



National Student
Outcomes Survey 2023
– 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 qualification completer outcomes 2023*. The report is available on the NCVER Portal: <www.ncver.edu.au>.

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This document should be attributed as NCVER 2024, *National Student Outcomes Survey 2023 – international component: technical notes*, NCVER, Adelaide.

This work has been produced by NCVER on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments, with funding provided through the Australian Government Department of Education.

Published by NCVER, ABN 87 007 967 311

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Contents

- Tables 4
- Introduction 5
- Survey scope 5
- Questionnaire design 5
 - Reference periods 6
- Survey methodology 7
 - Population 7
 - Sampling frame 8
- Fieldwork 9
 - Financial incentive 9
 - Email communications 9
 - SMS communications 9
 - Privacy 10
 - Survey response 10
- Estimation 10
 - Weighting 10
 - Reliability of estimates 11

Tables

1	Prize draw details, 2023	9
2	Survey response summary for international onshore VET qualification completers, 2023	10

Introduction

International onshore VET qualification completer outcomes 2023 provides a summary of the outcomes of international students who completed nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) in Australia during 2022 using data collected in 2023. The figures are derived from the international component of the National Student Outcomes Survey, which is an annual survey of VET students. The National Student Outcomes Survey collects information on VET students' reasons for training and their employment outcomes, satisfaction with training and further study outcomes.

This document provides information about the international component of the National Student Outcomes Survey.

Survey scope

Students are considered in scope of the international component if they completed nationally recognised training delivered by RTOs at certificate I level or higher, and they:

- paid for the training, and
- were 15 years of age or older on 26 May 2023, and
- were enrolled in 2022, and
- completed their qualification in Australia in 2022, and
- had successfully completed at least one subject during 2022, and
- had subject nominal hours reported during 2022.

Out of scope of the survey are international qualification completers who completed their training with an Australian training provider offshore.

Questionnaire design

The 2023 National Student Outcomes Survey collected data on qualification completers':

- main reason for training and whether they achieved that reason
- employment characteristics before and after training
- further study activity
- opinions of, and satisfaction with, the training and training provider
- suggestions for improvement.

In addition, the 2023 international component of the National Student Outcomes Survey collected data on:

- whether further study was undertaken in Australia or another country (for those undertaking further study)
- whether employed after training in Australia or another country (for those employed after training)
- satisfaction with main job (for those employed after training)
- barriers faced when looking for work
- current country of residence and nationality on passport
- type of visa held (for those residing in Australia)
- satisfaction with support on arrival in Australia by training provider
- importance of reasons to study in Australia
- type of accommodation while training
- satisfaction with living in Australia while training.

Questionnaire changes in 2023

- Questions were removed on whether online learning was undertaken during the training, whether satisfied with support from teachers/trainers during online learning and whether satisfied with the overall quality of online learning experiences.
- Questions were removed on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on aspects of training and on the main reason for not continuing training.

The 2023 questionnaire can be viewed from the publication page at <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/international-onshore-vet-qualification-completer-outcomes>.

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

Reference periods

Qualification completers were asked to provide information with respect to two reference periods.

The first reference date was 26 May 2023. Qualification completers were asked to supply information on labour force status, employment characteristics, country of current residence and visa type.

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

Survey methodology

Population

The population includes all students in scope of the survey. The population for the international component of the National Student Outcomes Survey came from data submitted as of 17 April 2023 to the National VET Provider Collection. The National VET Provider 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/territory training authorities (STAs). The National VET Provider Collection is an administrative collection governed by the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard: VET Provider Collection Specifications Release 8.0 (AVETMISS Release 8.0) and AVETMISS Data Element Definitions Edition 2.3, which are available at: <www.ncver.edu.au>. ¹

Removing duplicate training activity

Due to overlaps in the organisations submitting data² to NCVER, it is possible for the same training activity to be reported multiple times. A de-duplication process is applied to identify and remove duplicates where the same activity is reported for the same training provider in the same year via different data submitters. The de-duplication process requires an exact match on all the following fields:

- encrypted name identifier
- date of birth
- gender
- training organisation identifier
- program identifier
- subject identifier
- activity start date.

When duplicate training activity is identified, the data submitted by STAs is retained in the survey population.

Selecting one record within an RTO

Some students undertook more than one qualification within an RTO. In such cases, the following hierarchy was applied to the derivation of the international onshore VET qualification completer population:

- where a student had completed two or more qualifications, the record with the higher qualification level was selected.

¹ For more information regarding the national collections please refer to Australian vocational education and training statistics explained at <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/vet-statistics-explained>>.

² It is possible for a training provider to submit their data on training activity either directly, or via their STA, to NCVER for reporting in the National VET Provider Collection (the survey frame).

- where a student had completed two or more qualifications at the same qualification level, the record with the highest number of hours was selected.
- where a student had completed two or more qualifications with the same number of hours, the first record from the sorted program identifier (descending order) was selected.
- where a student had completed two or more qualifications with the same program identifier, the record with a valid USI was selected.

The application of this methodology resulted in a population of 66 744 international onshore VET qualification completers.

Sampling frame

The international survey component was conducted as a census of the sampling frame. The sampling frame refers to the de-duplicated records from the population available for surveying and for which contact details could be obtained to send survey invitations. This section describes the methodology used to create the sampling frame.

To reduce respondent burden, qualification completers were removed from the sampling frame if they were:

- reported in the international onshore VET qualification completer population file as completing multiple qualifications during 2022 across multiple RTOs³
- surveyed for the 2023 domestic student component of the survey.

The sampling frame was also restricted to international onshore VET qualification completers:

- available for surveying as reported in the 'survey contact status' field in the National VET Provider Collection⁴
- whose student contact details could be obtained to send survey invitations.

The application of this methodology resulted in 64 599 qualification completers in the sampling frame.

Source of contact details

For the 2023 survey, students' contact details (i.e. name, mobile number and email address) for the selected sample were sourced from:

- TAFE NSW;
- STAs, excluding authorities in New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory who requested NCVET provide the contact details;
- the Office of the Student Identifiers Registrar for students that had a unique student identifier; and/or
- NCVET from the Client Postal Details file submitted to the National VET Provider Collection.

³ In such cases, a hierarchy was applied to retain only one record for surveying in the sampling frame in order of reducing respondent burden. This was achieved by applying a similar hierarchy as per the methodology to retain only one student within an RTO. For details of the hierarchy, refer to the *Selecting one record within an RTO* section.

⁴ For further information on the Survey contact status field, refer to <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/rto-hub/statistical-standard-software/avetmiss-data-element-definitions-edition-2.3>>.

Fieldwork

The 2023 data were collected by way of a self-enumeration online questionnaire or telephone interview. The details of the fieldwork methodology are provided below.

Financial incentive

International onshore qualification completers were eligible to win prizes in the same prize draw offered in the domestic student component of 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. Ten prize draws were conducted, timed to coincide with reminder activity, with winners selected at random (table 1).

Table 1 Prize draw details, 2023

Prize draw	Close date	Prize draw details	Total prize value
1	14/6/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
2	21/6/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
3	28/6/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
4	5/7/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
5	12/7/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
6	19/7/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
7	26/7/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
8	2/8/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
9	9/8/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000
10	13/8/2023	1 x \$1 000, 2 x \$500 and 8 x \$250 EFTPOS gift-cards	\$4 000

Email communications

An invitation to complete the survey online was sent to all students with a valid email address from 5 to 9 June 2023. 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 timed to coincide with a weekly prize draw.

The content of invitation and reminder emails varied slightly, with different themes used to encourage survey participation, ranging from the importance of the survey to the chance to win a prize.

SMS communications

Students who had a valid mobile number but no email were sent an SMS invitation to complete the survey from 5 to 9 June 2023. Following these initial SMS communications, up to seven SMS reminders were sent to students with a valid mobile number who had not completed the survey.

Privacy

All students were sent a link to the privacy collection notice. The privacy notice complied with the Australian Privacy Principles and provided further information on how personal information would be managed and protected. The privacy collection notice can be viewed from the publication page at <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/international-onshore-vet-qualification-completer-outcomes>>.

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

Survey response

Following the provision and cleaning of contact details, survey invitations were sent to 58 836 qualification completers. Of these, 13 594 responded to the survey. The response rate is defined as the total number of questionnaires completed, expressed as a percentage of the total number of in-scope selections⁵. The national response rate for international onshore VET qualification completers was 23.1% (see table 2).

Table 2 Survey response summary for international onshore VET qualification completers, 2023

	Qualification completers	
	Number	%
Survey invitations	58 836	100.0
Responded	13 594	23.1
Sample loss/other response ¹	7 262	12.3
Refused/ unsubscribed	4 289	7.3
No response	33 691	57.3

Note 1 Sample loss includes returned to sender records. Other response refers to those who contacted the survey contractor's helpdesk with a query after the survey had closed and students who contacted the helpdesk to indicate they were of ill health and could not complete the survey.

Estimation

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.

⁵ Out of scope selections comprise students who contacted the survey fieldwork contractor to indicate they did not undertake the training they were being surveyed about.

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, 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 (five ranges: 15–19, 20–24, 25–34, 35–49, 50 years and over)
 - provider type (four categories: TAFE institutes, universities, community education providers and private training providers/enterprise providers)
 - gender (three categories: males, females, other or not stated)
4. Large weights were trimmed to reduce variance.

The population benchmarks used were based on the 2022 National VET Provider Collection.

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. Non-response bias occurs when the characteristics of those not responding to the survey differ from those responding to the survey in relation to the variables or items of interest. Non-response can affect the reliability of results and can introduce bias.

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 been selected by chance.

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 all estimates in the DataBuilder and Excel products at <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collection/student-outcomes/international-onshore-vet-qualification-completer-outcomes> and can be used to calculate the 95% confidence intervals.