

ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard release

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) (2005–2021)

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About this release

This document presents key findings from the latest initial teacher education (ITE) data (2005–2021) in the ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard. This includes an additional two years of data (2020, 2021) from what was previously available (2005–2019).

The key findings in this document present a snapshot of the latest ITE data. More detailed data and analysis will be available in early 2024 through the ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard and the *National Trends: ITE Pipeline* report.

Summary

- **The nature of ITE study is changing** – over the last decade, and particularly since 2017, there has been a rapidly growing uptake of online and mixed modes of study among commencing ITE students.
- **ITE commencements have been gradually rising** – following a sharp fall in 2018, the number of students commencing an ITE program increased each year from 2019 to 2021.
- **The number of ITE graduates has been declining since 2017 but increased in 2021** – the number of ITE completions declined steadily from 2017 to 2020, but an increase in 2021 indicates some signs of recovery. This increase may reflect a ‘catch up’ as students who could not complete during lockdowns in 2020 completed their courses in the following year.
- **ITE students are less likely to complete their degrees** – ITE completion rates have declined consistently, across program types and degree levels, since 2017. This has implications for future teacher workforce supply.
- **Students are entering ITE study through a variety of pathways** – admissions into ITE programs through VET have increased since 2017, along with those directly out of school.

Key findings

Commencements

Commencements form the first stage of the ITE pipeline – students who have started a program of study in the calendar year, which will allow them to register to teach.

- ITE commencements fluctuated over the period from 2017 to 2021 – falling sharply in 2018 before gradually trending upwards from 2019.
- In 2021, a total of 29,674 students commenced an ITE program, up from 27,654 in 2020:
 - ITE commencements have increased by 14% from 2019 (n = 26,145) to 2021 (n = 29,674), stabilising after a sharp decline of 18% from 2017 (n = 32,640) to 2018 (n = 26,594).

Demographics of commencing students

Age

- In 2021, 76% of commencing ITE students were aged 30 years or younger, a 3-percentage point drop from 2019 (79%).
- Differences in the age profile of commencing undergraduate and postgraduate ITE students have increased over time:
 - Undergraduate ITE commencements, aged 20 or younger – 2017: 34%; 2021: 37% (+3 percentage points)
 - Postgraduate ITE commencements, aged 31 or older – 2017: 36%; 2021: 39% (+3 percentage points).

Gender

- In 2021, most commencing ITE students were women (74%), an increase of 2 percentage points since 2017 (72%).

Remoteness

- In 2021, 20% of commencing ITE students lived in regional or remote areas. This proportion has gradually declined over time, falling from a peak of 23% in 2018.

Disability

- The proportion of commencing ITE students with a disability increased from 5% in 2017 to 7% in 2021 (+2 percentage points).

Study characteristics of commencing students

Full-time study

- In 2021, 82% of commencing ITE students were studying full-time, an increase from 79% in 2017 (+3 percentage points).

Degree level

- Nearly one-third (30%) of ITE commencements were in postgraduate degrees in 2021. The proportion of postgraduate ITE commencements increased at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 33% in 2020, before declining in 2021.

Study mode

The nature of ITE study is changing – since 2017, there has been a rapidly growing uptake of external (typically online) and mixed¹ modes of study.

- From 2017 to 2021, the proportion of commencing ITE students undertaking their study through mixed or online modes of attendance increased from 37% to 46% (+9 percentage points).
Since 2017:
 - Online mode of attendance has increased by 3 percentage points to 30% in 2021
 - Mixed mode of attendance has increased by 6 percentage points to 16% in 2021.
- Over the same period, there has been an equivalent decline in the proportion of commencing ITE students studying internally (on-campus), falling from 63% to 54% (-9 percentage points).

Basis of admission

There are a variety of ways students can enter an ITE program. For example, students may enter directly from secondary education or after undertaking tertiary education or work. There have been some changes over time in the ways ITE students are admitted to their programs. In particular, the proportion admitted through VET has risen (particularly for early childhood and primary programs).

Higher education pathway

- Almost all commencing postgraduate ITE students entered through a higher education pathway in 2021 (95%).
- In 2021, 33% of commencing undergraduate ITE students entered through a higher education pathway. This is a 12-percentage point increase from 21% in 2017.

Secondary pathway²

- In 2021, 38% of commencing undergraduate ITE students were admitted through a secondary pathway. This is a 4-percentage point increase from 34% in 2017.

ATAR

- The proportion of commencing undergraduate ITE students admitted on the basis of ATAR through a secondary pathway has declined by 10 percentage points from 70% in 2017 to 60% in 2021:³
 - Of those admitted on the basis of ATAR, the proportion of students entering on scores of 90 or above increased from 11% in 2017 to 13% in 2021 (+2 percentage points).

VET

From 2017 to 2021, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of ITE students admitted on the basis of VET across programs training early childhood teachers. Most of these entrants are likely to be early childhood educators studying to become teachers.

- Birth-to-five ITE programs – 2017: 57%; 2021: 66% (+9 percentage points)
- Birth-to-eight ITE programs – 2017: 29%; 2021: 34% (+5 percentage points)
- Birth-to-twelve ITE programs – 2017: 30%; 2021: 35% (+5 percentage points).

¹ A combination of online and on-campus study.

² Students who are admitted to an ITE program on the basis of recent secondary education (whether undertaken at school, VET or another Australian provider), typically recent Year 12 graduates.

³ Improvements to the Higher Education Student Data Collection's (HESDC) recording of basis of admission through secondary pathways may explain some of this change and helps with providing a clearer view of ATAR-based admissions.

Completions

- Completions represent the final stage of the ITE pipeline – students who, in any given year, have completed all requirements of their program.⁴ ITE completions have been gradually trending downwards since a peak in 2017 (n = 18,902), falling to a low of 15,042 in 2020 then increasing slightly to 15,397 in 2021:⁵
 - between 2017 and 2018 there was a 19% decline in completions and, as of 2021, this decline has not yet reversed.

Degree level

- Undergraduate programs accounted for 66% of all ITE completions in 2021, an increase of 5 percentage points from 2017 (61%).
- There has been an equivalent decline in postgraduate programs, accounting for 34% of all ITE completions in 2021 (2017: 39%).

Program type

The proportion of ITE completions in each program type have been stable from 2017 to 2021.

- In 2021, primary ITE programs comprised 38% of all ITE completions, followed closely by secondary programs (37%). Mixed ITE programs (primary and secondary combined) accounted for 4% of completions in 2021.
- Additionally, 3% of ITE completions were in birth-to-five programs; and a further 11% were across birth-to-eight and birth-to-twelve programs in 2021.

By state and territory

The proportion of completions by state and territory of student residence are broadly aligned with their relative population sizes.

- Since 2019, the proportion of ITE completions by students in NSW declined from 29% in 2019 to 23% in 2021 (-6 percentage points).
- Over the same period, there was a comparable increase (+8 percentage points) in the proportion of ITE completions by students in QLD from 15% in 2019 to 23% in 2021.
- The proportion of ITE completions in the NT increased from 0.5% in 2017 to 0.8% in 2021 (+59%).

⁴ The ATWD identifies students who have completed their program via Higher Education Student Data Collection (HESDC) records, as well as teacher regulatory authority records and Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) survey data.

⁵ Combined, completions in 2020 and 2021 (n = 30,439) are a reliable indicator of the total number of students who completed an ITE program over the last two years. The increase in ITE completions between 2020 and 2021 may actually be larger than currently reported - due to COVID-19, some students recorded as completing their degree in 2020 may not have been able to complete their placement requirements and subsequently completed in 2021.

Completion rates

Completion rates are calculated as the number of students who have completed their program over a four- or six-year timeframe⁶ as a proportion of those in their commencement cohort. Completion rates are presented by year of commencement to examine what proportion of a commencing cohort completed their program of study, and how long it took.

Degree level

Completion rates have been steadily declining for undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts:

- Six-year completion rates for undergraduate ITE students declined from 54% in the 2012 cohort to 49% in the 2016 cohort (-5 percentage points).
- Four-year completion rates for postgraduate ITE students declined from 80% in the 2014 cohort to 69% in the 2018 cohort (-11 percentage points):
 - Postgraduate ITE completion rates over this period were likely impacted by the phasing out of one-year ITE programs from 2013 to 2018, as stipulated by the Standards and Procedures for the accreditation of ITE programs in 2011.⁷ By 2018, all postgraduate ITE programs were at least two years in length.

Program type

Completion rates have also fallen across those commencing in both primary and secondary programs:

- Among undergraduate ITE students across the 2012 to 2016 cohorts:
 - Six-year completion rates for primary ITE programs fell from 58% to 50% (-8 percentage points), while secondary ITE program completion rates fell from 53% to 49% (-4 percentage points).
- Among postgraduate ITE students across the 2014 to 2018 cohorts:
 - Four-year completion rates for primary ITE programs fell from 80% to 63% (-17 percentage points), while secondary ITE programs declined from 81% to 73% (-8 percentage points):
 - Postgraduate ITE completion rates over this period were likely impacted by the phasing out of one-year ITE programs from 2013 to 2018. Longer programs have lower completion rates. Primary programs typically transitioned by 2015 and secondary programs by 2018.

⁶ Undergraduate ITE programs: six-year completion timeframe; postgraduate ITE programs: four-year completion timeframe. These timeframes account for part-time students (who take longer to complete their ITE study), students returning to an ITE course after a one-year break, and students completing an accelerated program due to recognition/credit for prior learning and have been shown to account for 97% of all ITE completions (AITSL, 2023a).

⁷ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2015, *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia*, AITSL, Melbourne.

First-year attrition

First-year attrition rates refer to the percentage of students, as a proportion of all commencing students in a cohort, who did not progress to their second calendar year of ITE study.

- The first-year attrition rate for undergraduate ITE students was 19% in the 2020 cohort, a 2-percentage point decline from 21% in the 2016 cohort.
- The first-year attrition rate for postgraduate ITE students has gradually increased over time, reaching 18% in the 2020 cohort, a 5-percentage point increase from 13% among the 2016 cohort:
 - This increase was driven by a 7-percentage point increase for postgraduate secondary ITE programs, reaching 18% in the 2020 cohort. By contrast, primary ITE programs have remained stable at 17%:
 - Historically, first-year attrition at the postgraduate level was not broadly applicable as degrees were one year in duration. The phasing out of one-year ITE programs from 2013–2018 and the move to two-year programs coincided with increases in first-year attrition among postgraduate students.