



# National Student Outcomes Survey 2018 (International component): technical notes

National Centre for Vocational  
Education Research

This document was produced as an added resource for further information on *International onshore VET graduate outcomes 2018*. The report is available on the NCVER Portal: [www.ncver.edu.au](http://www.ncver.edu.au).

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# Introduction

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 those who completed their training in the previous calendar year.

International students who completed their VET qualification in Australia in 2017 were surveyed as an additional component to the 2018 National Student Outcomes Survey. This includes students undertaking VET qualifications delivered by:

- TAFE (technical and further education) institutes
- universities
- community education providers
- private training providers.

The international component of the survey excludes:

- international graduates who completed their training with an Australian training provider offshore
- graduates under 18 years of age.

Data from the international component of the 2018 National Student Outcomes Survey are presented in *International onshore VET graduate outcomes 2018*. Information in this publication is presented on the outcomes of international onshore VET graduates who completed their training in the Australian VET system in 2017, with the data collected in mid-2018.

# Population

The population for the international component of the National Student Outcomes Survey came from the National VET Provider Collection<sup>1</sup>. The collection holds details on students, the training undertaken, and their achievement. The information is sourced from student enrolment records that are submitted to NCVET either directly from training providers or via state training authorities (STAs). The National VET Provider Collection is managed in accordance with the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS).

The international component of the National Outcome Survey collects information on graduates only. Students were considered an in-scope graduate if they undertook training at Certificate I level or higher, and:

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

The following hierarchy was applied to the derivation of the international onshore VET graduate population where a graduate had completed two or more qualifications:

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

Applying this hierarchy resulted in a population of 52 198 international onshore VET graduates. It was this population from which the mailing list for the survey was drawn.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>>.

# Sampling frame

The sampling frame was comprised of international onshore graduates for whom contact details were available.

Contact details were sourced using two different methods. Where students had a unique student identifier (USI), contact details were sourced from the USI Office. An application to source contact details using this method was submitted to, and approved by, the VET Data Access Committee.

For students without a USI, NCVET requested contact details from State training authorities (STAs). Contact details were sourced using this method for international onshore graduates undertaking training at:

- TAFE in New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, and
- Private training providers in South Australia and the Northern Territory.

The remaining international onshore graduates, for whom contact details were not available, were excluded from the sampling frame.

There were 52 198 international onshore graduates in scope for the international component, of which 47 635 received an invitation to complete the survey. Of these, 11 265 responded to the survey.

# Survey design

The international component of the 2018 survey was designed to report on the outcomes of international onshore VET graduates who paid for their training (see table 1).

**Table 1 Scope of the International onshore VET graduate outcomes publication**

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

## Survey response

The national response rate for international onshore VET graduates was 23.7% (see table 2).

**Table 2 Survey response summary for international onshore VET graduates, 2018**

	Graduates	
	n	%
Survey invitations	47 635	N/A
Responded	11 265	23.6
Did not respond	36 370	76.4
Email return to sender	1 447	3.0
SMS return to sender	11 767	24.7
Refused	1 493	3.1
No response	21 663	45.5

Table 3 shows the response rates by type of contact details available to send survey invites/reminders.

**Table 3 Survey response rates for international onshore VET graduates by type of contact details, 2018 (%)**

	Graduates
	%
Email and mobile	25.2
Email only	21.0
Mobile only	13.0

Table 4 shows the response rates for graduates by contact details source.

**Table 4 Survey response rates for international onshore VET graduates by contact details source, 2018 (%)**

Contact details source	Base (n)	Responses (n)	Response rate (%)
USI Register	40 533	9 759	24.1
Non-USI Register total	7 102	1 506	21.2
NSW TAFE	1 902	498	26.2
WA TAFE	1 229	377	30.7
SA TAFE	158	67	42.4
SA Private Provider	479	157	32.8
NT TAFE	62	30	48.4
NT Private Provider	16	3	18.8

## Weighting

Weighting is necessary to ensure the respondents represent the population as well as possible. The weighting procedure attempts to minimise bias so that the weighted responses represent the population and can be used to produce accurate estimates.

The weighting procedure consisted of four main steps:

1. A base weight was calculated for each unit, based on the probability of selection. Since a census approach was used, the base weight is equal to 1 for every respondent.
2. Base weights were adjusted to account for de-duplication of the population file, which ensured that individuals are only listed once on the sampling frame.
3. 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:
  - state/territory of training organisation (eight categories: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory)
  - age group (four ranges: 18–24, 25–34, 35–49, 50 years and over)
  - provider type (four categories: TAFE, university, community education provider and private training provider)
  - sex (two categories: male, female)
4. Large weights were trimmed to reduce variance.

The population benchmarks used were based on the 2017 National VET Provider Collection.

## Fieldwork

### Email

An invitation to complete the survey online was sent to all international onshore graduates with a valid email address from 4 June to 6 June 2018. This email invitation contained a unique login code and an embedded link with direct access to the online survey.

Eight reminder emails with the embedded link to the online survey were sent to international onshore graduates 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, 9 to 10 July, 23 to 26 July, 8 to 15 August and 17 to 18 August 2018. Email reminders contained a link to the survey, along with each student's unique login code.

### SMS communications

International onshore graduates who had a valid Australian mobile number, but who did not have an email address were sent an SMS invitation to participate in the survey between 4 and 8 June 2018.

International onshore graduates who had a valid email address but whose email invitation was sent to a junk folder were sent an SMS survey invite from 13 to 16 June 2018.

Following these initial SMS invitations, two SMS reminders were sent to all international onshore graduates with a valid Australian mobile number who had not completed the survey. This reminder mentioned the prize draw. The final (non-incentivised) reminder was sent to all international onshore graduates who had not completed the survey on 16 to 18 August 2018.

## Telephone follow-up

Telephone interviewing commenced in August with the aim of boosting survey responses. Over 1000 international onshore graduates completed the survey over the telephone.

## Financial incentive

International onshore graduates were eligible to win prizes in the same prize draw offered in the National Student Outcomes Survey. This 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. Five prize draws were conducted, timed to coincide with reminder activity, with winners selected at random (see table 5).

**Table 5 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 1 x \$250 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
2	24 June	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 1 x \$250 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
3	8 July	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 1 x \$250 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
4	22 July	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 1 x \$250 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
5	5 August	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 1 x \$250 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$4 000
6	19 August	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 1 x \$250 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$4 000

## Privacy

International graduates received a primary approach email, with a link to an online privacy notice, which complied with the Australian Privacy Principles. The privacy notice stated that NCVER would not release information from the survey that would enable an individual survey respondent to be identified. For further information on the privacy notice, refer to the 2018 primary approach email <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/collection/student-outcomes/international-onshore-vet-graduate-outcomes/>>

Graduates' names, telephone numbers and email addresses were used by the fieldwork contractor during the fieldwork stage. Contact details of graduates held by the fieldwork contractor for the purpose of this survey are destroyed upon conclusion of the project.

# Survey data

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

- 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 graduates was also obtained from the National VET Provider Collection. This included details of graduates' personal characteristics and some training information.

In addition, the international component of the National Student Outcomes Survey collected data on:

- country of further study (for those undertaking further study)
- country of employment after training (for those employed after training)
- satisfaction with main job (for those employed after training)
- barriers faced when looking for work
- current country of residence
- type of visa held (for those residing in Australia).

## Reference period

Graduates were asked to provide information with respect to two reference periods.

The first reference date was 25 May 2018. Graduates were asked to supply information on labour force status, employment characteristics and additional study, and also give opinions on their training and suggestions for its improvement.

The second reference period covered the six months before starting the training. Graduates were asked to supply information on labour force status, and employment characteristics.

## 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,  $1.96 \times SE$ , 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.