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Disadvantaged students find success in VET

The non-apprenticeship VET sector provides a successful pathway from school to further education and training for young Australians from all socioeconomic backgrounds, a new report shows.

The study, part of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) was released in late December. It was based on a sample of young people who had been in Year 9 in 1995, and who commenced a non-apprenticeship VET course by 2000. Their education, training and labour market activities were tracked until late in 2001, when they were around 20 years of age.

Around 20 per cent of young Australians had enrolled in a non-apprenticeship VET course by age 19. By age 20 in late 2001, 60 per cent of the non-apprenticeship VET entrants had completed their first course while 14 per cent were still enrolled in their first course.

Attrition rates in the non-apprenticeship VET sector were found to be about the same as those generally estimated for higher education with around a quarter of students not finishing their course. However, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were not disadvantaged in terms of course progress. Gender, language background and region were also unrelated to continuing with non-apprenticeship study.

The report's findings suggest that the non-apprenticeship VET sector has been more successful than the university sector in assisting students from all backgrounds to continue their studies and that any new policy initiatives targeting these equity groups should perhaps focus on entry to tertiary education or on branching points earlier in young people's educational pathways.

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The study also found evidence that participation in a non-apprenticeship VET course had benefits for participants in terms of creating future educational and work opportunities. By age 20, those who had done a non-apprenticeship VET course were more likely to be involved in full-time education, training or work than those who had not done any post-school study.

Further information and additional findings are available in the report, *Non-apprenticeship VET Courses: Participation, Persistence and Subsequent Pathways* by Julie McMillan, Sheldon Rothman & Nicole Wernert. The study is research report number 47 in the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), a program conducted jointly by ACER and the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). This and previous LSAY reports are available for download.

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ACER named Employer of Choice for Women

ACER has been awarded *Employer of Choice for Women* status by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA). ACER was one of ten Australian employers to receive the citation on 21 February. ACER was awarded the citation on the basis of its existing policies and practices that were shown to support women across the organisation and have a positive outcome for both women and the business.

[Read more on the WGEA website.](#)

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ACER UPDATE

ACER develops higher education research

ACER is looking to expand its involvement in higher education research and has appointed Dr Hamish Coates to lead ACER's work in this area. Dr Coates joined ACER as a Senior Research Fellow this month from his position as a Senior Research Officer at Graduate Careers Australia (GCA). At GCA, he designed, managed and conducted all aspects of a major high-stakes project to enhance Australia's annual graduate census. Prior to joining GCA, Dr Coates worked for five years as a Research Associate on numerous research projects at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) and the Assessment Research Centre (ARC) at the University Melbourne. His work in higher education has influenced national and institutional policy and practice. His research and publications focus on the measurement and evaluation of education processes, contexts and outcomes. Active interests include student learning and engagement, higher education policy, university pedagogy, online and distributed education, quality assurance, psychometric and statistical methods, assessment and evaluation, and education performance indicators.

Research Conference 2006

Bookings are now open for ACER's *Research Conference 2006 – Boosting science learning – what will it take?* The conference will examine recent research and practice directions in the area of science education both locally and internationally. For further information visit the [conference website](#)

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International civics and citizenship education study

ACER (in association with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in England, and the Laboratorio di Pedagogia Sperimentale (LPS) at the Roma Tre University) Italy has been commissioned by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) to conduct an International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCES). The purpose of the study is to investigate the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens in a range of countries in the 21st century. In pursuit of this purpose, the study will report on student achievement in a test of conceptual understandings and competencies in civic and citizenship education. It will also collect and analyse data about student dispositions and attitudes relating to civic and citizenship education. The study builds on the previous IEA studies of civic education, particularly the CIVED study in 1999. The study will take place from mid 2006 through 2010 with a main data collection in 2009. Dr Wolfram Schulz will be research director for the study.

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