Introduction

The VET FEE-HELP assistance scheme

The 2009 VET FEE-HELP Annual Statistical Report is the first in a series of statistical reports based on the VET FEE-HELP Student Data Collection. This report provides a statistical overview of the VET FEE-HELP assistance scheme for 2009—the first year that income contingent loans have been made available to Vocational Education and Training (VET) students.

The VET FEE-HELP Assistance Scheme has been established to provide opportunities for more Australians to pursue new careers or lift their qualifications to diploma level or above, without facing the disincentive of having to pay up-front tuition fees.

As an extension of the higher education FEE-HELP arrangements, VET FEE-HELP is an income contingent loan scheme for students undertaking certain VET courses of study (diploma, advanced diploma, graduate certificate and graduate diploma courses) with an approved VET provider. VET FEE-HELP assists eligible students to pay for all or part of their tuition fees.

Under the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA), VET providers are required to report data on all students who are eligible for VET FEE-HELP assistance. The 2009 VET FEE-HELP Annual Statistical Report consists of a series of statistical tables based on the student data. The tables are grouped into the following broad topics:

- VET FEE-HELP eligible and assisted students
- Tuition fees and expenditure
- Student achievement and course completions
- VET provider level statistics

Executive summary

Some key features of the detailed statistical tables included in the 2009 VET FEE-HELP Annual Statistical Report are summarised below.

VET providers

How many Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) were approved to offer VET FEE-HELP assistance during 2009?

- In 2009, 50 RTOs were approved to offer VET FEE-HELP assistance, including 20 TAFEs.
- Victoria had the highest number of approved VET providers at 27—18 of which were TAFEs.
- The Northern Territory and Tasmania had no approved VET providers in 2009.

How many VET providers reported student data in 2009?

- Student data are reported to DEEWR in accordance with census dates. Of the 50 approved VET providers in 2009, 39 determined VET units of study with a census date occurring in 2009 and reported student data to DEEWR accordingly.
- Not all approved VET providers reported a student's full year of study in 2009 as reporting requirements are subject to provider approval and VET unit of study census dates. Since provider approvals were staggered throughout 2009, the student data for each VET provider covers a different period of time and cannot be compared directly. Appendix Table 1 shows the approval dates and first census dates for the 39 VET providers that reported student data for 2009.
Students

Who accessed VET FEE-HELP assistance in 2009?

- A total of 5,262 students accessed VET FEE-HELP assistance during 2009, including 78 Indigenous Australian students (1.5 per cent), 788 students from regional and remote areas (15 per cent), and 890 students from low socioeconomic areas (17 per cent).
- The majority (69 per cent) of VET FEE-HELP assisted students were female, and half were aged under 25 years.
- Participation rates—the proportion of eligible students who access VET FEE-HELP assistance—allow us to compare the relative level of participation in the VET FEE-HELP Assistance Scheme among different student cohorts. In 2009, the overall participation rate for full-fee paying students was 50 per cent.
- Participation rates varied by age group from 36 per cent for full-fee paying students aged 45 years and over, to 54 per cent for full-fee paying students aged under 25 years.
- The participation rate for full-fee paying female students (59 per cent) was substantially higher than the rate for full-fee paying male students (36 per cent).

What were VET FEE-HELP assisted students studying?

- The most common field of education in 2009 for VET FEE-HELP assisted students was ‘Society and Culture’, undertaken by 1,382 students. Most (58 per cent) of these students were enrolled in the Diploma of Children’s Services.
- ‘Society and Culture’ was closely followed by ‘Management and Commerce’ as the second most common field of education, undertaken by 1,338 students. The most common qualification undertaken by ‘Management and Commerce’ students was the Diploma of Accounting (undertaken by 20 per cent of ‘Management and Commerce’ students).
- Around 79 per cent of VET FEE-HELP assisted students undertook study at the diploma level. Less than one per cent of VET FEE-HELP assisted students were undertaking training at the Vocational Graduate Diploma and Vocational Graduate Certificate levels.
- Three-quarters of VET FEE-HELP assisted students undertook full-time study, and just under half (49 per cent) were studying by an external mode of attendance (for example, online).

Tuition fees and expenditure

How much VET FEE-HELP assistance was accessed in 2009?

- In 2009, $25.5 million of VET FEE-HELP assistance was accessed by students. This represents 69 per cent of the $36.9 million of tuition fees that were charged to eligible students.
- Across fields of education, the amount of VET FEE-HELP assistance accessed by students ranged from $8,235 for students in ‘Mixed field programs’ to $6.36 million for ‘Society and Culture’ students.
- Full-fee paying students who undertook a qualification in the field of ‘Food, Hospitality and Personal Services’ had the highest deferral rate—97 per cent of tuition fees charged to these students were deferred—and the highest average annual tuition fee per Equivalent Full Time Study Load (EFTSL) of any field of education at $12,451. In contrast, ‘Engineering and Related Technologies’ students had one of lowest average annual tuition fees at $4,064 and deferred only 8 per cent of the tuition fees that they were charged.
- Across states and territories, the amount of VET FEE-HELP assistance accessed by students ranged from $195,149 in Western Australia to $19.4 million in New South Wales.
Student achievement and course completions

**How successful were VET FEE-HELP assisted students in completing their studies?**

- One measure of student achievement is the progress rate—EFTSL for successfully completed VET units of study as a proportion of the total EFTSL for all completed VET units of study. The overall progress rate for 2009 was 72 per cent.
- Students undertaking their training by an external mode of attendance had a relatively low progress rate at 31 per cent.
- Indigenous Australian students had a relatively high progress rate at 79 per cent.
- Comparing different fields of education, progress rates ranged from 23 per cent for ‘Natural and Physical Sciences’ students to 89 per cent for ‘Education’ students.
- A total of 526 VET FEE-HELP assisted students completed their course during 2009 and were awarded with a Diploma or higher level qualification.