



Enrolments, Commencements and Student Numbers – Explanatory Note

The Department of Education produces detailed monthly and annual data on international student enrolments, commencements and numbers of international students studying under student visas in Australia. These data are available to the Australian international education and training industry on the department’s international education website.

The Provider Registration and International Students Management System (PRISMS) international student enrolment and commencement data are sometimes thought to be the same as international student numbers. However, these data are not directly correlated to the number of international students in Australia or the number of international student visas issued. This is because each student can commence studying and be enrolled in more than one course of study or sector at the same time and consequently be represented in the PRISMS data several times.

Enrolments vs Commencements

The following hypothetical example illustrates the differences between student numbers, commencements and enrolments.

An international student comes to Australia to study, progressing through and between different education sectors over four years.

In the first year, the student *commences* an ELICOS course and *commences* school, completing both within the first year. The student would be counted as a commencement and an enrolment in both sectors (ELICOS and schools).

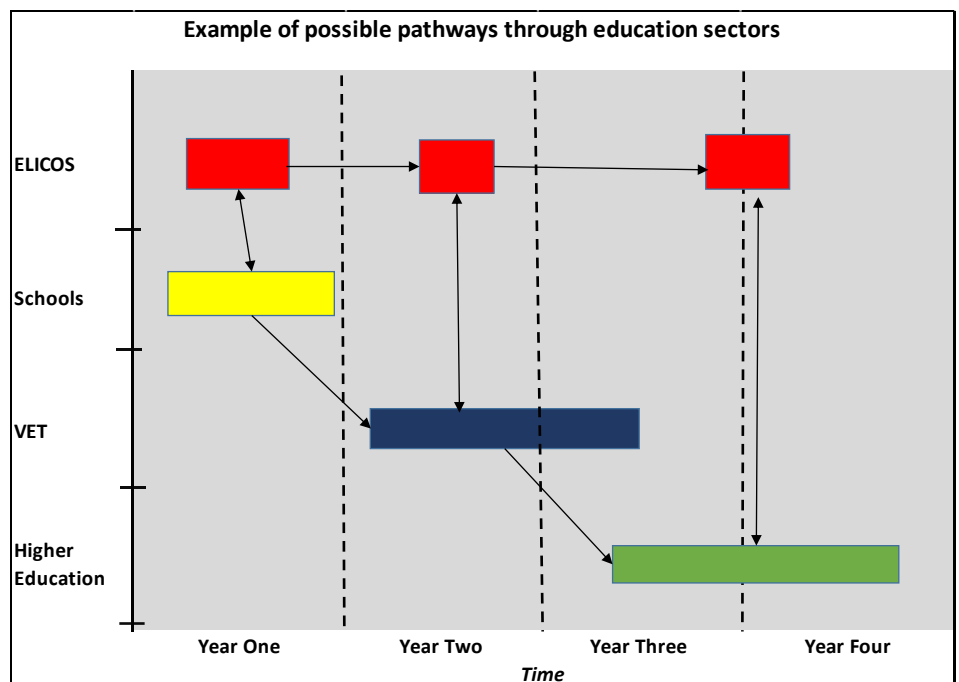
In the second year, the student *commences* a vocational education and training (VET) course and *commences* a second ELICOS course. Again, the student would be counted as a commencement and an enrolment in both sectors (VET and ELICOS).

In the third year, the student continues the VET course and *commences* studying a higher education course before completing the VET course.

Towards the end of the third year, the student *commences* a third ELICOS course while studying the higher education course. The student would count as a commencement in both the ELICOS and higher education sectors, and as an enrolment in the VET, ELICOS and higher education sectors.

In the fourth year, the student completes the third ELICOS course, and completes the higher education course. The student would be counted as an enrolment in each of these sectors, but not as a commencement, as the student did not *commence* these courses in the fourth year.

During the four years, the single student would be counted as a commencement six times and an enrolment nine times, as shown in the table on the left.



	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Student Numbers	1	1	1	1
Commencement Numbers	2	2	2	0
Enrolment Numbers	2	2	3	2

This example helps explain why there is a difference between the number of international *students* studying in Australia and the Department of Education’s annual data on *commencements* and *enrolments*.