of 1.3 per cent from 2016, while overseas commencements increased by 10.2 per cent to 202 713 students over the same period.
9. Commencing students in enabling courses<sup>1</sup> decreased by 0.9 per cent between 2016 and 2017 (24 153 to 23 933), while commencements in non-award courses<sup>2</sup> decreased by 0.5 per cent (17 887 to 17 805) over the same period. Commencements in postgraduate courses increased by 7.4 per cent to 192 297, while undergraduate commencements increased by 2.9 per cent to 385 049.
10. More than half of all commencing students were female (55.8 per cent).
11. Commencements in full-time study increased by 3.6 per cent in 2017 compared with 2016 (451 783 to 468 145 students).

### Indigenous student numbers

12. Students who self identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comprised 1.3 per cent of all enrolments in 2017 (up 8.1 per cent from 2016 to 19 261 students) and 1.4 per cent of commencements (up 6.3 per cent from 2016 to 8 745).
13. Increases in Indigenous student numbers were recorded across most broad fields of education, (excluding a decrease of 36.3 per cent for *Food, Hospitality and Personal Services*). The largest increase was for *Information Technology* (up 18.8 per cent to 391 students).
14. The main fields of education in which Indigenous students were enrolled were *Society and Culture* (6 280 students, or 32.6 per cent of all Indigenous students); followed by *Health* (4 001 students or 20.8 per cent); and *Education* (2 592 students or 13.5 per cent).

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<sup>1</sup> 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*.

<sup>2</sup> 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

15. Commencements in priority area courses in 2017 increased in courses providing initial teacher training (up 5.2 per cent) to 31 532; in courses in clinical psychology (up 3.5 per cent to 899); in courses leading to initial registration as nurses (up 3.0 per cent to 24 362 students); in courses leading to registration as a dental practitioner (up 1.9 per cent to 685 students); and in courses leading to a registration as a veterinary practitioner (up 1.1 per cent to 653).
16. In 2017 there was a decrease in commencing students undertaking courses leading to registration as a medical practitioner (down 4.1 per cent to 4 116 students).

## Low SES<sup>3,4</sup>

17. The number of Low SES commencing students in 2017 increased by 1.8 per cent compared with 2016 (from 75 164 to 76 517 students). Commencing Low SES students increased from 18.4 per cent to 18.5 per cent of all commencing domestic onshore students.
18. The total number of Low SES students increased by 2.6 per cent between 2016 and 2017 (from 183 135 to 187 867 students).

## Regional and remote<sup>3,5</sup>

19. The number of commencing students in regional areas increased by 0.4 per cent between 2016 and 2017 (from 82 730 to 83 064 students) and commencing students in remote areas also increased by 2.3 per cent (from 3 985 students in 2016 to 4 077 students in 2017).

## Field of Education

20. Increases in the number of commencing students were recorded in some broad fields of education in 2017 compared with 2016, with *Information Technology* up 28.0 per cent; *Architecture and Building* up 12.5 per cent; *Food, Hospitality and Personal Services* up 6.8 per cent; *Natural and Physical Sciences* up 5.4 per cent; *Society and Culture* up 5.1 per cent; *Health* up 3.8 per cent; *Engineering and Related Technologies* up 2.9 per cent; *Creative Arts* up 1.4 per cent; *Education* up 1.1 per cent; *Management and Commerce* up 0.9 per cent.
21. A decrease in the number of commencing students was recorded for *Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies* down 6.0 per cent.
22. The largest increase in overseas commencing student was in *Information Technology* up 37.6 per cent and *Architecture and Building* (up 29.1 per cent). *Management and Commerce* comprised almost half of all overseas commencements (94 301 out of 202 713), as well as almost half of all overseas enrolments (201 807 students out of 431 438).

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<sup>3</sup> Excludes overseas students and domestic students where permanent home address is overseas.

<sup>4</sup> Low SES postcode measure is based on the students' postcode of permanent home residence. Students are classified as being Low SES if their permanent address is in an area in the bottom 25% of the 2016 SEIFA Education and Occupation Index for 15-64 year olds.

<sup>5</sup> Regional and remote categories are derived from 2016 ASGS classifications.