



National Student Outcomes Survey 2018: technical notes

National Centre for Vocational
Education Research

This document was produced as an added resource for further information on *VET student outcomes 2018*. The report is available on the NCVER Portal: <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/vet-student-outcomes>>.

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Level 5, 60 Light Square, Adelaide, SA 5000
PO Box 8288 Station Arcade, Adelaide SA 5000, Australia

Phone +61 8 8230 8400

Email ncver@ncver.edu.au **Web** <<https://www.ncver.edu.au>> <<https://www.lsay.edu.au>>

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Contents

Introduction	5
Survey scope	6
Questionnaire design	7
Questionnaire changes in 2018	7
Reference period	7
Survey methodology	7
Population	8
Sampling frame	9
Sampling design	10
Source of contact details	11
Fieldwork	12
Email	12
SMS communications	12
Personalised letter	12
Telephone follow-up	12
Financial incentive	13
Privacy	13
Survey response	13
Response rate	13
Estimation	15
Classification of graduates and subject completers for reporting	15
Weighting	15
Reliability of estimates	16
Attachment A: History of the survey	17

Tables and figures

Tables

1	Scope of the VET student outcomes publication	6
2	Per cent of students at sampling with a unique student identifier (USI) by state and territory of student residence, 2018 sample population records submitted by training providers directly to NCVER	11
3	The population and the number of students invited to complete the 2018 survey, for graduates and potential subject completers	11
4	Prize draw details, 2018	13
5	Survey response summary for graduates and potential subject completers, 2018	14
6	Survey response rates for students by type of contact details, 2018 (%)	14
7	Survey response rates for students by state and territory of student residential address, 2018 (%)	14
8	Reporting status of all student respondents by group at sampling, 2018	15

Figures

1	Definition of graduates and subject completers	8
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Introduction

The *VET student outcomes 2018* publication provides a summary of the outcomes of students who completed their vocational education and training (VET) in Australia during 2017. The figures are derived from the 2018 National Student Outcomes Survey. This document provides information about the National Student Outcomes Survey data that were used to derive the *VET student outcomes 2018* publication and data products.

The National Student Outcomes Survey is an annual survey that collects information on vocational education and training (VET) students' reasons for training and their employment outcomes, satisfaction with training and further study outcomes. Students included in the survey are students awarded a qualification (graduates), or who successfully completed part of a course and then leave the VET system (subject completers).

Since 1999, the survey has collected information on the outcomes of government-funded VET¹ students (see attachment A for a history of the survey). The mandatory reporting of nationally recognised training activity to the National VET Provider Collection from 2014 provided a sampling frame to expand the scope of the National Student Outcomes Survey to include fee-for-service students from private training and community education providers. In 2016, a trial was undertaken to expand the survey to include fee-for-service graduates from private training providers (that is, those who paid for the training or whose employer paid for the training). Following the successful 2016 trial, the expanded scope was applied to the 2017 survey and onwards for graduates and subject completers.

1 Government-funded training was broadly defined as all activity delivered by government providers and government-funded activity delivered by community education and private training providers. In 2017 the scope of government-funded training was revised and data for previous years were back-cast. Government-funded training now includes only Commonwealth and state/territory government-funded training (either Commonwealth or state-recurrent funding, Commonwealth specific-purpose funding or state-specific funding) from all training providers. All fee-for-service activity from training providers has been excluded from the definition.

Survey scope

The 2018 National Student Outcomes Survey was designed to report on the outcomes of students who undertook government-subsidised training and those who undertook training on a fee-for-service basis. Students are considered in scope of the 2018 survey if:

- they were enrolled in 2017, and
- the completed year of the program was 2017 or they had successfully completed at least one subject during 2017
- they had some contact hours during 2017.

Out of scope of the survey are:

- students who undertook recreational, leisure or personal enrichment (short) courses
- students who undertook VET delivered in schools, where training activity was undertaken as part of a senior secondary certificate
- students under 18 years of age.

This document details the National Student Outcomes survey data that were used to derive the *VET student outcomes 2018* publication and data products. Table 1 provides information on the scope of the *VET student outcomes 2018* publication. International onshore VET graduates were included as an additional component of the 2018 National Student Outcomes Survey, however, international students are excluded from the scope of the *VET student outcomes* publication and data products and for this reason, the international survey component is not covered in this document. For further information on international outcomes data refer to the technical notes available from the *International onshore graduate outcomes* publication page at: <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/international-onshore-vet-graduate-outcomes>>.

Table 1 Scope of the VET student outcomes publication

	TAFE	University	Community education provider	Private training provider
Commonwealth and state funding	✓	✓	✓	✓
Domestic fee-for-service	✓	✓	✓	✓
International fee-for-service	✗	✗	✗	✗

Questionnaire design

The 2018 National Student Outcomes Survey collected data on students':

- reason for training and achievement of reason
- employment characteristics before and after training
- further study activity
- opinions of, and satisfaction with, the training
- suggestions for improvement.

Information on students was also obtained from the 2017 National VET Provider Collection. This included details of students' personal characteristics and some training information.

Questionnaire changes in 2018

The 2018 questionnaire was based on the 2017 questionnaire, with the following changes.

- A new question was added on whether the amount of training was about right, too much or too low.

The 2018 questionnaire can be viewed from the publication page at <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/vet-student-outcomes>.

Reference period

Students were asked to provide information with respect to two reference periods:

- The first reference date was 25 May 2018. Students were asked to supply information on labour force status, employment characteristics and additional study undertaken.
- The second reference period covered the six months before starting the training. Students were asked to supply information on labour force status, and employment characteristics.

Survey methodology

The 2018 National Student Outcomes Survey was designed to provide estimates for several purposes, including reporting for graduates and subject completers by:

- provider type (TAFE and private training provider) at the state/territory level
- provider type (TAFE, private training provider, university and community education provider) at the national level
- funding source (Commonwealth/state-funded and fee-for-service) at the state/territory level.

In addition to these reporting requirements, the 2018 National Student Outcomes Survey was designed to provide course level data for all courses with 300 or more graduates nationally. The 2018 survey was also designed to provide registered training organisation (RTO)-level data for an increased number of RTOs compared with prior years. The 2018 survey was designed to provide RTO level data for:

- training providers with 100 or more graduates
- training providers or 860 or more potential subject completers.

The sampling approach was designed to allow a single random sample designed to meet all reporting requirements. For further information refer to the *Sampling design* section in this document.

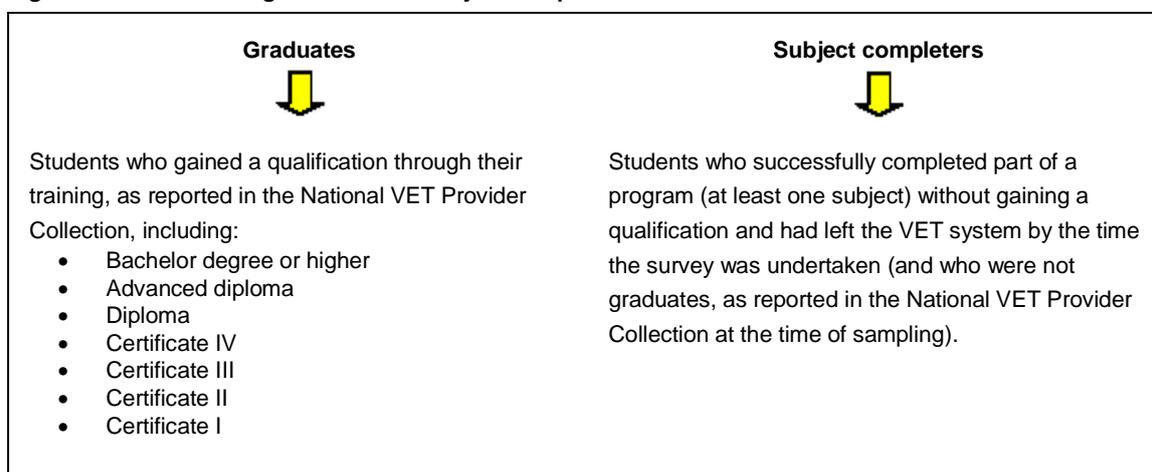
Population

The population comes from the National VET Provider Collection. The collection holds details on students, the training undertaken, and their achievement. The information is sourced from student enrolment records that are submitted to NCVER either directly from training providers or via state training authorities (STAs) prior to 4 April 2018. The National VET Provider Collection is managed in accordance with the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS).²

Student groups

The *VET student outcomes* series collects information on the outcomes of graduates and subject completers as defined in figure 1.

Figure 1 Definition of graduates and subject completers



Due to lags in reporting, it is not possible to identify from the sampling frame ‘actual’ subject completers; that is, those students who have successfully completed part of a program and then left the VET system. Instead, a sample of *potential* subject completers that includes subject completers and students who are continuing in the VET system is selected. The final status of respondents is determined through the survey responses. For further information, refer to the *Classification of graduates and subject completers for reporting* section in this document.

² For more information regarding the National VET Provider Collection please refer to Australian vocational education and training statistics explained at <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vet-statistics-explained>>.

The following hierarchy was applied to the selection of graduates in the population.³

- Where a student had completed two or more programs, the record with the higher qualification level was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more programs at the same qualification level, the record with the highest number of program enrolment hours was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more programs with the same program enrolment hours, the record with the lowest program field of education was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more programs at the same program field of education level, the record with the highest program record identifier was selected.

The following hierarchy was applied to the selection of potential subject completers in the population.

- Where a student met the definition of a potential subject completer and a graduate, the graduate record was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects, the record with the higher qualification level was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects at the same qualification level, the record with the highest number of subject enrolment hours was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects with the same number of subject enrolment hours, the record with the lowest program field of education was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects at same field of education, the record with the highest program record identifier was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects with the same program record identifier, the record with the highest subject record identifier was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects with the same subject record identifier, the record with the most recent date of completion was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects with the same date of completion, the record with the most recent commencement date was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects with the same date of commencement, the record with the highest funding source was selected.
- Where a student had completed two or more subjects with the same funding source, the first record was selected based on the above sorted algorithm.

Sampling frame

Due to overlaps in the organisations submitting data⁴, it is possible for the same training activity to be reported multiple times. It is also possible for a student to complete more than one program/subject during the year. To avoid sending a student multiple surveys, only one record per student was

³ For further information on the data elements that are used for sorting and selecting records for sampling, refer to https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/file/0011/10316/AVETMISS_Data_element_definitions_2_2.pdf

⁴ It is possible for a training provider to submit their data on training activity either directly to NCVER for reporting in the National VET Provider Collection (the survey frame) or via their STA.

selected for the sampling frame. This involves a de-duplication process between organisations' data submissions based on the unique student identifier (USI) or the encrypted name identifier, date of birth and sex, as is described below.

- Student type: the graduate record was selected where the same student met both the definition of a potential subject completer and a graduate.
- Program level of education: records with the highest qualification level were selected first.
- Program completed hours: records with the highest hours were selected first.
- Skill set status (for potential subject completer records only): the skill set record was selected first where the same student met both the definition of a skill set completer and a subject completer.
- Subject nominal hours (for potential subject completer records only): records with the highest subject contact hours were selected first.
- Submitter type (for records with a USI only): the record submitted by the STA was selected first where the student record was submitted by both an STA and RTO.

After the de-deduplication process, the sampling frame was restricted to records whose contact details could be obtained to send survey invitations (refer to the *Source of contact details* section in this document). After this, the sample was drawn.

Sampling design

The sample was conducted in two parts: one sample was drawn for graduates and an independent sample was drawn for potential subject completers.

Graduates were selected using a stratified random sample, with the stratum defined by state of residence. To meet reporting requirements, all graduates meeting any of the following conditions were selected in the sample with certainty:

- state/territory of residence is Tasmania, the Northern Territory, or the Australian Capital Territory
- the graduate is from an RTO with between 100 and 1250 graduates on the frame
- the graduate is from a course with between 300 and 350 graduates on the frame.

For the remaining graduates, the sample was selected using systematic sampling within strata, where units were sorted by provider type, funding source, age, sex, broad field of education, remoteness score, and Indigenous status. This results in the sample being implicitly stratified by these variables, and we would expect the sample to be representative of the population with respect to the distribution of these variables.

For subject completers, a stratified random sampling design was used with strata defined by cross-classifying state/territory (8 levels), provider type (4 levels: TAFE, university, community education provider, or private training provider) and funding source (2 levels: Commonwealth/state-funded or fee-for-service). These strata aligned with reporting domains at the national and state/territory level, which allows for control of sample size in these domains. In addition, all potential subject completers from an RTO with between 860 and 900 potential subject completers on the frame were included in a certainty stratum. Within the non-certainty strata, units were selected using systematic probability proportional to size sampling. The size measure was used to increase the chance that units from

targeted RTOs (at least 860 potential subject completers on the frame) were sampled. Before sampling, units were sorted by provider type, funding source, age, sex, broad field of education, remoteness score, and Indigenous status to ensure the sample was representative with respect to these variables.

Source of contact details

Prior to the expansion of the survey to include fee-for-service students from private training providers, contact details were sourced from STAs. This model could not be scaled up to cover students from all training providers in the survey expansion because many providers do not submit their data on training activity via an STA. For this reason, NCVET sought approval from the VET Data Access Committee to source contact details from the USI Office, where they could not be provided by STAs. Approval was provided to source contact details from the USI Registry for the 2018 survey.

Either the STA or the USI Office provided the name, address, telephone/mobile numbers and email address of students. The USI Registry was used to source contact details for the students at RTOs that submitted data to the National VET Provider Collection directly to NCVET (that is, not via the STA). The USI Registry could only provide contact details for these students if they had a USI. The sampling frame was therefore restricted to those with a USI for all records submitted to the National VET Provider Collection directly from RTOs (table 2).

Table 2 Per cent of students at sampling with a unique student identifier (USI) by state and territory of student residence, 2018 sample records submitted by RTOs directly to NCVET

State/territory of student residence	Per cent of graduates with a USI	Per cent of potential subject completers with a USI
New South Wales	99.8	86.9
Victoria	99.8	70.0
Queensland	99.0	90.1
South Australia	99.8	87.5
Western Australia	99.7	91.2
Tasmania	99.8	84.5
Northern Territory	100.0	93.2
Australian Capital Territory	99.9	65.8
Total	99.6	83.8

Survey invitations were sent to 736 278 students: 393 161 graduates and 343 117 potential subject completers (table 3).

Table 3 The population¹ and the number of students invited to complete the 2018 survey, for graduates and potential subject completers

	Population ¹	Survey invitations
Graduates	451 321	393 161
Potential subject completers	2 726 376	343 117
Total	3 177 697	736 278

Note: ¹ The population figures are prior to the de-deduplication process between data submissions that occurs to ensure students only receive one survey invitation.

Fieldwork

The 2018 data were collected by way of a self-enumeration online questionnaire or telephone interviewing. The details of the fieldwork methodology are provided below.

Email

An invitation to complete the survey online was sent to all students with a valid email address from 4 June to 8 June 2018. This email invitation contained a unique login code and an embedded link with direct access to the online survey.

Ten reminder emails with the embedded link to the online survey were sent to students who had not completed the survey. These emails were sent from 8 to 9 June, 15 to 16 June, 22 to 24 June, 29 to 30 June, 6 to 7 July, 9 to 13 July, 23 to 26 July, 31 July to 3 August, 8 to 15 August and 17 to 18 August. Email reminders contained a link to the survey, along with each student's unique login code.

SMS communications

Students who had a valid mobile number, but who did not have an email address were sent an SMS invitation to participate in the survey between 4 and 9 June 2018. Students who had a valid email address but whose email invitation was sent to a junk folder⁵ were sent an SMS survey invite from 13 to 16 June.

Following these initial SMS invitations, two SMS reminders were sent to all students with a valid mobile number who had not completed the survey. The first reminder was sent to students after the hard-copy letters were received from 9 to 12 July. This reminder mentioned the prize draw. The final (non-incentivised) reminder was sent to all students who had not completed the survey on 16 to 18 August 2018.

Personalised letter

Non-respondents with a mailing address were sent a hard-copy letter approximately four weeks after the initial email or SMS contact reminding/inviting them to complete the survey. The sending of the letters were staggered by state/territory, with students receiving the letter between 8 and 16 July 2018.

Telephone follow-up

Telephone interviewing commenced approximately six weeks after the initial letter was sent with the aim of boosting survey responses. Over 7000 students completed the survey over the telephone to boost numbers in low-responding student groups (for example, Indigenous students and students from remote and very remote areas) and to boost responses for selected RTOs.

Potential subject completers who were classified as continuing students were thanked for their time and interviews terminated as soon as their status was determined.

⁵ An analysis of the rate that individuals opened the initial email invitation suggested that emails were being directed to junk folders for selected email domains.

Financial incentive

A financial incentive, managed by the fieldwork contractor, was offered as a means of increasing the response rate. A rolling prize draw structure was used to maximise early response rates by offering more chances to win the earlier the survey is completed. Six prize draws were conducted, timed to coincide with reminder activity, with winners selected at random (table 4).

Table 4 Prize draw details, 2018

Prize draw	Close date	Prize draw details	Total prize value
1	10 June	1 x \$1,000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4,000
2	24 June	1 x \$1,000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4,000
3	8 July	1 x \$1,000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4,000
4	22 July	1 x \$1,000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4,000
5	5 August	1 x \$1,000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4,000
6	19 August	1 x \$1,000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4,000

Privacy

All students were sent a link to the privacy notice. The privacy notice complied with the Australian Privacy Principles and provided further information on how personal information would be managed and protected. For further information on the privacy notice, refer to <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/information-for-student-outcomes-survey-participants>.

Students' names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses were used by the fieldwork contractor during the fieldwork stage. The fieldwork contractor worked with an external service provider for printing and collation services. The fieldwork contractor provided the students' contact details to the printing provider for the purposes of administering the survey. Contact details of students held by the fieldwork contractor or the external printing provider for the purpose of this survey are destroyed upon conclusion of the project.

Survey response

Response rate

The national response rate for graduates and subject completers was 36.6% and 24.8% respectively. Details of the response rates achieved at the national level for students are shown in table 5.

Table 5 Survey response summary for graduates and potential subject completers, 2018

	Graduates		Potential subject completers	
	Number	%	Number	%
Survey invitations	393 161	na	343 117	na
Responded ¹	144 057	36.6	84 997	24.8
Did not respond	249 104	63.4	258 120	75.2
Mail returned to sender	17 692	4.5	14 868	4.3
Email return to sender	5 451	1.4	5 129	1.5
SMS return to sender	49 769	12.7	42 181	12.3
Refused	38 484	9.8	39 097	11.4
No response	137 708	35.0	117 748	45.7

Notes 1 'Responded' includes 205 graduates who were removed from reporting because they were out of scope of meeting the definition of a graduate.

Table 6 shows the response rates by type of contact details available to send survey invites/reminders.

Table 6 Survey response rates for students by type of contact details, 2018 (%)

Type of contact details	Group at sampling	
	Graduates	Potential subject completers
Email, address and mobile	39.5	28.8
Email and address	29.1	24.2
Email and mobile	32.0	22.4
Email only	23.7	17.9
Address and mobile	19.2	12.0
Address only	6.1	4.1
Mobile only	11.7	7.0
Total	36.6	24.8

Tables 7 shows the response rates for students by state or territory of student residential address.

Table 7 Survey response rates for students by state and territory of student residential address, 2018 (%)

State/territory of student residential address	Group at sampling	
	Graduates	Potential subject completers
New South Wales	40.1	25.9
Victoria	32.8	25.7
Queensland	34.6	23.2
South Australia	40.2	27.3
Western Australia	36.8	21.7
Tasmania	42.9	26.8
Northern Territory	36.5	19.9
Australian Capital Territory	44.1	29.3
Total	36.6	24.8

Estimation

Classification of graduates and subject completers for reporting

Graduates were classified as per the sampling frame (National VET Provider Collection). On completion of the fieldwork, potential subject completer respondents were classified into one of three broad groups: subject completers, continuing students, or relevant questions not answered, based on the answers to the following questions.

- ‘Are you still enrolled in the training?’ (Question 1 in the 2018 survey, only answered by potential subject completers).
- ‘Have you enrolled in any other study since undertaking the training?’ (Question 16 in the 2018 survey).
- ‘Where did you enrol to do this study?’ (Question 17 in the 2018 survey).

Those classified as continuing students in the potential subject completer sample, and those with the relevant questions not answered, were excluded from reporting. Table 8 shows the reporting status (final status) of all student respondents by their group at sampling. Of the 84 997 respondents selected as potential subject completers, 63 092 (74.2%) were reported as ‘actual’ subject completers in survey outputs. This gives a final number of 143 852 graduates and 63 092 ‘actual’ subject completers (62.9 % and 27.6% of the responding sample respectively).

Table 8 Reporting status of all student respondents by group at sampling, 2018

	Group at sampling			
	Graduates		Potential subject completers	
Initial status	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Graduates	143 852	100.0	na	na
Subject completers	na	na	63 092	74.2
Continuing students	na	na	20 332	23.9
Relevant questions not answered	na	na	1 573	1.9
Total	143 852	100.0	84 997	100.0

Throughout all NCVET published reports the term ‘subject completer’ exclusively refers to ‘actual’ subject completers; that is, students who did not finish a course and who did not continue in the VET system.

Weighting

The sample of respondents may not accurately represent the population due to known sources of bias such as unequal probability of selection, as well as other sources of bias such as non-response. The weighting procedure attempts to minimise bias so that the weighted sample represents the population and can be used to produce accurate estimates.

The weighting procedure consisted of three main steps:

1. A base weight was calculated for each sampled unit as the inverse of the probability that unit was selected in the sample.
2. A raking procedure was used to adjust the weights to account for non-response and to ensure weighted marginal distributions matched population marginal distributions. Variables chosen for raking were those that were important predictors of non-response and key reporting variables, as well as key reporting variables:
 - student type (2 categories: subject completer, graduate)
 - provider type (4 categories: TAFE, university, community education provider and private training provider)
 - state/territory of residence (8 categories: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory)
 - funding source (2 categories: Commonwealth/state-funded and fee-for-service)
 - sex (2 categories: male, female)
 - age group (4 ranges: 18 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 49 years and 50 years and over).
3. Large weights were trimmed to reduce variance.

Reliability of estimates

Two types of error are possible in an estimate based on a survey: sampling error and non-sampling error. *Non-sampling error* may occur for reasons such as non-response bias, incorrect responses, interviewer errors, attrition and processing errors. *Sampling error* occurs because estimates are calculated from a random sample of the population. The estimates may differ from the true population value (that is, the value if the whole population had been sampled and responded to the survey) as well from estimates that would be produced if a different sample had by chance been selected.

By convention, a 95% confidence level is used to judge the amount of sampling error in an estimate. The confidence interval for an estimate is calculated using the formula:

$$\text{estimate} \pm 1.96 \times \text{SE}$$

where SE is the standard error of the estimate returned by SAS software (the standard error is an estimate of how much variation there is expected to be in a published estimate from one sample to another, based on the randomness of sample selection), taking into account the sampling design and population size. The chance that a 95% confidence interval contains the true population value is 19 in 20.

The half-width of the confidence interval, $1.96 \times \text{SE}$, is often referred to as the *margin of error*. The margin of error is provided for key variables in the Excel summary tables at <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/vet-student-outcomes> and can be used to calculate the 95% confidence intervals.

Attachment A: History of the survey

The National Student Outcomes Survey was first conducted in 1995 and has been conducted annually by NCVET since 1997.

1995 (conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics), 1997 and 1998

- The survey was known as the Graduate Destination Survey, and was a census of TAFE graduates with a qualification involving at least 200 hours or one semester of training.

1999

- The survey was renamed the Student Outcomes Survey, and remained a census of graduates with a qualification involving at least 200 hours or one semester of training.
- For the first time, a small sample survey of subject completers was introduced. The survey was also expanded to include students from community education, private training and other government providers.
- Separate questionnaires were used for graduates and subject completers.
- Only information on TAFE students was published.

2000, 2001 and 2002

- A sample survey of graduates and subject completers. For graduates, the minimum training length condition was removed.
- Separate questionnaires continued to be used for graduates and subject completers.

2003

- The option to complete the survey via the internet was introduced.
- Students selected as subject completers who identified themselves as graduates were reported as graduates. Previously, responses of these people were collected, but not used in reporting. At the aggregate level, this change made no difference, but for sub-populations the effect may be greater.

2004

- For the first time the same questionnaire was used for graduates and subject completers.

2005

- Information on government-funded students from community education and private training providers was published for the first time.

2006, 2007 and 2008

- No changes were made.

2009

- A new recognition of prior learning (RPL) question block was included in the survey, replacing the one used previously.

2010

- No changes were made.

2011

- For the first time those with email addresses were invited to complete the survey online via email and/or a primary approach letter rather than being sent a hard-copy questionnaire.

2012

- For the first time ALL respondents received a primary approach letter inviting them to complete the survey online at the first mailing, rather than a hard-copy questionnaire. As in previous years, those with an email address also received an email invitation. Hard-copy questionnaires were only sent to those who did not complete online by a certain date.
- Students selected as potential subject completers who identified themselves as graduates were modelled to determine final graduate or subject completer status. Previously, responses of these students were reported as graduates. Data were backdated to 2005.

2013

- Sampling changed from proportional allocation to sampling based on more balanced sampling error across institutes for the main survey variable, labour force status after training. The target sampling error for graduates was 4% and 8% for subject completers, per institute.

2014

- The scope was expanded to include students from all jurisdictions who completed their training with a community education provider. This resulted in information being collected for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. Prior to 2014 only students from community education providers in New South Wales and Victoria were included in the survey.

2015

- Survey responses from fee-for-service students from community education providers were excluded from reporting and the summary publication was renamed *Government-funded student outcomes*. Data were backdated to 2006.

2016

- The survey expanded to include graduates from private training providers who either paid for their training themselves or whose employer paid for the training (otherwise known as fee-for-service students). Previously, only students who received government funding were included in the survey.
- The questionnaire was revised to a shorter, more user-friendly version that could be used on mobile devices. This questionnaire was implemented in 2016 for all students (TAFE, universities, other government providers, private training providers and community education providers).
- As a result of shortening the questionnaire, the questions used to classify subject completers were streamlined, and the classification of subject completers was improved. Data for subject completers in previous years were backdated to 2006 using this improved derivation.

2017

- The expanded survey scope, which includes fee-for-service students from private training and community education providers, was applied to subject completers.
- International onshore VET graduates were included as an additional component of the National Student Outcomes Survey.
- The reminder postcard and the hard-copy questionnaire were removed from the contact methodology.
- The 2017 National Student Outcomes Surveys and onwards exclude students aged under 18 years of age. Data from previous years were backdated.
- Government-funded training was broadly defined as all activity delivered by government providers and government-funded activity delivered by community education and private training providers. In 2018 the scope of government-funded training was revised and data for previous years have been back-cast. Government-funded training now includes only Commonwealth and state/territory government-funded training (either Commonwealth or state-recurrent funding, Commonwealth specific-purpose funding or state-specific funding) from all training providers. All fee-for-service activity from training providers has been excluded.
- The derivation of graduates and subject completers changed to be more in line with administrative data. Previously, due to lags in the reporting of a large number of qualifications completed to the National VET Provider Collection, government-funded students who were sampled as subject completers were reported as graduates if they self-reported completing a qualification and were deemed eligible for that qualification via a logistic regression model. From 2018, those who self-report completing a qualification, are reported as subject completers, as per the administrative data (or sample selection). Data have been back-cast for 2016, the year the data quality improvement is first seen. For further information, refer to the technical paper 'Student Outcomes Survey: self-reported graduate model review', available at <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/student-outcomes-survey-self-reported-graduate-model-review>.

2018

- Non-respondents with a mailing address were sent a hard copy letter approximately four weeks after the initial email contact. This represents a change to the previous methodology where the hard-copy letter was sent to all students at the commencement of the survey.
- This year, more RTOs will receive data about their students' satisfaction and training outcomes than ever before. The 2018 survey was designed to provide data for all RTOs with:
 - 100 or more domestic graduates in 2017
 - 860 or more domestic potential subject completers in 2017.