NCVER

Counting students in 'total VET activity'

Vocational education and training (VET) by nature is diverse, spanning a wide range of learning engagements from full-time programs across multiple years, short 'skill set' programs, to single subject enrolments. Student participation can also be wide ranging, with some students receiving training from multiple training providers within the same year.

Prior to 2015, if a student was enrolled with more than one training provider during a collection period, it was possible for them to be counted more than once. From 1 January 2015, all new and continuing students undertaking nationally recognised VET in Australia are required to have a unique student identifier (USI) to receive a qualification or statement of attainment. The USI is a randomly generated alpha-numeric code recorded against any nationally recognised training undertaken and remains with an individual for life.

The implementation of the USI provides a mechanism with which to better count students. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) uses a two-step process to identify unique student records in *Total VET students and courses 2023*. In this process we use the USI, where available, to match student records. For records without a USI, we use the client identifier within each submission.

Table 1 shows the number of students with subject enrolments and/or program completions that were reported with a USI and without, by submission pathway. Note that no reporting scope has been applied to figures in this table.

Table 1   **The number of students with subject enrolments and/or program completions that were reported with a USI by submission pathway, 2023.**

	USI reported		USI missing		Total students
Submission pathway	('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)
State training authority	1 933.9	97.0	60.3	3.0	1 994.2
Board of Studies	110.4	60.4	72.5	39.6	182.8
Direct submitter	4 518.9	99.3	33.0	0.7	4 552.0
Total	**6 563.2**	**97.5**	**165.8**	**2.5**	**6 729.0**

Note: Includes all reported training activity. Does not take into account training activity that is exempt from reporting a USI.

No reporting scope has been applied to the figures in the table.

The total student number reported for Boards of Studies is post deduplication of training activity and is therefore lower than the reported number of VET in Schools students.

Sources: National VET Provider Collection 2023, National VET in Schools Collection 2023.

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Table 2 provides the number of students before and after the two-step process for counting students, and prior to the total VET publication scope being applied.

Table 2   Student counts before and after application of the two-step student counting process, 2019 to 2023.

Year	Students		
	Before counting process	After counting process	% Removed
2019	5 501 702	4 387 499	20.3
2020	5 058 680	4 068 886	19.6
2021	5 635 806	4 436 849	21.3
2022	5 981 032	4 697 179	21.5
2023	6 729 036	5 206 339	22.6

Note: Includes all reported training activity. Does not take into account training activity that is exempt from reporting a USI. No reporting scope has been applied to the figures in the table.

Sources: National VET Provider Collection 2023 and National VET in Schools Collection 2023.

It is worth noting that although instances of missing USIs are decreasing over time, the number is unlikely to reach zero while valid exemptions exist. In addition, it is possible for students to have multiple USIs and although a mechanism exists to account for this in the USI Transcript Service, it can result in small amounts of duplication within the data.

The student counting process allows us to derive demographic information for each student. In certain products, including the publication and DataBuilder, we can also report training attributes for students, including those who have studied in multiple programs or at different RTOs in a calendar year. For these we can report all training attributes for the student, meaning the sum of these attributes will add to more than the reported total.

For further information on the process of counting students in *Total VET students and courses 2023*, refer to the technical paper *Counting students in total VET students and courses*, available at <https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/796213/Technical-paper-Counting-students-in-Total-VET-students-and-courses.pdf>.