

## Summary of the 2015 full year higher education student statistics

### Student numbers

1. A total of 1 410 133 domestic and international students enrolled at higher education institutions in 2015, an increase of 2.7 per cent from 2014.
2. There were 1 046 835 domestic students in 2015 (74.2 per cent of all students), an increase of 2.1 per cent from 2014. Overseas student enrolments increased by 4.5 per cent over the same period to 363 298.
3. Postgraduate students increased by 2.9 per cent to 386 915 while undergraduate students increased by 2.9 per cent to 979 426.
4. More than half of all students enrolled were female (55.4 per cent).
5. Over seventy per cent of students (71.0 per cent) were studying full-time.
6. Over ninety per cent of students were enrolled at Public Universities (91.5 per cent). Public University enrolments increased 2.1 per cent in 2015 (1 289 716 students, up from 1 263 669 students in 2014), while Private University and Non-University Higher Education Institutions increased by 9.9 per cent (from 109 561 students in 2014 to 120 417 students in 2015). In 2015, 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 2015 compared with 2014 (569,065 and 569,064 respectively). Domestic commencements accounted for 70.9 per cent of all commencements (403 414 students), a decrease of 1.0 per cent from 2014, while overseas commencements increased by 2.5 per cent to 165 651 students over the same period.
9. Commencing students in enabling courses<sup>1</sup> decreased by 0.7 per cent between 2014 and 2015 (20 087 to 19 950), while commencements in non-award courses<sup>2</sup> decreased by 6.7 per cent (18 703 to 17 459) over the same period. Commencements in postgraduate courses decreased by 3.8 per cent to 170 244, while undergraduate commencements increased by 2.3 per cent to 361 412.
10. More than half of all commencing students were female (55.6 per cent).
11. Commencements in full-time study increased by 1.2 per cent in 2015 compared with 2014 (424 876 to 429 778 students).

### Indigenous student numbers

12. Students who self identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comprised 1.1 per cent of all enrolments in 2015 (up 7.1 per cent from 2014 to 16 136 students) and 1.3 per cent of commencements (up 6.8 per cent from 2014 to 7 298).
13. Increases in Indigenous student numbers were recorded across most broad fields of education, (excluding a decrease of 4.2 per cent for *Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies* and a decrease of 13 per cent for *Mixed Field Programs*). The largest increase was for *Information Technology* (up 25.9 per cent to 282 students).
14. The main fields of education in which Indigenous students were enrolled were *Society and Culture* (5 318 students, or 33.0 per cent of all Indigenous students); followed by *Health* (3 167 students or 19.6 per cent); and *Education* (2 568 students or 15.9 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 2015 increased in courses leading to initial registration as nurses (up 8.8 per cent to 22 049 students); in courses leading to registration as a medical practitioner (up 6.8 per cent to 4 102 students); and in courses leading to registration as a veterinary practitioner (up 10.3 per cent to 686 students).
16. In 2015 there was a decrease in commencing students undertaking courses leading to registration as a dental practitioner (down 1.9 per cent to 657 students).
17. The number of commencing students in courses providing teacher training and in courses in clinical psychology remained static between 2014 and 2015 (30 769 students for teacher training and 893 students for clinical psychology).

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

18. The number of Low SES commencing students in 2015 increased by 0.1 per cent compared with 2014 (from 70 598 to 70 651 students). Commencing Low SES students increased from 17.5 per cent to 17.7 per cent of all commencing domestic onshore students.
19. The total number of Low SES students increased by 3.2 per cent between 2014 and 2015 (from 165 517 to 170 854 students).

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

20. The number of commencing students in regional areas decreased by 1.6 per cent between 2014 and 2015 (from 83 002 to 81 704 students), while commencing students in remote areas decreased by 4.0 per cent (from 4 016 students in 2014 to 3 856 students in 2015).

## Field of Education

21. Increases in the number of commencing students were recorded in some broad fields of education in 2015 compared with 2014, with *Food, Hospitality and Personal Services* up 129.9 per cent; *Architecture and Building* up 8.0 per cent, *Health* up 4.9 per cent, *Engineering and Related Technologies* up 2.2 per cent, *Society and Culture* up 1.2 per cent, *Creative Arts* up 1.1 per cent and *Management and Commerce* up 1.0 per cent.
22. Decreases in the number of commencing students were recorded for *Education* (down 10.5 per cent), *Mixed Field Programs*<sup>6</sup> (down 7.5 per cent), *Non-award courses*<sup>2</sup> (down 6.7 per cent), *Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies* (down 4.7 per cent), *Natural and Physical Sciences* (down 0.7 per cent) and *Information Technology* (down 0.3 per cent).
23. The largest increase in overseas commencing student numbers was in *Architecture and Building* (up 18.0 per cent). *Management and Commerce* comprised over half of all overseas commencements (83 981 out of 165 651), as well as almost half of all overseas enrolments (180 546 students out of 363 298).

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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, 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.

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