

Australian vocational education and training statistics



Adult literacy and numeracy courses

This report provides data on courses in the vocational education and training (VET) sector that are generally described as 'adult literacy and numeracy courses'. This includes General Education Programmes, Social Skills Courses, Employment Skills Courses and Other Mixed Field Programmes, plus some other activity. It does not include data on literacy and numeracy embedded in other vocational courses.

Key messages

- There were 188 300 students enrolled in literacy and numeracy courses in 2004, which represents 11.8% of total VET students.
- Overall, literacy and numeracy activity has grown—from 11.3% of total VET annual hours in 2002 to 12.8% in 2004.
- In 2004, 61.2% of all literacy and numeracy students were enrolled in General Education Programmes (115 300 students), with a further 21.6% (40 600 students) in Employment Skills Courses and 15.9% (30 000 students) in Other Mixed Field Programmes. The remaining 1.3% (2 500 students) were enrolled in Social Skills Courses.
- In 2004, most literacy and numeracy activity continued to be undertaken by:
 - females (54.8% in literacy and numeracy courses, 47.7% in total VET)
 - people aged between 30 and 49 years (38.5% in literacy and numeracy courses, 35.0% in total VET)
 - people from English speaking backgrounds (58.9% in literacy and numeracy courses, 69.0% in total VET).
- The majority of literacy and numeracy course enrolments were in non-Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) areas. Within the AQF, activity was dominated by certificate I courses, with significant numbers of certificate II courses also.
- While literacy and numeracy students have lower levels of achievement from their courses and subjects than the average for total VET students, they report higher levels of satisfaction with the quality of their training.



2002–04

Introduction to literacy and numeracy courses in VET

This publication explores the courses in the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector that are typically described as 'adult literacy and numeracy courses'. These courses aim to provide introductory activities in learning skills that enable students to participate in further studies, community activities and/or improve their employment situation. They can also help individuals acquire personal, social and workplace skills. Literacy and numeracy training is also embedded in other vocational courses in the VET system. A parallel exercise to this study is investigating the feasibility of providing data on this embedded training and the outcomes will be provided in a separate report (Schueler, forthcoming).

Scope of literacy and numeracy courses in VET

The NCVET National VET Provider Collection on students and their VET activity classifies qualifications or courses to single Qualification Field of Education Identifiers (QFEI) according to the content of the program of study. These identifiers are based on the Field of Education (FOE) at the narrow (four-digit) level, which is one part of the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED) (Australian Bureau of Statistics catalogue no. 1272.0, July 2001).

Literacy and numeracy courses can be identified in the National VET Provider Collection by using QFEIs. The four-digit FOE is allocated to the major course of study by a student, so only captures one specific FOE (even if more FOEs are applicable). The majority of adult literacy and numeracy courses fall within four QFEIs. These narrow-level (four-digit) FOE—together with the six-digit FOE contained within each—are:

■ 1201	General Education Programmes	■ 1205	Employment Skills Courses
120101	General Primary and Secondary Education Programmes	120501	Career Development Programmes
120103	Literacy and Numeracy Programmes	120503	Job Search Skills Programmes
120105	Learning Skills Programmes	120505	Work Practices Programmes
120199	General Education Programmes, not elsewhere classified (n.e.c.)	120599	Employment Skills Programmes, n.e.c.
■ 1203	Social Skills Courses	■ 1299	Other Mixed Field Programmes¹
120301	Social and Interpersonal Skills Programmes	129999	Mixed Field Programmes, n.e.c.
120303	Survival Skills Programmes		
120305	Parental Education Programmes		
120399	Social Skills Programmes, n.e.c.		

An extract of the Australian Standard Classification of Education—containing full descriptions of the narrow and detailed fields—is provided on page 17.

¹ This narrow field includes all Mixed Field Programmes (n.e.c.)

The four programmes in which the majority of literacy and numeracy courses fall within include a small number of high-level courses. However, these courses cannot be differentiated from literacy and numeracy courses because the National VET Provider Collection only contains the narrow level (four-digit) FOE for courses. Therefore, it is only possible to analyse data at this level and not at the more detailed six-digit FOE level.

This research has specifically excluded most language courses from the analysis as they, and some other literacy courses, fall outside the four main FOE identifiers noted above. For example, both English and English as a Second Language are included in the six-digit FOE for English Language (091501). However, because the National VET Provider Collection cannot analyse the FOE at the six-digit level, specialised language courses—such as Southern European Languages (091505)—cannot be distinguished from general language and literacy courses.

This report analyses data from the NCVET National VET Provider Collection between 2002 and 2004. There is no ASCED data available prior to this. A recurring problem with the literacy and numeracy data contained in this report is the high number and proportion of 'unknown' responses in some of the classificatory variables. This affects many of the trends in the literacy and numeracy data.

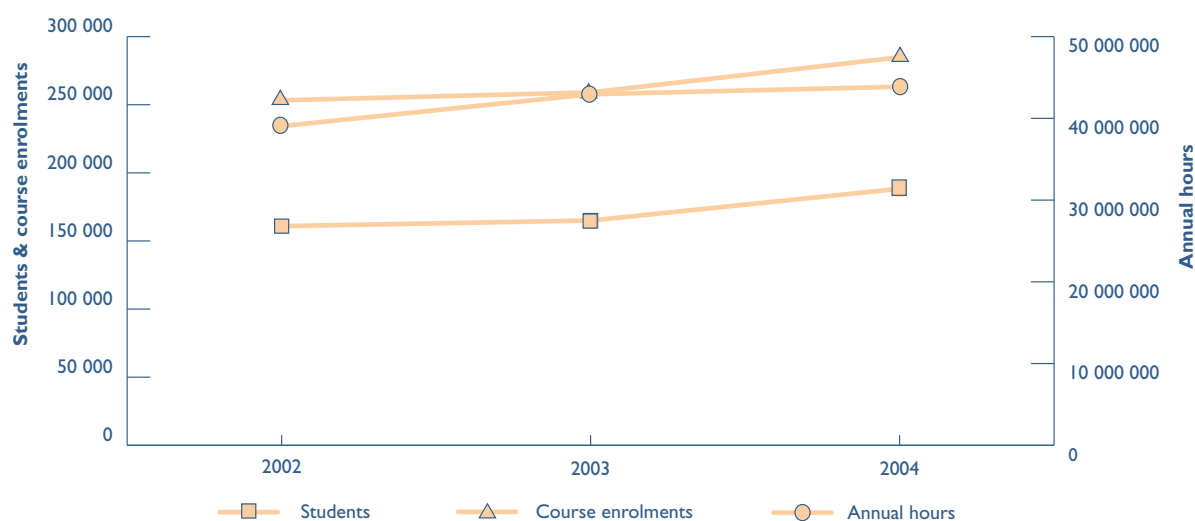
The first section of this report examines adult literacy and numeracy activity in the Australian VET sector, using three distinct activity measures: student enrolments, course enrolments and annual hours. The second section examines outcomes of literacy and numeracy activity by investigating educational achievements and course completions. The final section examines destination and satisfaction of literacy and numeracy courses in VET.

Section I: Literacy and numeracy activity

There has been an overall increase in all specific literacy and numeracy activity measures—student enrolments, course enrolments and annual training hours—in recent years (figure 1). This has occurred at a time when total activity in the public VET system has declined.

There are small differences in the growth patterns for the three activity measures used in VET. Student enrolment data captures the number of students enrolled in literacy and numeracy courses.² 'Course enrolment' captures the total number of registered participants in a course. It differs from student enrolments, because some students enrol in more than one course. 'Annual training hours' is the total hours undertaken in a year by all course enrolments.

Figure 1: Student numbers, course enrolments and annual hours for literacy and numeracy courses, 2002–04



Students

The number of students enrolled in literacy and numeracy courses increased by 17.0%—from 160 900 to 188 300 students—between 2002 and 2004, during which time the total number of students in the public VET system declined by 5.2%. The greatest increase in student numbers has been for students enrolled in Other Mixed Field Programmes, which increased by 24 200 students to 30 000 students between 2002 and 2004. In addition, there was also a significant (17.4%) increase in the number of students enrolled in General Education Programmes, whereas student enrolments in Social Skills Courses and Employment Skills Courses both declined.

Table 1 shows that in 2004, the majority (61.2%) of students were enrolled in General Education Programmes (1201). This is expected as this FOE includes Literacy and Numeracy Programmes (120103) and Learning Skills Programmes (120105).

Smaller proportions of literacy and numeracy students were enrolled in Employment Skills Courses (21.5%) and Other Mixed Field Programmes (15.9%), with only a small percentage in Social Skills Courses (1.3%).

Table 1: Number of literacy and numeracy students by major Field of Education course, 2002–04

Field of Education course		Total students ('000)			2002–04
Number	Description	2002	2003	2004	% change
1201	General Education Programmes	98.2	109.4	115.3	17.4
1203	Social Skills Courses	3.8	3.2	2.5	-34.7
1205	Employment Skills Courses	53.1	43.5	40.6	-23.6
1299	Other Mixed Field Programmes	5.8	8.9	30.0	420.0
Total students enrolled in literacy and numeracy courses		160.9	165.0	188.3	17.0
Total VET students enrolled in courses^(a)		1 582.3	1 617.5	1 519.8	-4.0
Total VET students		1 682.9	1 717.8	1 595.2	-5.2

Note: (a) Total excludes subject-only enrolment students

²This is not a unique count of students, because students can be enrolled at more than one provider and there is currently no universal student identifier operating in Australia.

Characteristics of literacy and numeracy students

A number of differences in the characteristics of the literacy and numeracy student population compared to the total VET student population are examined below.

Geographic distribution

Although New South Wales has been the leading state for both literacy and numeracy and total VET students in recent years, this dominance—especially for literacy and numeracy students—has declined. The proportion of literacy and numeracy students residing in New South Wales declined from 42.8% of all literacy and numeracy students in 2002 to 33.0% by 2004. There were also declines in the proportions of both literacy and numeracy students and VET students studying in South Australia—by 35.0% and 12.8% respectively—and in Western Australia—by 3.4% and 4.1% respectively—during the same period. All other states and territories experienced growth in the number of literacy and numeracy students between 2002 and 2004.³ However, only Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory also experienced growth in their total VET populations during the corresponding period.

Table 2: Distribution of literacy and numeracy (L&N) students by state/territory, 2002–04

State/territory	2002		2003		2004		2002–04	
	L&N %	Total VET	L&N %	Total VET	L&N %	Total VET	L&N % change	Total VET
New South Wales	42.8	32.9	43.2	34.3	33.0	32.4	-9.9	-6.5
Victoria	16.0	29.5	22.2	29.8	22.5	30.1	64.4	-3.2
Queensland	19.1	17.7	16.4	17.3	29.4	17.5	80.2	-6.6
South Australia	12.8	7.6	7.4	6.6	7.1	7.0	-35.0	-12.8
Western Australia	6.5	7.8	8.0	7.6	5.3	7.9	-3.4	-4.1
Tasmania	1.1	1.9	1.1	2.1	1.1	2.4	23.8	18.3
Northern Territory	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.2	6.6	-12.1
Australian Capital Territory	0.7	1.2	0.7	1.3	0.6	1.4	1.0	13.2
Total students (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	–	–
Total students ('000)	160.9	1 682.9	165.0	1 717.8	188.3	1 595.2	17.0	-5.2

Queensland recorded the greatest growth in literacy and numeracy students (80.2%) between 2002 and 2004. This growth led to Queensland recording a significantly higher proportion of the national literacy and numeracy student population (29.4%) than their overall proportion of total VET students (17.5%) in 2004 (table 2). The proportions of literacy and numeracy students in all other states and territories, except New South Wales and South Australia, were lower than their proportions of VET students. This was most apparent in Victoria, where there was 22.5% of literacy and numeracy students and 30.1% of all VET students, Western Australia (5.3% of literacy and numeracy students and 7.9% all VET), Tasmania (1.1% literacy and numeracy and 2.4% all VET) and the Australian Capital Territory (0.6% literacy and numeracy and 1.4% all VET).

Age structure

The age structure of the literacy and numeracy student population aged between 15 and 64 years changed only slightly between 2002 and 2004. The proportion of students aged between 15 and 19 years declined, whereas there were increases in all other age groups (table 3 on page 6). Overall, the proportion of literacy and numeracy students aged 24 years or less decreased from 36.7% in 2002 to 33.9% in 2004, while the proportion of literacy and numeracy students aged between 25 and 64 years increased from 57.5% to 61.9%.

The number of literacy and numeracy students increased for all age groups between 2002 and 2004, except for persons aged 65 years or older (-21 persons). The greatest increases occurred in the 30 to 39-year-old age group (8 000), followed by 40 to 49-year-olds (7 000) and 50 to 59-year-olds (4 500). In 2004, the average age of literacy and numeracy students (33 years) was older than the average for all VET students (31 years).

³ There was a 12.1% decline in reported VET activity in New South Wales between 2003 and 2004. This decline is partly due to problems faced by some New South Wales community providers introducing new software systems.

Age and gender

The literacy and numeracy population shows considerable differences in the age–sex structure compared with the total VET population (figures 2 and 3). The main differences between the two populations in 2004 were:

- a larger proportion of females (54.8%) in the literacy and numeracy population compared with the total VET population (47.7%)
- a larger proportion of females in the literacy and numeracy population in all age groups, except the 20 to 24 years age group compared with the total VET population.
- smaller proportions of males in the literacy and numeracy population than the total VET population for all age groups between 15 to 19 years and 40 to 49 years. A total of 36.5% of the literacy and numeracy population were males aged between 15 and 49 years compared with 44.5% in the total VET population.

Figure 2: Age–sex structure of literacy and numeracy (L&N) population, 2004

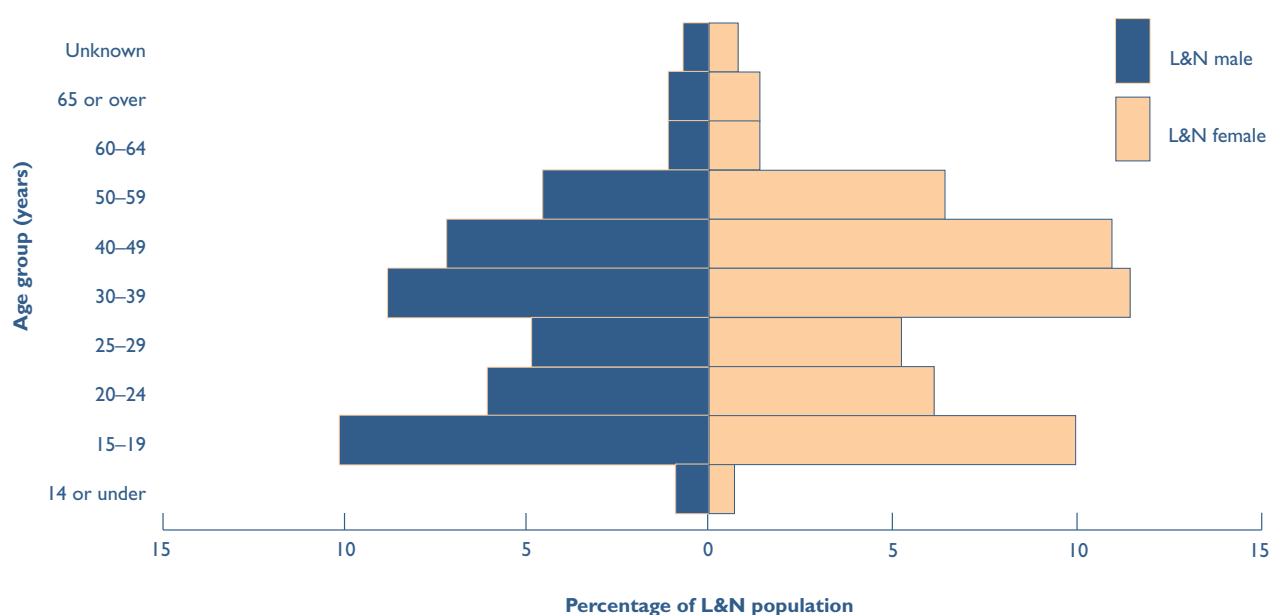


Figure 3: Age–sex structure of total VET population, 2004

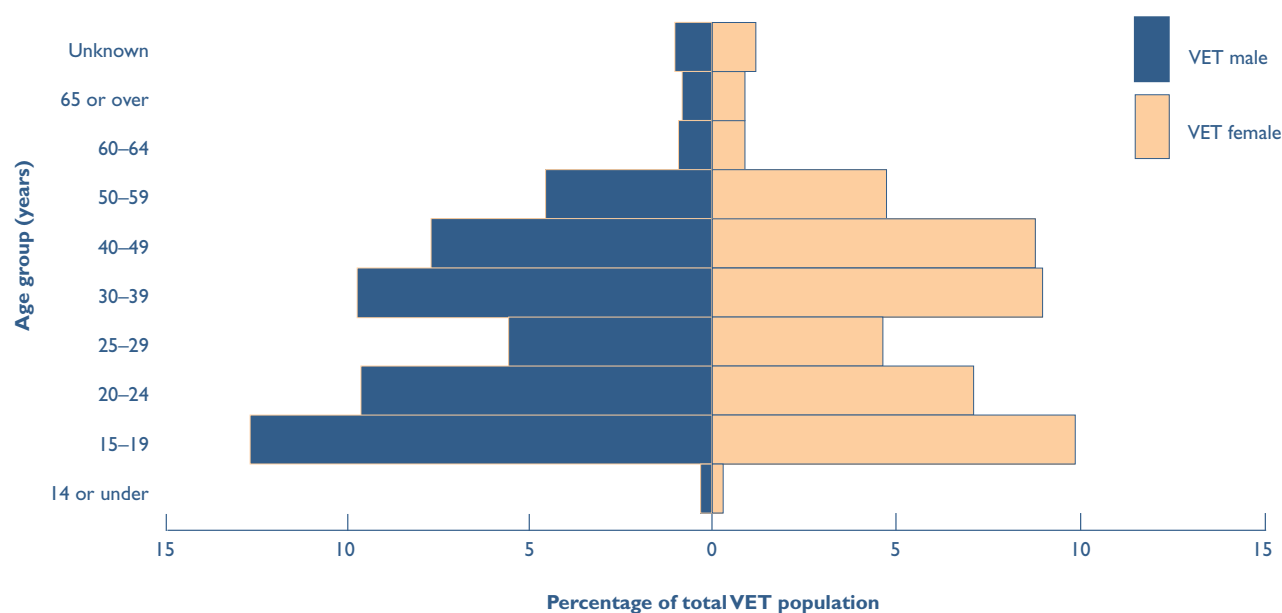


Table 3: Age profile of literacy and numeracy (L&N) students and total VET students, 2002–04

Age group	2002		2003		2004		2002–04	
	L&N (’000)	%	L&N (’000)	%	L&N (’000)	%	L&N % change	Total VET % change
14 years or under	2.6	1.6	3.2	1.9	3.0	1.6	13.8	16.1
15–19 years	37.0	23.0	37.9	23.0	37.9	20.1	2.5	1.3
20–24 years	19.5	12.1	21.3	12.9	23.0	12.2	18.1	-2.2
25–29 years	15.0	9.3	15.4	9.4	18.9	10.0	26.2	-10.3
30–39 years	30.3	18.8	30.8	18.7	38.3	20.3	26.3	-8.7
40–49 years	27.2	16.9	27.6	16.7	34.2	18.2	25.5	-6.3
50–59 years	16.1	10.0	15.8	9.6	20.7	11.0	28.1	-1.5
60–64 years	3.9	2.4	3.8	2.3	4.6	2.4	18.9	-0.8
65 years or over	4.7	2.9	4.6	2.8	4.7	2.5	-0.4	-13.0
Not known	4.6	2.8	4.6	2.8	3.1	1.6	-32.3	-31.1
Total students	160.9	100.0	165.0	100.0	188.3	100.0	17.0	-5.2

Table 4: Student characteristics of literacy and numeracy (L&N) students and total VET students, 2002–04

	2002		2003		2004	
	L&N (’000)	%	L&N (’000)	%	L&N (’000)	%
Total students	160.9	100.0	165.0	100.0	188.3	100.0
Indigenous status						
Indigenous	12.0	7.4	3.5	12.3	12.3	6.5
Non-Indigenous	117.5	73.0	76.3	120.1	138.0	73.3
Unknown	31.4	19.5	20.1	32.6	38.0	20.2
Total students	160.9	100.0	165.0	100.0	188.3	100.0
Disability status						
Disability	19.8	12.3	4.9	22.1	22.0	11.7
No disability	109.5	68.1	79.1	111.6	122.9	65.3
Unknown	31.6	19.6	16.0	31.3	43.5	23.1
Total students	160.9	100.0	165.0	100.0	188.3	100.0
Language spoken at home						
English language	100.8	62.7	70.7	99.0	110.9	58.9
Non-English languages	29.9	18.6	11.6	35.3	40.2	21.3
Not known	30.1	18.7	17.8	30.7	37.2	19.8
Total students	160.9	100.0	165.0	100.0	188.3	100.0

Equity sub-groups

The number of Indigenous students studying literacy and numeracy courses increased slightly from 12 000 in 2002 to 12 300 in 2004 (table 4). However, the actual proportion of Indigenous literacy and numeracy students decreased from 7.4% to 6.5% during the same period, due to the large (17.0%) increase in the total literacy and numeracy population. There was also a large (21.0%) increase in the number of literacy and numeracy students who did not report Indigenous status (unknown).

The literacy and numeracy population reported almost twice the proportion (6.5%) of Indigenous students than the total VET population (3.6%). The 2.8% increase in Indigenous literacy and numeracy students contrasts the 5.1% decline in Indigenous students in the total VET population.

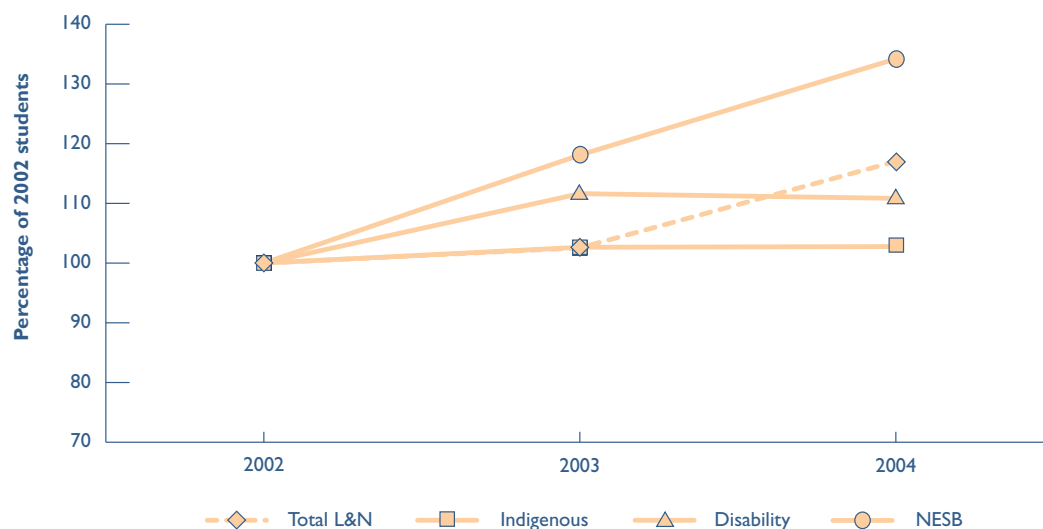
There were 22 000 students with a disability studying literacy and numeracy courses in 2004, up from 19 800 in 2002 (a 10.8% increase), while the number of literacy and numeracy students with a disability peaked (22 100) in 2003, before declining slightly (by 0.7%) the following year (figure 4).

Students with a disability represented 11.7% of the literacy and numeracy population, which was twice the proportion in the total VET population (5.7%).

Figure 4 also shows that the access and equity group that experienced the greatest increase between 2002 and 2004 was for people who speak a language other than English at home. The proportion of literacy and numeracy students who speak a language other than English increased from 18.6% in 2002 to 21.3% in 2004. During this period, the number of literacy and numeracy students from non-English speaking backgrounds increased by 10 200 students to 40 200.

The total VET population experienced a slight increase in people who speak languages other than English at home between 2002 and 2004 (from 11.6% to 12.1%). However, this proportion remained significantly lower than in the literacy and numeracy student population.

Figure 4: Literacy and numeracy (L&N) students by access and equity group, as a percentage of 2002 population, 2002–04



Note: NESB = non-English speaking background

Table 5: Highest education level of literacy and numeracy (L&N) students and total VET students, 2002–04

Highest education level	2002			2003			2004		
	L&N ('000)	%	Total VET ('000)	L&N ('000)	%	Total VET ('000)	L&N ('000)	%	Total VET ('000)
Bachelor degree or higher degree level	6.5	4.0	88.3	7.1	4.3	87.8	9.8	5.2	87.6
Advanced diploma or associate degree	1.6	1.0	24.6	1.7	1.0	23.2	2.0	1.0	19.5
Diploma	3.1	1.9	42.0	3.2	1.9	43.0	4.0	2.1	44.0
Certificate IV	1.9	1.2	38.0	2.7	1.6	42.8	2.6	1.4	43.9
Certificate III	5.7	3.5	95.1	5.6	3.4	96.7	7.3	3.9	98.6
Certificate II	1.2	0.7	12.0	1.6	1.0	15.6	2.1	1.1	19.6
Certificate I	0.6	0.4	2.6	0.7	0.4	2.6	1.1	0.6	4.7
Miscellaneous education	3.2	2.0	19.5	2.4	1.4	16.6	2.7	1.4	12.9
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>23.8</i>	<i>14.8</i>	<i>322.0</i>	<i>25.0</i>	<i>15.2</i>	<i>328.3</i>	<i>31.5</i>	<i>16.7</i>	<i>330.8</i>
Year 12	21.3	13.2	383.2	21.6	13.1	388.2	25.8	13.7	362.0
Year 11	12.4	7.7	149.0	11.3	6.9	145.2	12.0	6.4	137.1
Year 10	28.6	17.8	289.8	26.7	16.2	272.0	28.2	15.0	244.6
Year 9 or lower	30.1	18.7	108.9	31.0	18.8	112.5	30.6	16.2	106.6
Did not attend school	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.5	1.9
Not known	44.7	27.8	430.0	49.4	29.9	471.6	59.4	31.5	412.2
Total students	160.9	100.0	1 682.9	165.0	100.0	1 717.8	188.3	100.0	1 595.2

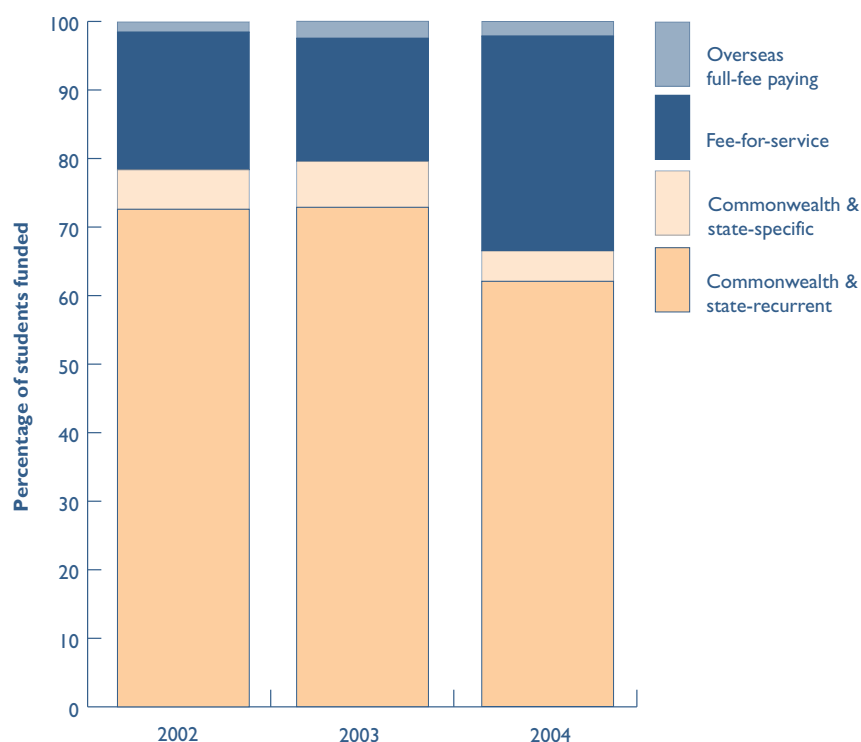
Table 6: Employment status of literacy and numeracy (L&N) students and total VET students, 2002–04

Employment status	2002			2003			2004		
	L&N ('000)	%	Total VET ('000)	L&N ('000)	%	Total VET ('000)	L&N ('000)	%	Total VET ('000)
Employed	44.3	27.6	865.6	41.5	25.2	873.3	56.1	29.8	811.3
Unemployed	38.4	23.9	233.7	37.9	23.0	223.2	38.9	20.7	209.0
Not in labour force	36.0	22.4	173.9	38.2	23.2	172.0	40.7	21.6	159.8
Not known	42.2	26.2	409.8	47.4	28.7	449.3	52.6	27.9	415.2
Total students	160.9	100.0	1 682.9	165.0	100.0	1 717.8	188.3	100.0	1 595.2

Funding source

The number of literacy and numeracy students funded by Commonwealth and state-recurrent finances (provided for recurrent purposes by a state, territory or the Commonwealth under its agreement with the state or territory) was the same in 2004 (116 800) as in 2002, although this fell from 120 200 in 2003. However, proportionally, Commonwealth and state-recurrent funded students fell from 72.6% in 2002 to 62.0% in 2004 (figure 5). The decline was primarily due to the large increase in the number and proportion of literacy and numeracy students funded by fee-for-service, which increased from 32 300 students (20.1%) in 2002 to 59 000 (31.3%) in 2004 and a smaller increase in the number and proportion of overseas full-fee paying literacy and numeracy students, from 2 400 in 2002 to 4 000 in 2004 (table 7).

Figure 5: Major funding source of literacy and numeracy students, 2002–04



In addition, the number of literacy and numeracy students funded by Commonwealth and state-specific finances (provided from state, territory or Commonwealth-specific purpose appropriations to provide training and infrastructure) declined from 9 300 in 2002 to 8 400 in 2004 (table 7).

Table 7: Major funding source of literacy and numeracy students, 2002–04

Major funding source	2002	2003	2004
Commonwealth & state-recurrent funding	116 800	120 200	116 800
Commonwealth & state-specific funding	9 300	11 100	8 400
Fee-for-service	32 300	29 600	59 000
Overseas full-fee paying	2 400	4 100	4 000
Total	160 900	165 000	188 300

Course enrolments

Activity within the VET sector can also be measured in terms of course enrolments. As some students enrol in more than one course in a year, the total number of course enrolments exceeds the total number of persons taking courses.

Literacy and numeracy course enrolments overall increased from 253 200 in 2002 to 284 800 in 2004 (12.5%) (table 8). The greatest increase occurred in Other Mixed Field Programmes—from 7 800 enrolments in 2002 to 36 800 enrolments in 2004. In addition, course enrolments in General Education Programmes increased from 162 800 to 185 100 during the same period. Course enrolments in both Social Skills Courses and Employment Skills Courses declined between 2002 and 2004, by 37.2% and 22.9% respectively, and student numbers declined by 34.7% and 23.6% respectively. Literacy and numeracy course enrolments as a proportion of total VET course enrolments increased from 12.8% in 2002 to 14.9% in 2004.

Table 8: Number of course enrolments for literacy and numeracy (L&N) courses, by Field of Education, 2002–04

Field of Education course		Total course enrolments ('000)			% change
Number	Description	2002	2003	2004	2002–04
I201	General Education Programmes	162.8	179.7	185.1	13.7%
I203	Social Skills Courses	5.7	5.1	3.6	-37.2%
I205	Employment Skills Courses	76.9	62.3	59.3	-22.9%
I299	Other Mixed Field Programmes	7.8	12.4	36.8	374.1%
Total L&N		253.2	259.4	284.8	12.5
Total VET course enrolments		1 980.3	2 038.3	1 910.0	-3.6

Qualification level

In 2004, over half (55.5%) of enrolments for literacy and numeracy courses were either miscellaneous education⁴ (33.6%) or non-award⁵ courses (21.9%) (table 9). This increased from 52.4% in 2002. This growth was due to the large increase in the number of enrolments in non-award courses, which doubled from 31 300 in 2002 to 62 500 in 2004. In contrast, miscellaneous education course enrolments declined by 5.5%—from 101 300 in 2002 to 95 700 in 2004.

There appears to be a 'hollowing out' of literacy and numeracy enrolments within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), with fewer students undertaking lower-level courses and more students undertaking higher-level courses. The proportion of literacy and numeracy students studying within the AQF at certificate I or II levels decreased from 38.7% in 2002 to 32.2% in 2004. In contrast, the proportion of students studying certificate III and IV courses increased slightly—from 5.1% of the literacy and numeracy population in 2002 to 8.5% in 2004. Overall, the proportion of students studying at certificate I or higher levels decreased from 43.9% in 2002 to 40.8% in 2004.

Provider type

In 2004, almost nine out of ten (88.5%) course enrolments for literacy and numeracy were undertaken at TAFE and government providers, a slightly higher proportion than in 2002 (87.8%). The major shift in provider type was the decline in course enrolments at community providers, which fell from 10.3% in 2002 to 7.3% in 2004. In contrast, course enrolments at 'other registered providers' (which includes private providers in receipt of government funding) increased from 1.9% in 2002 to 4.2% in 2004.

Course enrolments at TAFE and other government providers and at community providers remained higher for the literacy and numeracy population than the total VET population throughout 2002 to 2004. Despite the increase in course enrolments at other registered providers for the literacy and numeracy population (to 4.2% in 2004), they remained less than half that of the total VET population (9.4%) (table 10).

Annual hours

Total annual hours of training associated with the defined literacy and numeracy courses increased from 39.1 million hours in 2002 to 43.9 million hours in 2004, an increase of 12.3% (table 11). During the reporting period, total hours of delivery increased for General Education Programmes (by 26.5%), Social Skills Courses (by 29.8%) and Other Mixed Field Programmes (by 242.3%), while Employment Skills Courses declined considerably (by 26.0%).

General Education Programmes increased from slightly less than two-thirds (64.6%) of total literacy and numeracy delivery in 2002 to just under three-quarters (72.8%) of literacy and numeracy hours delivered in 2004. This was accompanied by a slight rise in Other Mixed Field Programmes—from 1.5% to 4.5%—and countered by a large decline in Employment Skills Courses—from 33.1% to 21.8%—during the same period.

In 2002, all literacy and numeracy courses represented 11.3% of total VET annual hours. This increased to 12.8% in 2004.

⁴ Miscellaneous education is defined in ASCED as all formal education not elsewhere classified.

⁵ Non-award courses are defined as those courses that do not lead to a formal qualification.

Table 11: Number of annual hours for literacy and numeracy (L&N) courses, by Field of Education, 2002–04

Field of Education course		Total hours of delivery ('000)			% change
Number	Description	2002	2003	2004	2002–04
1201	General Education Programmes	25 239.7	31 664.5	31 940.2	26.5
1203	Social Skills Courses	311.8	256.5	404.9	29.8
1205	Employment Skills Courses	12 928.4	10 039.5	9 572.8	-26.0
1299	Other Mixed Field Programmes	570.6	1 023.7	1 953.3	242.3
Total L&N hours		39 050.5	42 984.2	43 871.1	12.3
Total VET hours in courses^(a)		339 279.9	347 632.6	338 724.4	-0.2
Total VET hours		345 065.9	351 714.7	342 396.7	-0.8

Note: (a) Total excludes subject-only enrolment hours

The number of annual hours for literacy and numeracy courses increased by more than 4.8 million hours (12.3%) between 2002 and 2004 (table 12). The largest proportion of this increase occurred at certificate III levels (2.8 million hours increase), followed by certificate IV, secondary education and non-award courses (all increasing by 0.5 million hours).

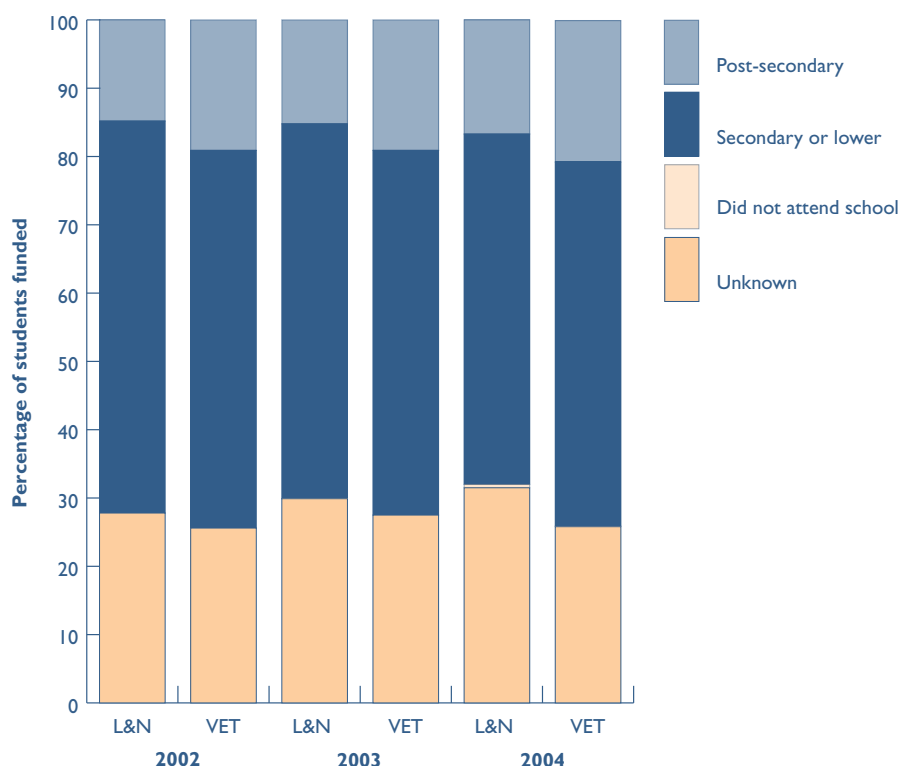
There were increases in annual hours delivered by all provider types between 2002 and 2004 (table 13). The largest increase (3.0 million hours) was for literacy and numeracy courses delivered by TAFE and other government providers, while the number of hours delivered by other registered providers trebled to more than 1.9 million hours.

Section 2: Outcomes

Outcomes of literacy and numeracy courses can be assessed using a number of measures the VET system. Course completions and student satisfaction are considered here. These are single point-in-time information.

Before examining the outcomes of people undertaking literacy and numeracy courses, it is worthwhile to examine some characteristics of these students at the time of their enrolment. Literacy and numeracy students generally have low levels of educational attainment (figure 6). For example, in 2002 more than half (57.4%) of literacy and numeracy students had a highest education level of secondary school or lower. However, by 2004, the proportion who had completed secondary school or lower-level education had decreased to 51.3% of literacy and numeracy students. This decrease was partly due to a 32.3% increase in the number of students who had undertaken some post-secondary education, as well as an increase in the number of students with 'unknown' education backgrounds.

Figure 6: Highest education level of literacy and numeracy (L&N) and total VET students, by level 2002–04

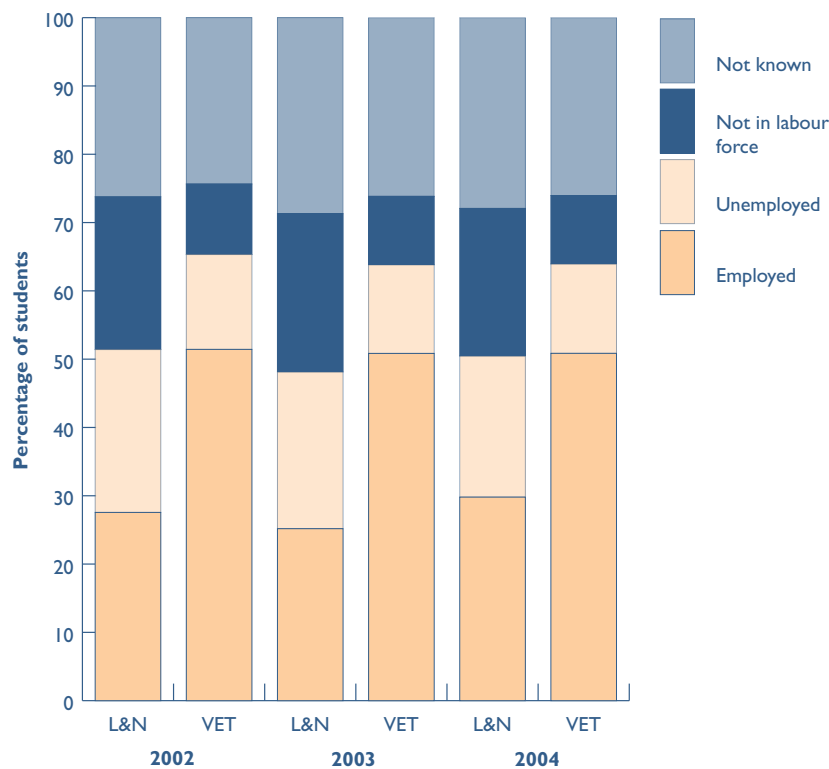


The trends in highest education level for literacy and numeracy students was strongly affected by a significant increase in the 'not known' category for literacy and numeracy students—which increased from 44 700 (27.8% overall) in 2002 to 59 400 in 2004 (31.5%). If the 'not known' category is removed from the data, then the proportion of students with a highest education level of secondary school or lower decreased from 79.5% in 2002 to 74.9% in 2004, while the proportion with post-secondary education levels increased from 20.5% to 24.4%.

The employment status of the literacy and numeracy population changed marginally between 2002 and 2004. The number and proportion of literacy and numeracy students who were employed increased slightly, while the proportions who were not in the labour force and unemployed both declined (even though their numbers increased). Again the data is affected by the large—and increasing—number of 'not known' responses reported.

The employment status of the literacy and numeracy population is significantly different to the total VET population. Whereas half (50.9%) of the total VET population were employed at the time of their enrolment in 2004, only 29.8% of the literacy and numeracy population were employed (figure 7). In addition, 20.7% of the literacy and numeracy population were unemployed and 21.6% were not in the labour force compared with 13.1% and 10.0% respectively for the total VET population (table 6).

Figure 7: Employment status of literacy and numeracy (L&N) and total VET students, 2002–04



Course completions

The absolute number of course completions for literacy and numeracy declined slightly, from 12 900 in 2002 to 12 300 in 2003. Provisional data suggests that the number of course completions will decline further to 12 100 in 2004. The proportion of total VET course completions that are literacy and numeracy students remained at 4.4% between 2002 and 2004.

It is possible to analyse data at the subject level and not just at the course level for outcome activity. Table 14 shows the educational outcomes for literacy and numeracy courses and students enrolled in literacy and numeracy subjects. It also indicates lower levels of successful achievement in literacy and numeracy course programmes than for literacy and numeracy subject programmes, which were slightly lower than for total VET. Just under two-thirds (64.4%) of annual hours for literacy and numeracy course programmes had successful outcomes (achieved/pass, recognition of prior learning, satisfactorily completed) in 2004, compared with 72.3% of hours for literacy and numeracy subject programmes and 76.7% of hours for total VET.

Conversely, there was a higher proportion of unsuccessful outcomes (not achieved/failed, not completed) for annual hours in literacy and numeracy course programmes (16.1%), than hours in literacy and numeracy subject programmes (13.7%) or total VET (9.8%). There was a higher rate of withdrawn outcomes (18.0%) in literacy and numeracy course programmes than in literacy and numeracy subject programmes (11.5%) and in total VET (10.7%).

Table 14: Number of annual hours of literacy and numeracy (L&N) activity, by outcome, 2004

Outcome	L&N course programmes ^(a)		L&N subject programmes ^(b)		Total VET	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Achieved/pass	19 840.0	45.2	31 499.1	57.6	237 261.5	69.3
Not achieved/failed	5 841.6	13.3	6 455.1	11.8	31 667.3	9.2
Withdrawn	7 882.9	18.0	6 320.0	11.5	36 672.5	10.7
Recognised prior learning	189.8	0.4	984.8	1.8	9 126.2	2.7
Credit transfer	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Continuing enrolment	657.2	1.5	1 354.7	2.5	9 412.5	2.7
Satisfactorily completed	8 240.5	18.8	7 091.1	13.0	16 268.6	4.8
Not completed	1 219.0	2.8	1 021.7	1.9	1 988.1	0.6
Total	43 871.1	100.0	54 726.5	100.0	342 396.7	100.0

Notes: (a) 'L&N course programmes' is where the whole course is related to literacy and numeracy.
 (b) 'L&N subject programmes' is for individual subjects that are related to literacy and numeracy.

Section 3: Destination and satisfaction

A number of VET outcome measures are also contained in NCVER's Student Outcomes Survey. The 2004 survey sampled graduates and module completers who completed some training at a TAFE institute during 2003. It does not survey graduates and module completers from community providers or other registered providers. The survey presents information on student satisfaction at a single point in time. Caution should be exercised using the results for literacy and numeracy graduates and module completers because of the small numbers involved.

Table 15 shows outcomes for both literacy and numeracy and total TAFE graduates and module completers⁶ by lower-level AQF qualifications.⁷ Literacy and numeracy graduates reported lower levels of employment after training than total TAFE graduates. The employment pattern was similar for module completers, where literacy and numeracy students reported considerably lower levels of employment after training than total TAFE module completers. These findings are not surprising considering the large differences in employment status between literacy and numeracy students and total VET discussed above.

There is considerable variation in the satisfaction levels of literacy and numeracy graduates, especially compared with total TAFE graduates. Furthermore, satisfaction levels vary according to qualification level. For example, whereas literacy and numeracy certificate II graduates reported higher satisfaction levels than total TAFE certificate II graduates, literacy and numeracy certificate I graduates reported lower satisfaction levels than total TAFE certificate I graduates. Higher proportions of literacy and numeracy certificate II graduates reported achieving their main reason for training (83%) and satisfaction with the overall quality of training (95%) compared with total TAFE graduates (80% and 87% respectively). In contrast, literacy and numeracy certificate I graduates reported slightly lower levels of achieving their main reason for studying (71%) and with the overall quality of training (85%) than total TAFE certificate I graduates (76% and 88% respectively).

Overall, literacy and numeracy module completers reported lower levels of satisfaction than total TAFE module completers, and literacy and numeracy graduates. Only literacy and numeracy module completers who undertook modules at certificate I level reported higher levels of satisfaction with their training (80%) than total TAFE module completers who completed modules at the same level (77%).

⁶ For module completers this is the qualification enrolled in, not the qualification completed.

⁷ Higher-level qualifications have been excluded from this analysis due to high standard errors.

Table 15: Outcomes of literacy and numeracy (L&N) and total TAFE graduates and module completers, by qualification level, 2004

Qualification undertaken	Employed after training	Difference in percentage points employed before and after	Achieved main reason for studying	Satisfied with overall quality of training
	%	% points	%	%
Graduates				
Certificate II—L&N	40	10	83	95
Certificate II—total TAFE	65	5	80	87
Certificate I—L&N	51	18	71	85
Certificate I—total TAFE	60	10	76	88
Module completers				
Certificate II—L&N	40	-3	45	66
Certificate II—total TAFE	62	1	69	76
Certificate I—L&N	34	1	66	80
Certificate I—total TAFE	45	3	68	77
Statement of attainment—L&N	37	-3	77	81
Statement of attainment—total TAFE	58	0	80	85

Note: Analysis by higher-level qualifications has been excluded due to high standard errors in the data.

Achievement and satisfaction levels by reason for undertaking training are shown in table 16. Slightly lower proportions of literacy and numeracy graduates achieved their main reason for training compared with the corresponding group of total TAFE graduates. However, irrespective of the reason for undertaking training, literacy and numeracy graduates were either equally or more satisfied with the overall quality of training than their total TAFE counterparts. Literacy and numeracy graduates who undertook training for further study-related reasons reported higher levels of achieving their reasons for study (86%) and satisfaction with quality of training (90%) than the equivalent group of total TAFE graduates (81% and 86% respectively).

Table 16: Achievement and satisfaction levels of literacy and numeracy (L&N) and total TAFE graduates and module completers, by reason for undertaking training, 2004

Reason for undertaking training	Graduates		Module completers	
	Achieved main reason for studying	Satisfied with overall quality of training	Achieved main reason for studying	Satisfied with overall quality of training
	%	%	%	%
Employment related—L&N	72	91	67	81
Employment related—total TAFE	78	85	66	76
Further study related—L&N	86	90	53	71
Further study related—total TAFE	81	86	57	63
Personal or other reasons—L&N	86	84	75	76
Personal or other reasons—total TAFE	90	84	81	80

Language and numeracy module completers and total TAFE module completers who undertook their training for employment reasons reported similar levels of satisfaction with achieving their main reason for training (67% and 66% respectively). However, more literacy and numeracy module completers were satisfied with their training (81%) compared with total TAFE module completers (76%). Literacy and numeracy module completers who undertook their training for personal or other reasons reported lower levels of achieving their reasons for training (75%) and satisfaction with their training (76%) than the comparable group of total TAFE module completers (81% and 80% respectively).

Fewer literacy and numeracy module completers who undertook training for further study-related reasons achieved their main reason for training (53%) than total TAFE module completers (57%). However, literacy and numeracy module completers reported higher levels of satisfaction with their training (71%) than total TAFE module completers (63%).

Both literacy and numeracy and total TAFE graduates reported higher levels of achieving their reason for training and higher levels of satisfaction with their training than module completers.

Appendix: Classification structure and definition of Field of Education for Mixed Field Programmes (12)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001, *Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED)*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

BROAD FIELD 12 MIXED FIELD PROGRAMMES

MIXED FIELD PROGRAMMES are programmes providing general and personal development education.

The theoretical content of Broad Field 12 Mixed Field Programmes includes:

- literacy and numeracy skills
- personal, social and workplace relationships

The main purpose of this broad field of education is to develop a basic understanding of reading, writing and arithmetic along with an elementary understanding of other subjects such as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music. It also involves developing an understanding of key competencies and skills that are needed for job search activities, employment and personal survival skills.

This broad field comprises the following narrow fields:

- 1201 GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES
- 1203 SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAMMES
- 1205 EMPLOYMENT SKILLS PROGRAMMES
- 1299 OTHER MIXED FIELD PROGRAMMES

Exclusions:

Personal management training. This is included in Detailed Field 080305 Personal Management Training.

NARROW FIELD 1201 GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES develop general knowledge, skills and competencies required for education and learning.

The main purpose of this narrow field of education is to develop an elementary understanding of subjects such as history, geography, natural science, mathematics, English, social science, art and music, and study methods.

Courses in Narrow Field 1201 General Education Programmes develop skills in:

- basic learning
- basic mathematics
- general school education
- reading and writing

This narrow field comprises the following detailed fields:

- 120101 General Primary and Secondary Education Programmes
- 120103 Literacy and Numeracy Programmes
- 120105 Learning Skills Programmes
- 120199 General Education Programmes, n.e.c.

I20101 General Primary and Secondary Education Programmes

General Primary and Secondary Education Programmes develop general knowledge and skills through school education programmes. It includes secondary education programmes run in TAFEs and other similar institutions.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- mathematics skills
- reading and writing
- general studies in history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music

I20103 Literacy and Numeracy Programmes

Literacy and Numeracy Programmes develop basic reading, writing and numeracy skills.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- general language skills
- basic reading and writing
- basic numeracy skills
- spelling and grammar

Exclusions:

English as a second language. This is included in Detailed Field 091501 English Language.

I20105 Learning Skills Programmes

Learning Skills Programmes develop skills for study, such as research and analysis skills.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- analysing techniques
- general report writing
- how to research a topic

I20199 General Education Programmes, n.e.c.

This detailed field includes all General Education Programmes not elsewhere classified.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- tertiary preparation
- general studies

NARROW FIELD I203 SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAMMES

SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAMMES develop skills required for day to day interacting and functioning in society.

The main purpose of this narrow field of education is to develop an understanding of key competencies and skills that are needed for personal survival and independent living.

Courses in Narrow Field I203 Social Skills Programmes develop skills in:

- parenting
- running a household
- social and interpersonal relationships

This narrow field comprises the following detailed fields:

- I20301 Social and Interpersonal Skills Programmes
- I20303 Survival Skills Programmes
- I20305 Parental Education Programmes
- I20399 Social Skills Programmes, n.e.c.

I20301 Social and Interpersonal Skills Programmes

Social and Interpersonal Skills Programmes develop skills for interacting with family and people in the wider community.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- personal and social relationships
- social etiquette
- interpersonal communication

Exclusions:

Personal management training. This is included in Detailed Field 080305 Personal Management Training

I20303 Survival Skills Programmes

Survival Skills Programmes develop skills for managing a household.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- basic home economics
- banking and buying

I20305 Parental Education Programmes

Parental Education Programmes develop skills for parenting.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- providing for children
- dealing with conflict
- resolving values problems
- setting boundaries

I20399 Social Skills Programmes, n.e.c.

This detailed field includes all Social Skills Programmes not elsewhere classified.

NARROW FIELD I205 EMPLOYMENT SKILLS PROGRAMMES

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS PROGRAMMES develop job searching and employment related skills.

The main purpose of this narrow field of education is to develop an understanding of key competencies and skills that are needed for job search and career development activities.

Courses in Narrow Field I205 Employment Skills Programmes develop skills in:

- career development
- searching for a job
- work practices

This narrow field comprises the following detailed fields:

- I20501 Career Development Programmes
- I20503 Job Search Skills Programmes
- I20505 Work Practices Programmes
- I20599 Employment Skills Programmes, n.e.c.

I20501 Career Development Programmes

Career Development Programmes provide guidance and counselling for career development.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- vocational exploration
- choosing a career
- career planning

I20503 Job Search Skills Programmes

Job Search Skills Programmes develop skills for finding a job.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- resume writing
- interview skills and presentation
- prospecting and general job seeking

I20505 Work Practices Programmes

Work Practices Programmes develop skills for functioning effectively in the workplace

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- communicating in the workplace
- working with others
- participating in teams

I20599 Employment Skills Programmes, n.e.c.

This detailed field includes all Employment Skills Programmes not elsewhere classified.

Examples of subjects in this detailed field include:

- returning to the workforce
- industrial skills

NARROW FIELD I299 OTHER MIXED FIELD PROGRAMMES

This narrow field includes all Mixed Field Programmes not elsewhere classified.

This narrow field comprises the following detailed field:

- I29999 Mixed Field Programmes, n.e.c.

I29999 Mixed Field Programmes, n.e.c.

This detailed field includes all Mixed Field Programmes not elsewhere classified.

Publisher's note

A glossary of terms used in this publication is available at <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/I697.html>>.

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