

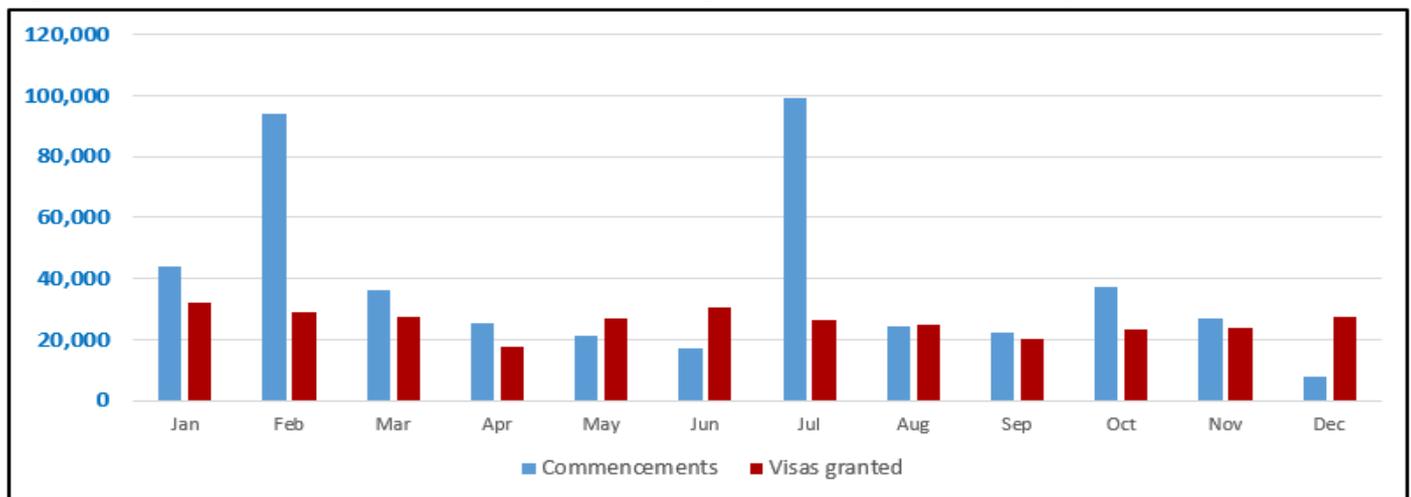


The relationship between international student enrolments and student visa grants

Data on student enrolments and commencements (i.e. new enrolments) as well as data on student visa grants are released on a monthly basis by the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Home Affairs respectively. Since enrolments and commencements data are limited to student visa holders, a strong correlation between these and visa grants data can be expected.

However, comparing these data requires consideration of the following issues. First, comparisons should be constrained to visa grants and commencements because a student enrolment may be sustained over many years (e.g. a 3 year bachelor degree). Second, while a commencement can be expected to follow from a visa grant, the time lag between these two events can vary widely. Considerations include whether a student was granted a visa while offshore or onshore. Third, a student can only commence when their course commences. As shown in Figure 1 below, the large majority of commencements take place in the months of February and July (i.e. first and second semester), while the monthly distribution of visa grants is relatively even over the year.

Figure 1: International students commencements and visa grants, all education sectors, by month in 2017



* Student visa grants data are for primary applicants only and excluding Defence and Foreign Affairs related grants.

This uneven frequency distribution indicates caution is required before drawing conclusions about short-term correlations (e.g. monthly or quarterly) between commencements and visa grants data. While visa grants do offer some capacity to predict future trends in commencements, consideration of any prevalent monthly variations need to be taken into account. Nonetheless, a strong correlation between commencements and visa grant growth trends does become apparent when measured over 12-month periods, as below.

Visa grants											
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
	208,470	245,742	273,733	233,488	212,919	210,122	218,160	247,459	255,274	269,908	298,468
% Growth on previous period	20%	18%	11%	-15%	-9%	-1%	4%	13%	3%	6%	11%
Commencements											
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	262,192	326,145	365,916	327,591	296,116	277,123	301,106	351,879	376,112	411,070	455,680
% Growth on previous period	25%	24%	12%	-10%	-10%	-6%	9%	17%	7%	9%	11%

There are more commencements than visa grants in any 12-month period because some students follow study pathways (e.g. ELICOS, foundation and higher education) which generates several commencements from one visa.