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Post-school education and training pathways to age 20.

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POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PATHWAYS TO AGE 20

Introduction

Participation in education and training after leaving school has long been recognised as an important pathway for young people. Post-school study offers opportunities to concentrate in specific fields, extending interests that may have developed while at school and developing skills in new fields of interest. This includes university study (or 'higher education') and programs of vocational education and training (VET), comprising apprenticeships and traineeships (now amalgamated under the Commonwealth program 'New Apprenticeships') and non-apprenticeship VET (offered at publicly-funded TAFE institutions and private VET providers). Information about these post-school pathways—who enters, who persists, who leaves—can assist in ensuring the continued progress of skills development for Australian youth.

This *Briefing* summarises three recent LSAY research reports based on a sample of 13 613 young people who were in Year 9 in 1995. It focuses on those young people who entered formal post-school study at a university or a TAFE institution, or undertook an apprenticeship or

traineeship since leaving secondary school. The majority of these young people completed Year 12 in 1998, and 1999 was their first year of post-school study. About one in five members of the cohort had left school before completing Year 12 and about 60 per cent of them entered some other form of study by 2000. This *Briefing* follows the pathways of those young people in post-school study up to 2001, when most were 20 years of age, and presents the major findings from these reports.

Participation in post-school study

One of the strengths of Australian education is the availability of a wide range of programs to suit young people's different interests and needs. This is reflected in the initial post-school education and training pathways of the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort, as shown in Figure 1. One-third of the cohort had entered university in 1999, their first year after completing Year 12, and another 4 per cent entered in 2000 after one year out of school. Around one in five cohort members—both Year 12 completers and non-completers—entered non-apprenticeship VET study, with most entering by the end

LSAY Briefings is a series produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), drawing on data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), a research program managed jointly by ACER and the Australian Government Department

of Education, Science and Training. The aim is to bring summaries of findings from LSAY research to a wider audience. Key LSAY reports published by ACER on which this paper is based, and related references, are listed at the end of the paper.

Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth BRIEFING

HIGHLIGHTS

- **By the age of 20, 80% of young people have undertaken some form of post-school study**
- **More than 75% of young people have completed or are continuing in the course of study they commenced after school**
- **Most young people who change their course of study do so within the first year, then persist in that new course**
- **Young people who are working are more likely than those not working to withdraw from post-school study**
- **Young people tend to stop post-school study because the course was not what they had expected or because personal interests have changed**

Figure 1 Entry to initial post-school study among members of the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort

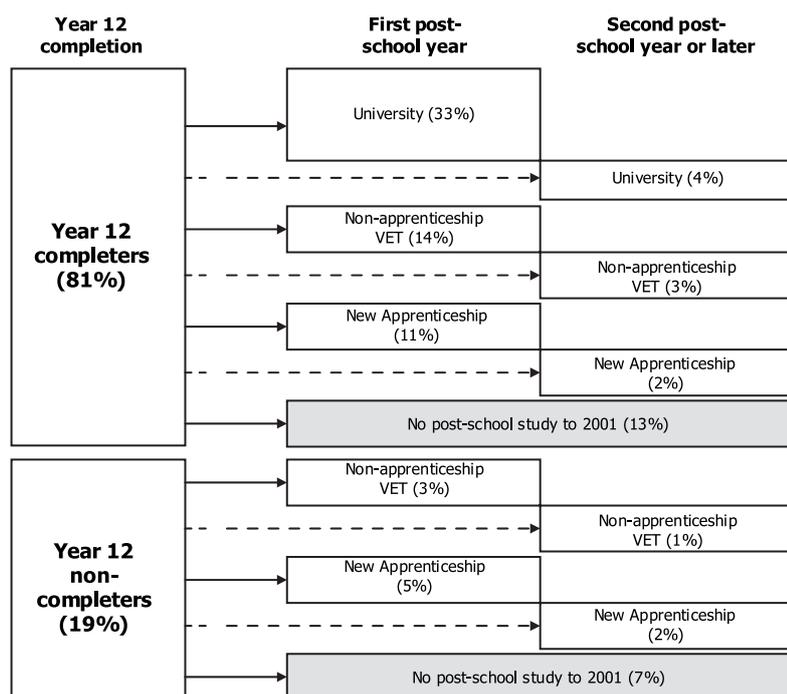


Table 1 shows what these young people were studying and where, highlighting some of the options available within the different forms of post-school study. For example, management and commerce was the most common field of education among VET students and second most common among university students. Food, hospitality and personal services was also common among VET students, but not at universities. Education; medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, law; and natural and physical sciences were studied by 23 per cent of university students.

Pathways through higher education

In 1999 or 2000, nearly one-half of the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort who completed Year 12 in 1998 commenced university study. By the

of the first year after leaving school. Close to the same proportion had participated in an apprenticeship or traineeship by the end of 2001, with most entering by the end of the first year after leaving school. A small number of cohort members had been involved in more than one form of post-school study up to 2001, and some had done short courses and informal forms of study that are not the focus of this *Briefing*, so that by the end of 2001, 80 per cent had participated in some post-school study.

Figure 2 Post-school education and training participation for different course types in Year 12

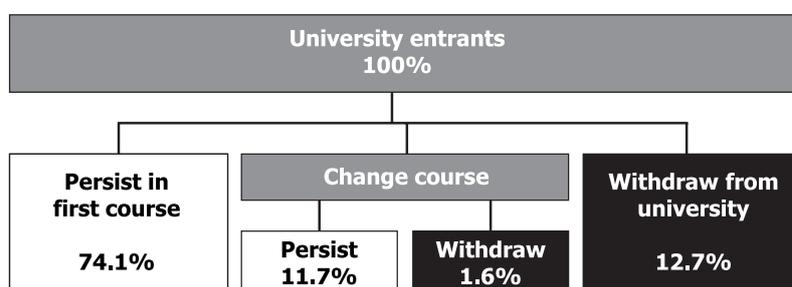


Table 1 Field of education in initial post-school study among the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort, by form of study

Field of education	University	TAFE	New Apprentice
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	2%	4%	6%
Architecture and Building	2%	5%	16%
Creative Arts	8%	8%	
Education	9%		
Engineering and Related Technologies	6%	7%	18%
Food, Hospitality and Personal Services		17%	17%
Health (excluding Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science)	12%	3%	4%
Information Technology	6%	7%	7%
Management and Commerce	19%	27%	27%
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, Law	4%		
Natural and Physical Sciences	10%		
Society and Culture (excluding Law)	20%	14%	
Other	2%	8%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%

end of 2001, when students were nearing the end of up to three years of study, 74 per cent of these young people were still in the course in which they had originally enrolled. About 12 per cent had changed course and were still at university, and 14 per cent had withdrawn completely. Some of those who had withdrawn had changed course before leaving. These pathways are shown in Figure 2.

Most students who changed from their first higher education course did so within a year of starting university: 11 per cent of course changers stopped their first course in the semester in which they started, and 52 per cent stopped in the following semester. Just under one-third of

course changers stopped their first course during the second year and only 6 per cent stopped their first course in the third year. Most of those who changed course started the next course directly after leaving the first one.

The most common set of reasons given for changing course related to interests: students generally changed course because the first course was not what they had preferred or it was not what they had expected. Many also felt that the second course offered better career prospects. Financial issues had little influence on the decision to change course. Some other factors increased the likelihood of changing courses: having a tertiary entrance score between 80 and 89 and enrolling in a course that was not the first preference. Young people who had begun university study after deferring entry for one year were less likely to change course.

Interests play a major role in withdrawal as well as course change. For example, just over one-fifth of students who stopped higher education indicated that the course turned out to be not what they had wanted, and just under one-fifth indicated that they wanted to get a job, apprenticeship or traineeship. Very few students cited academic difficulties as the main reason for withdrawal, although those with lower levels of achievement in secondary school were more likely to withdraw. Similarly, students did not cite difficulty juggling study and work as the main reason for withdrawal, but those with longer hours of paid work were more likely to withdraw from university.

Pathways through non-apprenticeship VET

Non-apprenticeship VET is used in this *Briefing* to refer to study that leads to a certificate, diploma, advanced diploma or associate degree offered by a TAFE institution. It does not include apprenticeships and traineeships, which are covered in the next section.

Table 2 Level of non-apprenticeship VET course undertaken by the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort, by Year 12 completion

Course level	Year 12 non-completers	Year 12 completers
AQF Certificate I	17%	5%
AQF Certificate II	24%	7%
AQF Certificate III	21%	17%
AQF Certificate IV	8%	14%
AQF Certificate level unknown	17%	6%
Diploma	12%	42%
Advanced diploma/associate degree	1%	9%
Total	100%	100%

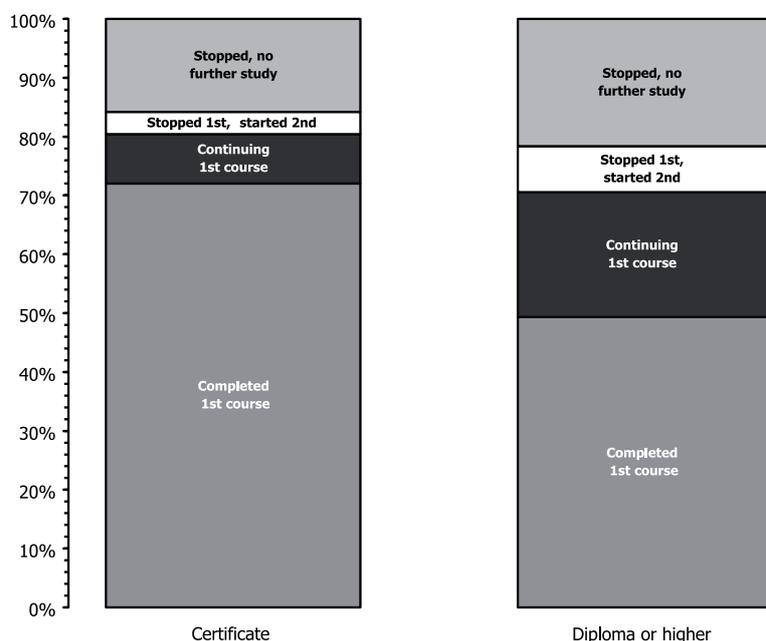
Between leaving school and late 2000, 20 per cent of the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort had begun a non-apprenticeship VET course. Entry at diploma-level and above has certain minimum requirements, and this influenced the levels of study for Year 12 completers and non completers, as shown in Table 2. Just over one-half of Year 12 completers entered diploma, advanced diploma or associate degree courses, with only 12 per cent in Certificate I or Certificate II courses. Among Year 12 non-completers, 41 per cent began study in Certificate I and Certificate II courses.

More than 80 per cent of Year 12 completers who entered a TAFE institution started their course immediately after leaving school,

compared to 62 per cent of non-completers. Nearly one in five non-completers waited until their third or fourth year after leaving school to begin their first TAFE course.

Year 12 completers were slightly more likely than non-completers to have stopped study before completing their first course (24% compared to 20%, respectively). This may be because non-completers tend to enrol more frequently in Certificate I and II courses, which tend to be shorter, and completers tend to enrol in diploma courses, which take longer to complete. Overall, 20 per cent of students in certificate-level courses had stopped their first course, compared to 29 per cent of students in higher-level courses (see Figure 3). Eleven per cent of those who stopped

Figure 3 Course completion status of participants in first non-apprenticeship VET courses to 2001 among the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort, by course level

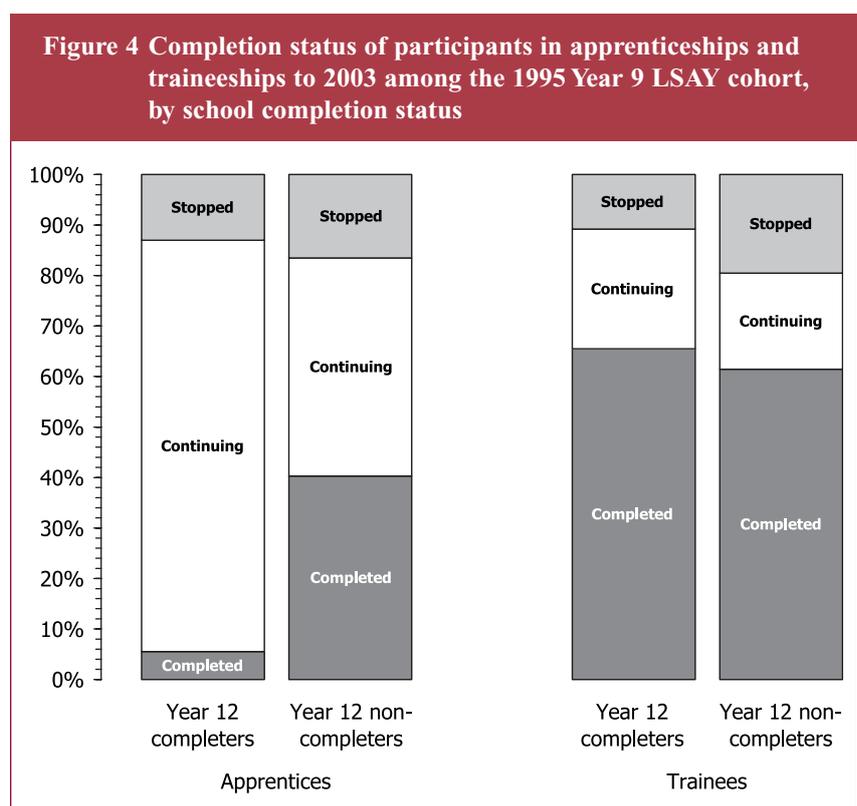


their courses subsequently enrolled in higher education; all were Year 12 completers.

The level of the non-apprenticeship VET course also has an influence on what type of study a young person undertakes after completing their course. Two-thirds of young people who had completed a diploma or higher qualification did not do any further study, compared to one-half of those who completed certificate courses. Thirty-one per cent of those who completed a certificate enrolled in some other non-apprenticeship VET study, most commonly a certificate at a higher level. This is generally because certificate-level courses are shorter and form a sequence; diploma and higher level courses offer 'terminal' options within the VET system and better articulation with university study.

Pathways through New Apprenticeship

By the end of 2001, 21 per cent of the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort had participated in at least one apprenticeship or traineeship. While Table 1 shows the fields of study taken by New Apprentices compared to all others in post-school study, Table 3 shows how these fields differ for apprentices and trainees. Most apprentices were learning in the electrical, automotive and building fields; these three fields accounted for more than 70 per cent of all apprentices. Close to 70 per cent of trainees were learning in the



business and services and health and community services fields. Food and hospitality had similar proportions of apprentices and trainees, reflecting the diversity of training and employment options in the field.

More than 85 per cent of Year 12 completers who started a New Apprenticeship did so immediately after leaving school, compared to 68 per cent of Year 12 non-completers. By the end of 2001, 22 per cent of apprentices had completed their initial training, compared to 62 per cent of trainees, reflecting the fact that apprenticeships generally have longer programs of study to

complete (see Figure 4). Forty-three per cent of trainees had participated in some other post-school program of education and training since leaving school, including 18 per cent who went into university or non-apprenticeship VET study, and 6 per cent who went into another traineeship after completing their initial traineeship. In contrast, 80 per cent of apprentices had undertaken only an apprenticeship.

There were also differences in the percentage of New Apprentices who stopped their study. Only 6 per cent of agriculture trainees, 7 per cent of automotive apprentices and 8 per cent of building and construction apprentices had withdrawn by 2001, compared to 28 per cent of hairdressing apprentices and 19 per cent of food and hospitality trainees.

A combination of pathways

While the post-school education pathways of the majority of young people are confined to the higher education or VET sector, a small percentage of young people transfer between different forms of post-

Table 3 Field of training studied by apprentices and trainees among the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort

Field of training	Apprenticeships	Traineeships
Electrical and electronics	14%	2%
Automotive and other engineering/technology	26%	5%
Building trades including carpentry and plumbing	30%	4%
Food and hospitality	14%	12%
Hairdressing	9%	<1%
Animal husbandry, land and marine	4%	8%
Business and services	1%	53%
Health, community services	1%	8%
Other	1%	8%
Total	100%	100%

school study. Of those who completed their non-apprenticeship VET course, 8 per cent of certificate recipients and 18 per cent of diploma or higher recipients continued study by entering higher education. Indeed, 3 per cent of those who entered higher education by 2000 had been in the VET sector before commencing their university studies. Further, 5 per cent of university entrants left higher education to undertake VET study and did not return by 2001. In total, 8 per cent of university participants in the 1995 Year 9 cohort had participated in VET by 2001, more commonly in non-apprenticeship VET than in apprenticeships and traineeships.

Persistence and withdrawal

Persistence in the first course, regardless of where it was undertaken, varied according to the amount of time necessary for completion. Persistence in New Apprenticeships was highest, with 86 per cent of participants either completing or continuing their first apprenticeship or traineeship. Between non-apprenticeship VET courses (76%) and first university courses (74%) there was little difference in persistence, but 12 per cent of university students persisted in a second course compared to 6 per cent of non-apprenticeship VET students who changed to another course. This resulted in more students completely leaving non-apprenticeship VET than university, apprenticeships and traineeships. It should be noted that other sources have reported different completion and withdrawal rates. Those rates are based on administrative data; LSAY data are collected from individuals annually and may overestimate completions because of the loss of sample members over time.

A small number of factors influenced the decision to persist in post-school study. Paid work while studying had a negative association with persistence in both higher education and non-apprenticeship

VET study. Among university entrants, cohort members from a language background other than English, from a small provincial city and with ENTER scores above 90 were more likely to persist in university study. Positive self-assessment of academic ability and intentions to pursue VET study, both measured while in school, were associated with course persistence in non-apprenticeship VET. Studying VET while still in school was positively associated with persistence in an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Reasons for stopping study were similar for all in post-school study, generally relating to students' changing interests. Forty per cent of those who left higher education and 17 per cent of those who left non-apprenticeship VET stated that the course turned out to be not what they had wanted. One in six of those who left said that they had lost interest in studying. New Apprentices most frequently identified personal reasons and that they did not like the type of work they were training for as the main reason for leaving.

Summary

A variety of post-school education and training pathways is necessary to develop an educated and highly-skilled society. The sectors discussed in this *Briefing*—higher education and VET, incorporating New Apprenticeships and non-apprenticeship VET—enrolled approximately 80 per cent of the Year 9 class of 1995 after they had left school, with some movement between different forms of post-school study. Other types of post-school education and training have been discussed in other LSAY reports.

The findings of the reports summarised here show a willingness for young people to complete some form of post-school study, even if they find their first course is not what they had preferred to study. Many of the course changes reported here may be regarded as part of a settling-in

period in the transition from school, as most change occurs within the first year of study and only a few people change course more than once. As many of those who withdraw from study completely do so to enter the labour market, it is also likely that some young people use post-school study to obtain skills necessary for employment, then leave study once that skill level is attained and before completing the formal qualification.

Nevertheless, while some young people may be successful after withdrawing from study, not all withdrawal can be viewed in positive terms. A small proportion of cohort members experienced a highly uncertain start in post-school study, changing study a number of times, then stopping. Around one-quarter of those who withdrew from all types of post-school study moved into unemployment or part-time work, or were outside the labour force at age 20, and were more likely to be in these states than those who completed their post-school study. Further research is required to ascertain the longer-term consequences of withdrawal from all forms of post-school study.

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The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) is a research program jointly managed by ACER and the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). Funding for LSAY is also provided by the Australian Education Systems Officials Committee (AESOC) through the National Fund for Educational Research.

The program includes more than 25 years of data on young Australians as they move through

school and into tertiary education, the labour market and adult life. LSAY commenced in its present form in 1995 with a national sample of Year 9 students.

Another sample of Year 9 students was drawn in 1998, and a further sample of 15 year-olds was drawn in 2003. Data are first collected in schools, then by mail and telephone interviews.

Advice and guidance are provided by a Steering Committee, with representatives from DEST, other Australian Government

departments, AESOC, Chief Executive Officers of State and Territory training authorities, non-government schools, academics and ACER.

The data collected through LSAY are deposited with the Australian Social Science Data Archive for access by other analysts.

Further information on the LSAY program is available from ACER's Website, www.acer.edu.au



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