

Glossary

Note on data sources and terms

A main source of data reported in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2020* and in the National Report on Schooling data portal is the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) (non-finance). This is a count of schools, students and staff involved in primary and secondary education, in government and non-government schools, for all Australian states and territories. The schools census collection date for the collection is the first Friday in August each year.

Data for government schools is submitted to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) by state and territory departments of education.

Data for non-government schools in all states and territories is collected by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment and a subset is provided to the ABS for the NSSC.

Data from the collection is published by the ABS in [Schools, Australia](#). Definitions of terms in this glossary are, for the most part, quoted or adapted from the *Schools, Australia* glossary and explanatory notes.

Other major data sources for the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* include the National Student Attendance Data Collection (ACARA); the Survey of Education and Work (ABS); the Census of Population and Housing (ABS); National, state and territory population (ABS); the NSSC (finance) collection (states and territories); NAP national reports (ACARA) and National VET Provider and National VET in Schools collections (NCVER).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) status

A student is classified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, based on information provided by the student, or their parent or guardian, on the school enrolment form.

Accrual accounting

A recording method in which revenues, expenses, lending and borrowing are recorded as they are earned, accrued or incurred regardless of when payment is made or received.

Apparent retention rate

An indicative measure of student progression through secondary school. It is a measure of the proportion of full-time school students who have stayed at school from one year to another. The rate is calculated by dividing the number of students in a year group (cohort) in one calendar year by the number of students in the same cohort in a previous calendar year. For example, an apparent retention rate from Year 10 to 12 in 2020 measures the percentage of Year 10 students in 2018 that continued to Year 12 in 2020.

From 2015 onwards, the ABS has released rates tables in 2 formats: one with rates exceeding 100% capped to a maximum value of 100.0 (capped), and one where rates exceeding 100% continue to be reported as the raw calculated value (uncapped). This report continues to report uncapped rates for apparent retention.

See [Schools, Australia](#) explanatory notes for further information.

Attendance

The National Student Attendance Data Collection is conducted by ACARA for Semester 1 of each school year. Data is collected for full-time students in Years 1–10 (including ungraded secondary). Data is provided to ACARA by state and territory education departments for government schools and by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment for non-government schools.

The attendance rate is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1–10 in Semester 1 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1.

The attendance level is defined as the proportion of full-time students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90%.

Specifications for the collection are provided in the [National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting](#).

Capital expenditure

Expenditure by a school or school system to purchase or improve land, buildings and other capital assets and equipment.

Census of Population and Housing

Australia's largest statistical collection, undertaken by the ABS. The Census of Population and Housing is conducted every 5 years. The aim of the census is to accurately collect data on the key characteristics of people in Australia on census night, and the dwellings in which they live. In 2016 the census counted 9.9 million dwellings and approximately 23.5 million people.

Estimated resident population

The estimated resident population (ERP) is used as a denominator to calculate students as a proportion of the population. The ERP is an estimate of the population of Australia, based on data from the Census of Population and Housing, updated quarterly using information on births, deaths, and overseas and interstate migration. For further details see ABS, [National, state and territory population, June 2020](#).

Full-time equivalent students

The FTE value of students is a measure used for funding purposes. It is calculated by adding the number of full-time students and the FTE value of part-time students.

A full-time student is one who undertakes the prescribed minimum workload required to complete a given year level in a calendar year. This may vary between states and territories and from year to year. A part-time student is one who undertakes a workload less than that prescribed as full-time. Methods for estimating the FTE value of part-time students vary between states and territories due to different policy and administrative arrangements. The recorded FTE value for each student is capped at 1.0.

Full-time equivalent teaching staff

The FTE value of teaching staff is a measure of the level of staffing resources. Staff who are employed full time and engaged solely on activities that fall within the scope of the NSSC have an FTE value of 1.0. All FTE values are rounded to one decimal place.

For staff not employed on a full-time basis, and/or engaged in a combination of in-scope and out-of-scope activities, the FTE value is calculated on the basis of the proportion of time spent on in-scope activities compared with staff who would be considered full time.

The FTE value of teaching staff is calculated by adding the number of full-time teaching staff and the FTE value of part-time teaching staff.

Full-time equivalent student–teacher ratios

Student–teacher ratios are calculated by dividing the FTE student number by the FTE teaching staff number. They are an indicator of the level of staffing resources used and should not be used as a measure of class size. They do not include teacher aides and other non-teaching staff who may also assist in the delivery of school education.

Location

School locations are classified based on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness indicator. The five Remoteness Areas for Australia are:

- major cities
- inner regional
- outer regional
- remote
- very remote.

A map, showing the location of these areas, is available on the [ABS website](#).

Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

The [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020](#), as agreed by education ministers, provides the basis for national reporting on the performance of schooling in 2020, and is the main focus of the statistical data included in this report.

The measurement framework defines national key performance measures (KPMs) for schooling, specifies the data sources for these KPMs and outlines the reporting cycle for the period 2020–2023.

The framework is maintained by ACARA on behalf of education ministers and is published on the ACARA website. It is periodically revised by ACARA in consultation with jurisdictions and sectors.

National Assessment Program

The National Assessment Program (NAP), as specified in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2020*, encompasses all assessments endorsed by education ministers for participation by students nationally:

- NAPLAN – annual, full student cohort literacy and numeracy assessments in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9
- NAP sample assessments – triennial domestic sample student population assessments in

Years 6 and 10 in Science Literacy, ICT Literacy and Civics and Citizenship

- Australia's participation in international sample student population assessments: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

ACARA is delegated to manage the development and oversee the delivery of assessments and reporting for NAPLAN, and for domestic NAP sample assessments, as directed by education ministers. PISA is conducted by the OECD. TIMSS and PIRLS are conducted by the IEA.

National Schools Statistics Collection

The scope of the NSSC consists of all 'establishments' that have as their major activity the administration or provision of full-time day primary, secondary and/or special education, or primary or secondary education by distance education. The statistics in the NSSC do not include students engaged in school-level education conducted by other institutions; in particular, TAFE, except where this is part of a school program, such as VET delivered to secondary students.

The NSSC consists of government and non-government statistics. Government statistics comprise all establishments (as defined) administered by departments of education under directors-general of education (or equivalent) in each state or territory. Non-government statistics comprise all such establishments not administered by departments of education.

The 2 sections of the NSSC are:

- non-finance statistics (numbers of schools, students and staff) collected for government and non-government schools and published by the ABS in its annual *Schools, Australia* publication
- finance statistics (expenditure on salaries and non-salary costs) collected for government school systems only, and published in this report and in the National Report on Schooling data portal.

Primary education

See *School level and school year*.

Recurrent funding

Annual funding provided to schools/school systems for expenditure relating to ongoing operating costs of the school (for example, teaching and non-teaching staff salaries, school operating costs).

Remoteness

See *Location*.

School

A school is an education establishment that satisfies all the following criteria:

- Its major activity is the provision of full-time day primary or secondary education or the provision of primary or secondary distance education.
- It is headed by a principal (or equivalent) responsible for its internal operation.
- It is possible for students to enrol and be active in a course of study for a minimum of 4 continuous weeks, excluding breaks for school vacations.

The term 'school' in this publication includes schools in institutions and hospitals, mission schools and similar establishments.

The term 'school' in this publication excludes preschools, early learning or long day care centres, senior technical and agricultural colleges, evening schools, continuation classes and institutions such as business or coaching colleges.

Multi-campus arrangements are counted as one school. Changes to school counts in this publication can occur when multiple schools amalgamate into a single multi-campus school, or multi-campus schools divide into separate schools.

School level and school year

All states and territories provide for 13 years of formal school education. Typically, schooling commences at age 5, is compulsory from age 6 until at least the completion of Year 10, and is completed at age 17 or 18.

For national reporting purposes, primary education comprises a Foundation year¹ followed by Years 1–6 in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia², Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. Primary education generally comprises a Foundation year followed by Years 1–7 in South Australia.³

Junior secondary education includes the years from commencement of secondary schooling to Year 10, including ungraded secondary.

Senior secondary education comprises Years 11 and 12 in all states and territories.

Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school level' are 'primary' and 'secondary'. In some tables, the categories 'primary', 'junior secondary', 'senior secondary' and 'total secondary' are used.

Students attending special schools are allocated to either primary or secondary education on the basis of school year or school level, where identified. Where a school year or school level is not identified, students are allocated to primary or secondary level of education according to the typical age level in each state or territory. Ungraded students (ungraded primary and ungraded secondary) are those who have not been placed in a specific year level.

See also *School type*.

See also *Special school*.

School sector

This report and the National Report on Schooling data portal use the term 'school sector' to distinguish between government schools, which are established and administered by state and territory governments through their education departments, and non-government schools, usually with some religious affiliation,

¹ The Foundation Year (first year of full-time schooling) is known as Preparatory in Vic, Qld and Tas, Kindergarten in NSW and the ACT, Reception in SA, Pre-primary in WA and Transition in the NT. In some jurisdictions, part-time programs that precede the Foundation Year are conducted in primary schools (for example, Kindergarten in WA). However, these programs are outside the scope of the NSSC and of data sets included in this report.

² Year 7 became part of secondary education in Qld and WA from 2015. This change affects some comparisons with previous years of student and staff data by school level.

³ In 2018, the SA Government announced that Year 7 will be moved from a primary school year to a secondary school year. In 2020 in SA, Year 7 was counted as a secondary school year for a number of non-government schools and 3 government schools, with other government schools to adopt this structure from 2022.

which are established and operated under conditions determined by state and territory governments through their registration authorities.

'School sector' is also used to further distinguish between non-government schools as Catholic or independent. Catholic schools make up the largest group of non-government schools. Independent schools may be associated with other religions, other denominations, particular educational philosophies, or operate as single entities.

Schools, Australia uses the term 'affiliation' rather than 'school sector' to make these distinctions.

A further distinction is sometimes made between systemic and non-systemic non-government schools. Systemic schools are formally affiliated with a group or system of schools. Non-systemic non-government schools do not belong to a system.

In *Schools, Australia* and in this report, Catholic systemic and non-systemic schools are counted as 'Catholic'.

Exception: For the purposes of financial reporting in Part 4.2, based on data drawn from the *My School* data collection, a number of Catholic non-systemic schools, mainly in New South Wales, are counted as 'independent'. Government funding for these schools is distributed directly to the schools rather than through Catholic school system authorities. This affects comparisons between school sectors in some states and nationally. Financial data reported in Part 4.2 should not be compared with financial data included elsewhere in this report.

Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school sector' are 'government', 'Catholic' and 'independent'. In some tables, the category 'total non-government' (total of Catholic and independent data) is also used.

School type

Categories used in tables and graphs showing 'school type' are:

- 'primary' – school delivers primary education
- 'secondary' – school delivers secondary education
- 'combined' – school delivers primary and secondary education
- 'special' – students may include primary students, secondary students, ungraded students or a combination of primary, secondary and ungraded students.

See also *Special school*.

Secondary education

See *School level and school year*.

Senior secondary certificate of education

Senior secondary certificates of education (SSCEs) are Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications issued by the curriculum, assessment and certification authority in each state and territory to students meeting the requirements for successful completion of secondary schooling. These have different titles in each jurisdiction:

New South Wales	Higher School Certificate (HSC)
Victoria	Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)
Queensland	Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)
South Australia	South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
Western Australia	Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)
Tasmania	Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE)
Northern Territory	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET)
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory Senior Secondary Certificate (ACTSSC)

Special school

A special school satisfies the definition of a school (see *School*), and requires one or more of the following characteristics to be exhibited by a student before enrolment is allowed:

- mental or physical disability or impairment
- slow learning ability
- social or emotional problems
- in custody, on remand or in hospital.

Special schools include special assistance schools, as defined under the *Australian Education Act 2013*. These are non-government schools that are:

- likely to be recognised by the state minister as a special assistance school
- primarily established to cater for students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Staff

Staff are people engaged in the administration and/or provision of day primary, secondary or special school education, or primary or secondary education by distance education at in-scope education establishments.

The functional categories for school staff are as follows:

- (a) Teaching staff are employees who spend the majority of their time in contact with students. They support students either by direct class contact or on an individual basis and are engaged to impart school curriculum. For the purposes of this report, teaching staff includes principals, deputy principals, campus principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administration.
- (b) Specialist support staff are employees who perform functions to support students or teaching staff. While these staff may spend most of their time in contact with students, they are not employed or engaged to impart the school curriculum.
- (c) Administrative and clerical staff are employees whose main duties are generally clerical or administrative. Teacher aides and assistants are included in this category, as they are seen to provide services to teaching staff rather than directly to students.
- (d) Building operations, general maintenance and other staff are employees involved in the maintenance of buildings and grounds. Also included are staff providing associated technical services, other janitorial staff and staff who service equipment. School cleaners, whether salaried or employed on contract, are excluded.

For further details on the definition of staff, see [Schools, Australia, glossary](#).

States and territories

Australia has a federal system of government comprising the national government, and the governments of the 6 states and 2 territories. In this report, the national government is generally referred to as 'the Australian Government'.

In tables and graphs in this report and the National Report on Schooling data portal, states and territories are listed in the order of New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA), Tasmania (Tas), the Northern Territory (NT) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). This is the order used in ABS publications, including *Schools, Australia*.

Student

A student is a person who, on the NSSC census date, is formally enrolled at a school and is active in a primary, secondary and/or special education program at that school. Students may be enrolled at more than one school; however, jurisdictions employ strategies that ensure that, as far as possible, students are reported only once in this collection.

Students not present at a school⁴ on the NSSC census date are included as students if they were expected to be absent for less than four continuous weeks (excluding school vacations).

School students undertaking VET (including through TAFE), school-based apprenticeships or traineeships, work placements or tertiary extension studies as a part of the student's school enrolment are in scope for the NSSC. The workload of these subjects or programs (which may take place outside the school premises) is included in a student's aggregate workload to determine whether a student is classified as full-time or part-time, and in calculating the FTE for part-time students.

⁴ For the schools census 2020, students were considered to be enrolled and active in an education program, even if that program had been temporarily disrupted by COVID-19. This included where programs were temporarily delivered online or remotely and even where schools were temporarily closed for COVID-19 related reasons.

Student attendance

See *Attendance*.

Survey of Education and Work

The SEW, conducted annually by the ABS, provides selected information on participation in education, highest educational attainment, transition from education to work, and current labour force and demographic characteristics for the population aged 15–74 years. Data from Education and Work is used to report participation and attainment data, including KPMs for schooling, in this report.

See [ABS, Education and Work, Australia, May 2020](#) methodology for more information.

Teaching staff

Teaching staff are staff who spend most of their time in contact with students. They support students either by direct class contact or on an individual basis and are engaged to impart school curriculum.

For the purposes of this report, teaching staff includes principals, deputy principals, campus principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administration. Teacher aides and assistants, and specialist support staff are excluded, except assistant teachers working in homeland learning centres and community schools in the Northern Territory.

User cost of capital

In the government budget context, the user cost of capital is usually defined as the opportunity cost of funds tied up in capital assets used to deliver government services.

Capital charging is the actual procedure used for applying this cost of capital to the asset management process. As such, it is a means of representing the cost of capital used in the provision of government budgetary outputs.

VET for secondary students, VET in Schools

Data on vocational education and training delivered to secondary students / VET in Schools was derived from the National VET in Schools Collection and the National VET Provider Collection, compiled by NCVET under the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) release 8.0.