Drivers of Participation and Completion of VET

Prepared for the NSW Skills Board

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WOOLCOTT
RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The NSW Skills Board commissioned research into the drivers of and barriers to participation and completion of VET in NSW. The research will be used to develop targeted interventions that improve student engagement in VET and better chances of completion. This project included desktop research, qualitative research (n=42 groups, n=64 depth interviews and n=16 family sessions amongst considerers, current and past VET students) and an online survey (n=2,072). Separate PowerPoint reports have been provided on each component of the research. This document provides an overview of the findings across components.

1.2 Summary of research findings

1.2.1 Information gathering and decision making

Many students struggled to find information and navigate the VET system, particularly those who did not have a clear idea about what they wanted to do. Google searches resulted in a long list of VET provider sites rather than a list of potential course options, which was the expectation.

1.2.2 Drivers of participation

In an overall sense, it appeared that family/family reasons and friends are significant influencers for participation in VET. There were, however, a high proportion of students who were driven to start further education by their employer (48% of completers; 41% of non-completers). Schools' careers advisors were the least influential of the potential influencers listed (31% of completers; 30% of non-completers).

The main reasons offered for starting a course were more often job related than for personal interest, although the latter was a strong motivator for some segments.

1.2.3 Drivers of course non-completion

There were many risk factors to emerge that influence non completion of VET. It was more likely that students not completing were studying a Diploma rather than a Certificate I-IV (20% completers and 42% of non-completers). Those students who had not completed their Diploma were more likely to have only attained some secondary school education, intermediate or the school certificate than those who completed Diplomas (who were more likely to have completed a Certificate, Diploma or Degree previously), showing that those with a lower level of educational attainment prior to starting a Diploma were disadvantaged from the start.

Non-completers were more often undergoing the course fully online (24% completers and 46% of non-completers) and were more likely to be attempting a longer duration course of more than a year (27% completers and 43% of non-completers).

Students who did not complete their course were more often originally motivated by job change related factors such as 'to help get the job I want' or 'change job' (39% completers and 46% of non-completers) rather than personal development or interest (35% completers and 22% of non-completers).

Finding information at the outset appeared to be a factor influencing completion rates. Those not completing their course revealed much greater difficulty in obtaining relevant information on either the courses or the providers. However, non-completers were less likely to have used a range of information sources at all. Where information was used by those not completing their course, it was felt to be somewhat less helpful.

There were major differences between completers and non-completers with regard to their satisfaction with the course, with only around half of non-completers being satisfied with aspects such as guidance and support from providers, responsiveness to queries, content relevance and being up to date, and teaching quality.

Non-completers found the course content more difficult than students who completed the course (33% 'too/quite difficult' versus 16% of completers) and those who failed to complete their course were more likely to be VET FEE HELP funded (36% of non-completers used VET FEE HELP versus 13% for completers).

In the survey, the following initiatives were suggested by those who did not complete as being likely to have helped drive completion:

- More in class time   10%
- Better personal circumstances   7%
- Course being better managed   5%
- Having better teachers   4%
- Having more job prospect information   3%

'More in class time' was only mentioned by those who had done an online course (18% of non-completers who did an online course), indicating that is was a particularly salient issue for online learners.

The most frequently cited reasons for non-completion were:

- changed or lost job   20%
- family/personal reasons   19%

- training not what I expected   19%
- lost motivation   13%

In demographic terms, non-completers were:

- more often younger (33% aged under 21 versus 26% for completers)
- slightly more likely to be disabled (15% vs 11%)
- more often unemployed (25% vs 17%).
- more often on benefits (35% of completers on benefits vs 53% of non-completers).
- generally on lower incomes (personal and household).

1.2.4 Segments

Various student mindsets were identified in the qualitative research and tested through the quantitative survey. The report identifies different student backgrounds, motivations for doing VET, barriers to completion and potentially useful interventions for each segment. A total of nine segments emerged. Although the segments are not mutually exclusive, the overlap is small (16%). The size and names of the segments are set out below:

Table 1: Segments - size and definition

Segment	Definition	Size
School leavers	Aged 21 or under, working or student before studying. Doing the course for work reasons. Plus…	
- Reluctant learners	Agree that they only did the course because 'I needed a qualification to get a job'	8%
- Dreamers	Agree that 'I've always had a strong desire to do the kind of work this course would lead to'	14%
- Directionless	Agree that 'I have no clear idea about what job I want'	7%
Career builders	Aged 22 and over, working or student before studying. Doing a course for work reasons. Plus…	
- Directed employees	It was a requirement of my job	11%
- Re-inventors	To help me get the job I want, change my job, set up or expand own business	28%

-	Career aspirants	To help me advance my career/get a promotion, increase my pay, do my job better, do more interesting work	18%
Other		Any age and unemployed, home duties or retired prior to studying. Plus…	
-	Mind stimulators	Studying for personal development/interest	8%
-	Benefit recipients	It was a requirement of my government welfare benefits	2%*
-	Re-starters	To help me get the job I want, to help get back into the workforce, or to set up my own business	20%

*We believe that this segment could be much larger than this, as they may be less likely to take part in research than other segments.

Of the segments, reluctant learners, directionless and re-starters were least likely to finish the course.

1.3 Implications

The research suggests that a lot of non-completion is driven by poor choice of course. This can be due to a lack of clear direction on the part of the learner before enrolling, poor assistance in navigating the myriad possibilities and difficulty in finding easy to use information, and poor information on course content and expected student workload. This can lead to course choices that are inappropriate and/or unrealistic expectations.

Once in the course non-completers frequently experience a lack of support and guidance for struggling/at risk students, poor responsiveness to queries and a perception of poor content and teaching quality (particularly with online courses).

The areas above should be the areas of focus for interventions to increase student participation and completion.

There are also some specific interventions most applicable to certain segments.

2. Background

Education at all levels is one of the most important ingredients of a successful society and the complex array of potential influences on the decision to pursue post school education is an exciting subject for study.

The post school educational environment has seen significant change in recent years. University enrolments have increased whilst the latest NCVER VET activity data shows declining participation in VET courses nationally. The introduction of contestable funding for VET has been rolling out across the states, with Victoria the first to undertake significant change in 2008. More recently the NSW government introduced the 'Smart and Skilled' reforms.

Various policy changes have increased the choices available to students about what, where, and how to study. The current arrangements for creating VET qualifications have led to a very large number of nationally recognised qualifications (currently more than 1400 qualifications in training packages, with additional accredited courses). Changes to the system under which VET training is funded have resulted in an increase in the 'share' of courses amongst private operators and a consequent reduction in the TAFE share. At the same time there has been significant growth in the offering of internet based tertiary education which has made this level of education more accessible.

Within such a dynamic educational environment, it was felt that an evaluation of the student decision making process was necessary. The NSW Skills Board wished to undertake market research to assess motivations, influencers and barriers to participation and completion of VET courses. Woolcott Research carried out this investigation in 2017. The outcomes will inform the development of policy interventions to improve participation and completion rates.

3. Objectives

The two key project objectives were to identify:

- Relevant factors influencing a student's decision to participate in VET;

- Factors that influence a student's decision to complete VET.

In a specific sense, the more detailed areas of investigation included:

- **Educational Experiences**
  - Relative level of academic achievement
  - Incidence completing VET in Schools
  - Number of years of secondary education completed

- **Family Influences**
  - Level of parental interest and involvement in the education process
  - Degree to which parents have expressed any aspiration regarding the respondents' future education and career
  - Perceived parental preferences in terms of career choice

- **Information Gathering Process**
  - Sources consulted to obtain further education or career information
  - Extent to which information was sought
  - Level of information contribution from a range of potential influencers such as parents and other family members, careers advisors, other school staff, friends/relatives, employers and peers
  - Degree to which information was sought from educational institutions
  - Incidence of visiting possible institutions either on open days or at other times

- **Perceptions**
  - Image perceptions of VET education relative to university
  - Underlying preferences between university and VET
  - Reasons for those preferences
  - Image perceptions of TAFE relative to private institutions
  - Perceptions of alternative career paths considered in terms of such aspects as enjoyment, potential for financial reward, social status, peer group acceptability, family acceptability

- **Decision Making Process**
  - Extent to which the decision was made independently by the student versus the level of outside influence
  - Relative importance of outside influence and the identity of the most significant influencers
  - Nature and extent of the different education and training options considered
  - Main considerations taken into account in framing the decision
  - Specific factors which led to the final decision
  - Impact of any promotional activity or specific offers by institutions in the decision

- **Issues Aligned With Non-Completion of Courses**
  - Nature of the original decision to enrol in the particular course
  - Level of initial enthusiasm for the course and its associated career options
  - Proportion of the course completed
  - Level of enjoyment of the course itself and the institution more broadly
  - Perceptions of the quality of instruction
  - Perceptions of the institution in terms of broader social aspects
  - Nature of the specific course or institution related reasons for not completing
  - Nature of any personal, family or peer group influences on the decision

- **Demographic**
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Personal and household income
  - Main language spoken at home and other languages spoken
  - Occupation of respondent
  - Incidence of enrolment in a specific apprenticeship or traineeship

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4. Research Design

The project involved three phases:

4.1 Phase 1: Desktop research

As a preface to the qualitative and quantitative study among past, current and prospective VET students, a comprehensive desktop review of literature (national and international) on allied topics/themes was conducted. A separate report was produced that began with a high-level snapshot of Australia's VET environment, capturing the range of macro level influences on the VET sector before examining micro-level drivers and impediments to VET participation and completion. The report explored:

- Australia's VET sector being at a new crossroads with new decisions and further policy, program and funding reforms now likely (further reform will undoubtedly impact the perceived relevance of VET to industry and students and influence the public image of the sector).

- Global and local VET participation and completion indicators (including a comparative look at the state of play in state, national and offshore settings).

- Student participation in VET (key drivers and influences) – An overview of individual characteristics and generic influences that *motivate or restrain participation*.

- VET program completions (key drivers and influences) – An overview of individual characteristics and generic influences that *support or impede program completion*.

Based on the above review the report concluded with a suite of hypotheses aligned with each of the key areas of enquiry for Phase 2.

4.2 Phase 2: Qualitative research

The qualitative phase involved n=42 groups, n=64 depth interviews and n=16 family sessions amongst considerers, current and past VET students as follows (a separate presentation is available on this component):

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Table 2: Qualitative research design

	Certificate I & II	Certificate III	Certificate IV, Diploma and AD	Apprenticeships/ Trainees	ATSI	TOTAL
Completed VET (TAFE and private)	3x MG/ 6x D	3x MG/ 6x D	3x MG/ 6x D	3x MG/ 6x D	1x MG	**13x MG/24x D**
Did not complete VET (TAFE and private)	2x MG/ 6x D/ 1x FS	3xMG/ 6x D/ 1x FS	4x MG/ 6x D/ 1x FS	3xMG/ 6x D/ 1x FS	1x MG	**13 x MG 24 x D 4 x FS**
Currently doing VET (TAFE and private)	2x MG/ 2x D 1x FS	2x MG/ 2x D 1x FS	2x MG/ 2x D 1x FS	2x MG/ 2x D 1x FS		**8 x MG 8 x D 4 x FS**
Considering doing VET (TAFE and private)	2x MG 2x D 2x FS	2x MG 2x D 2x FS	2x MG 2x D 2x FS	2x MG 2x D 2x FS		**8x MG 8x D 8x FS**
TOTAL	**10x MG 16x D 4x FS**	**10x MG 16x D 4x FS**	**10x MG 16x D 4x FS**	**10x MG 16x D 4x FS**	**2x MG**	**42 x MG 64 x D 16 x FS**

MG = Mini-group (4-6 participants)
D = Depth interview
FS = Family sessions (conducted with 16-24 year olds and their parent(s)).

The mini-groups and depths were conducted amongst:
- a mix of male and female
- a mix of ages
- a mix of socio-economic backgrounds
- included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)
- a mix of school leavers and career builders
- from a mix of courses and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

Mini-groups and depths were conducted in Sydney and the following regional locations: Griffith, Maitland, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga.

The mini-group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted in a central location in each of the cities and towns, and were moderated by a senior research executive from Woolcott Research. The groups comprised of 4-6 participants and participants were reimbursed for their time.

The family sessions explored the whole family's expectations, perceptions and beliefs about VET. They were conducted in-home or in a central location, if requested. They ran for approximately 1.5 hours and they were paid an incentive for their time.

All participants were recruited using a qualified market research recruiter. A recruitment screening questionnaire was used to select participants.

A separate PowerPoint report has been provided on the qualitative findings.

4.3 Phase 3: Quantitative research

For the quantitative phase an online panel survey of n=1,006 students was conducted, along with an additional n=1,066 responses from students from within the Student Outcomes Survey which was running concurrently.

The resultant sample was as follows:

Table 3: Quantitative research design

	Currently Completing	Completed	Did not complete	Considering
Online panel provider	250	300	250	206
Student Outcomes Survey	0	705	361	0
TOTAL	250	1,005	611	206

Weighting

The Student Outcomes Survey listing presented two potential sources of sampling bias:

- The listing contained only Smart and Skilled funded students, and
- Email addresses for TAFE students usually contained a @TAFE domain name, meaning that many of those who had finished with their studies were no longer looking at that address and so did not respond to the emailed survey.

In order to overcome these sampling irregularities, respondents were weighted to accurately reflect total 'government funded VET participants' as defined by the NCVER. This resulted in weighting factors being applied to:

- Age
- Proportion studying at TAFE
- Proportion studying diplomas/advance diplomas
- Proportion receiving online only tuition

Analysis

A separate PowerPoint report has been provided on the quantitative findings. This report presents a distilled review of the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases.

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5. Literature Review Findings

Phase one of the project provided a comprehensive scan and analysis of national and offshore literature on the VET sector and captured wide-ranging macro-level trends, influences, and recent data on VET participation and completions.

Findings included commentary on the demographic, socio-economic, educational and geographic characteristics of the student market, specific VET participation drivers, influences during the information gathering stage, individual perceptions (family/other influencers); and issues associated with non-completion of VET programs. This section provides a high level snapshot of observations while the more detailed literature review is also available in a separate report.

5.1 VET participation drivers and influences

Below is a summary of all key observations on VET participation influences derived from the literature review.

The public image of VET (media and opinion leader communication) tends to reinforce the view of VET as a 'second choice' albeit a safer, pragmatic, but inferior option for youth with lower academic performance records. Negative media about students enrolled in courses unsuited to their abilities and financial circumstance may have further weakened the image of VET.

Geo-social issues are influential and include distance from major learning facilities, transport, access to broadband, cost of travel, limited providers and program choice as well as the willingness to move/stay near home. Regional students are more likely to enter the job market directly.

Social background, family and friends influence the study choices of NSW youth. The top three barriers to study/work goals are perceived academic ability, financial issues and family responsibilities.

Education (previous school achievements) is a significant factor in post school education choices together with academic ability (perceived and real).

Socio-emotional issues, i.e. how young people see themselves influences VET participation. Feelings of alienation (or inclusion), a sense of place in the school community, supportive relationships, positive engagement with teachers, interest in learning and extra-curricular activities can affect VET involvement.

Gender stereotyping is an issue. Recent research still shows young Australian women not oriented towards vocational careers or trades as a viable option – those who pursue a trade have been found

to have a perceived innate ability in a particular occupation, a strong sense of self, independence and role models.

Family role models, stereotypes and bias affect the outlook of youth. There is a strong influence of fathers on sons (a 'heritage' bias) while women are less constrained and tend to explore/move elsewhere. Education and career inheritance is still alive and well in families.

Financial circumstances can be a major deterrent to post school education including VET programs. Young people adjust their educational aspirations in response to financial constraints early in life. For some VET programs, e.g. apprenticeships, low pay and difficulties with finance can be deterrents.

Some students, in particular those participating in fee for service VET, have insufficient, front-end insights to the different fee structures of providers – these are often higher than realised and create major cost pressures for some students.

The majority of students undertake training for employment reasons (including those undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship) with much smaller groups undertaking training for personal development. The vast majority is satisfied with VET teaching and assessment and with the overall quality of training.

Critical events and disruptions including specific background problems, key events, moments or chance encounters with people living different lives (positive or negative) can be the trigger for a change process and a related decision to participate or not participate in post school education including VET.

Disadvantaged students

Disadvantaged groups are not homogenous and each experiences unique and overlapping barriers to participation. Issues include family problems, illness, disability, self-confidence and motivation, indigenous or ethnic origin, language, literacy and numeracy, financial issues, geographic isolation and/or cultural beliefs and values.

Disadvantaged student groups (particularly indigenous students) tend to see VET as an entry point (via lower level VET programs) but many do not transition to higher-level VET courses or university.

Indigenous students are far less likely to go to university and more likely to plan an apprenticeship or other VET involvement. Literacy and numeracy, regional isolation, equity and discrimination, family problems, alcohol and drug issues are all pivotal influences.

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Disabled students encounter unique challenges, e.g. transport/access issues and challenges with group work and need additional services and time that VET providers may or may not be able to provide.

Migrants generally face greater challenges with VET participation than those born locally. Key issues are language, cultural equity and discrimination issues, socio-economic segregation and limited access to or knowledge of appropriate learning support. Identification with an ethnic neighbourhood with no VET facilities and culturally specific gender perceptions are other possible factors.

School influences

Career advice and counselling is not proactively educating students about VET options in a positive way or exposing them to adequate information about VET options - university advice is favoured. Many students lack a vision for their future pathway in senior secondary schooling and require more timely and accurate insights to labour market opportunities and career choices.

Many schools still reinforce a view that trades are only appropriate for those who are not suited to higher education and professional careers. When young people enrol in VET, they do so feeling they are 'not good enough' and VET will not give a high level of recognition or prestige.

VET in Schools programs positively affect post school VET participation for some students. These programs can lead students to change their plans towards VET or reinforce their decision to enrol, but much depends on the program with many weaknesses in the current VET in schools approach.

5.2 VET completion influences

Similar to VET participation, the likelihood of program completion has been linked to multiple factors. Below the wide-ranging influences on VET program completions observed in the literature review are outlined.

Generational differences in aspirations and expectations may be relevant in VET completions. Bernard Salt emphasises young people who are 'fearless of the future, highly mobile and always on the lookout for something that is different or apparently better'.

Clarity of personal career goals and a strong, front-end intention to complete are influential variables in program completions. A student's confidence in their own personal goals and reasons for doing a course affects their attendance, participation and completion of training modules. In general, student satisfaction with the quality of teaching and program content is high and has been found to have a negligible impact on completions.

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A previous TAFE NSW study found that failure to complete was not related to one single factor. Discontinuing a program was not always a conscious decision but rather students 'drifted off' due to a combination of course, work-related and personal factors.

VET program completion is higher in trade-based programs, employment-based training programs and structured workplace learning.

Socio-economic status of students has a stronger probability of influence on non-completion than most other factors. For some students, the price or fee structure for VET options prohibits completion. VET-FEE HELP loan recipients also tend to have a lower likelihood of completion.

Social inequality of students in VET programs results in various psychosocial factors that affect completions, e.g. economic, housing, social and family issues.

Inability to pursue a first VET program choice is also a key reason why students fail to complete their programs. Students told to enrol in a particular program because they are not suited or 'good enough' to take other programs are less likely to complete.

A strong self-identity and psychological variables tend to layer over variables such as age, gender and employment status in influencing VET completions. A sense of identity and belonging at college or work and, the extent to which students identify with places and people, impact their decision to stay on.

VET completion could be weakly correlated with age. As the age of students increases, a higher level of non-completion may be evident (with non-completion by older students linked to the hours required to complete the course competing with other time pressures). This was not supported by the current research.

Gender influences are evident with a higher number of males in VET programs and in turn, male-dominated workplace cultures affecting the female VET experience. Females terminate apprenticeships to some degree based on male-dominated workplaces, but they often shift settings rather than withdraw.

Although research commissioned by NCVER has observed that deregulation and an expansion of private providers enables students to make better course choices, some studies show that more program and provider choice equates with lower completion rates. Choices made in the context of diverse options, limited information and a lack of clarity about career goals have less chance of completion. Some students and parents are ill equipped to 'shop around'. It is therefore likely that the benefit of deregulation (with an expanded suite of providers and course offerings) can only be fully realised if parents and students have the capacity (i.e. the necessary insights and goal clarity) to productively engage in choice making.

Prior education is influential. Non-completion is prevalent among students with less than Year 11 schooling and those with a prior record of poor academic performance.

There are 'hot spots' or problem phases in programs when students can withdraw quickly. The first of these is the beginning of a VET course. Students sometimes quickly find programs are not as practical and concrete as they expected or reading, writing and maths requirements are prohibitive.

Various family problems and issues are associated with VET completion likelihood, e.g. parents with low levels of education, a cycle of poverty, domestic violence, physical or mental health issues and a need for children to sometimes care for their parents.

Family/student location is often associated with program completion. Although those living in regional areas are more likely to complete, rural students are sometimes behind their city peers academically.

Aboriginality is generally highly correlated with VET program non-completion. Unemployment is also high in remote areas and some young indigenous people are victims of entrenched employment exclusion (at times leaving programs due to an absence of related employment).

Migrants are also more prone to program non-completion. Language skills, poverty, expectations to work in the family business and culturally defined gender issues are influential.

Critical incidents, events and encounters (positive and negative) of an unexpected nature can influence VET completions. Broadly included are: major life events, personal or family illness and other crises.

Apprentices

The primary reason for non-completion of apprenticeships across developed nations is the quality of the employment experience. A sense of fairness, varied work, on-the-job training, strong mentoring, a good boss and a safe workplace free from bullying are key factors.

Management style is a major issue affecting employer-apprentice relationships. Those who mentor apprentices in a positive way tend to retain them. Completion rates are higher with large employers with many apprentices and lower with small employers with only one apprentice.

In general, 60% of apprentices who do not complete leave within the first year. Those who leave much later are more likely to leave for personal reasons than those linked directly to the employer.

Low pay does not top the list of reasons for non-completion despite the financial difficulties that apprentices encounter. Low pay is a cited reason for leaving among less than 10% of apprentices.

A key risk for apprentices leaving their contractual arrangements is the ability to find another suitable business to take them on. Employers need more structured training in how to mentor, train and manage apprentices. Most stakeholders agree that some employers of apprentices experience real challenges in supervising young apprentices due to the employers' own aptitude for training, their insights to generational differences and propensity to adopt a mentoring role.

A disrupted and changing economy and government funding decisions are also seen as influences on apprenticeship take-ups and non-completion.

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Descriptive Presentation
of the
Research Findings

6. Information Gathering and Decision Making

6.1 The search for information

The first step for prospective students to obtain information about VET qualifications was almost always doing an online search to find courses. The kind of information they were looking to gather was what choices of course were available and where or how they were offered. This was unlike the search used to choose to go to University where the institution could often be the first port of call, then the choice of the course.

However, many found their search for a VET course often resulted in confusion, particularly for those who did not have a clear idea about what they wanted to do. Google searches invariably resulted in a long list of VET provider sites rather than a list of courses and where they are offered which was the expectation. Some students then ended up landing on the TAFE website due to the difficulty navigating information on courses and providers, however this was often thought to be difficult to navigate and confusing in itself.

In the quantitative survey, students stated that they found it easier to find information about courses than providers. Of the total sample, 63% of past students (completers and non-completers), 78% of current students and 54% of considerers said they found it 'easy' to obtain information about courses. However, importantly, students who completed their courses were more likely to say finding information about courses and providers was 'easy'. 76% of completers found it easy to find information on courses compared to 58% of those who did not complete. 70% found it easy to find information on providers compared to 49% of those who did not complete. Those non-completers who paid for the course themselves, rather than obtained VET FEE HELP, found it easier to obtain information about the course (71% found it easy compared to 53%).

Completers and non-completers broadly used the same information sources, however non-completers were less likely to use a range of information sources including information on different courses (49% completers and 37% non-completers), course costs (55% completers and 44% non-completers) and information on industry demand (47% completers and 37% non-completers). On average completers were likely to use 3.4 information sources compared to 3 for non-completers. Making it easier for all potential students to access this information could improve the likelihood of students selecting the right course.

In addition, where information was used by those not completing their course, it was felt to be somewhat less helpful. Of those who used it, 67% of the completers found a summary of course content and expected workload useful compared to only 48% of the non-completers who used it. A description of what jobs the course can lead to was found to be useful by 57% of the completers who used it compared to only 46% of the non-completers who used it.

Non-completers who did not use the information sources stated that they would have found information on course content and expected workloads most useful as well as clear information about different courses for comparison. Often they did not look for such information and instead relied on other sources such as an RTO salesperson.

6.2 Key influencers on course decision making

Family

The most frequently mentioned influencer for all students was family (61% of past students, 72% of current students and 77% of considerers). This was particularly the case for the younger students. Some were influenced by their parents' own career options and parents also referred their children to relevant family and friends.

It also emerged in the qualitative phase, that mothers who were returning to the workforce, particularly single mothers, were often influenced by having to seek employment to support their family. This was a different type of influencer in that family is a motivation for doing any form of VET to get back into work rather than influencing towards a particular type of course.

Friends

The second most frequently mentioned influencer for all students was friends (52% of past students, 69% of current students and 73% of considerers). In addition, non-completers were slightly more influenced by friends than completers (53% of non-completers compared with 49% of those who completed).

Employer

Many were often motivated by employers suggesting career path options which included furthering their studies/education. The employer was particularly influential for those who completed courses (48% for completed students compared with 41% for non-completers) and for those in apprenticeships. The vast majority of those who said the employer was influential were working prior to studying (over 80%).

Around a third of non-completers (34%) and completers (38%) who said their employer was influential on their choice of course said that their employer paid for the course, so there are many instances of employers being influential but not paying for the course. If the employer does fund the course they are highly likely to be influential on choice of course - 84% of the non-completers who said that their employer funded their course stated that their employer was a strong to moderate influence on their choice of course.

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Providers

Providers were seen to be quite influential by some participants. The RTO salespeople were reported as being a strong to moderate influence by 34% of past students, 60% of current students and 57% of considerers. In the qualitative research some participants mentioned RTOs cold calling, door knocking or approaching potential students in shopping centres. There were reports that some had put on a 'hard sell' offering large discounts for immediate sign up and upselling from certificates to diplomas. In particular this was an issue for the young, inexperienced, indecisive student who was directionless and was more likely to be convinced to do something which was really not appropriate for them. They rarely asked many questions of the RTO salesperson and instead trusted that it was legitimate and an appropriate option for them.

Careers advisors

School careers advisors were the least influential of all those listed (31% of past students). Many of the school leavers went to their careers advisors for assistance in suggesting courses as they were perceived to have all the knowledge at their fingertips, however many did not find their advisor all that helpful. Advisors were thought to be most helpful for students who had some idea what they wanted to do, so the advisor could recommend a course of action. For those who had less of an idea, they were perceived to offer little guidance. Most said that students at school had to make an appointment to see the advisor so the unmotivated tended not to bother. Also, advisors tended to hand out University information (not VET), particularly in private schools.

A few had spoken to teachers they had a good relationship with about their options but this was mentioned by a minority.

RTO advisors were found to be more influential, but most did not know they existed.

Table 4: Degree to which each influenced the decision on which course to start

Influenced by: (strong/moderate)	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)	Current Students (n=250)	Considering (n=206)
Family	61	60	61	72	77
Friends	52	49	53	69	73
Peers / Colleagues	44	48	41	65	73
Employer	42	47	44	69	64

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TAFE / RTO Careers Advisor	40	40	40	69	67
TAFE / RTO sales person	34	39	33	60	57
Advertising	34	34	32	65	56
Expo / Event	33	34	32	61	63
Broker	32	33	34	59	55
School Careers Advisor	31	31	30	63	53

Q7. How much influence were each of the following on your decision to study the particular course?

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7. Drivers of Participation

7.1 Motivations to participation

When asked within the quantitative survey, the main reasons provided for doing the course were to 'help me get the job I want' (44% of past students, 50% of current students and 36% of considerers), for 'personal development/interest' (26% of past students, 15% of current students and 27% of considerers) or 'to change job or career' (23% of past students, 22% of current students and 31% of considerers).

Non-completers were more often originally motivated by job change related factors rather than personal development/interest reasons. 46% of non-completers stated that they did the course to 'help get the job they wanted' compared to 39% of completers. 'Personal development/interest' was a reason for 35% of completers compared with only 22% of non-completers showing that those who complete have more of an interest in the subject they study.

Non-completers more often had 'no idea' about their future and what kind of job they wanted (35% vs 26%), or were driven simply by 'the qualification' (45% vs 36%), because they needed a qualification to get a job.

7.2 Finance

The cost of VET courses and the degree of Government help available was not well known to all. In particular, there was poor knowledge of Smart and Skilled and what that meant for the individual. Only just over a third of past students in the survey had heard of Smart and Skilled (37%).

Less than half (49%) of the past students in the survey stated that they knew the total cost of the course (before any government subsidy). However, this knowledge did not seem to affect completion rates.

Many students within the qualitative phase felt that the upfront nature of course fees in the case of VET FEE-HELP was less flexible in comparison to university HECS-HELP where there is a cost per semester.

Those who had signed up for VET FEE-HELP were more familiar with the process and many in the qualitative research felt that they would not be paying it back as they would never reach the threshold. However, those who had not completed the course tended to be unclear about whether they would have to pay back the full fees.

In the survey it was apparent that completed students were more likely to be funding their course themselves (41% for completers compared with 24% for non-completers), whereas non-completers

were more likely to be using VET FEE HELP (36% of non-completers compared with 13% of completers).

8. Drivers of Completion

Students who did not complete their course were more often undergoing the course fully online compared to using other methods (46% of the non-completers were doing an online course compared with 24% of completers). In the qualitative research many of those who had or were doing online courses seemed to find the course difficult. They found it hard to remain motivated without the face-to-face contact and difficult to work from home, particularly those who were only able to work at night after a day at work or the family had gone to bed. There were also frequent complaints about a lack of support from the RTO for online courses in terms of slow responses from the provider or teacher in terms of giving feedback, answering questions or providing marks. There were some comments about the RTO taking more than three days to respond to emails and students having to wait weeks for marks before they could proceed to the next module.

It was more likely that non-completers were studying a Diploma/Advanced Diploma rather than a Certificate I-IV (42% of non-completers compared with 20% of completers). This relates to the fact that those who did not complete their courses were more likely to be attempting a course of a longer duration (43% of non-completers were doing a course of a year or more compared with 27% of completers).

8.1 Reasons for non-completion

The most frequently cited reason for non-completion was changing or losing a job (20%). This was followed by family or personal reasons (19%) and the training not being as expected (19%). In the qualitative research it emerged that family or personal reasons often included health issues or pregnancy. Training not being as expected was often in relation to the course including practical elements/work placements that they were not expecting, the subject area not being what they imagined or the course being more difficult than they expected.

Level of motivation to complete the course was high (63%) for completers and non-completers prior to starting the course, with completers only marginally higher than non-completers (69% of completers were 'very motivated' prior to starting compared with 61% of non-completers). However, losing motivation was the fourth highest reason given for non-completion (13%) showing that after starting the course this is a strong factor for deciding not to complete. There was little difference in motivation amongst the non-completers with different influencers, for example of those influenced by friends 64% said they were very motivated, RTO salesperson 62%, RTO careers advisor 64%. They were least motivated if influenced by an employer 56% or a careers advisor at school 52%.

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Those living outside metropolitan areas mentioned that they were often unable to do the course they wanted at the nearest campus so they either ended up having to travel long distances to complete it or do it online with little support, leading to higher non-completion rates.

8.2 Risk factors for non-completion

In a demographic sense, non-completers were:

- More likely to be young, under 22 (33% non-completers compared with 26% of completers)

- Less likely to be CALD (10% non-completers versus 18% amongst completers)

- Slightly more likely to be disabled (15% non-completers compared with 11% completers)

- Likely to have not finished any courses (started 1.6 courses and had completed 0.7 on average)

- More likely to be previously unemployed (25% non-completers compared to 17% completers) and

- More likely to have a personal income under $20,000 (38% of non-completers compared to 29% of completers)

- More likely to be receiving benefits (53% of non-completers compared to 35% of completers)

- Less likely to live in cities (55% of non-completers and 63% of completers)

8.3 Apprenticeships/Traineeships

Students undertaking an apprenticeship were more likely to finish their course (39% of completers were apprentices compared with 33% of non-completers) and those who completed their apprenticeships were more likely to be satisfied with the on-the-job training.

Students undertaking an apprenticeship and who had a closer working relationship with their supervisor were also more likely to finish their course (57% of completers sought help from their immediate supervisor if there were problems compared to 42% of non-completers).

9. Course Experience

9.1 Satisfaction with the course

The majority of participants were quite positive about the course. TAFE courses in particular were felt to be very practical. The lecturers were considered, knowledgeable and supportive.

However, there were also perceptions of poor course quality in the qualitative research with some finding their course to be disorganised, not up to date, irrelevant, badly structured and even boring.

There were substantial differences between completers and non-completers with regard to their satisfaction with the course. This satisfaction gap was most noticeable on the guidance and support received from the provider (82% of completers were satisfied with this aspect compared with 50% of non-completers), responsiveness to queries (80% of completers were satisfied compared with 48% of non-completers), content being relevant and up to date (82% of completers were satisfied compared with 57% of non-completers) and teaching quality (81% of completers were satisfied compared with 56% of non-completers).

Of those who did not complete, satisfaction was lowest for guidance and support for online courses (9% extremely satisfied compared with 29% for those with a trainer in a classroom) but there was no difference between TAFE and private providers. Those doing Cert I-III were more satisfied (25% extremely satisfied) than those doing Cert IV (10%) or Diplomas (15%).

On content being relevant and up to date, dissatisfaction was higher amongst non-completers from private providers (18% dissatisfied) than TAFE (10% dissatisfied). Satisfaction was lower amongst those who had started online courses (44% satisfied compared with 70% for those with a trainer in a classroom). Those doing Cert I-III were more satisfied (30% extremely satisfied) than those doing Cert IV (16%) or Diplomas (14%).

Similar patterns also existed for responsiveness to queries and teaching quality for online compared to classroom courses and level of qualification.

Lack of support was also apparent in the qualitative research with many participants finding the teachers unsupportive and not providing help when needed (particularly the case for online courses).

Satisfaction was lower for learning materials, resources and facilities overall (40% and 33% satisfaction for past students respectively) and satisfaction with these factors did not distinguish between completers and non-completers.

Apprentices who did not complete the course were also less satisfied with on the job training (63% satisfied compared to 86% of completed students).

Overall, the level of difficulty for the courses was mostly thought to be pitched at the right level (49% of past students thought it was about right with 18% quite easy and 20% quite difficult). However, non-completers found the course content more difficult than students who completed their courses (33% found it difficult compared with 16% of completers). Of the non-completers, most students whose highest level of qualification was school certificate or some secondary found the course at the right level (61%). Almost a third did find it difficult (31%) but this was no higher than for those with higher level previous qualifications.

9.2 Support

There appears to be a lack of support and poor use of support where it does exist. In addition, those who did use the support provided did not find it particularly helpful.

Non-completers were slightly more likely to have used study skills guidance and support (31% compared with 22% of completers) but were much less likely to have found that support helpful (36% very helpful compared to 63% for completers).

9.3 Interventions to assist completion

Those who did not complete their course were asked what factors would have assisted completion in an open text format. The initiatives suggested being likely to have helped drive completion included:

- more in class time (10%) (this was only mentioned by those who had done an online course)
- better personal circumstances (7%)
- course being better managed (5%)
- having better teachers (4%)
- having more job prospect information (3%)

Interestingly however, the biggest single response was 'nothing' (32%). For this group, the reasons they did not complete may have been predominantly personal or family reasons for which course-specific interventions would not have been helpful.

Both completers and non-completers who did not use any of the initiatives offered during the course were asked if in hindsight, they would have been helpful, using a scale very helpful, quite helpful, or not helpful.

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Overall around a third or fewer felt that each of the initiatives would have been very helpful, with non-completers being more likely to see mentoring programmes (26%) and extra tutoring (23%) as potentially very helpful compared to 15% and 13% of completers respectively.

Overall eighteen per cent of those who didn't use the support stated that study skills guidance and support would have been very helpful (19% of non-completers and 14% of completers). However CALD non-completers were more likely to say study skills guidance and support would have been very helpful (32%) compared to their non-CALD equivalents (18%).

Those non-completers with a lower level of prior education (i.e. some secondary level education or school certificate) were more likely to say that extra tutoring would have been potentially very helpful (46%) as well as mentoring programmes (47%). Younger non-completers were also more likely to say these interventions would have been useful.

10. Identification of Segments

10.1 Overview of the segments

We found in the qualitative phase that there were differences not only between completers and non-completers, but also in the motivations of people to participate in VET and in the reasons for not completing specific courses at a particular time.

In that regard, we focussed on a deeper level of analysis within the qualitative phase and it emerged that students tended to fall into 'mindsets' which were based on their motivations to study, that in turn influenced completion. The mindsets within each category were not mutually exclusive, and we found that people could move between mindsets and categories throughout their life time.

Within the qualitative phase eight student profiles were identified, each with different motivations for enrolling in VET and each with different challenges facing their course selection and completion. These segments or mindsets were given names to describe their key characteristics.

During the quantitative component, we attempted to validate the existence of the segments and determine their size in order to provide some idea of the magnitude of each segment within the VET market.

During analysis, it emerged that there was a further segment that was similar to the re-inventors. The key difference however, was that they were unemployed before starting their course. They have been described as the 're-starters'. The nine segments are described below. Although the segments are not mutually exclusive, the overlap is small (16%). The categories were based on a combination of age, work/study status before studying, plus response to one of either attitudinal question or reason for studying.

Table 5: Segments - size and definitions

Segment	Definition	Size
School leavers	Aged 21 or under, working or student before studying. Doing the course for work reasons. Plus…	
- Reluctant learners	Agree that they only did the course because 'I needed a qualification to get a job'	8%
- Dreamers	Agree that 'I've always had a strong desire to do the kind of work this course would lead to'	14%
- Directionless	Agree that 'I have no clear idea about what job I want'	7%

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Career builders	Aged 22 and over, working or student before studying. Doing a course for work reasons. Plus…	
- Directed employees	It was a requirement of my job	11%
- Re-inventors	To help me get the job I want, change my job, set up or expand own business	28%
- Career aspirants	To help me advance my career/get a promotion, increase my pay, do my job better, do more interesting work	18%
Other	Any age and unemployed, home duties or retired prior to studying. Plus…	
- Mind stimulators	Studying for personal development/interest	8%
- Benefit recipients	It was a requirement of my Government welfare benefits	2%*
- Re-starters	To help me get the job I want, to help get back into the workforce, to set up my own business	20%

* We believe that this segment could be much larger than this, as they may be less likely to take part in research than other segments.

Note: Segments add to more than 100% because segments are not mutually exclusive.

Below we have outlined each of the segments, along with their prevalence, profile, motivations for starting a VET course, and the barriers to completion.

10.2. School leavers

10.2.1 Reluctant learners

a) Profile

This segment represented 8% of the total VET students surveyed.

The reluctant learners agreed that they 'only did the course because I needed a qualification to get a job'.

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This group were young (aged 21 or under) and many had just left school so they are limited in their life experiences. Two thirds of reluctant learners (66%), were living at home with their parents and over a third claimed to be on benefits (38%).

Almost a quarter of this segment had started VET in school, but had left school early or dropped the subject (22%). Overall they were less likely to have completed VET in school than some of the other segments (e.g. 31% of reluctant learners completed VET in school compared with 43% of directionless).

Within the qualitative study, reluctant learners were more likely to be male apprentices and considering a traditional trade. This was largely confirmed by the quantitative study, with over half of the segment (54%) claiming to have started an apprenticeship, with a high proportion (66%) doing a Certificate I-III. The vast majority were also starting their course through TAFE (80%). They were more likely than other segments to be in cities (67%).

b) Motivations

Within the qualitative study, reluctant learners did not enjoy school and did not value academic achievement as highly as others. They tended to be attracted to their preferred occupation due to its lifestyle and saw VET as a 'necessary evil' to secure a job. In fact, within the quantitative study, reluctant learners reported being significantly less motivated than VET students overall, with only 43% of this segment claiming to be 'very' motivated (non-completers 37%).

The main reasons offered for beginning the course were very focussed on employment outcomes – 'It was a requirement of my job' (31%) and 'to help me get the job I wanted (31%).

Over half were strongly or moderately influenced by their family (52%) to start the course and a further four in ten respondents suggested they had been influenced by their careers advisor at school.

c) Barriers

Only 20% of this segment completed their course, which was lower than most other segments.

The main barriers to completion for reluctant learners that emerged within the qualitative study were apprenticeship conditions, difficulty of the course and a lack of maturity. Some apprentices complained about their relationship with their employer and the difficulty of living on apprentice wages, causing some to discontinue their course. Many reluctant learners struggled with their course as they were not particularly academically-focussed at school. Within the quantitative study, it emerged that 23% of the 'did not complete' reluctant learners only achieved some secondary school education (compared to 2% of the completed students).

The most frequently cited reason for non-completion was due to a change (26%) or loss of job (13%). Other reasons offered were, having achieved their goals (15%) and personal reasons (15%).

d) Interventions to completion for this segment

Within the qualitative study, participants who fell into this category identified better support from training providers for early school leavers, access to study skills guidance and structuring courses so that there is a fair balance between practical and theoretical components early on in the qualification.

During the qualitative research it was apparent that some students wished for the provider to be more flexible in scheduling assessments, to allow for unforeseen circumstances. Over half (54%) suggested that 'Increased flexibility from course provider for deadlines for assessments, exam timetables etc.' would have been 'very helpful' as would have been 'mentoring programmes', particularly so for the non-completers (48% of non-completers claimed it would have been very helpful compared to 34% of completers).

10.2.2 Dreamers

a) Profile

The proportion of students who fell into this segment was 14%.

This segment were also defined as school leavers, however they agreed strongly with the statement 'I've always had a strong desire to do the kind of work this course would lead to'. Like the reluctant learners, these students were mostly living with their parents (68%) and many were on benefits (38%).

Respondents in this segment were more likely to be starting a Certificate I-III (74%) in a class room setting (51%), and 46% were also completing their course as part of an apprenticeship. They were more likely than other segments to be living in cities (68%).

b) Motivations

This group had a passion for their chosen course and appeared highly motivated to obtain skills (66% claimed to be 'very motivated' before starting their course). Dreamers were more likely to be in creative industries or following family traditions. In that regard, they were strongly influenced by their family (47%) and their careers advisor (32%), with their main motivation for starting their course being 'to help me get the job I wanted' (25%).

c) Barriers

Dreamers were more likely to engage actively in VET and were more likely to complete their course than other school leaver cohorts (28%). However, they seemed to lose motivation if the course did not meet their expectations. In fact, 15% of this segment volunteered that they did not complete because the 'training was not as expected'.

Within the qualitative study, many claimed they did not fully understand requirements before enrolling or that they were disappointed with the standard of teaching and class management during the course.

Unexpected life events, such as pregnancy, moving location or illness, were also identified as a barrier to completion within the qualitative study.

d) Interventions to completion for this segment

To help dreamers overcome these barriers, it was suggested from the qualitative research that a one page course outline showing course content, compulsory practical components and anticipated study time was given to students prior to enrolment. This would assist with setting expectations prior to commencing the course. Better classroom management, support through difficult elements of the course and flexibility to account for unexpected life events were also identified.

This was validated within the quantitative study, with non-completers suggesting that:

- clear information about different courses for comparison would have been very/quite helpful (79% compared to 64% of completers)
- Information about different providers would have been very/quite helpful (78% compared to 54% of completers)

Other interventions mentioned were having access to more detailed course content, information and delivery methods (29% amongst non-completers; 5% amongst completers) and study skills guidance and support during the course (32% of non-completers would have found this 'very' helpful).

10.2.3 Directionless

a) Profile

The Directionless segment represents 7% of VET students.

This segment is inexperienced and, unlike dreamers and reluctant learners, has no clear idea of what job they would like to do. Hence, the types of courses they were studying were very varied.

They tend to be more often female (62%) and like the other school leavers, are still living with their parents (66%) at home. They were more likely to have completed VET in school than the other school leaver segments (43%).

Nearly half (48%) were completing their course fully online (which was more than for other school leaver segments) and 75% had started a Certificate I-III. Potentially they are more likely to do online shorter courses because they are less certain about their decision to do the course and therefore less committed.

b) Motivations

Directionless students seemed to have no specific interest in their course and many simply enrolled in VET for 'something to do'.

In that regard, they were more likely to lack motivation with only 35% of these students claiming to be very motivated before starting their course.

Within the qualitative phase, they emerged as having little understanding of what courses were available, what will be required and the different careers they may lead to. In fact, within the quantitative study a low proportion suggested that finding information on either the course (24%), or providers (18%) was very easy.

Interestingly, quite a high proportion also suggested that they were doing the course because 'it was a requirement of my job' (43%), so they are not making a conscious choice to do the course because it is something they love and want to get into, but rather because their employer has said they must do it to continue in their role.

Directionless students were also more likely to be influenced by external sources such as a careers advisor (51%), a sales person from the RTO (31%) or by advertising (36%) than other groups. This is a concern because they could be at risk of selecting a course that is inappropriate for the interests and ability.

c) Barriers

Within the qualitative component, directionless students tended to choose courses and jobs in widely varied fields, reflecting their lack of direction, interest and motivation. It seemed that if a course did not meet their expectations or certain parts were too difficult, they were likely to drop out. Within the quantitative survey the proportion of those having completed their most recent course was a low 20%.

The main reasons for non-completion amongst this segment were that the 'training was not what was expected (21%) or that they had changed jobs (17%).

d) Interventions

A lack of study skills and self-management made following through with a course harder for many, especially as a high proportion were completing it online. Almost two thirds of non-completers suggested in the survey that they would have liked more detailed course content, information on delivery methods to help choose the right course (20%) and that during the course, increased flexibility from the course provider for deadlines for assessments and exam timetables (61% amongst non-completers; 27% amongst completers), mentoring (59% amongst non-completers; 38% amongst completers) and extra tutoring (40% amongst non-completers; 30% amongst completers) would have been 'very' helpful.

The qualitative research showed that the directionless segment would also benefit from better advice before selecting a course and more general courses that would help them to explore and then narrow down their interests. Career pathways for different types of courses, 'short experiences' of different types of career and anecdotal descriptions of different course outcomes would also be beneficial.

10.3. Career builders

10.3.1 Directed employees

a) Profile

This segment represents 11% of the VET studmarket and was defined as those who had been employed before starting their course and were directed to the course by their employer.

This group was typically slightly older than the directionless cohort and were currently working full time (66%). Over a third had children still at home (35%), and they were more likely to have completed a VET course in school (48%).

Almost two thirds (65%) were completing their course at TAFE and completing a shorter 4-6 month, Certificate I-IV (78%). A high proportion (62%) were having their course fees paid by their employer.

Over half of them did not know the name of the course they did (51%), presumably because for many the employer organised and paid for the course.

b) Motivation

Directed employees tended to have no intrinsic motivation to undertake further training but were told by their employer (or due to legislative requirements) that a specific course was needed to stay in their current position or proceed further in their career. Three quarters of these students said

that the main reason for starting their course was because it was a requirement of their job and a further four in ten (41%) started as part of an apprenticeship.

In that regard, directed employees tend to have higher completion rates (37% completed) than some of the other segments.

They were more likely to indicate that they found it 'very easy' to find information on their course (43%) and on the providers (41%).

c) Barriers

The main barriers to completion for directed employees were a loss of job (21% of non-completers) or moving employer or industry (32% non-completers), i.e. the requirement was no longer there to do the course.

d) Interventions

As directed employees were eager to get the course "over and done with" and were having to balance work with study, flexibility was key. Almost half (47%) of the non-completers in this segment claimed that a shorter length course would have been 'very helpful', and a further one in five (19% non-completers students) also suggested extra tutoring would have been of benefit.

10.3.2 Re-inventors

a) Profile

Re-inventors represent a substantial proportion of VET students (28%).

They were more likely to be older than the directed employees (43% were over 35 years old compared with 19% of directed employees).

They were typically defined as employed and looking for a career change (87%). Within the qualitative study, they included both young and middle aged people who had been working for several years and wanted to do something different and older blue collar workers who needed less physical jobs.

Re-inventors were more likely to attend TAFE (72%) than the other career builders, to be doing an Advanced Diploma/Diploma (48%) and using VET FEE HELP (38%).

b) Motivation

Re-inventors enrolled in VET to change career pathways (47%) or to help them get the job they wanted (60%). In that sense, they were more motivated prior to starting (69% were 'very motivated').

c) Barriers

30% of re-inventors completed their course, however those who did not complete were more likely to be doing a Diploma (49% non-completers compared to 20% of completers), and doing the course online (49% non-completers; 24% completers).

Whilst motivated, many of those not completing (34%), found the course too/quite difficult (compared with 18% completers) and tended to have lost motivation or interest (16%). This could have been due to choosing a course that was not quite appropriate or quite right for them.

d) Interventions

Within the qualitative groups, the re-inventors suggested better support for study skills and upfront one page course outlines would have helped to overcome some barriers. Although not the only segment to have raised this, 30% of non-completers felt that information on industry demand for the course and future outcomes would have been very helpful (compared to 21% of completers) as would have been support for career planning and finding work after completion of their course (20% non-completers; 11% completers).

10.3.3 Career aspirants

a) Profile

Career aspirants represent 18% of VET students, and the vast majority are currently working full time (57%) or part time (35%). They were more likely to be older than the directed employees (41% were over 35 years old compared with 19% of directed employees).

Within the qualitative study they were working in their desired field and were using VET to improve their career opportunities or fine tune their skills in a specific area. Unlike other career building cohorts, they were less likely to be doing a full online course (29%) and were more likely to be doing a Diploma or Advanced Diploma (49%). 12% of non-completers were also using self-paced learning (compared to 3% of completers). There were many different courses mentioned but they were most likely to be studying business or administration related courses (12%).

Career aspirants had often completed a higher than average number of courses (2.2) since leaving school and had finished more than one of those courses (1.3 on average).

b) Motivation

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53% of career aspirants claimed to have started their course to help advance their career, and a further 48% stated that they wanted a chance to do more interesting work. Thirty five per cent (35%) of career aspirants simply wanted a career change.

In that regard, they tended to be less influenced by any other external factors other than their employer (33% were strongly influenced).

c) Barriers

Career aspirants were more likely to be self-financing their training or have taken out a VET FEE HELP loan than the employee directed segment (who were often funded by their employer), and as such they had high expectations of their courses. They were often frustrated if the course was disorganised, badly taught or had poor administration.

In that regard, the main reason recorded in the quantitative survey for career aspirants not completing their course was loss of motivation or interest (22% amongst non-completers). This could be due to perceived poor quality of the course or inappropriate course selection.

d) Interventions

Lifting the quality and flexibility of teaching appeared in the group discussions to be the best way to improve participation amongst this group, as career aspirants had high expectations and were often time poor.

Career aspirants who did not complete their course, and who did not use the supports, felt the key aspects that would have been 'very helpful' to aid completion were:

- Study skills guidance and support (28% non-completers compared to 15% of completers)
- Extra tutoring (21% non-completers and 13% completers)
- Mentoring programmes (24% non-completers; 12% completers)

10.4. Others

10.4.1 Mind stimulators

a) Profile

Mind stimulators generally did not participate in the labour force and were largely defined through their motivation to study for personal reasons. They represented 8% of VET students and were more likely to be female (71%), have a disability (28%) and be on disability support (33%).

The majority (85%) were low income earners (earning under $40,000).

Over half were doing a course in a class room setting (53%) and only 30% were completing their course online.

Subjects they were studying varied between IT/computing (14%), nursing (18%) and animal/pet care (16%).

b) Motivation

They tended to enrol in VET courses out of personal interest (20%), to keep the mind active and to gain a sense of self-worth/self-esteem, or to help them get back into the workforce (17%).

Within the qualitative phase, it emerged that some mind stimulators become perennial course doers, enrolling in course after course with no plans to apply their knowledge in real life. Amongst the non-completers in this segment, the average number of courses started was 2.05 and the average completion of courses was 0.5.

35% of this segment claimed that a sales person from TAFE or another training organisation had a moderate to strong influence on their decision to start the course, and this was particularly true amongst those who did not complete (44%).

c) Barriers

It seemed that as they were often self-funded (38%), mind stimulators had high motivation to finish (32% completed their most recent course). However, as they did not have to do the course for career or employment reasons, it often meant that they were more likely to discontinue if the course became too difficult or there were unexpected practical components. Illness or unexpected life events were often cited as preventing their completion (45%). Cost was less likely to be an issue, as there were also a high proportion who did not have to pay a fee (30%).

In addition, compared to some of the other segments, they tended to be less satisfied with the content being relevant and up to date (23% extremely satisfied amongst non-completers; 48% extremely satisfied amongst completers) and the level of guidance and support (28% extremely satisfied amongst non-completers; 61% amongst completers).

d) Interventions

For the mind stimulators, the aspects that would have been very helpful for completion were, clear information on course costs for comparison (43% non-completers; 14% completers), a summary of course content and practical hours, work placements and expected workloads (55% non-completers; 7% completers) and better teachers (14% non-completers).

10.4.2 Benefit recipients

a) Profile

Within the quantitative survey, this segment only represented 2% of VET students. They were defined as being unemployed before starting their course and were starting their course because it was a requirement of their government benefits. As this is only a very small group within the sample, the findings should be interpreted much more cautiously.

This segment comprised mostly young people (33% 22-25 years) and females (70%). Almost half were still living with their parents (44%) and 10% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

They were significantly less likely to be attending TAFE (43% only) as it was thought that TAFE courses were more scrutinized for non-attendance, but likely to be in a class room setting (68%) and completing a Certificate I-III (87%).

b) Motivation

Students in this segment had low motivation to complete their course (32% very motivated). Instead, a common trend identified during the qualitative phase of the research was to enrol in a course, discontinue part way through and enrol in a new course when Centrelink found out.

They tended to not be very motivated by outside influencers, other than their peers (19%) and out of necessity.

Some claimed they were also motivated by a desire to help them get back into the workforce (25%).

c) Barriers

Only 28% completed their course and the main barrier to completion was personal reasons (44%). From the qualitative findings it also seemed that there may be a deeper underlying barrier to participation and completion that was a lack of self-confidence.

d) Intervention

To improve outcomes for this cohort, many were calling for a summary of course content, number of hours, work placements and expected workload prior to starting (26% would have found this very helpful), and honesty from the provider, 'If I had known their reputation I would have enrolled in TAFE' (13%).

10.4.3 Re-starters

a) Profile

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This segment was very similar to the re-inventors only they were unemployed before starting their VET course. They represented 20% of VET students and were more often female (78%) and over 25 years (52%).

A high proportion of re-starters were attempting an online course (56%). Often this was chosen because it seemed to fit into their lifestyle better with their family responsibilities.

A higher proportion did childcare related courses than other segments (15%), but there was also animal related courses (6%) and community services/disability/counselling (3% each).

b) Motivation

Like the re-inventors, their main reason for starting was to help them get the job they wanted (56%) or to get back into the workforce (29%).

Influence of family is strong (36% influenced) possibly due to many (especially within the groups) being single mothers who were keen to become re-employed and earn a decent wage.

c) Barriers

Those who did not complete their course were more likely to be completing a Diploma (51%), studying online (68%) and doing a course longer than 6 months (75%).

Having started the course, however, almost a third (31%) of non-completers admitted that they had found the course too/quite difficult and a high percentage suggested that the training was not what they had expected (40%).

d) Interventions

For these students, the aspects that would have been 'very helpful' to them in completing their course were:

- Mentoring programmes (49% non-completers; 19 % completers)
- Teachers managing disruptive students better (39% non-completers; 29 % completers)
- Extra tutoring (44% non-completers; 21% completers)

Many also spontaneously suggested that more class time would have been beneficial (40%), particularly those doing online courses.

11. Summary of Key Findings

From the findings of this research study, the following points emerged regarding drivers to participation and completion.

11.1 Drivers to participation

In an overall sense, it appears that family or family reasons and friends are significant drivers for participation in VET.

There is however, a high proportion of students who are driven to start further education by their employer (48% of completers; 41% of non-completers).

40% of students report seeing RTO careers advisors and they were perceived as being more helpful or influential than the school careers advisors (31% of completers versus 30% of non-completers).

Around a third, also were influenced by RTO sales people, brokers, events and expos.

The main reasons offered for starting a course were more often job related than for personal interest, although the latter was a strong motivator for some segments:

- To help me get the job I want (39% completers and 46% of non-completers)
- To get the chance to do more interesting or different work (23% completers and 17% of non-completers)
- Change job or career (21% completers and 24% of non-completers)
- For personal development/interest (35% completers and 22% of non-completers)

11.2 Drivers of course non-completion

There were many risk factors to emerge that were influencing non completion of VET. It was more likely that students not completing were studying a Diploma rather than a Certificate I-IV (20% completers and 42% of non-completers). Those students who had not completed their Diploma were more likely to have only attained some secondary school education, intermediate or school certificate than those who completed Diplomas (who were more likely to have completed a Certificate, Diploma or Degree before starting their course), showing that those with a lower level of educational attainment prior to starting a Diploma were disadvantaged from the start and should have been advised to do a different course or given more support.

Students who did not complete their course were also more often undergoing the course fully online compared to using other methods (24% completers and 46% of non-completers) and were more

likely to be attempting a longer duration course of more than a year (27% completers and 43% of non-completers).

Students undertaking an apprenticeship were more likely to finish their course. (39% completers versus 33% of non-completers).Students who did not complete their course were more often originally motivated by job change related factors such as 'to help get the job I want' or 'change job' (39% completers and 46% of non-completers) rather than personal development/interest reasons (35% completers and 22% of non-completers).

In addition, non-completers more often had 'no idea' about their future (35% non-completed with 26% completed), or were driven simply by 'the qualification' (45% non-completers versus 36% completers).

Students who didn't complete their course had no major differences in terms of decision input influencers, however there was a slight tendency for completers to be more influenced by employers (48% completers vs 41% non-completers) and non-completers to be more influenced by friends (53% non-completers versus 49% completers).

Interestingly, there was only a moderate difference between the original levels of motivation to complete the course (61% non-completers, 69% completers).

Finding information at the outset appeared to be a factor to completion rates. Those not completing their course revealed much greater difficulty in terms of ease of obtaining relevant information:

	Easy to Find Information	
	Not Completed	Completed
Information about courses	58%	76%
Information about providers	49%	70%

However, non-completed students were less likely to have use a range of Information sources:

	Information Sources Used	
	Not Completed	Completed
Information on different courses	37%	49%
Information on course costs	44%	55%
Information on industry demand	37%	47%

Where information was used by those not completing their course, it was felt to be somewhat less helpful:

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Information Seen as Very Helpful		
	Not Completed	Completed
Summary of content & workload	48%	67%
Description of job potential	46%	57%
Information on industry demand	38%	47%
Careers advice by training provider	48%	55%

There were major differences between completed and not completed students with regard to their satisfaction with the course:

Total Satisfaction		
	Not Completed	Completed
Guidance & support from provider	50%	82%
Responsiveness to queries	48%	80%
Content relevant & up to date	57%	82%
Teaching quality	56%	81%

Students who did not complete a course were also less satisfied with on the job training (63% satisfied compared to 86% of completed students).

Non-completers found the course content more difficult than students who completed the course (33% 'too/quite difficult' versus 16%) and those who failed to complete their course were more likely to be funded through VET FEE HELP (36% VET FEE HELP versus 13% for completers).

Students who had not completed were slightly more likely to have used study skills guidance and support (31% versus 22% completed) but were much less likely to have found that support helpful (36% very helpful compared to 63% for completers). This suggests that the support was not meeting the needs of the student. Non completers were more likely to see mentoring programmes and extra tutoring as potentially helpful.

The following initiatives were suggested by those who did not complete as being likely to have helped drive completion:

- More in class time   10%
- Better personal circumstances   7%
- Course being better managed   5%
- Having better teachers   4%
- Having more job prospect information   3%

'More in class time' was only mentioned by those who had done an online course (18% of non-completers who did an online course), indicating that is was a particularly salient issue for online learners.

The most frequently cited reasons for non-completion were:

- changed or lost job   20%
- family/ personal reasons   19%
- training not what I expected   19%
- lost motivation   13%

In demographic terms, non-completers were:

- more often younger (33% aged under 21 versus 26% for completers)
- slightly more likely to be disabled (15% vs 11%)
- more often unemployed (25% vs 17%).
- more often on benefits (35% of completers on benefits vs 53% of non-completers).
- lower incomes (personal and household).

11.3 General interventions to improve participation and completion

The research suggests that non-completion is often driven by poor choice of course. This can be due to a lack of clear direction on the part of the learner before enrolling, poor assistance in navigating the myriad possibilities, difficulty in finding easy to use information, and poor information on course content and expected student workload. This can lead to course choices that are inappropriate and/or unrealistic expectations.

Once in the course there seems to be a lack of support and guidance for struggling/at risk students, poor responsiveness to queries and a perception of poor content and teaching quality (particularly with online courses).

These should be the general areas of focus for interventions to increase student participation and completion.

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11.4 Segmentation

Within the qualitative study, several segments were identified based on their 'mindsets' and motivations to start VET. These were then validated within the quantitative survey. A total of nine segments emerged. These mindsets or segments were not found to be mutually exclusive as people could move between mindsets and categories. However it emerged within the quantitative study that the segments did not overlap a great deal (only around 16% overlap). The size and names of the segments are set out below:

School Leavers

- Reluctant Learners (8%)
- Dreamers (14%)
- Directionless (7%)

Career Builders

- Directed Employees (11%)
- Re-inventors (28%)
- Career Aspirants (18%)

Other

- Mind Stimulators (8%)
- Benefit Recipients (2%)
- Re-starters (20%)

Of the segments, reluctant learners, directionless and re-starters were least likely to finish the course.

11.5 Interventions to improve participation and completion amongst segments

Interventions to improve the likelihood of completion vary slightly between the segments.

Within the school leavers segments the reluctant learners would benefit from better support such as mentoring programmes, study skills guidance and support and ensuring that there is a fair balance between practical and theoretical components, particularly early in the course.

Dreamers would benefit from clear information about different courses for comparison, information about different providers and access to more detailed course content, information and delivery methods.

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More detailed course content and guidance choosing the right course would benefit the directionless learners in particular, along with advice to move away from online choices as online courses may be less suitable for directionless learners.

More general courses that would help them to narrow down their interests, career pathways for different types of courses, 'short experiences' of different types of career and anecdotal descriptions of different course outcomes would also be beneficial. General mentoring and extra tutoring would also assist this segment to complete.

Flexibility to do the course in the best way that suits them is key for employee directed learners, as control is generally out of their hands in terms of having to do the course in the first place, with many also wishing for shorter courses.

Re-inventors would benefit from better support for study skills as they are frequently older and have been out of education for some time. Information on industry demand for the course and future outcomes would be very helpful for this group as would support for career planning and finding work after completion of their course.

Improving the quality of teaching and course flexibility would benefit career aspirants, along with more support in the form of study skills guidance and support, extra tutoring and mentoring programmes as they have often been out of education for some time.

Clear information on course costs for comparison and a summary of course content and practical hours, work placements and expected workloads would help those mind stimulators in danger of non-completion.

To improve outcomes for benefit recipients, a clear and honest summary of course content, number of hours, work placements and expected workload prior to starting would assist completion.

Re-starters often struggle with the academic nature of courses since they have been out of education for some time, so for them mentoring programmes, extra tutoring and teachers managing disruptive students better would assist completion. Online courses may be less appropriate for re-starters.

12. Appendix

12.1 Data tables and charts

Table 6: Influencers on course choice

Influenced by: (strong/moderate)	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Current Students (n=250)	Considering (n=206)
Family	61	72	77
Friends	52	69	73
Peers / Colleagues	44	65	73
Employer	42	69	64
TAFE / RTO Careers Advisor	40	69	67
TAFE / RTO sales person	34	60	57
Advertising	34	65	56
Expo / Event	33	61	63
Broker	32	59	55
School Careers Advisor	31	63	53

Q7. How much influence were each of the following on your decision to study the particular course? RANDOMISE
Base: All respondents

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Table 7: Influencers on course choice

Influenced by: (strong/moderate)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Family	60	61
Friends	49	53
Employer	48	41
Peers / Colleagues	47	44
TAFE / RTO Careers Advisor	40	40
Advertising	39	33
Broker	34	32
Expo / Event	34	32
TAFE / RTO sales person	33	34
School Careers Advisor	31	30

Q7. How much influence were each of the following on your decision to study the particular course? RANDOMISE
Base: All respondents

Figure 1: Ease of obtaining information
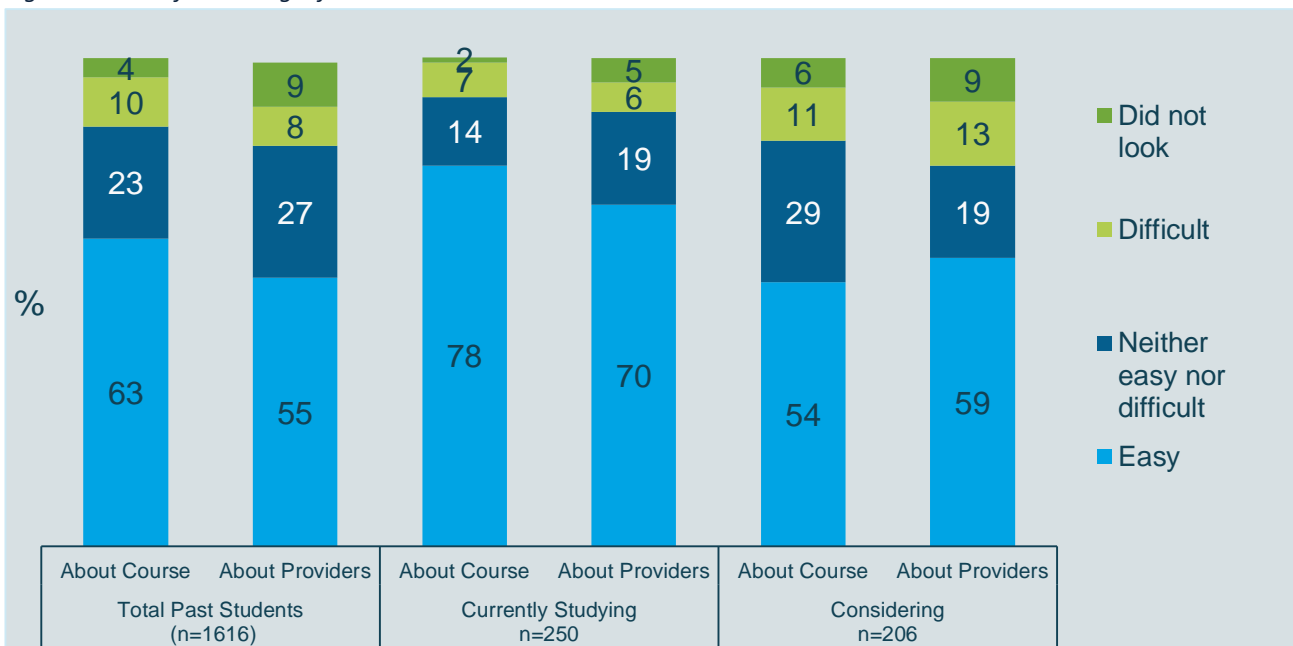
Q10. How easy was it for you to find the information you wanted about providers?
Base: All respondents

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Figure 2: Ease of obtaining information (completers v non-completers)
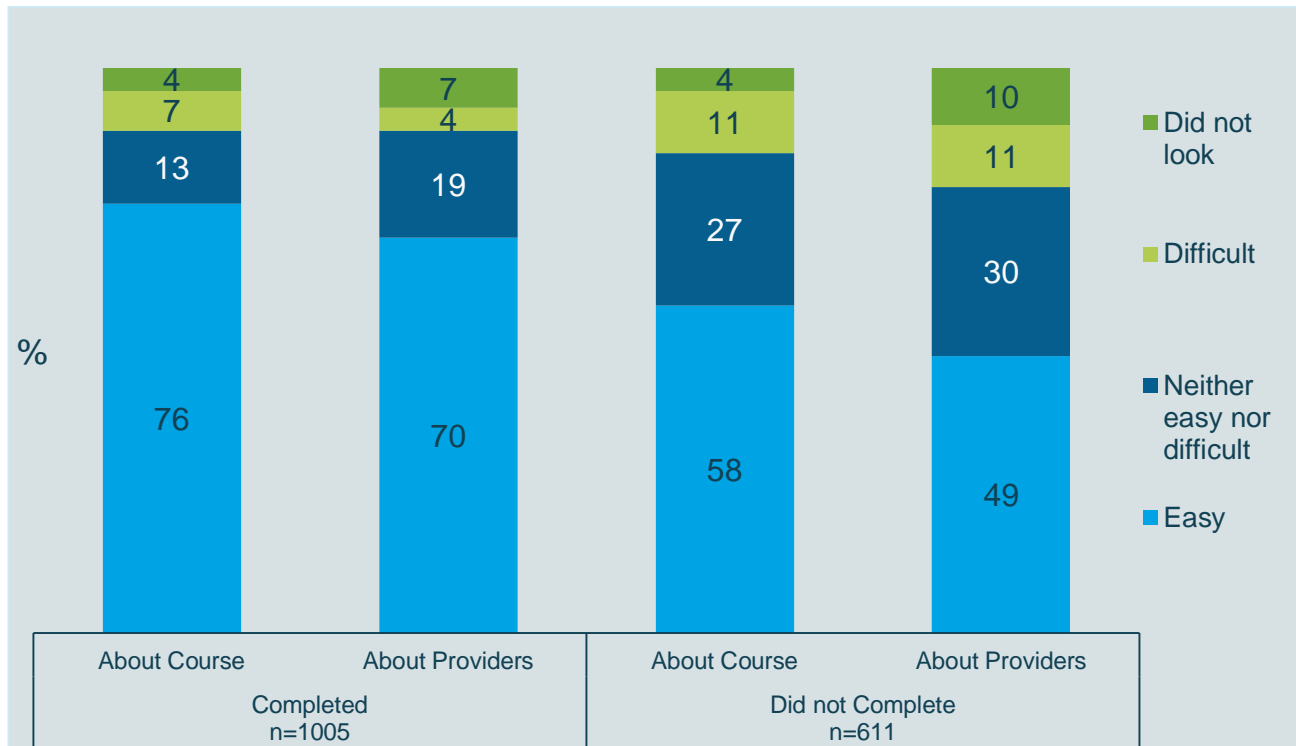
Q10. How easy was it for you to find the information you wanted about providers?

Base: All respondents

Table 8: Use of information to assist in course selected

Usage of information sources (before starting course) Yes answers	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Currently Studying (n=250)	Considering (n=206)
Summary of course content and expected workload	60	66	68
Description of jobs that courses lead to	57	59	63
Clear information on course costs for comparison	47	58	58
Clear information about different courses for comparison	40	53	57
Information on industry demand & expected future income	39	51	42
Clear information about different providers for comparison	38	48	50
Careers advice by training providers	32	49	50
Total info sources used	313	384	388

Q11a. Before starting, did you use any of the following to help you choose a course that was right for you?
[Currently] Did you have access to…
Base: All respondents

Table 9: Use of information to assist in course selection

Usage of information sources (before starting course) Yes answers	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Summary of course content and expected workload	60	59
Description of jobs that courses lead to	57	57
Clear information on course costs for comparison	55	44
Clear information about different courses for comparison	49	37
Information on industry demand & expected future income	47	37
Clear information about different providers for comparison	37	38
Careers advice by training providers	36	31
Total info sources used	341	303

Q11a. Before starting, did you use any of the following to help you choose a course that was right for you?
[Currently] Did you have access to…
Base: All respondents

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Figure 3: Degree to which the information was felt to be useful

Completed n=1,006 — **Did not Complete n=611**

■ % Using source   ■ % of total who found it helpful

Information source	Completed: % Using source	Completed: % found helpful	Not Completed: % Using source	Not Completed: % found helpful
Summary of course content and expected workload	60	40	59	28
Description of jobs that courses lead to	57	32	57	26
Clear information on course costs for comparison	55	31	44	25
Clear information about different courses for comparison	49	27	37	20
Information on industry demand & expected future income	47	26	37	18
Clear information about different providers for comparison	37	20	38	19
Careers advice by training providers	36	17	31	12

Total # of info sources used
Completed 3.4
Not completed 3.0

Q11a. Before starting, did you use any of the following to help you choose a course that was right for you?
[Currently] Did you have access to…
Q11c.How helpful would this information have been in helping you to choose a course?
Base: All respondents

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Table 10: Degree to which the information would have been helpful

(Yes, it would have been 'very' helpful)	Total Past Students N=1616		Currently Studying n=103		Considering n=84	
	%	Base	%	Base	%	Base
Clear information about different courses for comparison	28	N=266	27	n=109	23	n=95
Clear information on course costs for comparison	25	N=213	43	n=103	30	n=84
Summary of course content and expected workload	24	N=159	31	n=88	36	n=72
Clear information about different providers for comparison	21	N=216	25	n=123	30	n=114
Information on industry demand & expected future income	21	N=207	21	n=119	26	n=118
Description of jobs that courses lead to	20	N=138	34	n=101	25	n=85
Careers advice by training providers	19	N=212	24	n=125	24	n=127
Total potential helpfulness of info sources	158		205		194	

Q11c. FOR ALL THOSE THAT SAID NO OR DON'T KNOW IN Q11a – How helpful would this information have been in helping you to choose a course?

Base: Respondents who said "no" or "don't know" in Q11a

Table 11: Degree to which the information would have been helpful (completers v non-completers)

(Yes, it would have been 'very' helpful)	Completed n=541		Did not Complete n=374	
	%	Base	%	Base
Clear information on course costs for comparison	24	n=541	25	n=374
Clear information about different courses for comparison	24	n=594	29	n=396
Description of jobs that courses lead to	22	n=497	19	n=327
Careers advice by training providers	22	n=664	18	n=430
Clear information about different providers for comparison	21	n=666	22	n=425
Information on industry demand & expected future income	20	n=600	21	n=379
Summary of course content and expected workload	18	n=437	27	n=287
Total potential helpfulness of info sources	151		161	

Q11c.How helpful would this information have been in helping you to choose a course?
Base: Respondents who said "no" or "don't know" in Q11a

Figure 4: Awareness of Smart and Skilled
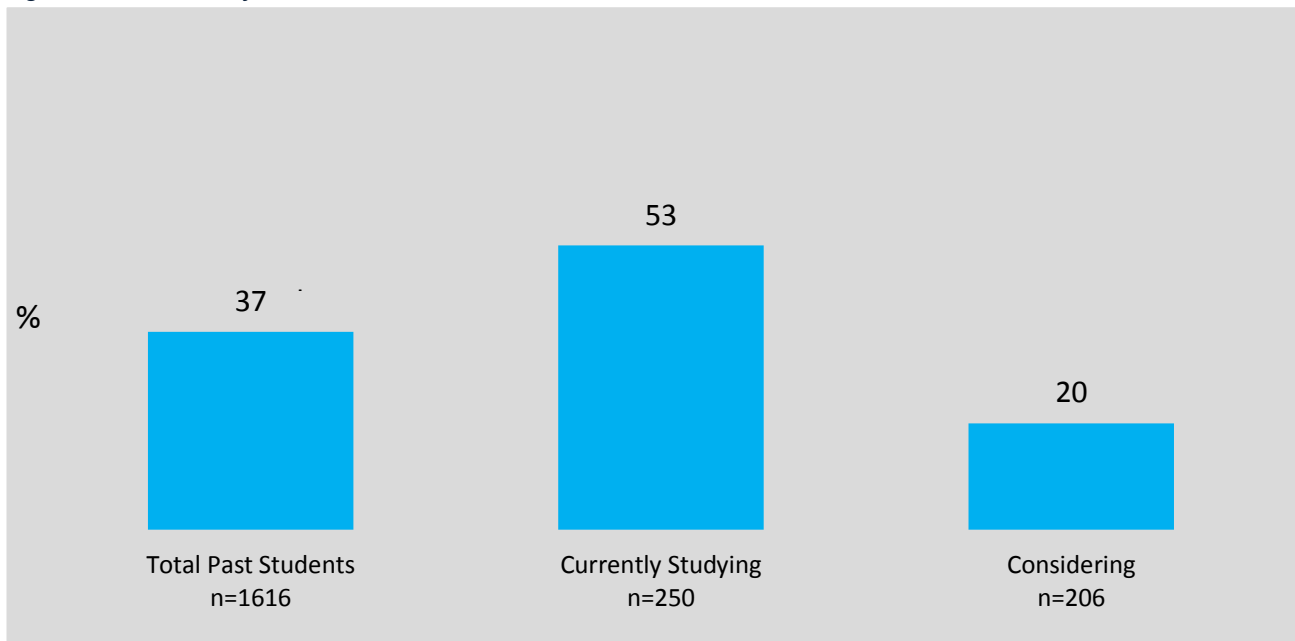
Q18. Have you heard of Smart and Skilled?
Base: All respondents

Figure 5: Importance of aspects of the course in decision making for considerers

Considerers
(n=206)

	Flexibility to help maintain study/life balance	Level of guidance and support from the provider (e.g. study skills support, mentoring programs)	High quality learning materials and resources (e.g. text books, equipment…)	Teaching quality
Not important	5	6	4	3
Quite important	34	34	36	27
Very important	61	59	60	70
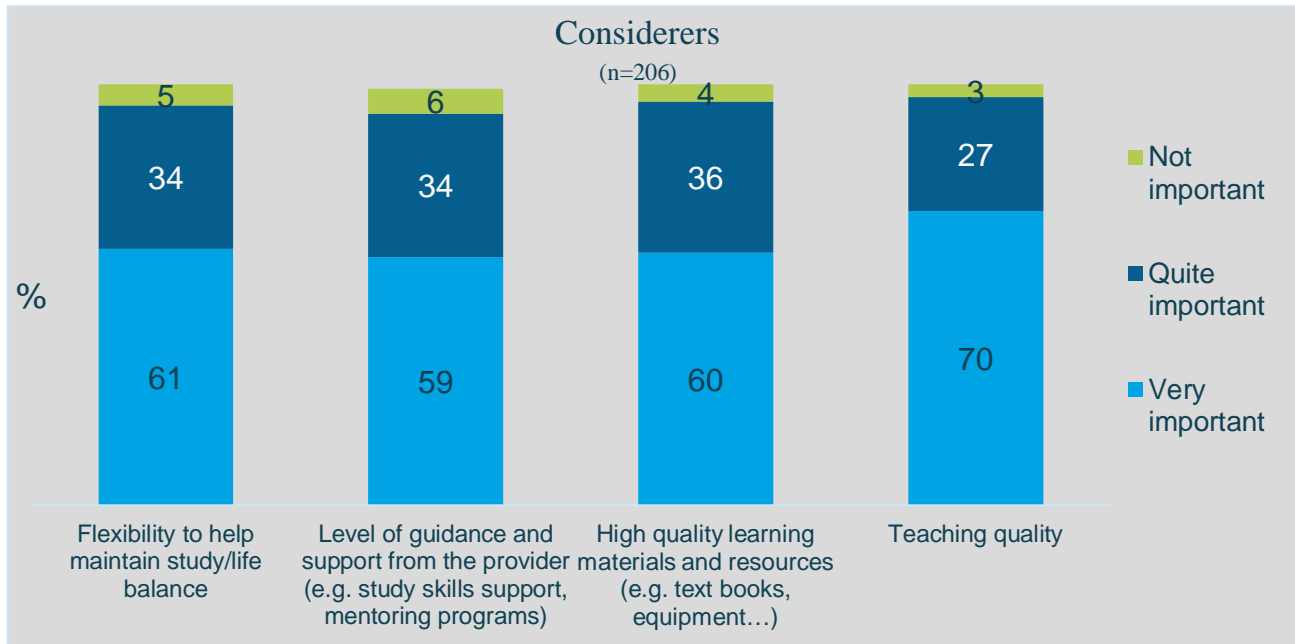
Q12. How important would the following factors be to you if you did enrol in the course?
Base: Respondents considering doing a VET course (n=206).

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Table 12: Main reason for doing the course

	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Currently Studying (n=250)	Considering (n=206)
Help me get the job I want	29	29	18
Requirement of my job	23	24	14
Change my job/career	12	10	18
Help get back into workforce	8	9	10
Part of an apprenticeship or traineeship	6	10	2
Get the chance to do more interesting or different work	6	4	3
For personal development/interest	5	2	5
Help advance my career/get a promotion	5	3	7
To set up my own business / expand business	3	5	6
Increase my pay	2	3	10
Do my job better	1	2	3
Get into another course of study	1	0	0
Requirement of government welfare benefits	0	0	1
Get skills for community work / volunteering	0	0	3

Q6b. Of the reasons that you selected, which was your main reason for doing the course?
Base: All respondents

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Table 13: Total reasons for doing the course

	Total Past Students (n=1616	Currently Studying (n=250)	Considering (n=206)
Help me get the job I want	44	50	36
For personal development/interest	26	15	27
Change my job/career	23	22	31
Get the chance to do more interesting or different work	19	17	14
Help get back into workforce	15	21	22
Help advance my career/get a promotion	14	11	10
Requirement of my job	14	26	10
Do my job better	11	15	15
Get into another course of study	10	7	3
Part of an apprenticeship or traineeship	10	18	10
Increase my pay	9	12	15
To set up my own business / expand business	7	12	12
Get skills for community work / volunteering	5	8	8
Requirement of government welfare benefits	4	1	1
Other	1	0	1

Q6a. Why did you do this course? Choose all that apply
Base: All respondents

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Table 14: Total reasons for doing the course (completers v non-completers)

All reasons	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Help me get the job I want	**39**	**46**
For personal development/interest	**35**	22
Get the chance to do more interesting or different work	**23**	17
Change my job/career	**21**	**24**
Do my job better	19	9
Help advance my career/get a promotion	15	14
Requirement of my job	15	14
Help get back into workforce	14	15
Get into another course of study	12	9
Part of an apprenticeship or traineeship	10	10
Increase my pay	9	9
Get skills for community work / volunteering	9	4
To set up my own business / expand business	8	6
Requirement of government welfare benefits	3	4
Other	2	1

Q6a. Why did you do this course? Choose all that apply
Base: All respondents

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Table 15: Payment for course

	Total Past Students (n=1616)		Currently Studying (n=250)		Considerers expectation of funding (n=206)	
Student or Parents	29	**47**	40	**64**	45	**62**
Employer	18		24		13	
VET FEE-HELP	29	**30**	23	**24**	20	**21**
Other Government Funding	1		1		1	
No fees required		**20**		**12**		**10**
Don't Know		**-**		**-**		**11**

Q17. How was your course paid for?
Base: All respondents

Table 16: Payment for course (completers v non-completers)

Method of payment	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Student or Parents	41	24
Employer	21	17
Commonwealth VET FEE-HELP loan	13	36
No fees required	21	20
Other	5	4

Q17. How was your course paid for?
Base: All respondents

Figure 6: Awareness of the total cost of the course (including any government subsidy)
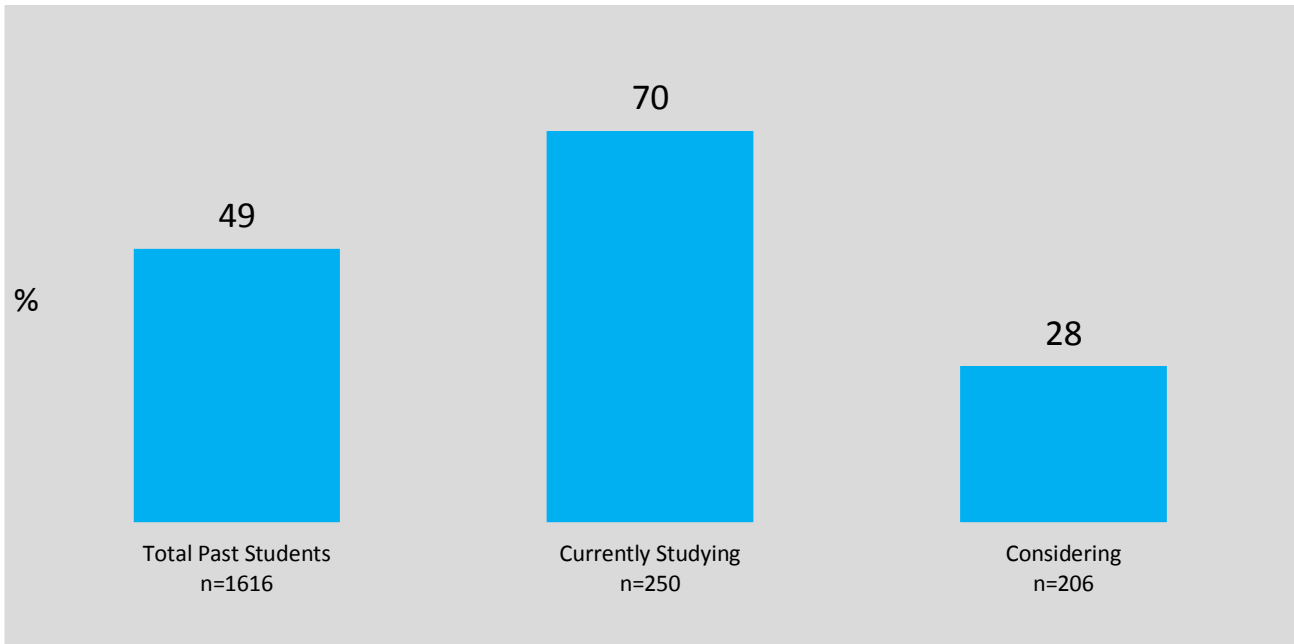
Q19. Do you know the total cost of your course (including/before any government subsidy)?
Base: Base: All respondents

Figure 7: Price willing to pay for the course
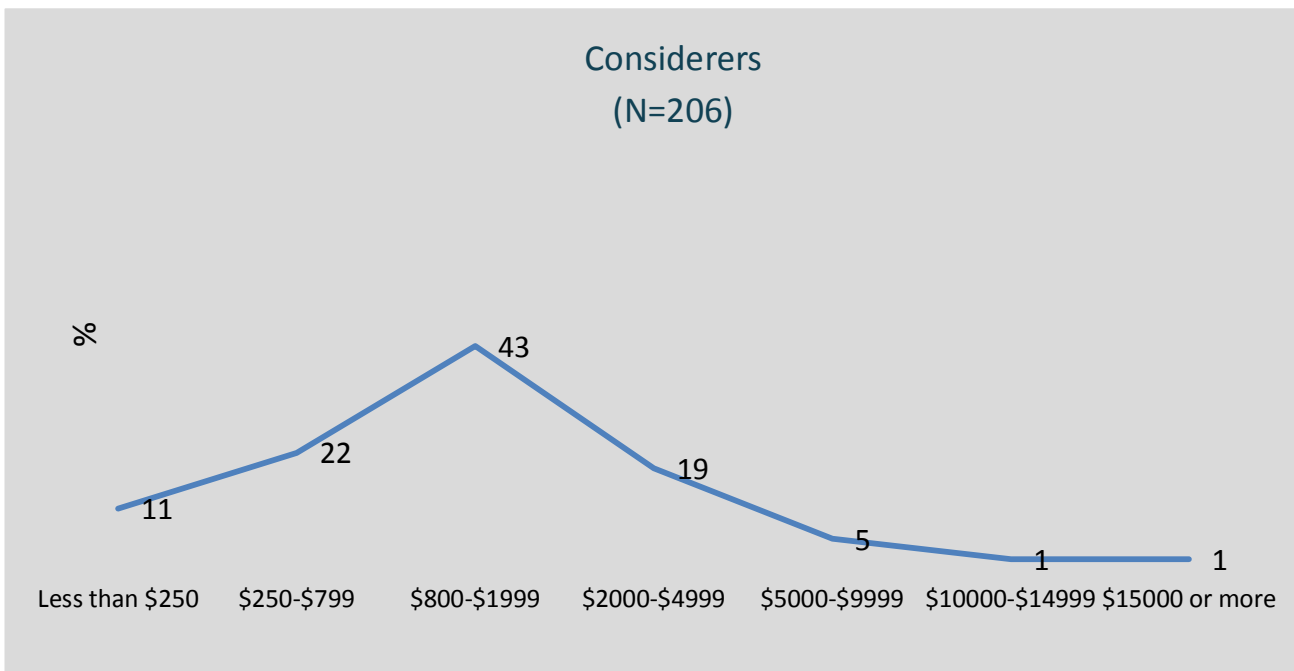
Q20. How much would you be willing to pay for the course?
Base: Respondents considering doing a VET course (n=206).

Table 17: Main reason for not completing the course

Main reason for non-completion	Did not Complete (n=611)
The training was not what I expected	19
Family or personal reasons	19
I just lost motivation / interest	13
Changed jobs / started a new job	12
I lost my job	8
I learnt the skills I needed for my job	6
I achieved my training goals	4
Started other training	3
Training timetable not flexible enough	3
Training no longer met my plans	2
The college closed/dumped the course	2
I wasn't happy with the support/materials/the trainer	2
I have a few more components/haven't been offered the chance to do them/can't afford the extra fee	1
I just found it too hard/overwhelming	1
Other	7

Q20. What was the main reason for choosing not to continue the training?

Q21. Did you find out information after the course started that made it difficult to complete, e.g. number of practical hours involved, expected workload?

Base: Respondents who did not complete the course they were enrolled in (n=611)

Figure 8: Level of motivation to complete the course (completers v non-completers)
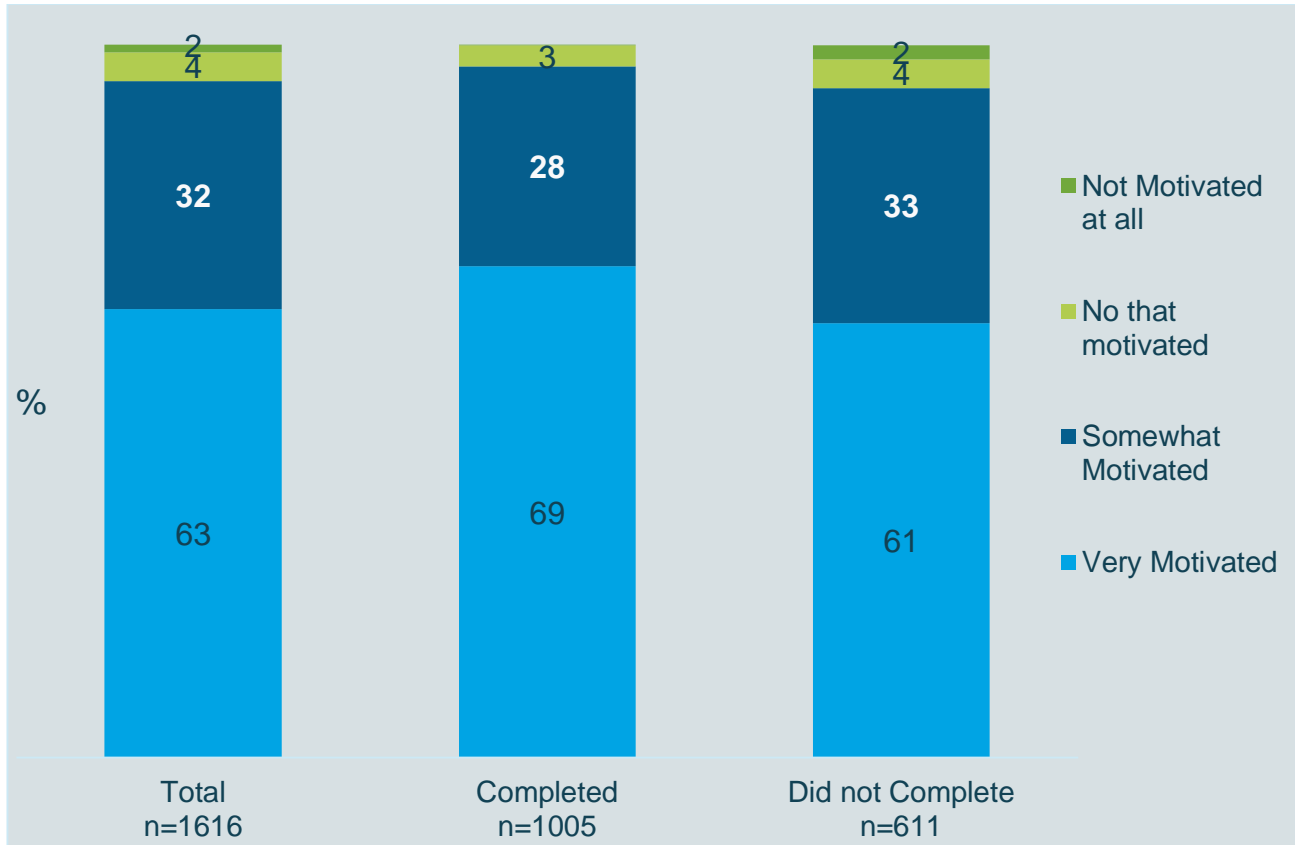
Q8. How motivated were you to complete the course before you started?
Base: All respondents

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Figure 9: Institution
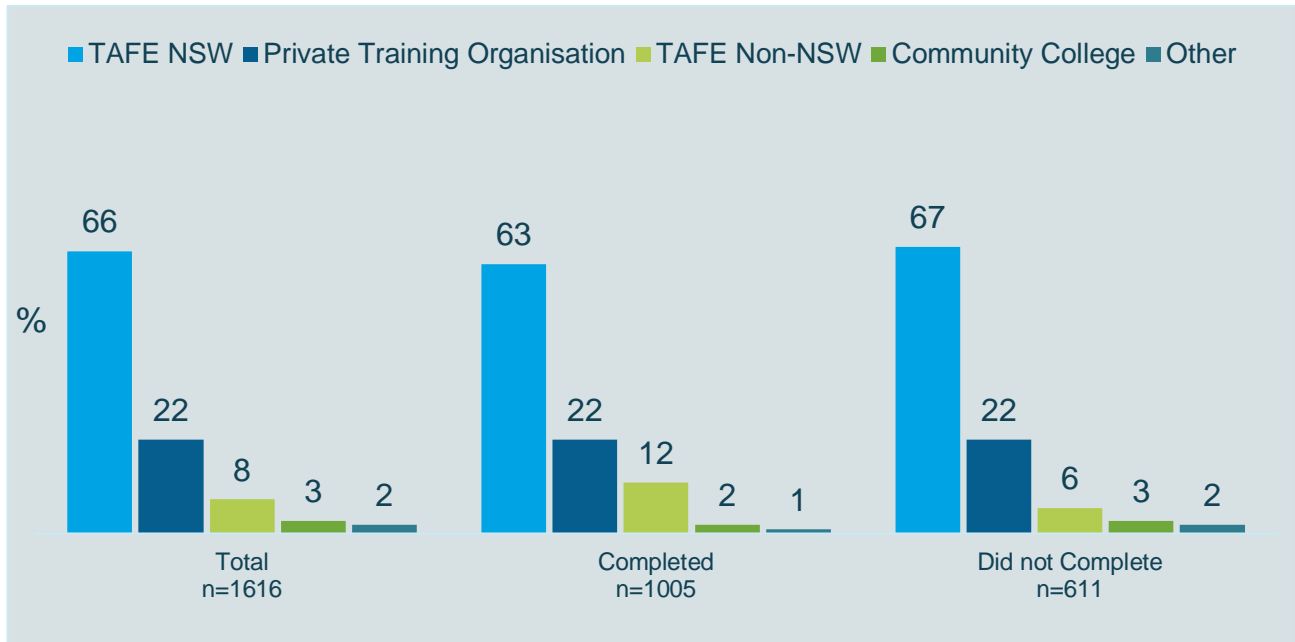
Q3. Where did you start your training?
Base: All respondents

Figure 10: Level of course studied
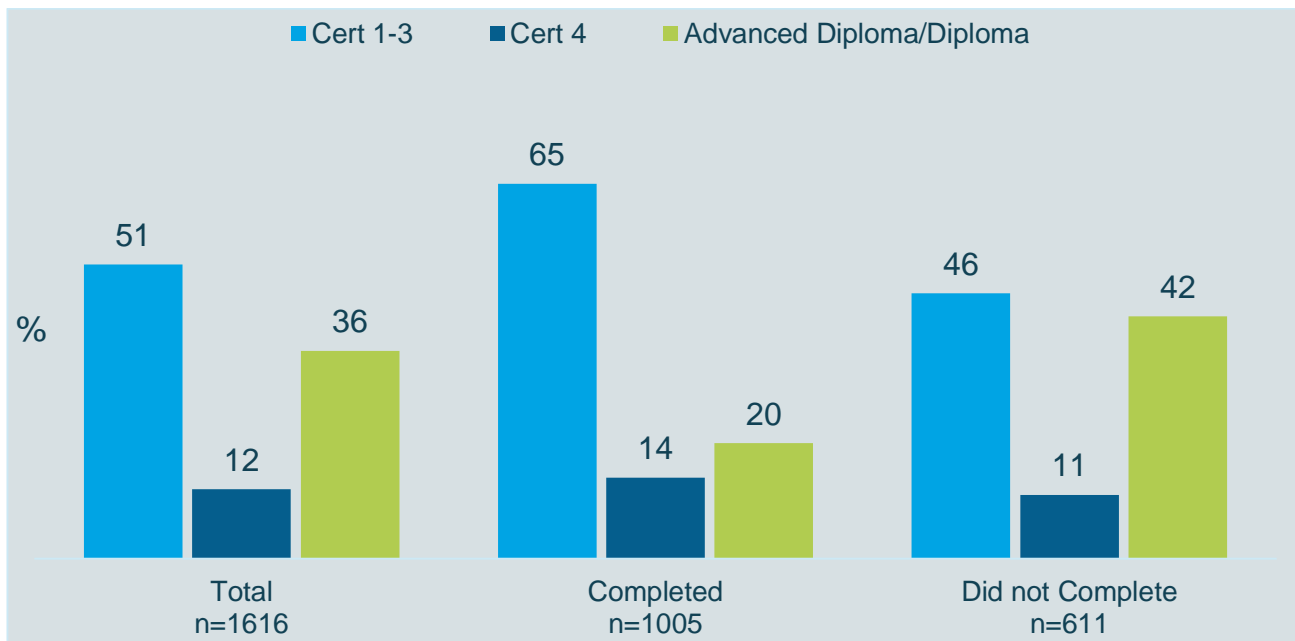
Q2. What level was the course?
Base: All respondents

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Figure 11: Length of course
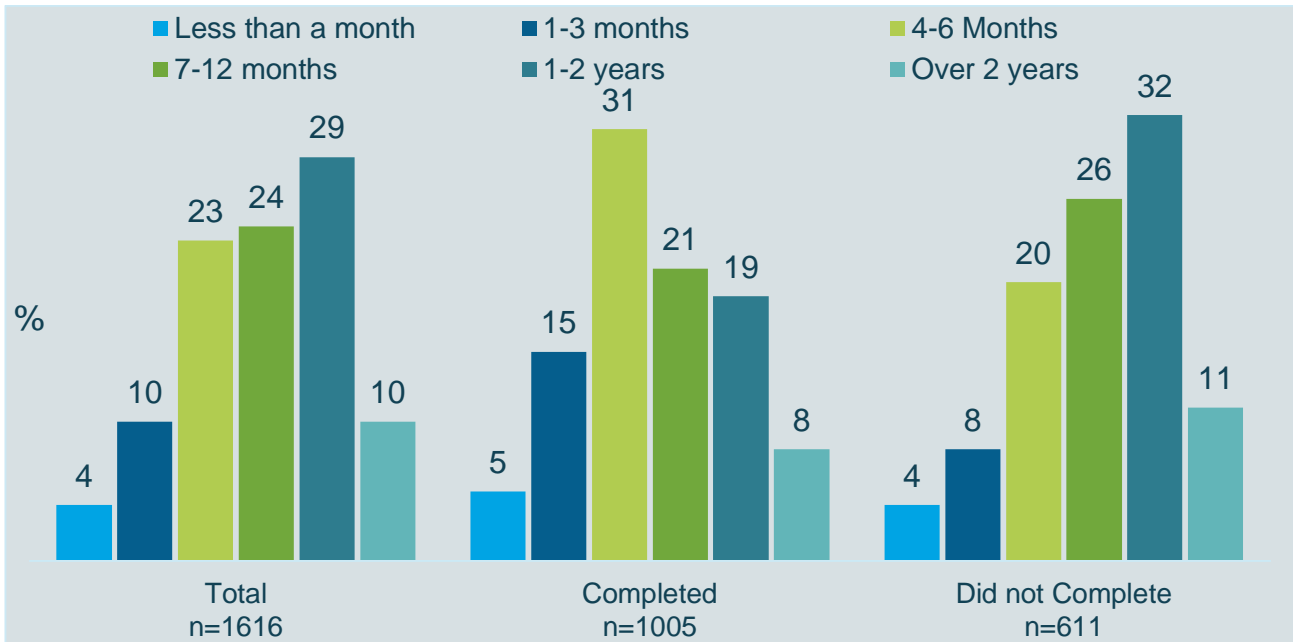
Q5. How long was the course? In total, not how much you completed.

[Considering] What is your ideal course length?

Base: All respondents

Figure 12: Method of course delivery
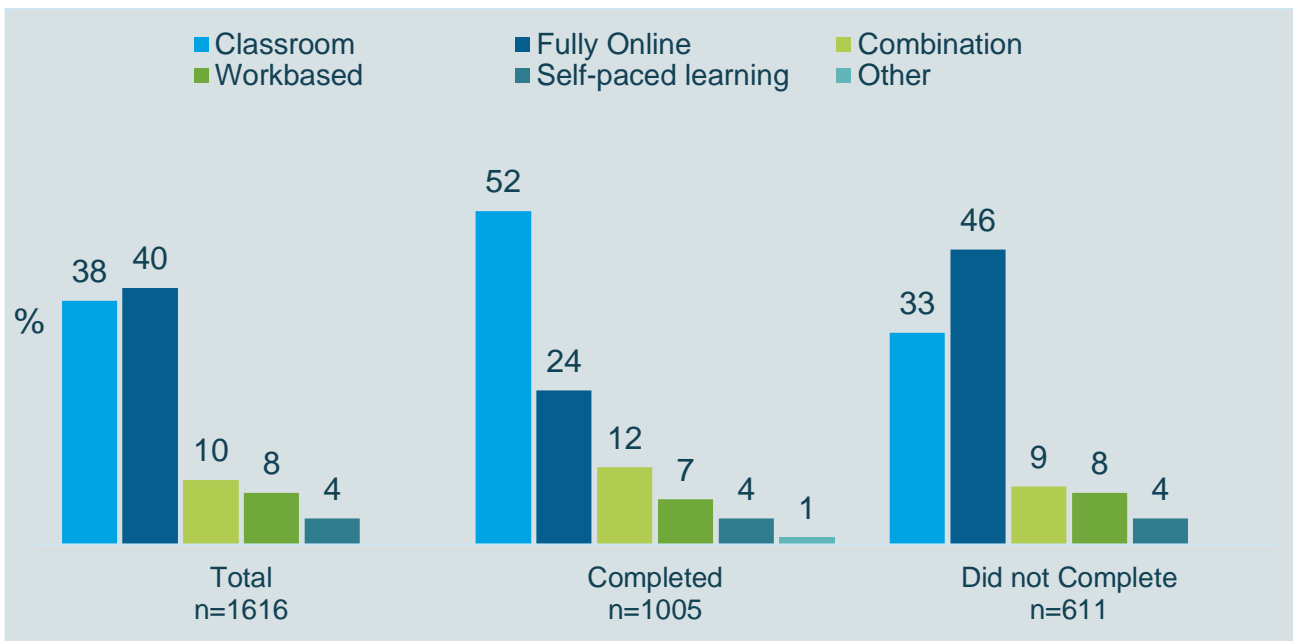
Q4a. How was the course delivered?

[Considering] How would you best like to do the course?

Base: All respondents

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Figure 13: Incidence of any of the course being delivered online
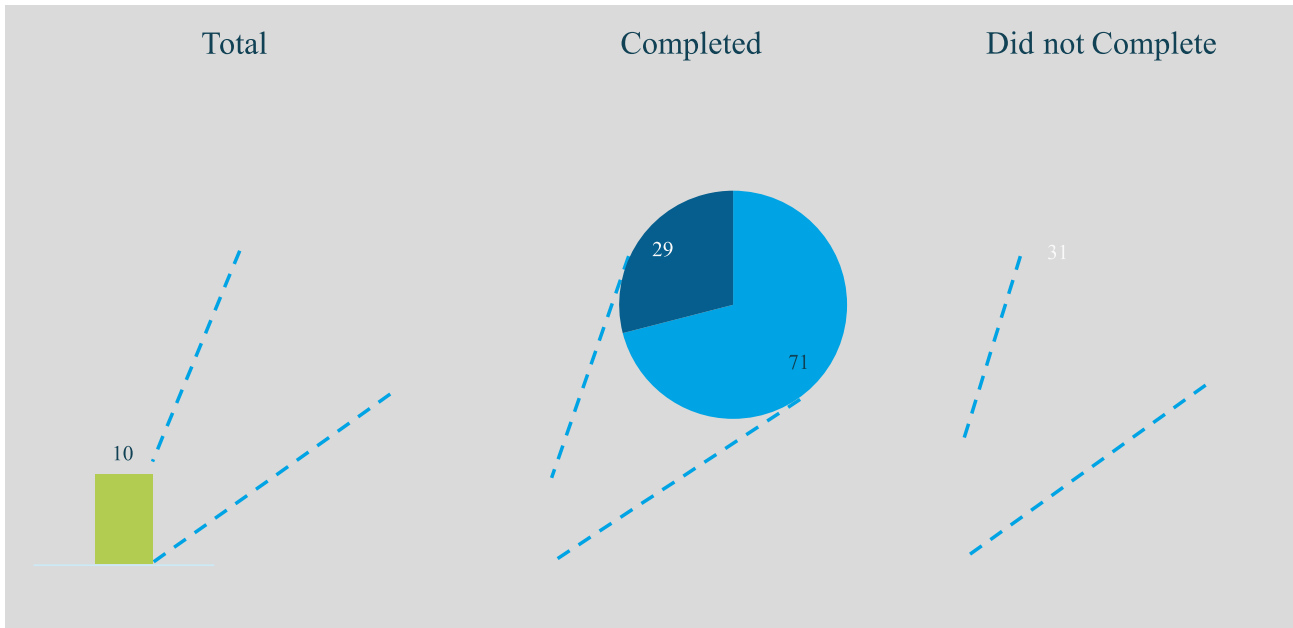
Q4b. Was any part of the course or assessment done online?
Base: Respondents whose course used a combination of different delivery methods

Table 18: Satisfaction with the course

Total Satisfied	Total (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Course Flexibility	65	80	59
Course Length	64	80	58
Content relevant & up to date	64	82	57
Teaching Quality	63	81	56
Course Organisation & Admin	61	77	54
Guidance & support from provider	59	82	50
Responsiveness to queries	57	80	48
Learning Materials & Resources	40	34	42
Training & Facilities	33	32	34

Q13. When doing the course how satisfied were you with the following?
Base: All respondents

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Figure 14: Perception of course content as difficult
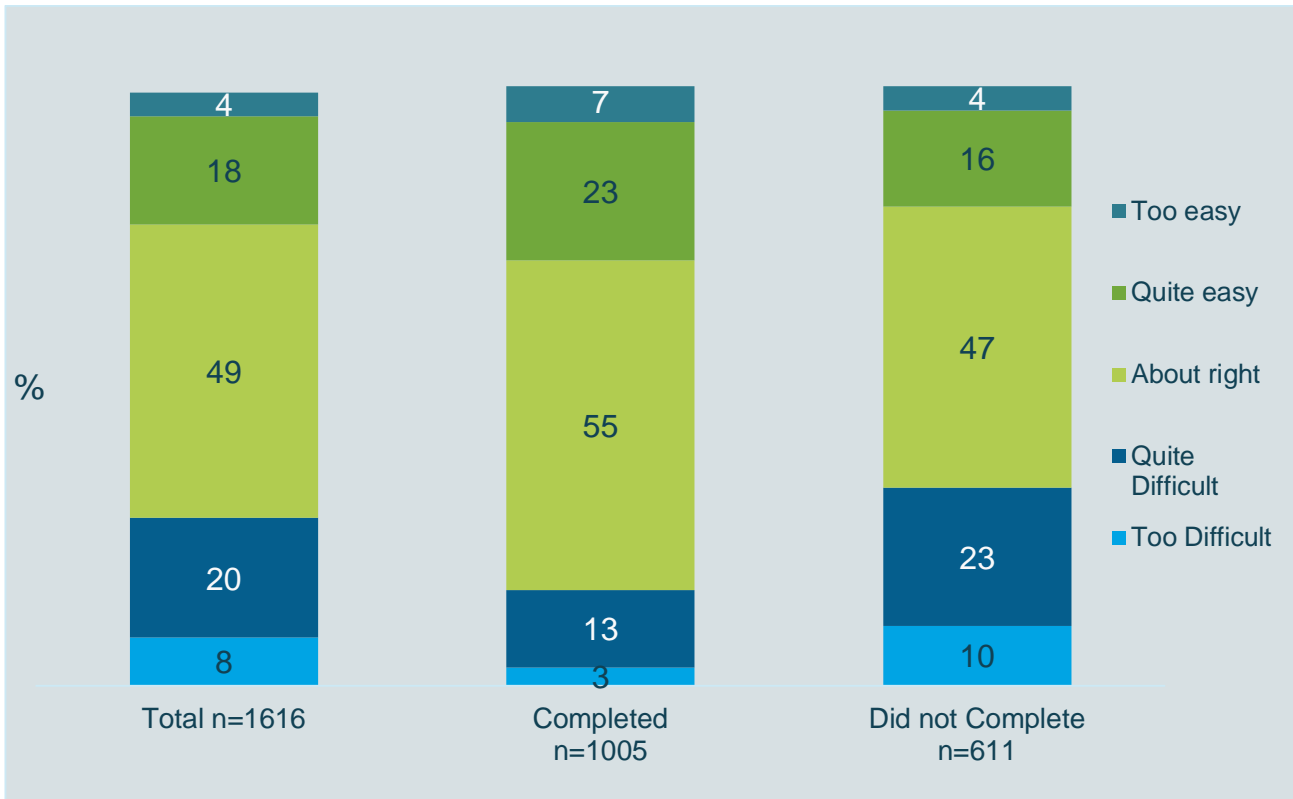
Q15. Did you find the course content difficult or easy?
Base: All respondents

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Table 19 : Use of additional support to complete training

Used support	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Study Skills Guidance & Support	22	31
Mentoring Programs	15	17
Extra Tutoring	14	16

Very helpful	Completed		Did not Complete	
	%	Base	%	Base
Study Skills Guidance & Support	63	n=241	36	n=149
Mentoring Programs	62	n=156	59	n=115
Extra Tutoring	60	n=131	50	n=93

Q20a/Q22a. Did you use the following support to help you to complete your training?
Base: Base: All respondents

Table 20: Perceived helpfulness of other initiatives

Potential/perceived helpfulness "very helpful"	Total		Completed		Did not Complete	
	%	Base	%	Base	%	Base
Shorter length of course	51	n=1616	26	n=1005	19	n=611
Increased flexibility from course provider for deadlines for assessments, exam timetables etc.	32	n=1616	32	n=1005	32	n=611
Teachers managing disruptive students better	26	n=1616	29	n=1005	24	n=611
Mentoring programmes	23	n=1345	15	n=849	26	n=496
Extra tutoring	20	n=1392	13	n=874	23	n=518
Study skills guidance and support	18	n=1226	14	n=764	19	n=462
Career planning and support services	12	n=1345	11	n=836	13	n=509

Q20c. How helpful would the following have been in helping you to complete your course?
Base: Respondents who said "no it was not available" or "no, it was available but I didn't use it" in Q20a

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Table 21: Suggested other factors that would have assisted completion

	Did not Complete (n=611)
Nothing	32
More in class time	10
Better personal circumstances	7
The course being managed more professionally/being better organised	5
Better teachers	4
More flexibility/being able to go at my own pace	3
Employment data/job prospects on completion	3
Honesty from the provider/if I had known their reputation/I would have enrolled in TAFE	2
The course was too difficult for the time allocated/the level	2
Placement services being available/careers assistance/work experience	2
An online course/more of an online component	2
Cheaper courses/fee support	2
Friends/colleagues/family advice/support	2
More accessible support/better response from trainers	1
Tutorial support/teachers guidance	1
Detailed info/content, requirement, delivery method etc.	1
More money from Austudy /or paid work placement to help make ends meet	1
Other	15
Don't know	11

Q21. Is there anything else that would have helped you to complete your course?
Base: Did not complete

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Figure 15: Incidence of having a past University degree
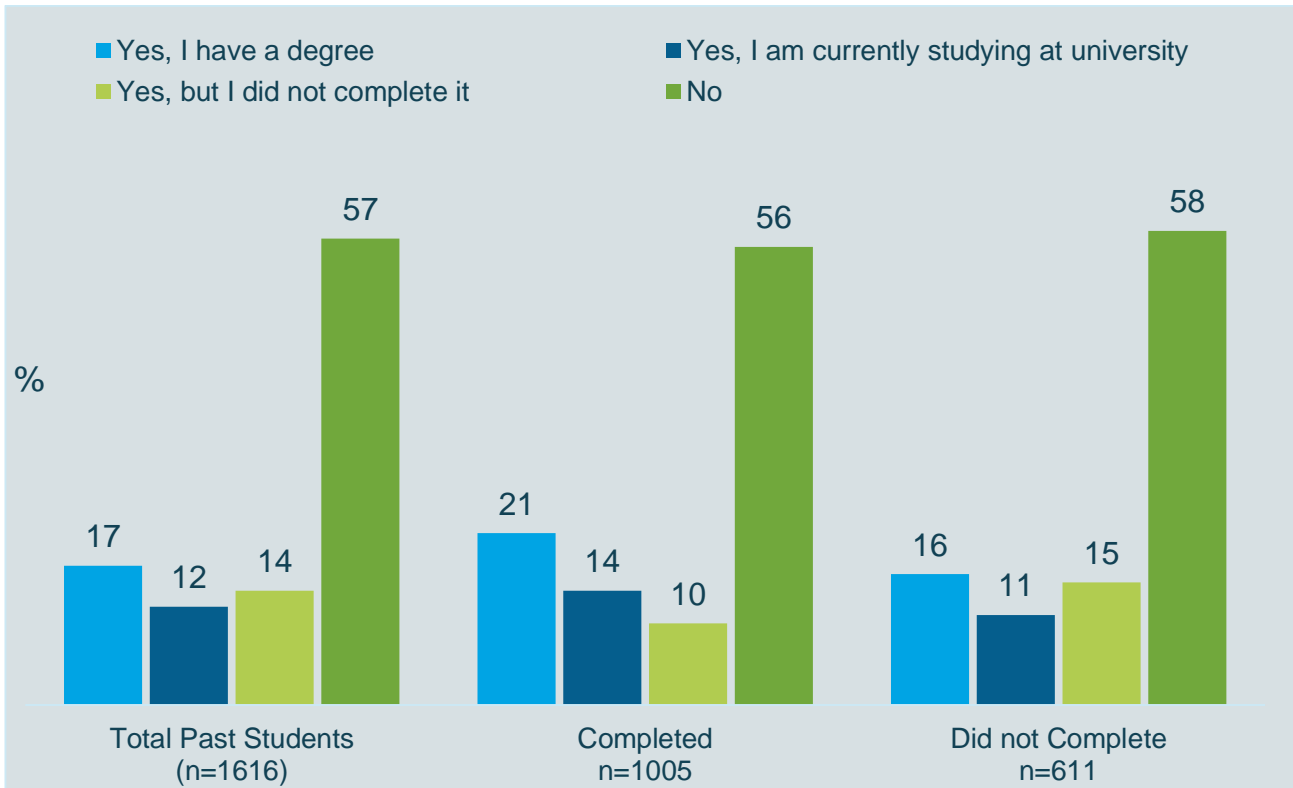
Q23. Have you started a university course previously?
Base: All respondents

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Table 22: VET courses while at school

VET course while at school	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)	Currently Studying (n=250)	Considering (n=206)
Yes, I did a VET course/s while at school and got a Certificate	17	18	16	26	8
Yes, I did a VET course/s while at school and got a Statement of Attainment	5	7	4	19	5
I started a VET course while at school but dropped the subject(s)	5	5	5	7	3
I started a VET course while at school but left school early	4	2	4	3	6
No, I did not want to do a VET course while at school	24	26	22	15	18
No, VET courses were not offered at my school	46	41	48	30	60

Q25. Did you do a VET course while at school? (e.g. Construction, Hospitality, Business Services, Automotive, Hairdressing etc.)
Base: All respondents

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Figure 16: VET courses started and finished after leaving school
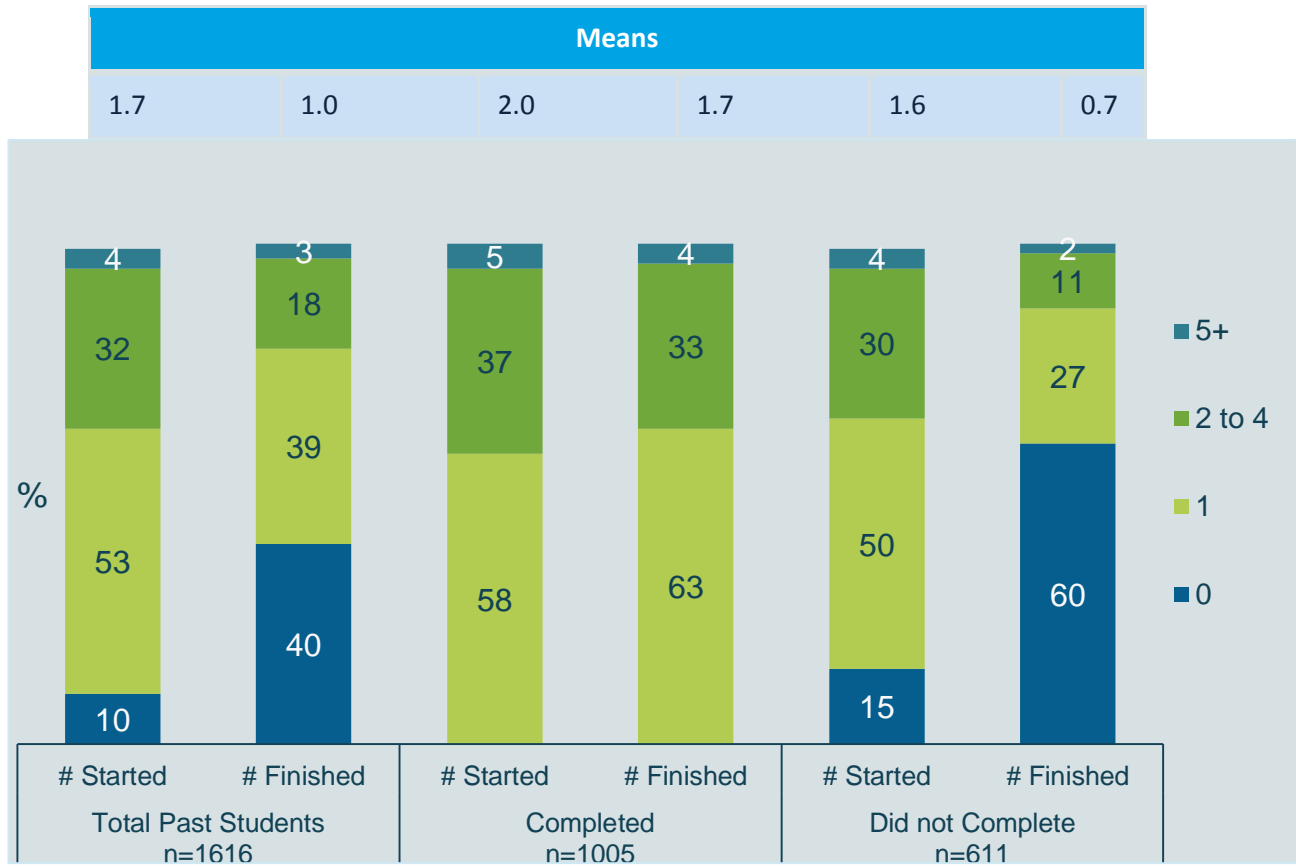
		Means			
1.7	1.0	2.0	1.7	1.6	0.7

Q26. How many different VET courses have you started since leaving school?

Q27. How many of those courses have you completed?

Base: All respondents

Table 23: Age and gender

Gender	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Male	38	40	38
Female	62	60	62
Age			
Under 22	30	26	33
22-25	17	22	15
26-35	19	20	18
Over 35	33	32	34

F1. Please record your gender
S6. How old are you?
Base: All respondents

Table 24: Languages other than English

Language other than English spoken at home	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
No	88	82	90
Hindi	1	0	1
Korean	1	0	1
Mandarin / Chinese	*	*	*
Filipino	*	1	0
Other	10	17	9

F4. Do you speak a language other than English at home?
Base: All respondents
Less than 1%

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Table 25: ATSI and Disabled

ATSI	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Yes	7	6	8
No	92	94	91
Refused	1	1	1
Disabled			
Yes	14	11	15
No	83	86	81
Refused	4	3	4

F5. Do you have a disability?
F3. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?
Base: All respondents

Table 26: Employment situation

Employment situation before starting course	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Working full time	30	34	29
Unemployed	23	17	25
Working part time	22	25	20
Student	13	13	13
Engaged in home duties	7	6	7
Retired	1	1	*
None of the above	5	3	6

F7. Which of the following best describes your situation before you started the course?
Base: All respondents

Table 27: Access to benefits

Access to Benefits	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Newstart Allowance	16	13	17
Youth Allowance	14	9	16
Disability Support	6	5	7
ABSTUDY	4	3	4
Austudy	4	3	4
Other	7	5	8
No benefits	52	65	47

F10. Are you on any of the following benefits?

Base: All respondents

Table 28: Income

Personal income	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Under $20,000	35	29	38
$20,0000-$39,999	20	20	20
$40,000-$59,999	14	17	13
$60,000-$99,999	9	13	7
> $100,000	4	5	4
Refused	17	15	18

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Household income	Total Past Students (n=1616)	Completed (n=1005)	Did not Complete (n=611)
Under $20,000	15	11	16
$20,0000-$39,999	12	11	12
$40,000-$59,999	16	16	16
$60,000-$99,999	16	18	15
> $100,000	17	20	16
Refused	25	24	25

F11. Which of the following categories best describes your personal income before tax?

F12. Which of the following categories best describes your household income before tax?

Base: All respondents

Figure 17: Incidence of training being part of an apprenticeship
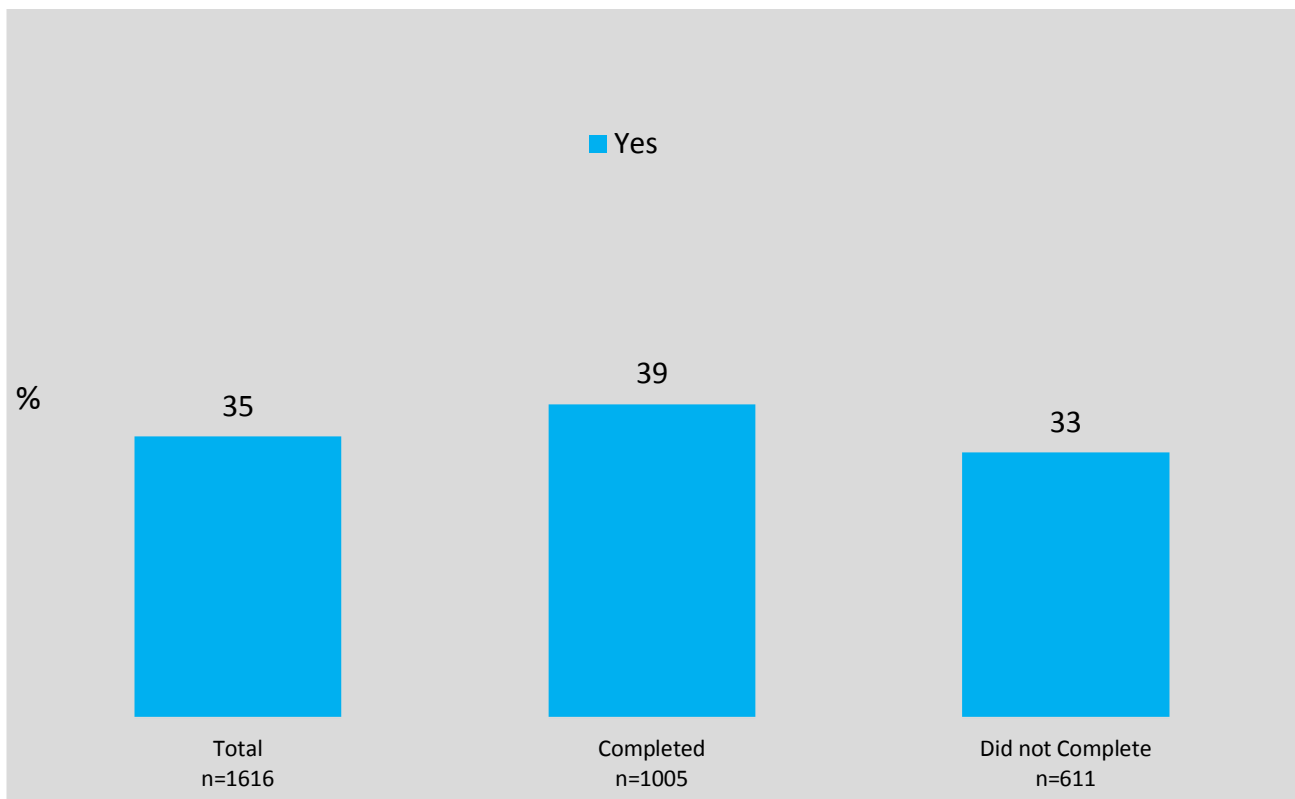
Q5b. Was your training part of an apprenticeship or traineeship?

Base: All respondents

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Figure 18: Satisfaction with the on-the-job training
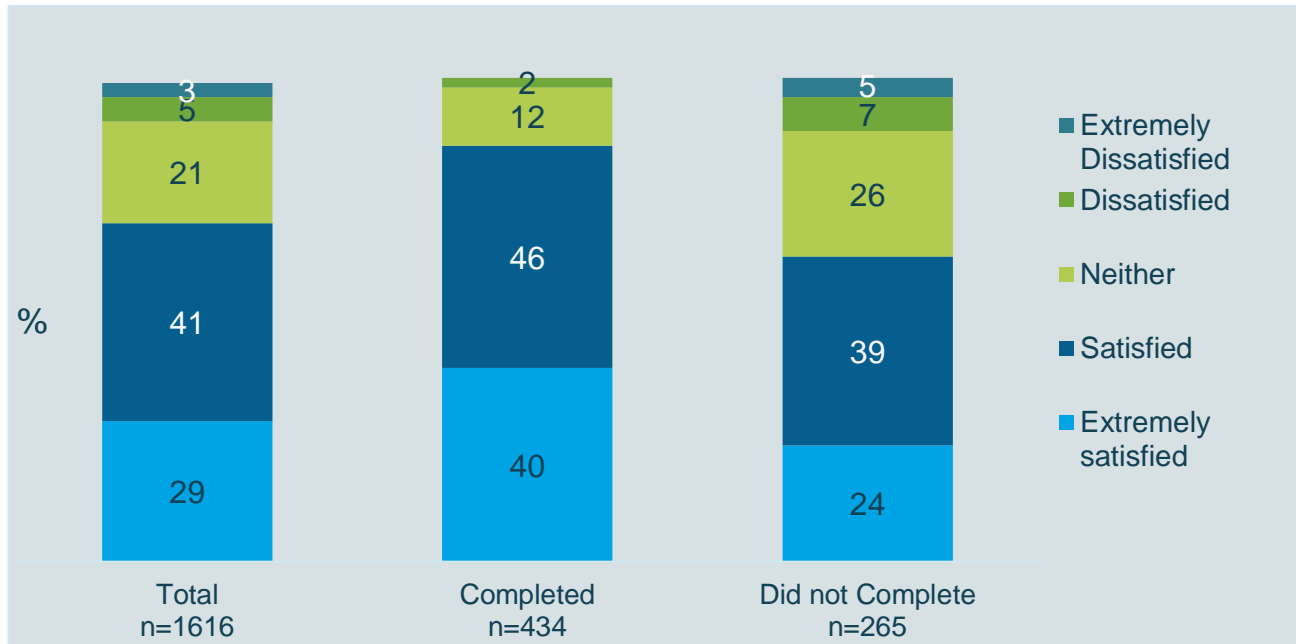
Q14a. How satisfied were you with the on-the-job training provided by your work supervisor?
Base: Respondents whose training was part of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Figure 19: Number of employees during on-the-job training
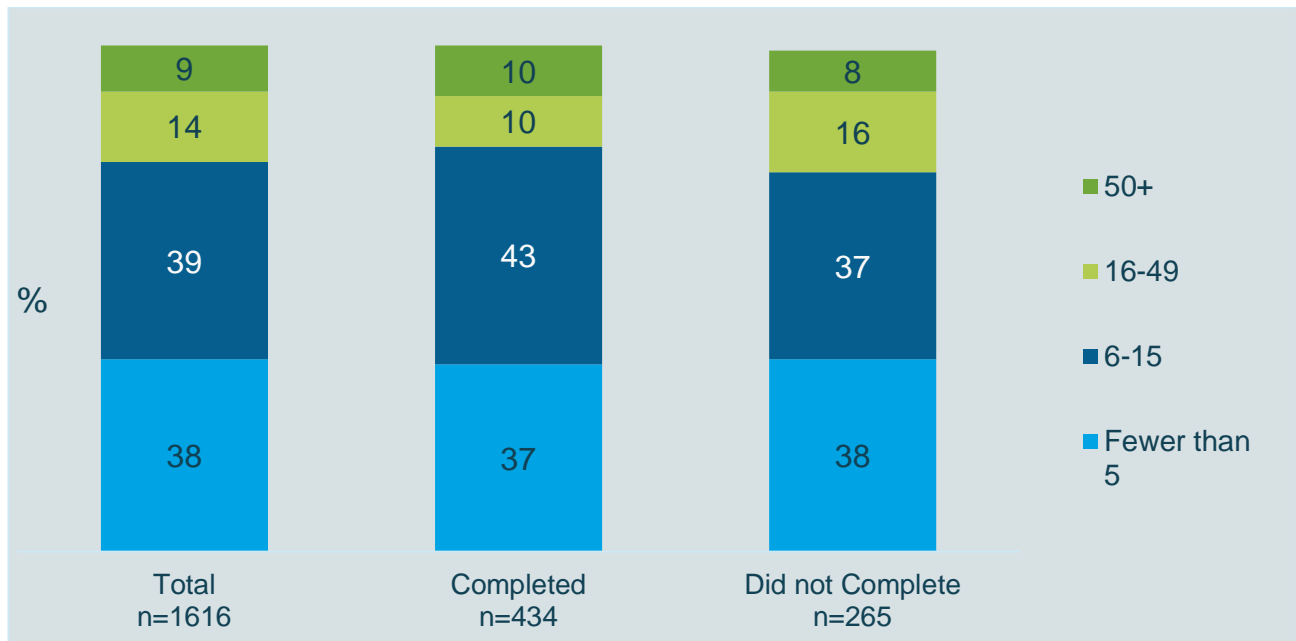
Q14b. How many employees did your workplace/organisation have during the on-the-job training?
Base: Respondents whose training was part of an apprenticeship or traineeship

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Figure 20: Person sought if there were problems at work
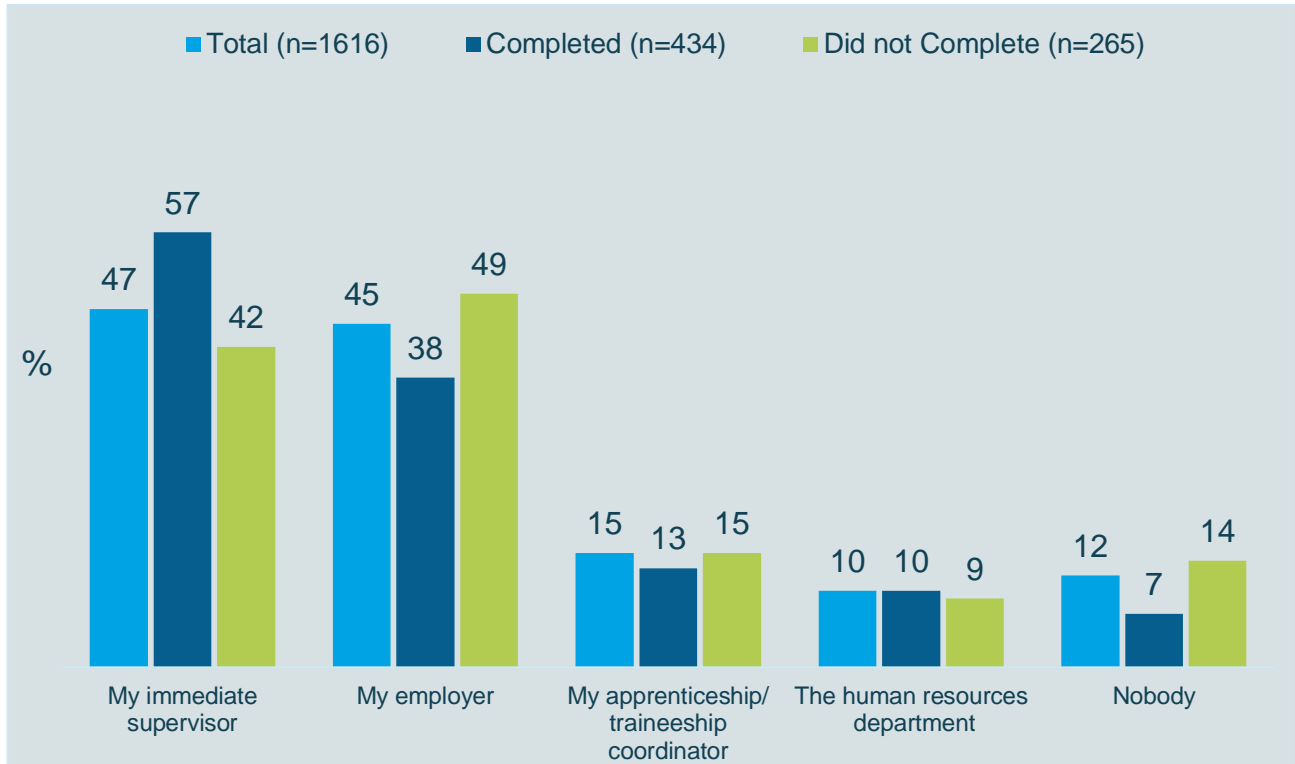
Q14c. If you had any problems at work, who did you speak to? If you didn't have any problems, who would you have spoken to if you had?

Base: Respondents whose training was part of an apprenticeship or traineeship

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Figure 21: Size of Segments

%

8	14	7	11	28	18	8	2	20
Reluctant Learners (n=79)	Dreamers (n=147)	Directionless (n=53)	Directed Employees (n=241)	Re-inventors (n=398)	Career Aspirants (n=373)	Mind Stimulators (n=147)	Benefit Receivers (n=51)	Re-starters (n=323)
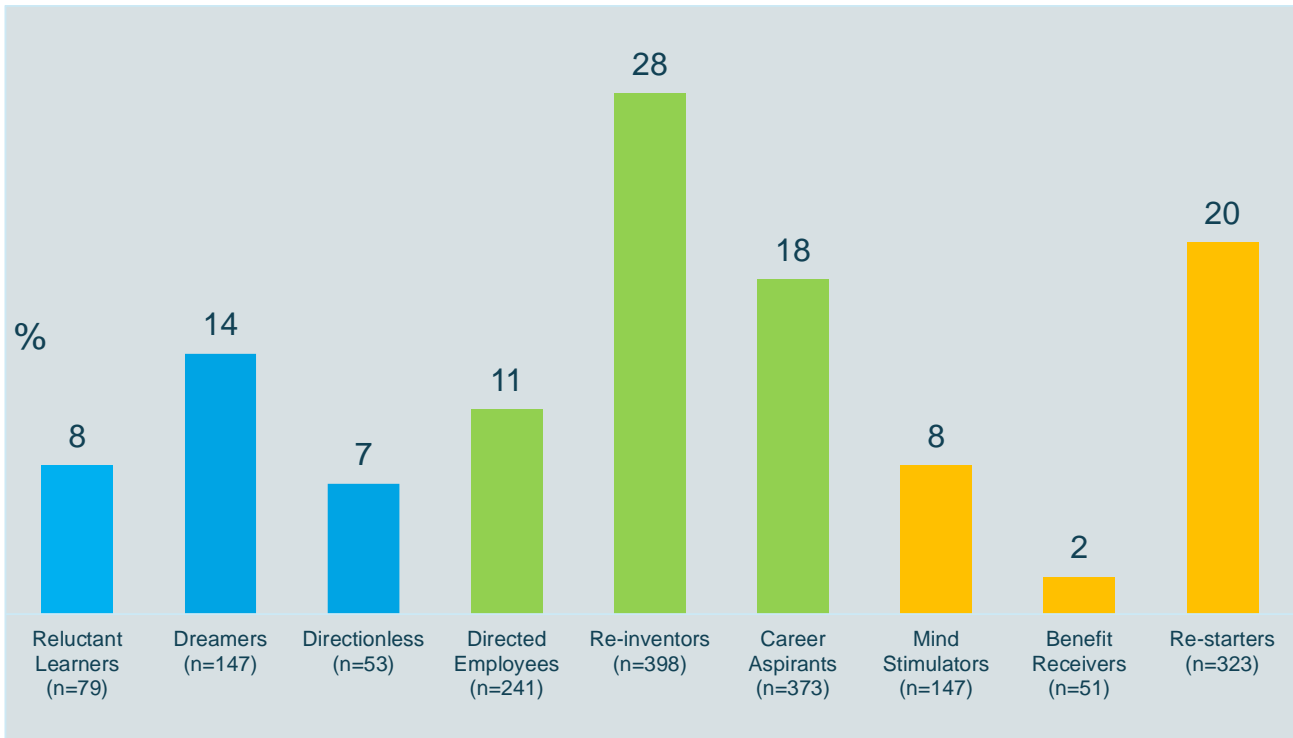
Figure 22: Proportion of students completing the course

Yes, completed the course

%

20	28	20	37	30	31	32	28	24
Reluctant Learners (n=79)	Dreamers (n=147)	Directionless (n=53)	Directed Employees (n=241)	Re-inventors (n=398)	Career Aspirants (n=373)	Mind Stimulators (n=147)	Benefit Receivers (n=51)	Re-starters (n=323)

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

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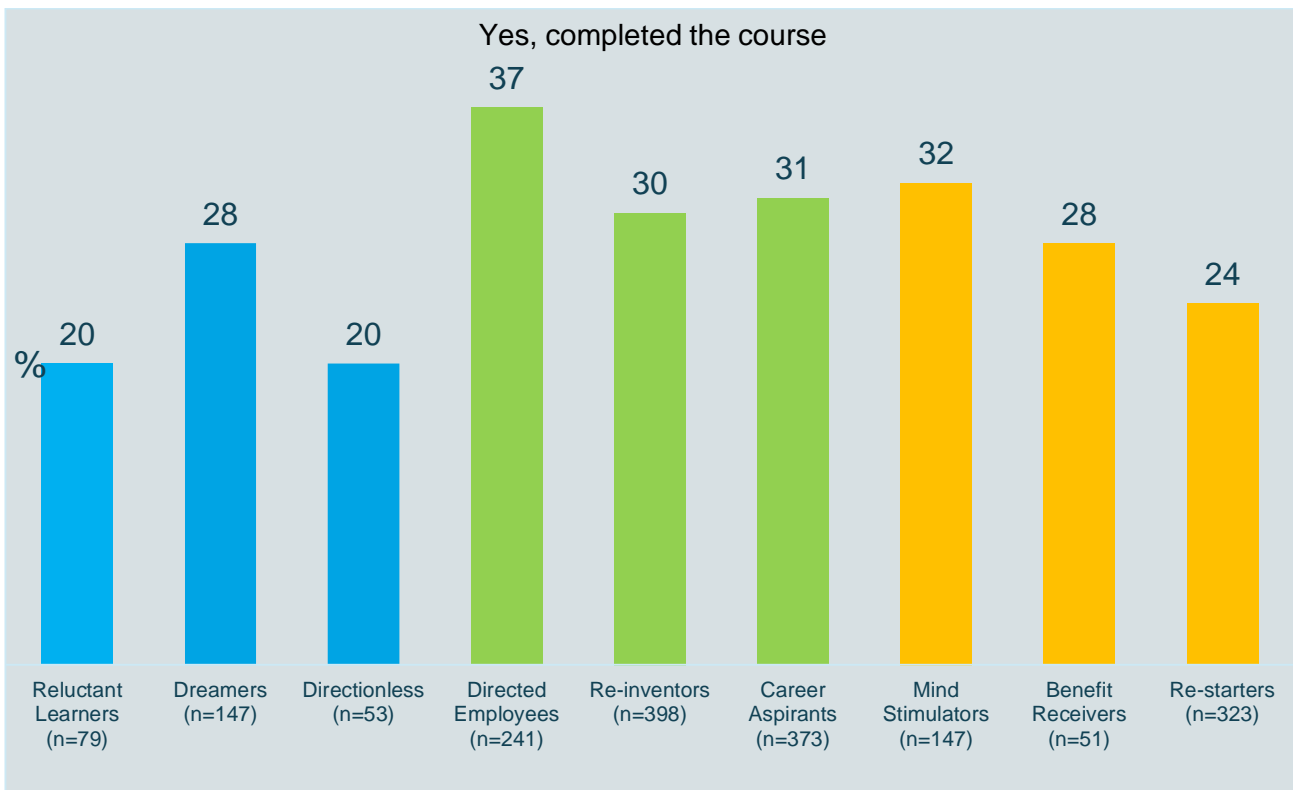
Figure 23: Proportion attending TAFE NSW
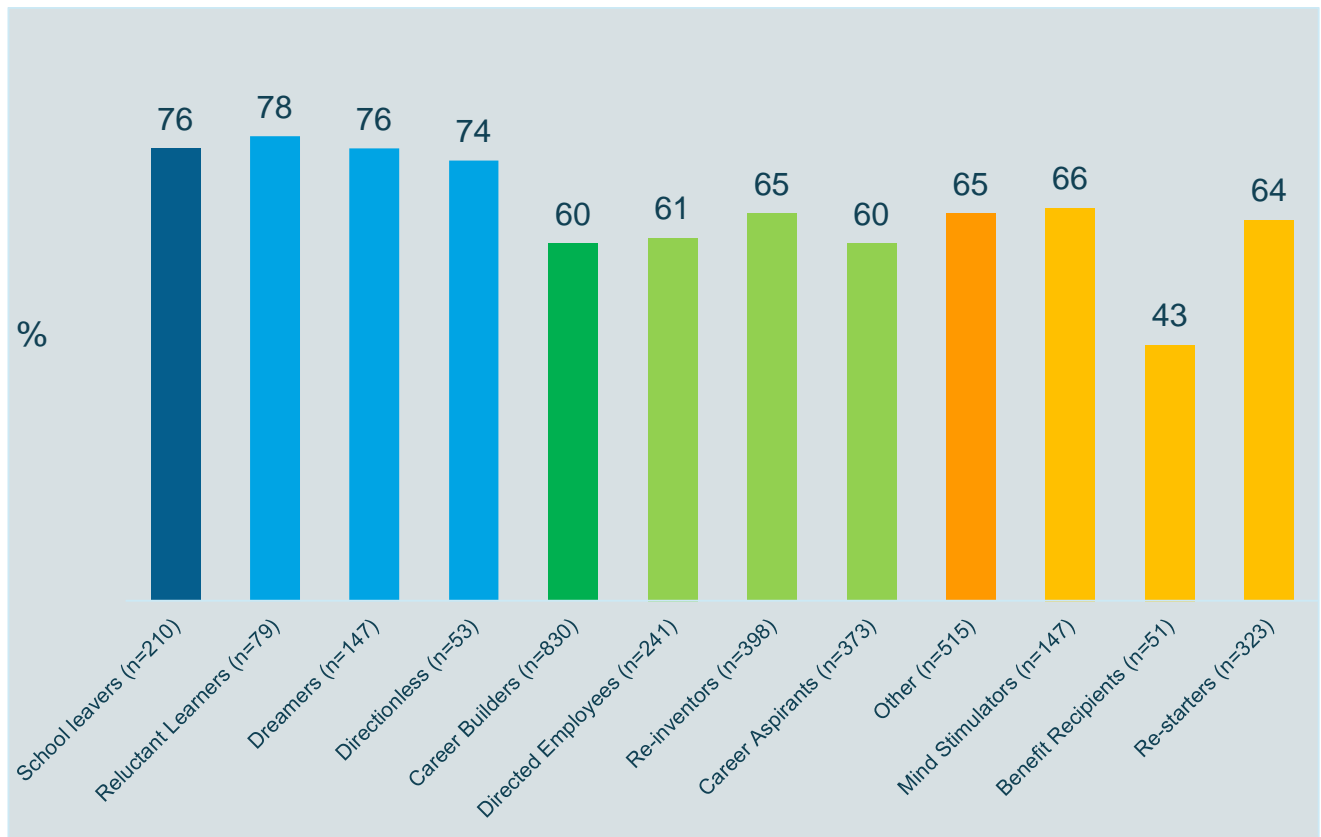
Q3. Where did you complete your training?
Base: All respondents

Table 29: School Leaver Segments

Profile	Reluctant Learners % (n=79)	Dreamers % (N=147)	Directionless % (n=53)
Male	49	47	38
Female	51	53	**62**
Living with parents	66	68	66
On benefits	38	38	31
Incidence of disability	4	2	5
Incidence of completing VET in school	**31**	32	43
Started VET in school but left school early	22	**14**	23
No. of courses **started** since school	1.2	1.4	1.2

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

No. of courses **completed** since school	0.7	0.9	0.7
Proportion completing most recent course	20	28	20
The Course	**Reluctant learners % (n=79)**	**Dreamers % (N=147)**	**Directionless % (n=53)**
Fully online	**26**	**25**	48
Class room	42	**51**	27
Work based	**14**	10	**16**
Part of an apprenticeship	**54**	**46**	**49**
Attended TAFE	**80**	**82**	79
Course type:			
Cert I-III	66	74	75
Cert IV	18	10	20
Diploma/Advanced Dip	16	16	5
Course Length:			
Less than a month	3	2	**13**
More than one month, less than 12 months	47	51	41
More than one year	50	47	45
Influencers	**Reluctant learners % (n=79)**	**Dreamers % (N=147)**	**Directionless % (n=53)**
Influenced by careers advisor at school	**40**	**32**	**51**
Influenced by careers advisor at TAFE	**31**	**29**	**31**
Influenced by family	**52**	**47**	**44**
Influenced by advertising	**29**	**23**	**36**
Degree of motivation to complete the course ('very')	**43**	66	**35**
Ease of finding information about courses ('very easy')	34	33	24
Ease of finding information about providers ('very easy')	23	29	18
Main Reasons for starting:			

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

	Reluctant learners % (n=79)	Dreamers % (N=147)	Directionless % (n=53)
- It was a requirement of my job	31	29	**43**
- To help me get the job I wanted	31	**25**	18
Barriers to completion	**Reluctant learners % (n=79)**	**Dreamers % (N=147)**	**Directionless % (n=53)**
Reason for non-completion:			
- Family reasons	15	12	16
- I achieved my training goals	15	10	15
- I lost my job	13	10	0
- The training was not what I expected	13	15	21
- I changed jobs	26	20	17
Aspects that would have helped completion: (very helpful)			
- Clear information on course costs for comparison	20	15	31
- A summary of course content etc. before enrolment	32	21	24
- Increased flexibility from course provider for assessment deadlines	**54**	39	**56**
- Mentoring programmes	45	**33**	55
- Extra tutoring	25	20	**38**
- Study skills guidance and support	**34**	29	**40**

Table 30: Career Builder Segments

Profile	Directed Employees % (n=241)	Re-inventors % (N=398)	Career Aspirants % (n=373)
Male	49	45	48
Female	51	55	52
Working full time	**66**	**50**	**57**
Working part time	**31**	**37**	**35**
Incidence of children at home under 18	**35**	**36**	**34**
Incidence of having a degree	**41**	**28**	**27**
Incidence of completing VET in school	**48**	23	23

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

	Directed Employees	Re-inventors	Career Aspirants
Started VET in school but left school early/dropped out	6	15	11
No. of courses **started** since school	1.6	1.9	**2.2**
No. of courses **completed** since school	**1.2**	1.1	**1.3**
Proportion completing most recent course	**37**	30	31

The Course	**Directed Employees %** **(n=241)**	**Re-inventors %** **(N=398)**	**Career Aspirants %** **(n=373)**
Fully online	42	41	**29**
Class room	**27**	33	34
Work based	12	6	7
Part of an apprenticeship	**78**	37	35
Attended TAFE	65	72	68
Course type:			
Cert I-IV	**78**	51	50
Diploma/Advanced Dip	20	**48**	**49**
How course was paid for:			
- By me	**10**	**23**	26
- By employer	**62**	16	**25**
- VET FEE HELP	**17**	**38**	33

Influencers	**Directed Employees %** **(n=241)**	**Re-inventors %** **(N=398)**	**Career Aspirants %** **(n=373)**
Influenced by careers advisor at TAFE RTO (strong)	**30**	**24**	**23**
Influenced by Sales person from RTO (strong)	**27**	18	**10**
Influenced by peers/colleagues (strong)	**40**	18	18
Influenced by employer (strong)	**54**	21	**33**

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

Degree of motivation to complete the course ('very')	59	**69**	60
Ease of finding information Course ('very easy')	**43**	30	**32**
Ease of finding information Provider ('very easy')	**41**	33	**36**

Reasons for starting	Directed Employees % (n=241)	Re-inventors % (N=398)	Career Aspirants % (n=373)
Reasons for starting (main):			
- It was a requirement of my job	**75**	**8**	14
- It was part of an apprenticeship	**41**	**6**	9
- To help me get the job I wanted	**21**	**60**	37
- To change my career job	**10**	**47**	35
- To help me advance my career	13	21	**53**
- To get the chance to do more interesting work	**8**	24	**48**

Barriers to completion	Directed Employees % (n=241)	Re-inventors % (N=398)	Career Aspirants % (n=373)
Reason for non-completion:			
- I changed jobs	**32**	12	16
- I lost my job	**21**	12	5
- I achieved my training goals	**13**	4	3
- I started other training	**13**	3	3
- I lost motivation/interest	2	16	**22**
Aspects that would have helped completion:			
Careers advice and guidance by providers(very helpful)	**33**	24	17
Industry demand for the course and future outcomes (very helpful)	19	**27**	22

EXPERIENCE | INNOVATION | INSPIRATION

	Mind Stimulators % (n=147)	Benefit Recipients % (n=51)	Re-starters % (n=323)
Increased flexibility from course provider	**39**	**38**	35
Shorter length	**41**	24	25

Table 31: Other Segments

Profile	Mind Stimulators % (n=147)	Benefit Recipients % (n=51)	Re-starters % (n=323)
Male	29	30	22
Female	71	70	78
Living with parents	19	**44**	19
On benefits	71	74	68
ATSI	3	10	5
LOTE at home / CALD	13	7	11
Incidence of disability	**28**	12	**13**
Incidence of completing VET in school	17	6	9
Did not want to do a VET course while at school	22	**47**	24
No. of courses **started** since school	1.9	1.7	1.5
No. of courses **completed** since school	0.8	0.8	0.6
Proportion completing most recent course	32	28	24

The Course	Mind Stimulators % (n=147)	Benefit Recipients % (n=51)	Re-starters % (n=323)
Fully online	**30**	**29**	**56**
Class room	**53**	**68**	35
Part of an apprenticeship	16	**35**	16
Attended TAFE	72	**43**	71
Influenced by peers/colleagues (strong)	5	**19**	7
Influenced by family (strong)	**14**	**5**	36

	Mind Stimulators	Benefit Recipients	Re-starters
Influenced by sales person (strong)	3	17	10
Influenced by advertising (strong)	7	5	12
Degree of motivation to complete the course ('very')	77	**32**	74
Ease of finding information ('very easy')	20	**1**	20
Reasons for starting:			
- To help me get the job I wanted	**19**	24	**56**
- It was a requirement of my job	28	**37**	**1**
- For personal development/interest	**20**	8	3

Barriers to completion	Mind Stimulators % (n=147)	Benefit Recipients % (n=51)	Re-starters % (n=323)
Found the course content 'too difficult'	**4**	4	10
Reason for non-completion:			
- family/personal reasons	45	44	24
- training was not what I expected	12	8	40
- Lost motivation/interest	17	0	13
Aspects that would have helped completion: (very helpful)			
- Increased flexibility from course provider for deadlines for assessments, exam timetables etc…	**49**	27	27
- Better management of disruptive students	**19**	**12**	**37**
- Mentoring programmes	**11**	20	**42**

Barriers to completion	Mind Stimulators % (n=147)	Benefit Recipients % (n=51)	Re-starters % (n=323)
Other aspects that would have helped completion:			
- The course being better managed more professionally	4	10	2

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- Some/more in class time	**0**	**0**	**33**
- Tutorial support/teachers guidance	0	**42**	2
- Nothing	**48**	29	**22**

12.2 Questionnaire – completed students

About this survey

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey. The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete.

Your personal information and data collected will not be disclosed to other third parties. Data collected through this survey will be used for this research only.

How to complete this survey

Please use the 'Back' and 'Forward buttons at the bottom of each page to go through the survey, not the back button of your browser.

You can pause the survey at any time and finish it later by closing your browser. To start the survey from where you left off, please click on the link in the email sent to you.

Please click here to start the survey. Thank you for your time.

Screening

VET is defined as vocational education and training through TAFE and other government providers, community education providers, private providers and others (excluding universities). Qualifications include Certificates I, II, III, IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma as well as apprenticeships and traineeships.

S1. Which of the following statements are true about you:
Please select all that apply

I am **currently completing** a VET course or an apprenticeship or traineeship	1
I have **completed** a VET course or an apprenticeship or traineeship in the last two years	2
I have enrolled in a VET course or an apprenticeship or traineeship in the last two years but **did not complete all the training required to obtain the qualification**	3
I am **considering doing** a VET course or an apprenticeship or traineeship in the next 12 months	4
None of the above	5

PARTICIPANTS ONLY COMPLETE ONE SECTION - Order of completion

*-If **currently completing** (alone or with any other combination of codes) is selected they complete the currently completing section*

*-If **completed** and **did not complete** (but not code 1) are both selected we determine the more recent one and they complete this section.*

*-If ONLY **considering doing** is selected they go to considering section*

S2. Which of the following is more recent:
ASK IF NOT S1 CODE 1 AND IF S1 CODE 2 **AND** S1 CODE 3 ARE SELECTED

I have **completed** a VET course or an apprenticeship or traineeship in the last two years   1
I have enrolled in a VET course or an apprenticeship or traineeship in the last two years but **did not complete all the training required to obtain the qualification**   2

*If **completed** is selected (Code 1 at S2) – go to completed section*
*If **did not complete** is selected (Code 2 at S2) – go to did not complete section*

S6. How old are you?
Under 18 and still at school   1 – TERMINATE
Under 18 and not at school   2
18-21 years   3
22-25 years   4
26-35 years   5
35+ years   6

SECTION B: Completed

Course details

Q1. What was the most recent VET course you completed? If you completed more than one VET course in the last 2 years please answer the survey based on the main one (or more advanced course) you completed.

_____

Q2. What level was the course?
Certificate I   1
Certificate II   2
Certificate III   3
Certificate IV   4
Diploma   5
Advanced Diploma   6
Other (please specify) _____   7

Q3. Where did you complete your training?

TAFE NSW	1
Private Training Organisation	2
Community College	3
Other (please specify)	4

Q4a. How was your course delivered? *Please choose one of the options below that best describes how your course was delivered.*

Fully online or by distance/correspondence	1
With a trainer in a classroom	2
Self-paced learning (delivered at the training provider's premises with support from a trainer)	3
Work-based (on the job training with some support from a training provider)	4
A combination of different delivery methods (e.g. some online and some classroom)	5
Other (please specify)	6

Q4b. (If code 5 - a combination) Was any part of the course or assessment done online?

Yes	1
No	2

Q5. How long was the course?

Less than a month	1
1-3 months	2
4-6 months	3
7-12 months	4
1-2 years	5
Over 2 years	6

Q5b. Was your training part of an apprenticeship or traineeship?

Yes	1
No	2

Reason for starting training

Q6a. Why did you do this course? *Please choose all that apply.*

It was a requirement of my job	1
It was part of an apprenticeship or traineeship	2
To help me get the job I want	3
To change my job/career	4
To help get back into the workforce	5
To set up my own business or expand my business	6
To help me advance my career/get a promotion	7
To increase my pay	8
To get the chance to do more interesting or different work	9
To do my job better	10
To get into another course of study	11
To get skills for community work/volunteering	12
For personal development/interest	13
It was a requirement of my Government welfare benefits	14
Other (please specify)	15

Q6b. Display only those options from Q6a. that the student selects.
Of the reasons that you selected, which was your **main** reason for doing the course?

Q6c. Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

RANDOMISE	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not relevant	Don't Know
I've always had a strong desire to do the kind of work this course led/will lead to.							
I have no clear idea about what job I want.							
I only did the course because I needed a qualification to get a job.							

Q7. How much influence were each of the following on your decision to study the particular course? RANDOMISE

	Strong influence	Moderate influence	No influence
A careers advisor at school	1	2	3
A careers advisor at TAFE NSW or another training organisation	1	2	3
A specialised vocational education and training broker	1	2	3
A sales person from TAFE NSW or another training organisation	1	2	3
Family	1	2	3
Friends	1	2	3
Peers/colleagues	1	2	3
Employer			
Advertising	1	2	3
Careers expo/event	1	2	3

Q8. How motivated were you to complete the course before you started?

Very motivated	1
Somewhat motivated	2
Not that motivated	3
Not motivated at all	4

Information gathering and decision making

Q9. When deciding which course to do, how easy was it for you to find the information you wanted about courses?

Very easy	1
Quite easy	2
Neither easy nor difficult	3
Quite difficult	4
Very difficult	5
I did not look for information about different courses	6

Q10. How easy was it for you to find the information you wanted about providers?

Very easy	1
Quite easy	2
Neither easy nor difficult	3
Quite difficult	4
Very difficult	5
I did not look for information about different providers	6

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Q11a. Before starting, did you use any of the following to help you choose a course that was right for you?

RANDOMISE	Yes	No	Don't know
Clear information on course costs for comparison			
A summary of course content, number of practical hours, work placements and expected workload before enrolment			
Descriptions of career pathways, i.e. what jobs and opportunities different courses will lead to			
Clear information about different courses for comparison			
Clear information about different providers for comparison			
Careers advice and guidance by training providers			
Information on industry demand for the course and expected future income			

Q11b. FOR ALL THOSE THEY SAY YES TO IN Q11a – How helpful was the information in helping you to **choose a course**? *Miss this question out if they say no or don't know to all at Q11a*

For each option - very helpful, quite helpful, not helpful.

Q11c. FOR ALL THOSE THEY SAY NO OR DON'T KNOW TO IN Q11a – How helpful would this information have been in helping you to **choose a course**? *Miss this question out if they say yes to all at Q11a*

For each option - very helpful, quite helpful, not helpful, don't know.

Q12. Is there anything else that would have helped you to choose the right course?
_____
_____
_____

Experience of the course

Q13. When doing the course how satisfied were you with the following:

RANDOMISE	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Extremely Dissatisfied	Not Relevant
Training location and facilities *(not shown if answer at Q4a is fully online/by correspondence)*						

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Learning materials and resources (e.g. text books, equipment such as power tools, assessment materials, online reading materials)						
Content being relevant and up to date						
Level of guidance and support from the provider						
Course organisation and administration						
Teaching quality						
Responsiveness to questions and queries						
Course flexibility						
Course length						

Q14a If your training was part of an apprenticeship or traineeship (Yes at S5), how satisfied were you with the on-the-job training provided by your work supervisor?
Extremely satisfied
Satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Extremely dissatisfied

Q14b. How many employees did your workplace/organisation have during the on-the-job training?
Fewer than 5
6-15
16-49
50+

Q14c. If you had any problems at work, who did you speak to? *If you didn't have any problems, who would you have spoken to if you had?* (Please choose all that apply)
My immediate supervisor   1
My employer   2
The human resources department   3
My apprenticeship/traineeship coordinator   4
Nobody   5
Other (please specify)   6

Q15. Did you find the course content difficult or easy?

Too difficult	1
Quite difficult	2
About the right level	3
Quite easy	4
Too easy	5

Finance

Q17. How was your course paid for?

By me or my parents (including a personal loan)	1
My employer paid	2
I took out a Commonwealth VET FEE-HELP loan	3
I did not need to pay a fee	4
Other (please specify)	5

Q18. Have you heard of Smart and Skilled?

Yes	1
No	2

Q19. Do you know the total cost of your course (including any government subsidy)?

Yes	1
No	2

Future suggestions

Q20a. Did you use the following support to help you to **complete your training**?

RANDOMISE	Yes	No, it was not available	No, it was available but I didn't use it
Mentoring programmes			
Extra tutoring			
Study skills guidance and support			

Q20b. FOR ALL THOSE THEY SAY YES TO IN Q20a – How helpful was this support? *Miss this question out if they do not say yes to any in Q20a*

For each option - very helpful, quite helpful, not helpful.

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Q20c. (ASK ALL) How helpful would the following have been in helping you to complete your course?

	Very helpful	Quite helpful	Not helpful	Don't know
Increased flexibility from course provider for deadlines for assessments, exam timetables etc.				
Teachers managing disruptive students better				
Shorter length of course				
Mentoring programmes (only show if no in Q20a)				
Extra tutoring (only show if no in Q20a)				
Study skills guidance and support (only show if no in Q20a)				

Q21. Is there anything else that would have helped you to complete your course?
_____
_____
_____

Q22a. Did you access career planning support services while completing your course?
Yes
No

Q22b. If yes, how helpful was it – very helpful, quite helpful, not helpful

Q22c. If no, how helpful would you have found support for career planning while completing your course?
Very helpful   3
Quite helpful   2
Not helpful at all   1
Don't know

Past education

Q23. Have you started a university course previously?
Yes, I have a degree   1
Yes, I am currently at university   2
Yes, but I did not complete my degree   3
No   4

Q24. Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you have **completed**?
Some secondary school   1

Intermediate or School Certificate   2
Leaving Certificate or High School Certificate   3
Certificate I-IV or Diploma   4
University undergraduate degree   5
University postgraduate degree   6
Other   (please specify)   7 _____

Q25. Did you do a VET course while at school? (e.g. Construction, Hospitality, Business Services, Automotive, Hairdressing etc)

Yes, I did a VET course/s while at school and got a Certificate   1
Yes, I did a VET course/s while at school and got a Statement of Attainment   2
I started a VET course while at school but dropped the subject(s)   3
I started a VET course while at school but left school early   4
No, I did not want to do a VET course while at school   5
No, VET courses were not offered at my school   6

Q26. How many different VET courses have you started **since leaving school**?
__

Q27. How many of those courses have you **completed**?

Classification

F1. Please record your gender:
Male   1
Female   2
Other   3
Prefer not to say   4

F2. What is your postcode? *(classify according to metro/regional/rural/remote)*

_____

F3. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?
No   1
Yes   2
Prefer not to say   3

F4. Do you speak a language other than English at home?
No   1
Yes, please specify   2 _____

F5. Do you have a disability?
No   1
Yes   2

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Prefer not to say   3

F6. Were you born in Australia?

Yes   1
No please specify country   2_____

F7. Which of these categories best describes your situation **before you started the course**?

Working full time   1
Working part time   2
Student   3
Unemployed   4
Engaged in home duties   5
Retired   6
None of the above (please specify)   7

F8. Do you live with your parents or guardian at home?

Yes   1
No   2

F9. Do you have children living at home under the age of 18 (your own children, not brothers and sisters)?

Yes   1
No   2

F10. Are you on any of the following benefits?

Newstart Allowance   1
Youth Allowance   2
ABSTUDY   3
Austudy   4
Disability Support   5
Other (please specify)   6
No benefits   7

F11. Which of the following categories best describes your **personal** income before tax?

Under $20,000 per year   1
$20,000-$39,999 per year   2
$40,000-$59,999 per year   3
$60,000-$99,999 per year   4
$100,000-$149,999 per year   5
Over $150,000 per year   6
Prefer not to say   7

F12.Which of the following categories best describes your **household** income before tax? *Only options same and higher than F9 should appear.*

Under $20,000 per year   1
$20,000-$39,999 per year   2
$40,000-$59,999 per year   3

$60,000-$99,999 per year	4
$100,000-$149,999 per year	5
$150,000-$199,999 per year	6
Over $200,000 per year	7
Prefer not to say	8

Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey.

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