



## International students outside Australia due to COVID 19

The COVID-19 global pandemic and associated travel restrictions had a substantial impact on the movement of international students in 2020 and this is continuing in 2021. With the assistance of the Department of Home Affairs, an exercise to match international student enrolment and student visa data was undertaken and from mid-July 2020 it became possible to report the number of enrolled students in and outside Australia as shown in Table 1 below. These figures must be reported as points-in-time rather than as a cumulative count as students will move locations over time.

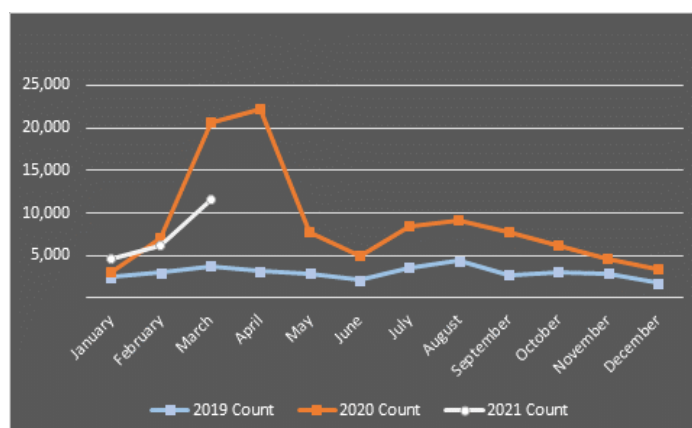
Table 1 demonstrates that while international student numbers have declined overall since early 2020, that decline has been largely limited to the cohort of students in Australia. From the point when the data first became available in July 2020, it is apparent that the number of enrolled students outside Australia has grown substantially (from over 66,000 in July 2020 to over 120,000 in March 2021). As shown in Table 1, the growth in enrolled students outside Australia is moderating the impact of ongoing declines of enrolled students in Australia.

International students studying from outside Australia during the COVID-19 crisis are making an important contribution to the Australian economy. Preliminary data from the ABS shows that tuition fees from students outside Australia totalled \$3.3 billion in 2020<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 1: Location of enrolled international students, month-by-month since March 2020**

Date	Total	% In Australia	% Outside Australia	% unknown
March 2020	542,413	unknown	unknown	N/A
July 2020	506,093	83%	13%	4%
September 2020	517,401	78%	17%	5%
December 2020	498,285	73%	21%	5%
March 2021	449,742	69%	25%	6%
<b>% change March 2020 to March 2021</b>	<b>-17%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	
<b>% change July 2020 to March 2021</b>	<b>-8%</b>	<b>-21%</b>	<b>82%</b>	

**Figure 1: Status of enrolment deferments at March 2021**



In the 15 months from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2021, there were 127,234 enrolment deferments made by 91,516 students, over two thirds of whom were outside Australia. At the end of March 2021:

- 39% had since recommenced studying or finished.
- 16% had a new start date in 2021 or later
- 44% did not yet have a new proposed start date.

Excluding those deferred students who have since recommenced or finished their studies, the remainder (around 50,000 students) are likely to recommence studying when COVID-19 travel restrictions are lifted.

Around 50 per cent of the additional deferments seen in March 2021 (Figure 1) represent students who had already deferred from 2020 to 2021, while the remainder were students with no prior deferment.

<sup>1</sup> Reported under 'Correspondence courses' (Column CN) here: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/international-trade/international-trade-goods-and-services-australia/mar-2021/5368011a.xls>