In 2017, there were 799,371 enrolments generated by 624,001 full-fee paying international students in Australia on a student visa. This represents a 12.7% increase on 2016 and compares with an average annual enrolments growth rate of 4.4% per year over the preceding ten years.

There were 455,680 commencements (new enrolments) in 2017, representing a 10.9% increase on 2016 figures. This compares with the average annual commencements growth rate of 3.8% per year over the preceding ten years.

The higher education sector had the largest share of enrolments and commencements (43.8% and 32.9% respectively) in 2017. Enrolments and commencements in the sector increased by 14.7% and 14.3% respectively on 2016 figures. China and India accounted for 38.2% and 15.5% respectively of enrolments by students in higher education. Commencements in postgraduate research increased by 9.2% on 2016 figures, while other postgraduate commencements grew by 22.0%. Bachelor degree commencements grew by 7.8% over the same period.

The VET sector accounted for 27.2% of total enrolments and 30.2% of total commencements in 2017. Enrolments and commencements in the sector increased by 16.7% and 16.1% respectively. India contributed the largest share of enrolments (12.7%) and commencements (11.5%) in the sector. China was the next largest source country for enrolments with 8.5%, followed by the Republic of Korea (8.1%) and Thailand (8.0).

The English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sector accounted for 19.4% of total enrolments and 25.9% of total commencements in 2017. Enrolments and commencements grew by 3.4% and 2.9% respectively. China was the largest ELICOS market in the period with 29.3% share of enrolments. Brazil with 11.7% was the second largest nationality for ELICOS enrolments followed by Colombia (8.3%) and Thailand (6.6%).

In 2017, the schools sector accounted for 3.2% of total enrolments and 3.0% of total commencements. Enrolments and commencements in the sector grew by 10.7% and 9.0% respectively. Asia contributed 86.1% of enrolments and 80.9% of commencements. By nationality, China contributed the largest share of enrolments at 52.6% followed by Vietnam (11.4%) and the Republic of Korea (4.7%).

Enrolments and commencements in non-award courses (such as exchange and foundation programs) increased by 13.5% and 6.5% respectively. China (39.2%), the USA (13.0%) and the UK (4.3%) accounted for more enrolments in non-award courses than any other nationality. Commencements from China and the USA increased by 12.3% and 11.3% respectively, and commencements from the UK decreased by 3.7% on 2016 figures.