



Department of Education,  
Training and Youth Affairs

# **Indigenous Participation in Higher Education**

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## Overview

Historically, Indigenous people have formed one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged groups in Australia. In particular, they have been disadvantaged in all sectors of education, including higher education. They have been disadvantaged both by being less likely to enter higher education and by being less likely to obtain higher education qualifications.

Over the years, the Commonwealth Government has implemented a number of programmes designed to enhance the participation of Indigenous Australians in education generally and in higher education specifically. The aggregate participation of Indigenous Australians in higher education has shown a fairly steadily increasing trend since 1987, the first year for which any comparable statistics are available. However, the participation levels of Indigenous people are still below those for the non-Indigenous population. Other statistics show that those Indigenous people who do participate in higher education, as a group, tend to have a different experience of higher education from other students.

Typically, an Indigenous Australian higher education student is likely to be older than a non-Indigenous Australian student, more likely to be female, and less likely to have previous qualifications but more likely to be admitted to higher education through a special entry scheme. Indigenous students are more likely to come from rural and isolated areas and more likely to relocate in order to attend a higher education institution. They are less likely than other Australian students to enrol as internal (on-campus) students and more likely to enrol as external students or in a 'multi-modal' form of attendance (partly internal and partly external). They are less likely to be enrolled in postgraduate courses and much more likely to be enrolled in enabling courses. They are also much more likely to be enrolled in teacher education courses but less likely to be enrolled in most science and science-related fields or in fields such as business and economics. Indigenous students as a group, on average, make slower academic progress than do other Australian students, but Indigenous graduates have results in the employment market similar to those of other Australian graduates. In the year following graduation they are marginally more likely to find full-time work. However, they are much more likely than non-Indigenous graduates to be employed by Federal or State governments or in public education and much less likely to be in the private sector (including self-employment).

The first part of this report examines these patterns of difference in more detail. Since they are a part of a broader historical pattern of economic and social disadvantage, redress cannot be expected solely from the efforts of the higher education sector, but it does have an important contribution to make. The second part of this report looks at trends over time illustrating the degree of progress that has been made in reducing the differences between the higher education experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The third part of the report provides some comparisons between different higher education institutions, illustrating how they have individually contributed to these achievements.

An appendix gives technical notes on the sources of data and related issues.



# 1. Characteristics

## 1.1 Age

Indigenous Australian higher education students tend to be around five years older than their non-Indigenous counterparts. This tendency shows up at all stages of higher education: for both postgraduate and undergraduate students and for students at commencement and at completion. The figures for 1999 (1998 for completing students) are shown in Table 1 and further illustrated in Figures 1A to 1H.

Table 1 Average age (years) of non-overseas students, 1999 (commencing and all students) and 1998 (completing students)

	Undergraduate			Postgraduate		
	Commencing	All	Completing	Commencing	All	Completing
Indigenous	29	29	31	36	37	35
Non-Indigenous	23	24	25	34	35	34

Figure 1 (A-H) Non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, postgraduate and undergraduate, all and commencing, by age group (years), 1999

Figure 1A Indigenous undergraduate students

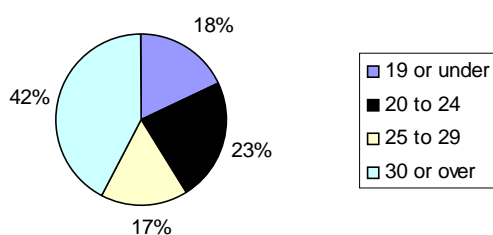


Figure 1B Non-Indigenous undergraduate students

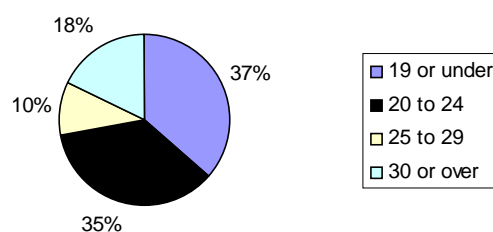


Figure 1C Indigenous postgraduate students

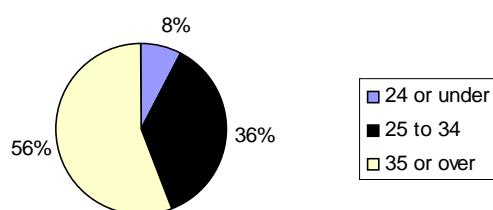
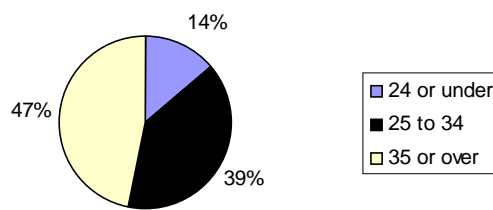


Figure 1D Non-Indigenous postgraduate students



(continued)

Figure 1 (A–H) Non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, postgraduate and undergraduate, all and commencing, by age group (years), 1999 (continued)

Figure 1E Indigenous undergraduate commencers

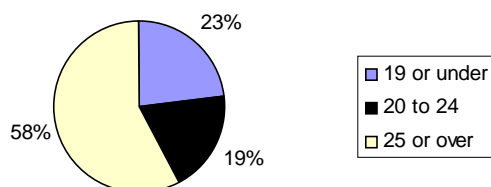


Figure 1F Non-Indigenous undergraduate commencers

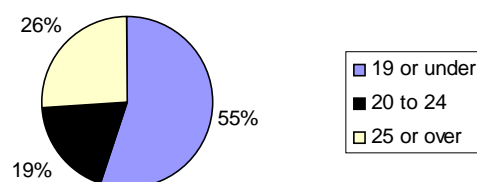


Figure 1G Indigenous postgraduate commencers

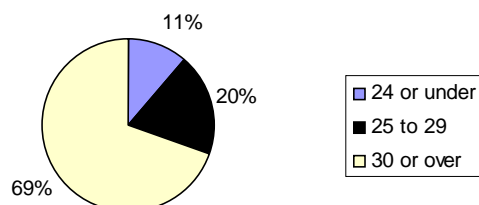
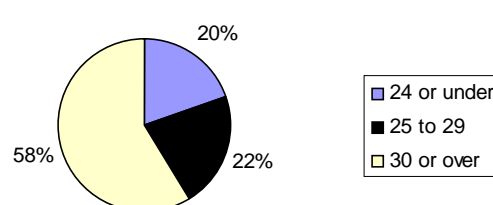


Figure 1H Non-Indigenous postgraduate commencers



## 1.2 Sex

Indigenous women are significantly more likely to participate in higher education than Indigenous men. This can be seen by comparing the numbers of Indigenous higher education students with Indigenous population figures from the latest (1996) census. In 1996 there were 4352 female Indigenous Australian students in higher education: this was 4.5 per cent of the female Indigenous population in the 17–64 age bracket. In comparison, there were 2604 male Indigenous Australian higher education students, 2.9 per cent of the male Indigenous population in the same age bracket.

One frequently remarked phenomenon in Australian higher education is the fact that in recent years female students have come to outnumber male students, having long been a minority. In 1987, female students outnumbered male students for the first time, but only barely—50.1 per cent to 49.9 per cent (of all students). By 1999, female students were 55.0 per cent of all students. The predominance of females among Indigenous students is much more marked. In 1987, 60.3 per cent of Indigenous students were female and in 1999, 63.4 per cent.

## 1.3 Prior qualifications and basis for admission

Indigenous higher education students are less likely to have prior qualifications. For greater comparability, Figures 2A and 2B are restricted to non-overseas students commencing an undergraduate award course in 1999.

Figure 2 (A and B) Non-overseas students commencing undergraduate awards, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by highest prior qualification, 1999

Figure 2A Indigenous

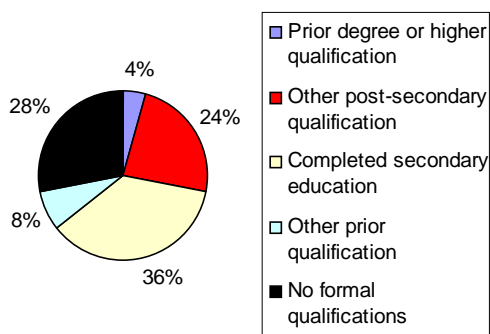
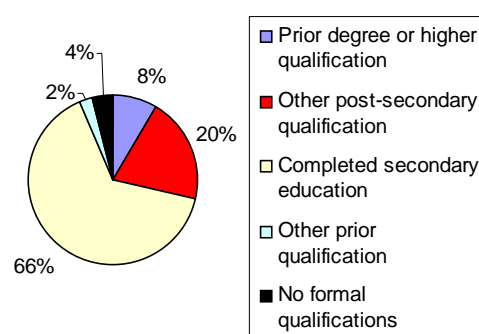


Figure 2B Non-Indigenous



Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in this category are about equally likely to have some sort of post-secondary qualification (a little less than 30 per cent in each category), but non-Indigenous students are more likely to have a prior degree or postgraduate qualification while Indigenous students are more likely to have a sub-degree qualification. Among the majority who do not already have a post-secondary qualification, non-Indigenous students are much more likely to have completed secondary education, while Indigenous students are more likely to have either some other sort of qualification or no formal qualifications at all.

Similarly, it may be seen from Table 2 that Indigenous students are much more likely than non-Indigenous students to be admitted to higher education on the basis of special entry schemes or institutional assessments and less likely to be admitted on the basis of past higher education or school education.

Table 2 Commencing non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by basis of admission, 1999

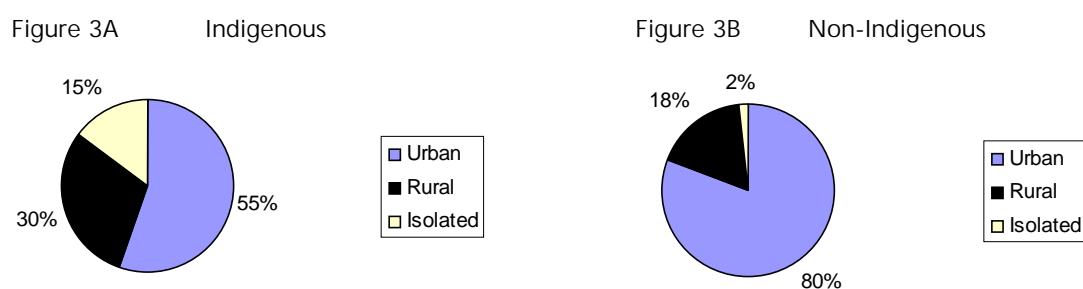
	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)
Complete or incomplete higher education studies (including Open Learning)	21.5	38.3
Complete or incomplete TAFE studies (excluding TAFE secondary)	3.9	5.5
Secondary education (school)	10.1	35.2
Secondary education (TAFE or other)	0.7	0.5
Special entry or institutional examination/assessment	47.6	10.8
Employment experience or professional qualification	2.7	3.5
Other	13.6	6.3
Total	100.0	100.0

## 1.4 Areas of home residence and relocation

Reflecting the geographic distribution of the Indigenous population, Indigenous students are more likely to come from rural and (especially) isolated areas than are non-Indigenous students. In 1999, they were only 0.9 per cent of students from urban areas, but 2.2 per cent of students from rural areas and 10.9 per cent of students from isolated areas.

The respective distributions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are shown in Figures 3A and 3B.

Figure 3 (A and B) Non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by area of home residence, 1999



Indigenous students are more likely to move away from their previous home town in order to enrol in higher education, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Proportions of graduate respondents <sup>(a)</sup> who had moved from their previous home towns to study, 1996 to 1998

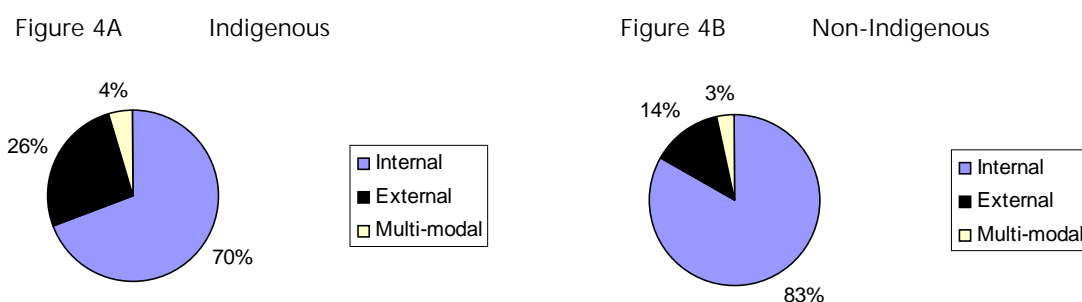
Year of Survey	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)
1996	62	34
1997	50	33
1998	43	28

(a) Based on GCCA survey data: see appendix for details.

## 1.5 Internal and external studies

Figures 4A and 4B compare the distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students between internal, external, and 'multi-modal' enrolment (multi-modal students take at least one unit internally and at least one unit externally).

Figure 4 (A and B) Non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by mode of attendance, 1999



The different pattern evident from the figures is related to the fact that a smaller proportion of Indigenous students come from urban areas. The proportion of (non-overseas) students from urban areas who enrol internally is 86 per cent; for students from rural areas the proportion is 70 per cent and for students from isolated areas it is 57 per cent.

There are other significant differences between Indigenous students undertaking their courses externally (or by mixed mode) and those enrolled internally. For example, older Indigenous people are less likely than younger ones to enrol as internal students, as Table 4 illustrates.

Table 4 Indigenous students undertaking their courses externally or multi-modally, by age group, 1999

Age group	Proportion enrolled externally or by mixed-mode (%)
19 and under	13.6
20 to 24	25.0
25 to 29	36.6
30 to 39	36.3
40 and over	39.2
Total	30.7

Another difference relates to chosen field of study. As Table 5 illustrates, Indigenous students in some fields, such as 'Business, administration, economics' and 'Law, legal studies' were much more likely than the average to choose the option of studying externally, while students in some other fields, such as 'Health' and 'Science' were much less likely to do so.

Table 5 Indigenous students undertaking their courses externally or by mixed mode, by broad field of study, 1999

Broad Field of Study	Number	As proportion of Indigenous students in field (%)
Agriculture, Animal Husbandry	42	34.4
Architecture, Building	1	1.8
Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences	677	24.3
Business, Administration, Economics	231	30.3
Education	1236	51.5
Engineering, Surveying	15	14.0
Health	154	14.5
Law, Legal Studies	134	30.5
Science	68	13.7
Veterinary Science	1	5.9
Non-Award	12	33.3
Total <sup>(a)</sup>	2471	30.9

(a) The sum of figures for individual fields is less than the total figure because students in combined courses are counted in each relevant field of study.

## 1.6 Level of course

Indigenous students are less likely to be undertaking postgraduate courses than are non-Indigenous students and much more likely to be undertaking enabling courses, as is illustrated in Table 6 and Figure 5. A related pattern for course completions is shown in Table 7 and Figure 6.

Table 6 Proportions of non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by broad level of course, 1999

Broad level of course	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)
Higher degree	6.0	12.2
Other postgraduate award	3.5	7.2
Bachelor's degree	54.4	77.4
Other undergraduate award	17.7	2.0
Enabling course	17.9	0.4
Non-award	0.4	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Figure 5 Proportions of non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by broad level of course, 1999

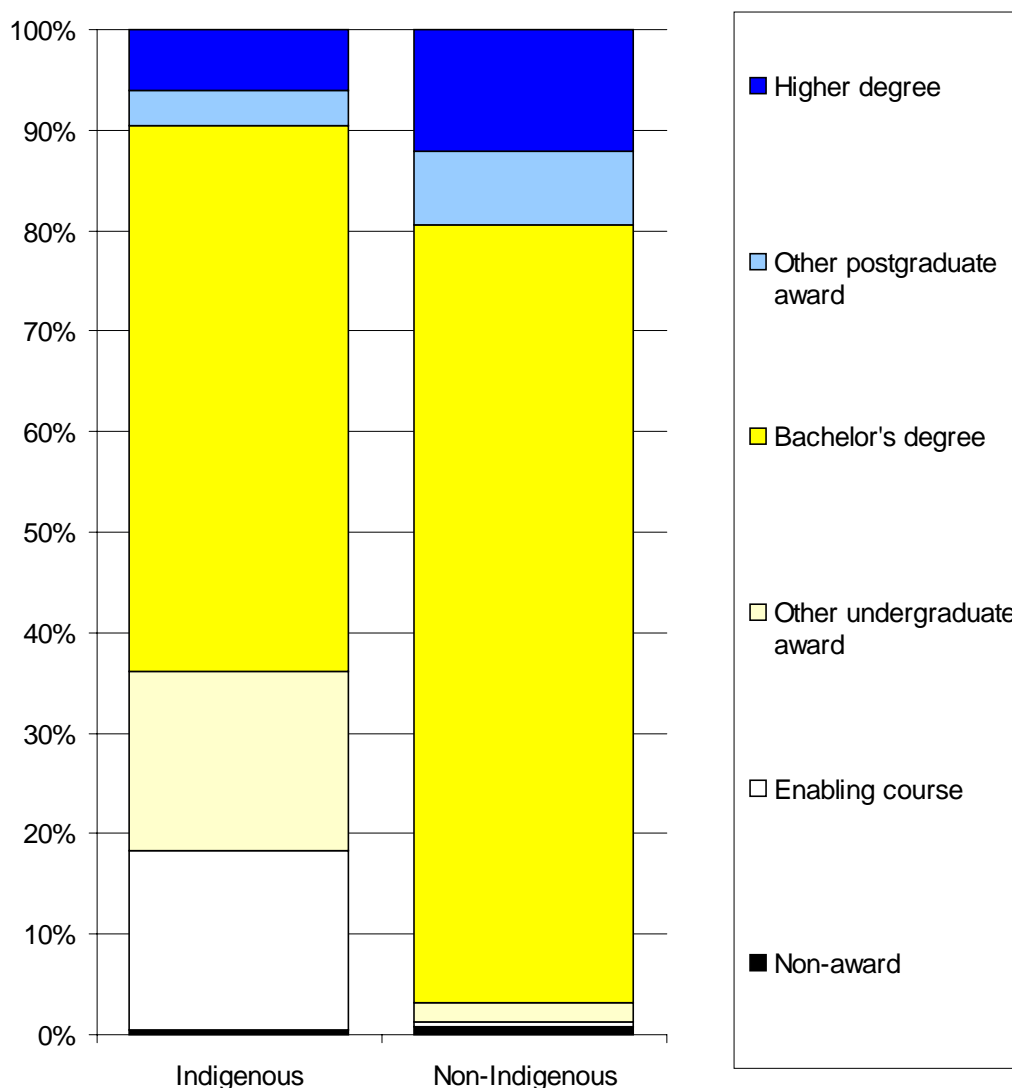
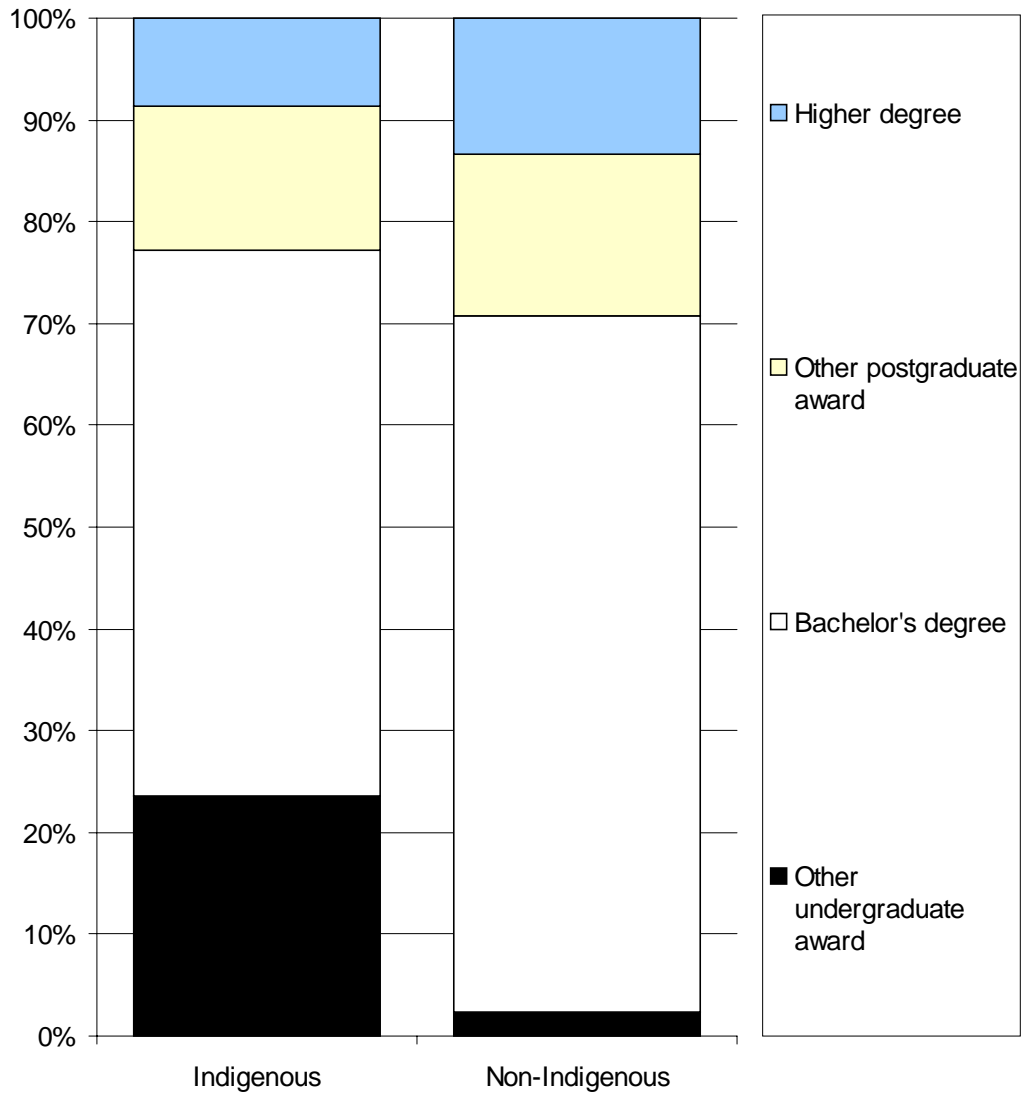


Table 7 Proportions of award course completions by non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by broad level of course, 1998

	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)
Higher degree	8.7	13.3
Other postgraduate award	14.2	15.9
Bachelor's degree	53.5	68.3
Other undergraduate award	23.6	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figure 6 Proportions of award course completions by non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by broad level of course, 1998



## 1.7 Field of study

Table 8 shows how the distribution of Indigenous students by broad field of study is different from the distribution of non-Indigenous students. Table 9 illustrates the related pattern of award course completions.

Table 8 Proportions of non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous by broad field of study, 1999 <sup>(a)</sup>

	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)
Agriculture, animal husbandry	1.5	1.8
Architecture, building	0.7	2.2
Arts, humanities, social sciences	34.8	26.3
Business, administration, economics	9.5	22.8
Education	30.0	11.4
Engineering, surveying	1.3	7.3
Health	13.3	11.8
Law, legal studies	5.5	5.4
Science	6.2	16.5
Veterinary science	0.2	0.3
Non-award	0.4	0.9

(a) Columns add to more than 100% because students in combined courses are counted in each relevant field of study.

Table 9 Proportions of award course completions by non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by broad field of study, 1998 <sup>(a)</sup>

	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)
Agriculture, animal husbandry	1.1	1.6
Architecture, building	1.4	2.1
Arts, humanities, social sciences	37.1	20.7
Business, administration, economics	8.0	26.6
Education	22.6	13.5
Engineering, surveying	1.5	5.6
Health	16.9	13.1
Law, legal studies	7.0	4.2
Science	5.3	13.9
Veterinary science	0.3	0.2

(a) Columns add to more than 100% because students in combined courses are counted in each relevant field of study.

## 1.8 Academic success

Indigenous people get many different things out of higher education (as, indeed, do all people). Many of the benefits which people can see in their higher education experiences are difficult to define or to measure. This paper looks at some convenient measures which reflect some of the key purposes of higher education.

The primary purpose of higher education is the completion of award courses. (An award, in this context, is a bachelor's or higher degree or a similar qualification such as a diploma or certificate.)

Ideally, some comparative measure of the rate at which students complete award courses would be a useful indicator of academic success. However, the varying length of higher education courses, depending on such factors as level, field, and whether study is full-time or part-time, presents complications in deriving a suitable measure. A special database has been created for this specific analytical purpose: it is drawn from the annual series of Higher Education Student Statistical Collections and consisting of information relating to students who commenced higher education courses between January and March 1992. Table 10 is drawn from analysis of this database. While 62.7 per cent of non-Indigenous non-overseas students had completed an award by 1998 at the same institution, the equivalent figure for Indigenous students was 32.9 per cent.

Table 10 Academic outcomes, as at 1998, for students commencing undergraduate award courses in 1992 <sup>(a)</sup>

	Completed an award course at the same institution (%)	Still studying at the same institution but not yet completed a course (%)	Not still enrolled at the same institution and not completed an award course there (%)
Indigenous	32.9	4.6	62.5
Non-Indigenous	62.7	3.5	33.8

(a) This table updates Table A.7 from the publication, *Completions: Undergraduate academic outcomes for 1992 commencing students*, with 1998 data. Refer to that publication for detailed notes on methodology and data limitations.

Table 11 shows two performance indicators which measure progress towards completion, the apparent retention rate and the student progress rate. The apparent retention rate is the number of students re-enrolling in a year as a percentage of the number of students enrolled the previous year (excluding those who completed a course). This rate is called 'apparent' because it does not treat as 'retained' those students who have transferred to another institution or officially deferred or suspended their continuing enrolment. The student progress rate is the proportion of units of study undertaken which have been successfully completed in a year. Units of study are the basic components of a course, often known as 'units' or 'subjects'. A student may undertake one or more of these at a time, and each one successfully completed can provide credit towards the eventual completion of a course.

Table 11 Student progress rate (1998) and apparent retention rate (1999) for non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous

	Indigenous students(%)	Other non-overseas students (%)
Student progress rate, 1998	64	86
Apparent retention rate, 1999	61	80

Roughly speaking, Table 11 shows that Indigenous students are about three-fourths as likely as non-Indigenous students to pass the units they took each year and to return for the next year of study.

## 1.9 Transition to employment

Although Indigenous Australians are less likely to participate in higher education than non-Indigenous Australians, and also less likely to receive higher education awards, the experience of Indigenous graduates on entering the workforce is similar to that of others. Indigenous graduates who seek full-time work in the year after completing their courses are about as likely to find it as non-Indigenous graduates, or possibly slightly more so, according to the GCCA survey data as exemplified in Table 12.

Table 12 Proportions of graduate respondents (a) in full-time work, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, 1996 to 1998

	1996		1997		1998	
	Number available for f/t work	Proportion in full-time work (%)	Number available for f/t work	Proportion in full-time work (%)	Number available for f/t work	Proportion in full-time work (%)
Indigenous	274	81	243	79	220	82
Non-Indigenous	44857	81	40357	79	42034	80

(a) Based on GCCA survey data; see appendix for details.

According to GCCA surveys, Indigenous graduates show a tendency to find employment in different areas from non-Indigenous graduates. This is illustrated in Tables 13A and 13B.

Table 13 (A and B) Proportions of employed graduate respondents <sup>(a)</sup>, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by area of employment

Table 13A	Indigenous respondents	1996 (%)	1997 (%)	1998 (%)
	Federal or State Government	43	43	47
	Private sector or self-employed	27	27	31
	Public education	16	18	11
	Local government, private education, non-profit, and other	14	12	11
	Total	100	100	100

Table 13B	Non-Indigenous respondents	1996 (%)	1997 (%)	1998 (%)
	Federal or State Government	31	30	29
	Private sector or self-employed	50	53	55
	Public education	8	7	6
	Local government, private education, non-profit, and other	11	10	11
	Total	100	100	100

(a) Based on GCCA survey data; see appendix for details

**There is a clear and consistent pattern among those graduates who enter full-time employment after graduation: the private sector (including self-employment) absorbs about half of all non-Indigenous graduates, but less than a third of Indigenous graduates. Indigenous graduates are much more likely to be employed by Federal or State governments or in public education.**

**Table 14 shows that the salaries of Indigenous graduates entering full-time employment are similar to those of non-Indigenous graduates.**

Table 14 Average salaries of employed graduate respondents <sup>(a)</sup>, aged less than 25 <sup>(b)</sup>, Indigenous and non-Indigenous (\$)

	1996	1997	1998
Indigenous	27,000	29,960	28,000
Non-Indigenous	26,500	27,000	28,000

(a) Based on GCCA survey data; see appendix for details.

(b) Graduates aged 25 and over have been excluded as there is a higher probability that their salaries are influenced by prior employment histories.

## 2. Changes over time

### 2.1 Growth in participation

Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the growth over time of Indigenous student numbers in higher education and of award course completions by Indigenous students.

Figure 7 All Indigenous students, 1987–1999, commencing Indigenous students 1989–1999, and award course completions by Indigenous students, 1988–1998

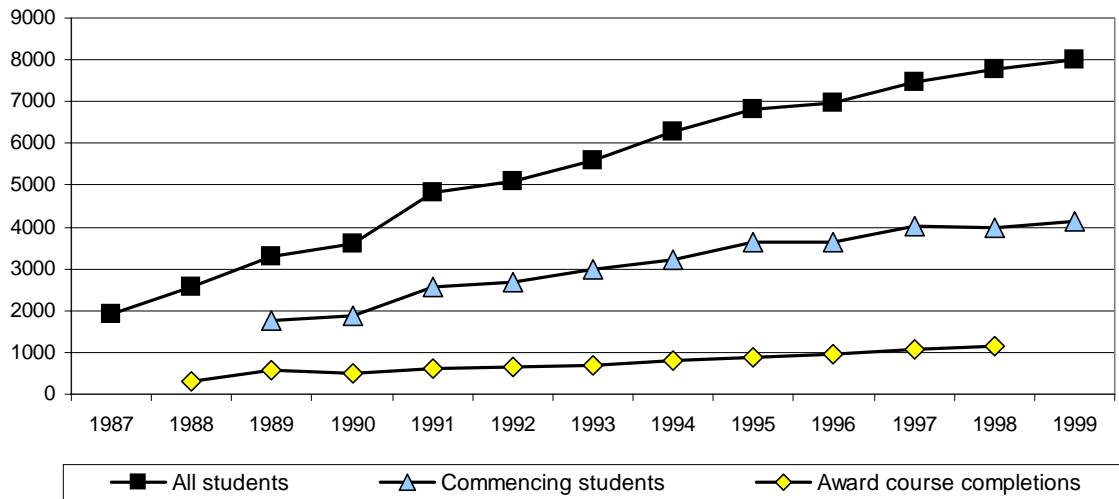
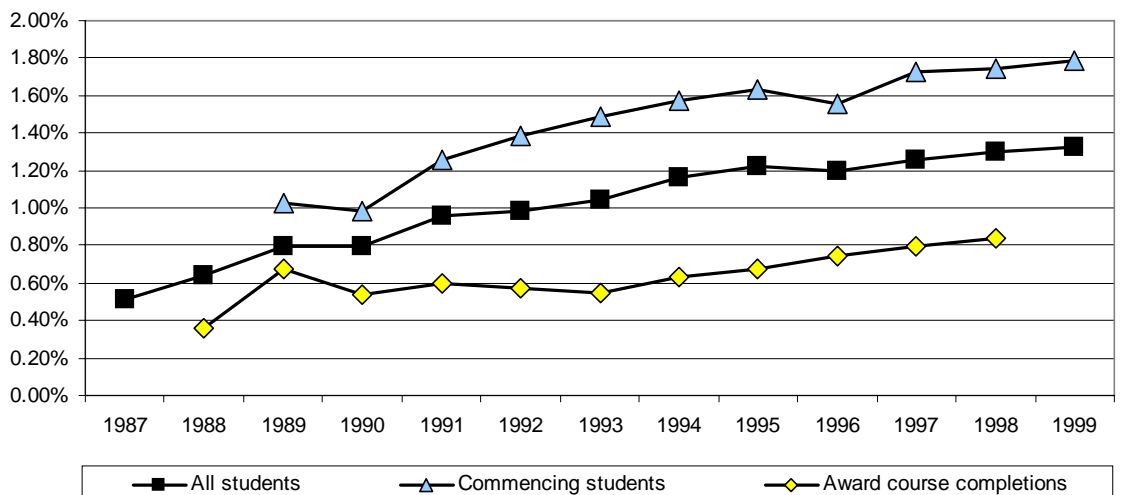


Figure 8 All Indigenous students, 1987–1999, commencing Indigenous students, 1989–1999, and award course completions by Indigenous students, 1988–1998, all as proportions of corresponding figures for non-overseas students



These trends may be compared with population census figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics which show that Indigenous Australians accounted for 1.3 per cent of the population in the 17 to 64 age group in 1991, and 1.7 per cent in 1996.

## 2.2 Level of course over time

Although Indigenous students are less likely than non-Indigenous students to be enrolled in postgraduate courses, the increase in Indigenous participation has been particularly rapid at the postgraduate level, as Table 15 illustrates.

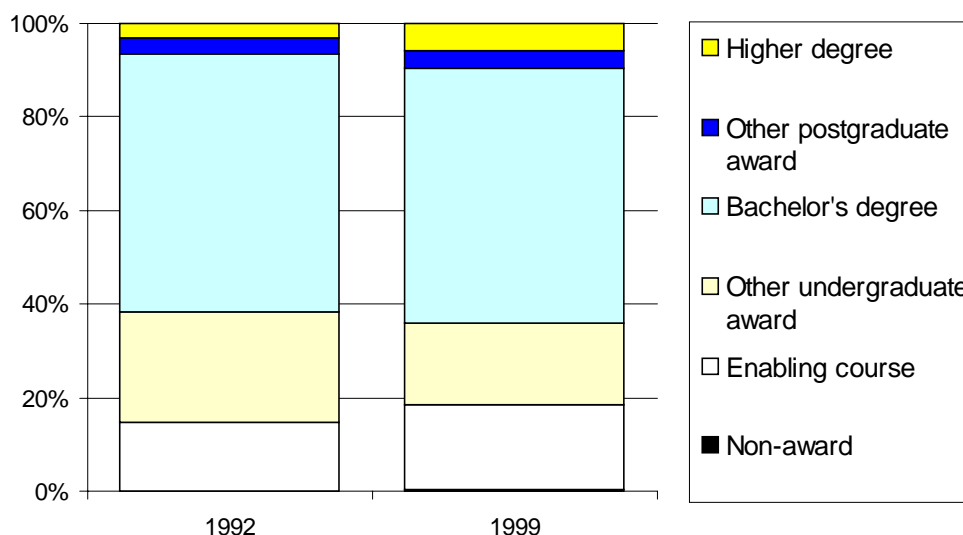
Table 15 Indigenous students by broad level of course, 1992 and 1999

Broad level of course	1992	1999	Change, 1992-1999 (%)
Higher degree	157	478	204
Other postgraduate award	174	284	63
Bachelor's degree	2812	4351	55
Other undergraduate award	1213	1419	17
Enabling course	742	1433	93
Total (including non-award)	5105	8001	57

In 1992, at the beginning of this period, enabling courses were still a relatively recently introduced category: this should be borne in mind in interpreting the rapid increase in the number of students at this level. (The total numbers of non-award students are too small for any meaningful interpretation.)

Another way of looking at the same information is to compare the distribution of Indigenous students by level of course in 1992 and 1999, as in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Distribution of Indigenous students by broad level of course, 1992 and 1999



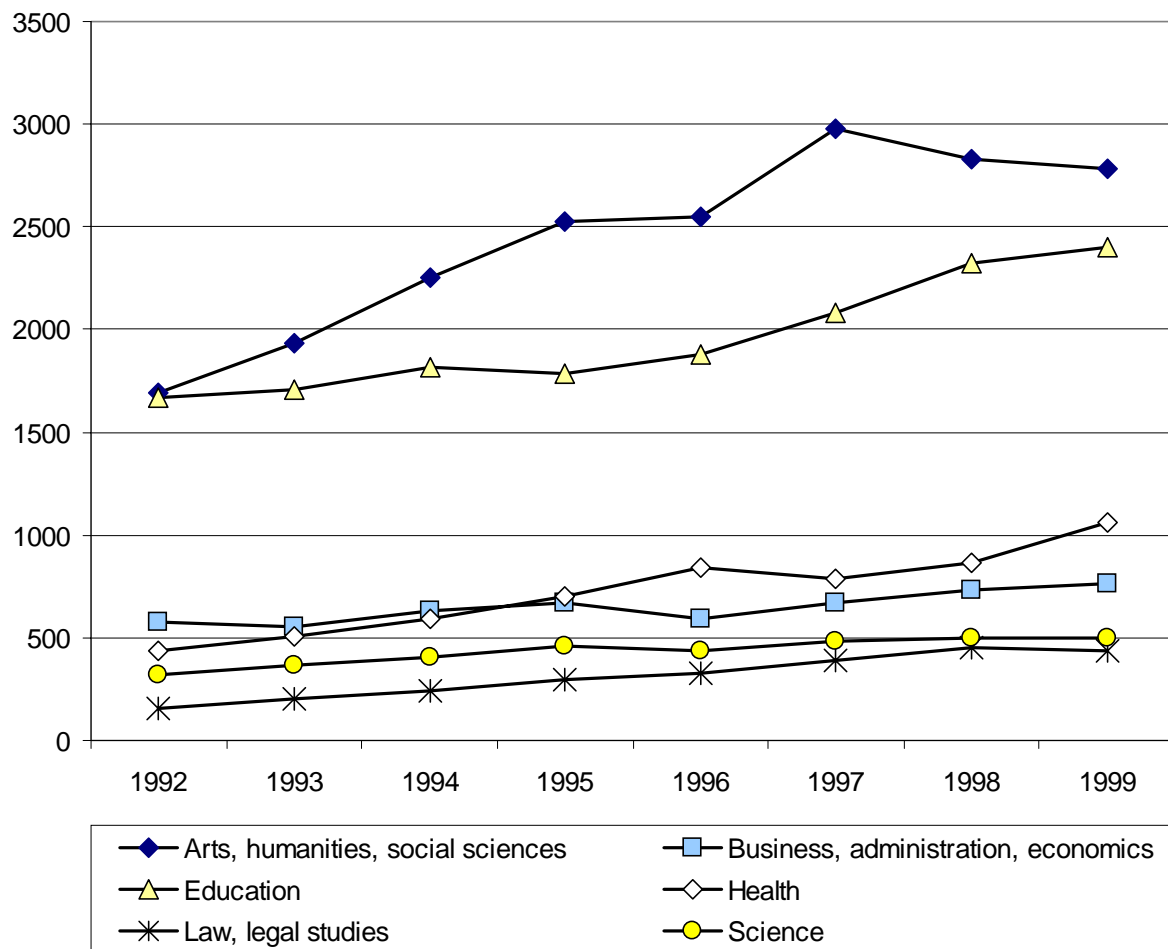
## 2.3 Field of study over time

Table 16 and Figure 10 show the persistence of the pattern of under-representation of Indigenous Australian in some fields of study and over-representation in others, as compared to non-Indigenous Australians, although there have been some notable changes over time. Perhaps the statistics suggest a gradually progressing spread of Indigenous participation, concentrating on different fields of study over time. It does appear that education was the first field to draw a high level of Indigenous participation. Although it continues to do so, this concentration has been diluted to some extent over the last few years by a movement of Indigenous students into fields such as health and law.

Table 16 Indigenous students by broad field of study, 1992 and 1999

Broad field of study	1992	1999	Change, 1992-1999 (%)
Agriculture, animal husbandry	112	122	9
Architecture, building	34	55	62
Arts, humanities, social sciences	1693	2783	64
Business, administration, economics	573	763	33
Education	1670	2400	44
Engineering, surveying	99	107	8
Health	435	1062	144
Law, legal studies	153	440	188
Science	318	496	56
Veterinary science	11	17	55
Total (including non-award)	5105	8001	57

Figure 10 Indigenous students, selected broad fields of study, 1992 to 1999



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## 3. Institutional comparisons

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### 3.1 Institutional patterns of participation

Table 17 shows the number of Indigenous students at each institution in 1999, as a total figure, as a percentage of the total number of Indigenous students at all institutions, and as a percentage of the total number of non-overseas students at each institution.

The figures in Table 17 reflect two apparent tendencies. One is that institutions in areas of relatively higher Indigenous population are unsurprisingly likely to have higher proportions of Indigenous people in their student populations. After the special all-Aboriginal case of Batchelor College (in the Northern Territory), the three institutions with the highest proportions of Indigenous students are in the Northern Territory (Northern Territory University), Western Australia (Edith Cowan University), and (northern) Queensland (James Cook University).

Not all the variation between institutions, however, can be explained by variation of this kind in their 'catchment areas'. The four universities in Western Australia, for example, may have some degree of variation in the geographical area on which they draw, but the overlap must be very large. The same is true of the three universities in South Australia. Yet in both States there is considerable variation between universities in the proportion of their students who are Indigenous. It needs to be emphasised, however, that part of the variation can be explained by factors such as course mix. For example, it was evident above that Indigenous students are much less likely to be enrolled in courses in the broad field of study 'Engineering, surveying' than non-Indigenous students, but much more likely to be enrolled in the broad fields of study 'Education'. Thus, a hypothetical university with a large Faculty of Education but no Faculty of Engineering would naturally tend to have a higher proportion of Indigenous students than the average.

In addition, there are more individual factors specific to particular institutions. In this area of Indigenous education, just as in other areas, institutions specialise to varying degrees. This is entirely appropriate, but it means that unqualified deductions from gross figures should be avoided. The most obvious relevant example of specialisation is Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. All the activities of this institution are specialised entirely for Indigenous people, and primarily for a specific sub-group of Indigenous people (remote communities) at that.

Returning to the case of the three universities in South Australia, it may be seen that the University of South Australia has the highest proportion of Indigenous students. This is hardly surprising given that the university is charged with a specific legislative obligation to provide education for Aboriginal people. This sort of institutional level requirement is unusual. What is more common is for institutions to provide individual specialised courses and units, often through individual specialised departments, tailored for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Specialised courses in such areas as Indigenous music, Indigenous community management, Indigenous teacher education, and Indigenous health work

Table 17 Indigenous students by institution, 1999

Institution <sup>(a)</sup>	Number at each institution	As proportion of all Indigenous students (%)	As proportion of non-overseas students at the institution (%)
Australian Film, Television & Radio School	3	0.0	3.2
Avondale College	9	0.1	1.5
Charles Sturt University	296	3.7	1.4
Macquarie University	281	3.5	1.5
Southern Cross University	169	2.1	2.0
The University of New England	180	2.2	1.2
The University of New South Wales	88	1.1	0.4
The University of Newcastle	208	2.6	1.2
The University of Sydney	364	4.5	1.2
University of Technology, Sydney	243	3.0	1.2
University of Western Sydney	313	3.9	1.2
University of Wollongong	110	1.4	1.1
Deakin University	266	3.3	1.1
La Trobe University	62	0.8	0.3
Monash University	97	1.2	0.3
RMIT University	19	0.2	0.1
Swinburne University of Technology	34	0.4	0.3
The University of Melbourne	91	1.1	0.3
University of Ballarat	18	0.2	0.4
Victoria University	48	0.6	0.3
Central Queensland University	199	2.5	2.0
Griffith University	264	3.3	1.3
James Cook University	386	4.8	4.1
Queensland University of Technology	240	3.0	0.9
University of the Sunshine Coast	15	0.2	0.6
The University of Queensland	234	2.9	0.9
University of Southern Queensland	148	1.8	1.2
Curtin University of Technology	457	5.7	2.6
Edith Cowan University	914	11.4	5.2
Murdoch University	108	1.3	1.2
The University of Western Australia	116	1.4	1.0
University of Notre Dame Australia (Broome)	33	0.4	30.6
The Flinders University of South Australia	101	1.3	1.0
The University of Adelaide	141	1.8	1.2
University of South Australia	322	4.0	1.5
Australian Maritime College	38	0.5	4.5
University of Tasmania	219	2.7	2.0
Batchelor College	562	7.0	100.0
Northern Territory University	222	2.8	5.6
Australian Defence Force Academy	5	0.1	0.3
The Australian National University	72	0.9	0.9
University of Canberra	87	1.1	1.1
Australian Catholic University	219	2.7	2.3
Total	8001	100.0	1.3

(a) Institutions which had no Indigenous students in 1998 are not shown.

### 3.2 Level of course by institution

Table 18 compares institutions by showing the actual numbers of Indigenous students at various levels of course. It demonstrates the key role of just a few institutions in providing postgraduate education for Indigenous students. Macquarie University and the University of Technology, Sydney, between them, account for 21 per cent of all Indigenous postgraduate students and 25 per cent of all Indigenous higher degree students.

Table 18 Indigenous students by institution and broad level of course, 1999

Institution <sup>(a)</sup>	Higher degree	Other-post graduate	All post graduate	Bachelor's degree	Other - under graduate	All award courses	Enabling courses	Non-award	Total
Australian Film, Television & Radio School	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3
Avondale College	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	6	9
Charles Sturt University	12	8	20	195	55	270	17	9	296
Macquarie University	59	24	83	118	73	274	0	7	281
Southern Cross University	1	2	3	121	43	167	2	0	169
The University of New England	14	25	39	140	1	180	0	0	180
The University of New South Wales	13	1	14	74	0	88	0	0	88
The University of Newcastle	12	3	15	175	1	191	17	0	208
The University of Sydney	16	15	31	172	125	328	36	0	364
University of Technology, Sydney	59	21	80	159	0	239	3	1	243
University of Western Sydney	27	13	40	215	56	311	0	2	313
University of Wollongong	13	3	16	94	0	110	0	0	110
Deakin University	4	14	18	247	1	266	0	0	266
La Trobe University	5	7	12	50	0	62	0	0	62
Monash University	7	11	18	71	8	97	0	0	97
RMIT University	3	2	5	14	0	19	0	0	19
Swinburne University of Technology	0	8	8	26	0	34	0	0	34
The University of Melbourne	11	17	28	57	4	89	2	0	91
University of Ballarat	1	2	3	15	0	18	0	0	18
Victoria University	1	2	3	45	0	48	0	0	48
Central Queensland University	5	2	7	186	6	199	0	0	199
Griffith University	20	4	24	232	0	256	0	8	264
James Cook University	17	4	21	220	71	312	74	0	386
Queensland University of Technology	8	14	22	215	3	240	0	0	240
University of the Sunshine Coast	2	0	2	13	0	15	0	0	15
The University of Queensland	22	1	23	204	7	234	0	0	234
University of Southern Queensland	9	4	13	55	4	72	76	0	148
Curtin University of Technology	20	7	27	151	217	395	62	0	457
Edith Cowan University	6	2	8	128	6	142	772	0	914
Murdoch University	7	2	9	70	0	79	29	0	108
The University of Western Australia	5	5	10	86	0	96	20	0	116
University of Notre Dame Australia	2	1	3	30	0	33	0	0	33
The Flinders University of South Australia	12	11	23	78	0	101	0	0	101
The University of Adelaide	12	7	19	60	28	107	32	2	141
University of South Australia	19	10	29	160	121	310	12	0	322
Australian Maritime College	0	0	0	5	33	38	0	0	38
University of Tasmania	9	3	12	159	11	182	37	0	219
Batchelor College	0	1	1	0	367	368	194	0	562
Northern Territory University	17	14	31	129	41	201	21	0	222
Australian Defence Force Academy	1	1	2	3	0	5	0	0	5
The Australian National University	15	3	18	54	0	72	0	0	72
University of Canberra	5	2	7	52	0	59	27	1	87
Australian Catholic University	4	8	12	70	137	219	0	0	219
Total	478	284	762	4351	1419	6532	1433	36	8001

(a) Institutions which had no Indigenous students in 1998 are not shown.

**Table 18 also shows how those institutions which have large numbers of Indigenous students have struck quite different balances between enabling courses and award courses.**

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### 3.3 Course completions by institution

Table 19 shows the distribution by institution of award course completions by Indigenous students in 1997. It can be seen by comparing this with Table 17 that, not surprisingly, those institutions which have the largest numbers of Indigenous students enrolled also account for the largest share of award course completions by Indigenous students. However, the two statistics do not correlate exactly. Table 20 presents figures on student numbers and completion numbers for each institution side by side for ease of comparison.

Table 19 Award course completions by Indigenous students, by institution, 1998

Institution <sup>(a)</sup>	Number at each institution	As proportion of all completions by Indigenous students	As proportion of completions by non-overseas students
Australian Film, Television & Radio School	2	0.2%	3.9%
Avondale College	1	0.1%	0.7%
Charles Sturt University	37	3.2%	0.8%
Macquarie University	51	4.5%	1.3%
National Institute of Dramatic Art	2	0.2%	3.3%
Southern Cross University	24	2.1%	1.4%
The University of New England	36	3.2%	1.1%
The University of New South Wales	23	2.0%	0.4%
The University of Newcastle	29	2.5%	0.9%
The University of Sydney	52	4.6%	0.7%
University of Technology, Sydney	66	5.8%	1.2%
University of Western Sydney	93	8.1%	1.6%
University of Wollongong	19	1.7%	0.8%
Deakin University	17	1.5%	0.3%
La Trobe University	6	0.5%	0.1%
Monash University	20	1.8%	0.3%
RMIT University	5	0.4%	0.1%
Swinburne University of Technology	6	0.5%	0.3%
The University of Melbourne	15	1.3%	0.2%
University of Ballarat	1	0.1%	0.1%
Victoria University	5	0.4%	0.2%
Central Queensland University	24	2.1%	1.4%
Griffith University	37	3.2%	0.9%
James Cook University	56	4.9%	3.9%
Queensland University of Technology	33	2.9%	0.5%
The University of Queensland	39	3.4%	0.7%
University of Southern Queensland	11	1.0%	0.5%
Curtin University of Technology	65	5.7%	1.6%
Edith Cowan University	18	1.6%	0.5%
Murdoch University	8	0.7%	0.5%
The University of Western Australia	19	1.7%	0.6%
The Flinders University of South Australia	7	0.6%	0.3%
The University of Adelaide	8	0.7%	0.3%
University of South Australia	36	3.2%	0.7%
Australian Maritime College	6	0.5%	2.1%
University of Tasmania	41	3.6%	1.6%
Batchelor College	113	9.9%	100.0%
Northern Territory University	34	3.0%	4.5%
Australian Defence Force Academy	5	0.4%	1.2%
The Australian National University	25	2.2%	1.2%
University of Canberra	11	1.0%	0.6%
Australian Catholic University	36	3.2%	1.3%
Total	1142	100.0%	0.8%

(a) Institutions which reported no award course completions by Indigenous students in 1998 are not included.

Table 20 Comparison of institutional shares of Indigenous students and of award course completions by Indigenous students, 1998

Institution <sup>(a)</sup>	Institution's share of Indigenous students (%)	Institution's share of completions by Indigenous students (%)
Australian Film, Television & Radio School	0.0	0.2
Avondale College	0.1	0.1
Charles Sturt University	3.7	3.2
Macquarie University	3.6	4.5
National Institute of Dramatic Art	0.0	0.2
Southern Cross University	2.2	2.1
The University of New England	2.1	3.2
The University of New South Wales	1.3	2.0
The University of Newcastle	2.7	2.5
The University of Sydney	3.3	4.6
University of Technology, Sydney	2.5	5.8
University of Western Sydney	5.4	8.1
University of Wollongong	1.2	1.7
Deakin University	3.5	1.5
La Trobe University	0.6	0.5
Monash University	1.7	1.8
RMIT University	0.2	0.4
Swinburne University of Technology	0.4	0.5
The University of Melbourne	1.3	1.3
University of Ballarat	0.3	0.1
Victoria University	0.7	0.4
Central Queensland University	3.0	2.1
Griffith University	3.2	3.2
James Cook University	4.9	4.9
Queensland University of Technology	3.3	2.9
The University of Queensland	2.5	3.4
University of Southern Queensland	2.1	1.0
Curtin University of Technology	5.4	5.7
Edith Cowan University	9.9	1.6
Murdoch University	1.3	0.7
The University of Western Australia	1.8	1.7
The Flinders University of South Australia	0.9	0.6
The University of Adelaide	1.7	0.7
University of South Australia	4.3	3.2
Australian Maritime College	0.1	0.5
University of Tasmania	2.4	3.6
Batchelor College	8.9	9.9
Northern Territory University	2.6	3.0
Australian Defence Force Academy	0.1	0.4
The Australian National University	1.3	2.2
University of Canberra	1.2	1.0
Australian Catholic University	2.4	3.2

(a) Institutions which reported no award course completions by Indigenous students in 1998 are not included.

It can be seen from Table 20 that some institutions account for a significantly higher proportion of award course completions by Indigenous students than of Indigenous student numbers. A careful reading shows that in some of these cases the actual numbers are small, so that the disproportion cannot be considered definitely significant. One instance of an institution with a substantial share of Indigenous students and a significantly larger share of completions is the University of Technology, Sydney. A reverse pattern is exhibited by such institutions as Edith Cowan University.

Once again, it is important not to make too simplistic inferences from comparisons of this sort between institutions. Different institutions will have Indigenous student intakes with quite different characteristics, such as previous educational background, and also different course mixes, all of which affect completion rates.

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### 3.4 Academic success by institution

Table 21 shows the same information as Table 11 (apparent retention rates and student progress rates), but by institution.

Table 21 Apparent retention rates, 1999, and student progress rates, 1998, for non-overseas students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, by institution

Institution <sup>(a)</sup>	Apparent retention, 1999		Student progress, 1998	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Charles Sturt University	0.66	0.76	0.72	0.84
Macquarie University	0.66	0.80	0.75	0.85
Southern Cross University	0.50	0.70	0.69	0.88
The University of New England	0.65	0.78	0.59	0.80
The University of New South Wales	0.68	0.85	0.71	0.90
The University of Newcastle	0.68	0.81	0.76	0.87
The University of Sydney	0.73	0.85	0.81	0.89
University of Technology, Sydney	0.67	0.85	0.71	0.89
University of Western Sydney	0.79	0.79	0.75	0.81
University of Wollongong	0.78	0.86	0.75	0.88
Deakin University	0.69	0.76	0.64	0.84
La Trobe University	0.71	0.80	0.77	0.83
Monash University	0.63	0.81	0.69	0.86
RMIT University	0.62	0.80	0.73	0.86
Swinburne University of Technology	0.76	0.78	0.83	0.85
The University of Melbourne	0.63	0.88	0.77	0.93
University of Ballarat	0.76	0.80	0.81	0.85
Victoria University	0.53	0.75	0.56	0.79
Central Queensland University	0.60	0.72	0.62	0.81
Griffith University	0.76	0.62	0.74	0.87
James Cook University	0.50	0.72	0.64	0.82
Queensland University of Technology	0.67	0.81	0.73	0.89
The University of Queensland	0.79	0.85	0.80	0.90
University of Southern Queensland	0.42	0.70	0.41	0.75
Curtin University of Technology	0.56	0.81	0.66	0.88
Edith Cowan University	0.48	0.72	0.47	0.86
Murdoch University	0.58	0.78	0.58	0.85
The University of Western Australia	0.54	0.90	0.61	0.91
The Flinders University of South Australia	0.70	0.83	0.65	0.86
The University of Adelaide	0.60	0.86	0.52	0.85
University of South Australia	0.58	0.79	0.55	0.85
Australian Maritime College	0.50	0.66	0.52	0.93
University of Tasmania	0.74	0.86	0.70	0.85
Batchelor Institute <sup>(b)</sup>	0.58	<sup>(b)</sup>	0.34	<sup>(b)</sup>
Northern Territory University	0.49	0.69	0.54	0.79
The Australian National University	0.75	0.83	0.80	0.87
University of Canberra	0.55	0.80	0.65	0.86
Australian Catholic University	0.76	0.81	0.85	0.90

(a) Institutions for which comparable data are not available have not been included.

(b) Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education has no non-Indigenous students.



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## Appendix—Technical aspects

This appendix provides additional information about some technical aspects.

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### Data sources

The annual collection of higher education student statistics conducted by the Higher Education Division of DETYA (and its predecessors) provided the basic data for all statistical information in this report except for Table 3, Table 12, and Tables 13A and 13B. This information has been presented, as far as possible, in a way which maintains maximum comparability between information in this paper and other published information based on the Higher Education Student Statistical Collection.

Table 3, Table 12, and Tables 13A and 13B are all based on data from the Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA). Each year, on 30 April, the GCCA conducts two surveys of students who have completed a higher education award course in the twelve months ending on that day. These two questionnaires, the Graduate Destinations Survey (GDS) and the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), are administered together, but a small proportion of respondents do not complete both.

General response rates to the GDS and the CEQ are considered to be good and to provide a valuable source of statistical information not covered by the Higher Education Student Statistical Collection. Tables in this paper based on GCCA data use the subset of respondents most frequently used in GCCA publications, in order to maximise comparability. This subset consists of non-overseas respondents who have completed either a bachelor's degree or a three-year undergraduate diploma.

The number of Indigenous respondents to the GDS and the CEQ is quite small. To increase the reliability of inferences from this small number of instances, tables based on GCCA data in this paper show figures for three years rather than just one.

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### Non-overseas student

Overseas students have been excluded from all analyses in this report. Thus, where statistics for Indigenous students have been compared with statistics for another population, that population consists of all non-overseas students who are not Indigenous. For this purpose, the category of 'non-overseas students' includes the following three sub-categories: Australian citizens; Australian permanent residents; and New Zealand citizens.

## Indigenous

For the purposes of the statistics used in this report, the category of Indigenous students is defined primarily by self-identification.

In a very small number of cases, the statistical information collected does not identify whether or not a student is Indigenous. For the purpose of all but one of the aggregate analyses in this paper, all such cases have been treated as non-Indigenous students. This is in order to provide maximum comparability with other published figures.

The exception is Table 10, which is an updated version of a table which has already appeared in the publication *Completions: Undergraduate academic outcomes for 1992 commencing students*, and which therefore uses the definitions used in producing that table in order to maintain comparability.

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## Type of enrolment

Students are identified statistically as 'internal' if they are undertaking all units of study through an internal mode, 'external' if they are undertaking all units of study through an external mode, or 'multi-modal' if they are undertaking at least one unit internally and at least one unit externally. In most Departmental statistical publications, 'multi-modal' students are included in the totals for external students, while internal students (but not external students) are shown as the two categories of 'full-time' and 'part-time' students. In this paper, however, some separate figures for 'multi-modal' students are shown, alongside 'internal' and 'external' students.

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## Broad field of study

Courses of study are grouped according to their occupational relevance. Students undertaking individual units not as part of a full course are not included in this categorisation and are instead listed as 'non-award' students.

The classification into 'fields of study' is hierarchical. At the top level of classification are ten categories known as 'broad' fields of study. Most of these can be divided and then subdivided to give more specific classifications. For example, within the classification there is a specific field of study under the designation 'Statistics and Operations Research': this is a subdivision of the field of study 'Mathematics', which is in turn included within the scope of the broad field of study 'Science'.

In this paper, only the top level of the classification, the 'broad fields of study', has been used. It should be borne in mind that some of these broad fields cover a very diverse range of courses.

## Level of course

Courses are classified to a level according to the qualification they lead to, such as bachelor's degree or graduate certificate.

Analyses in this report refer to the following levels of course:

- postgraduate, consisting of:
  - higher degrees (master's degrees and doctorates); and
  - other postgraduate courses, leading to non-degree graduate qualifications, such as diplomas and certificates (and also including master's qualifying or preliminary programmes);
- undergraduate, consisting of:
  - undergraduate award courses, including bachelor's degrees and non-degree undergraduate qualifications, such as advanced diplomas and associate diplomas;
  - enabling courses; and
  - non-award courses.