International students studying non-award courses in 2018

This snapshot provides an overview of international student enrolments in courses that do not result in an award (or qualification) that is recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework. The Australian non-award courses include two broad types: foundation and other enabling courses; and mobility courses, including study abroad and study exchange programs.

In 2018, there were 876,399 international student enrolments in Australia. The non-award sector had 49,864 enrolments (6% of all enrolments), including 28,168 in foundation and other enabling courses and 21,696 in mobility courses. Foundation courses are an entry pathway into undergraduate study, while other enabling courses are an entry pathway into various other courses, including postgraduate study. Mobility courses are undertaken by students who come to Australia for a study abroad experience or as an exchange student. The duration of non-award courses is generally less than one year.

Trends

Figure 1 shows the enrolment pattern in non-award courses. From 2013, enrolments in foundation and enabling courses grew steadily up to 2017, but declined slightly (by 0.4%) in 2018. Mobility course enrolments grew by 24% from 2013 to 2014 and have grown by small increments in each subsequent year, including by 0.1% in 2018. The complete non-award sector declined by 0.2% in 2018.

Top nationalities

More than half (56%) of all non-award course enrolments were in foundation and other enabling courses and most were by students from Asian countries. Students from China accounted for almost two thirds (65%) of enrolments, with the majority (74%) enrolled in foundation courses. The top five nationalities contributed over three quarters of total enrolments (79%) in non-award foundation and other enabling courses (Table 1).

Of the 44 per cent of non-award enrolments in mobility courses, almost four out of every five enrolments (79%) were by students from either the Americas or Europe. The top 5 nationalities contributed over half (58%) of enrolments in non-award mobility courses, comprising 53 per cent in study abroad programs and 47 per cent in exchange programs or other mobility activities (Table 2).

The proportion of international students who had studied non-award courses immediately prior to commencing higher education in 2018 was 11%. International student study pathways data can be obtained from a data visualisation at: https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/pages/data-and-research.aspx.

For further information about this Research Snapshot contact the International Research Analysis Unit by email: IEResearch@education.gov.au.