



International Higher Education Students by Level of Course

Since 2002, the proportions of international students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate courses have shifted. In 2002, 37% of international higher education students were enrolled in a postgraduate course, increasing to 44% in 2007. A similar change has also occurred with commencing postgraduate students (43% to 52%) over the same period. This snapshot examines the trend by international students away from undergraduate towards postgraduate courses.

Undergraduate students

Undergraduate enrolments have grown 35% since 2002 to 98,459. However, the annual rate of growth has slowed from a high of 15% in 2003 to 1% in 2007. Undergraduate commencements grew by 6% since 2002 to 33,978. This is largely due to recent growth of 4% in 2007.

Postgraduate students

Postgraduate enrolments have grown very strongly, up 81% since 2002 to 77,178. Commencements increased 49% to 36,658 over the same period. Nonetheless, the rate of commencement growth has been declining, down from a high of 16% in 2003 to 8% in 2007.

In 2007, almost four-in-five (79%) postgraduate enrolments were at the Masters by Coursework level. Enrolments almost doubled over the five years from 31,116 in 2002 to 61,210 in 2007. Commencements at this level also grew strongly over this period, up 57% to 28,908 in 2007.

Postgraduate degrees - research versus coursework

The average proportion of international enrolments in a postgraduate degree by research or coursework has remained steady since 2002, at 88% for coursework and 12% for research. Similarly, for commencements, proportions have remained fairly constant, averaging 92% for coursework and 8% for research. For all students in research courses, 84% were enrolled in a Doctoral degree with the remainder in a Masters by Research degree.

Nationality

Since 2002, coursework level* commencements from have increased 170% from India and 71% from China. In 2007, China and India comprised 57% of Masters by Coursework and 22% of research (Doctoral, Masters by Research, and PhD & Higher Doctorate qualifying) level commencements.

Commencements of Doctoral students from Malaysia have increased almost three-fold since 2002 while Masters by Research commencements from India have almost doubled.

Commencements from Thailand, the third largest market for postgraduate students, have been declining since 2002 (down 32%). However, the rate of decrease has slowed, from a high of 19% in 2005 to 4% in 2007.

Nepal, the fourth largest postgraduate market in 2007 has grown dramatically since 2002 (up 1185%) with three quarters of commencements in Masters by Coursework degrees. Although still a small market, Iran now ranks fifth for Masters by Research and seventh for Doctoral commencements.

Field of education

More than half (56%) of all commencements at the Masters by Coursework level in 2007 were in the 'Management and Commerce' broad field of education. Of these, 39% and 34% were in the 'Accounting' and the 'Business and Management' narrow fields of education respectively. Indian and Chinese students made up almost two-thirds of these commencements (35% and 25%). Other major broad fields of education at this Masters by Coursework level in 2007 included 'Information Technology' (14% of all commencements) and 'Society and Culture' (7%).

Doctoral students were enrolled across most broad fields of education, however the largest concentration of commencements were in 'Society and Culture' (25%); 'Natural and Physical Sciences' (21%); and 'Engineering and Related Technologies' (17%). Within 'Society and Culture', 35% of students were enrolled in a 'Philosophy' and 'Religious Studies' course. Almost one-third of Masters by Research commencements were enrolled in 'Engineering and Related Technologies' (31%); 'Natural and Physical Sciences' (18%); and 'Society and Culture' (13%) courses.

More information is available at: <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/MIP/Statistics/Default.htm>.

* Includes Masters by Coursework, graduate certificate and diploma, Masters preliminary, vocational graduate certificate and diploma.

