

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
28 and 29 May 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: Low SES Students

REFERENCE: Question on Notice Hansard, Monday 28 May 2012, page 71)

QUESTION No.: BI-30

Senator Mason: That is my point. What is the proportion of low-SES students? Is that increasing?

Dr Taylor: Yes.

Senator MASON: Is the participation increasing, or is the graduation increasing?

Dr Taylor: I would have to take that on notice, but the evidence shows that the success rates are the same after the first year.

Senator MASON: I am with the minister on this. I think participation is something, but what really matters is graduation.

Mr Griew: With respect, the point that Dr Taylor made was that on experience there is a mid-point which is if you get low-SES students through the first year with the skills to succeed in the first year then that massively increases the graduation rate. There is some point in having an intermediate measure.

Senator MASON: It is better than nothing. I accept that. Dr Taylor, can you give that to the committee? For how many years do you have robust statistics on low-SES engagement?

Dr Taylor: We can go back as far as the statistics themselves, which is probably 2001.

Senator MASON: I was going to ask for five years, but if you can go back 10 years, that is better still. Is that all right?

Dr Taylor: Yes, we could.

Senator MASON: I would like to see whether the proportion starting, in particular, and graduating has increased.

ANSWER

The department collects data on a range of characteristics of students enrolled in higher education in Australia, including award course completion numbers.

The latest data available on low-SES participation is 2010. Table 1 provides a summary of low-SES students enrolled in higher education in Australia for the period 2001 to 2010:

- The participation rate of students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education (all course levels) was 15.39 per cent in 2010 (130,069 students), an increase from 15.09 per cent in 2009 (120,652 students). The participation rate has steadily increased since 2005 (14.62 per cent).
- For undergraduates with a low socioeconomic status background, the participation rate increased from 16.17 per cent in 2009 (95,080 students) to 16.47 per cent in 2010 (102,027 students).

Table 1: Domestic students from low socioeconomic status background, numbers and participation rates^{(a)(b)}, 2001- 2010

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Undergraduate	86,715	87,924	86,615	85,028	83,829	85,379	88,922	90,467	95,080	102,027
Undergraduate as % of total domestic undergraduate students	16.75%	16.63%	16.46%	16.28%	15.98%	15.97%	16.09%	16.10%	16.17%	16.47%
All students	104,336	106,805	106,374	104,362	103,156	105,908	110,695	113,442	120,652	130,069
All students as % of total domestic students	15.39%	15.19%	14.99%	14.77%	14.62%	14.70%	14.88%	14.96%	15.09%	15.39%

(a) Data excludes students whose permanent home address is overseas.

(b) Low SES postcode measure is based on the students' postcode of permanent home residence, with the SES value derived from the 2006 SEIFA Education and Occupation Index for postal areas, where postal areas in the bottom 25% of the population aged 15-64 being classified as Low SES. This is the normal method that has been used by DIISRTE over many years.

Source: Selected Higher Education Statistics 2001-2010, DIISRTE

Table 2 provides a summary of low-SES students who completed an award in Australia for the period 2001 to 2010:

- The number of completions from students with a low socioeconomic status background in higher education was 21,618 in 2010, an increase from 20,635 in 2009 (4.8 per cent).
- For undergraduates with a low socioeconomic status background, the number of completions increased from 13,188 in 2001 to 15,764 in 2010.

Table 2: Domestic students from low socioeconomic status background, completions^{(a)(b)}, 2001- 2010

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Low SES undergraduate completions	13,188	14,596	15,382	15,765	14,987	15,070	15,621	15,140	15,261	15,764
Low SES undergraduate completions as % of total domestic undergraduate completions	15.02%	15.42%	15.48%	15.45%	14.85%	14.84%	15.24%	14.83%	14.60%	14.75%
All low SES completions	16,287	17,968	19,163	19,749	19,148	19,561	20,355	20,300	20,635	21,618
All low SES completions as % of total domestic completions	13.85%	14.00%	14.03%	13.90%	13.52%	13.53%	13.91%	13.70%	13.46%	13.73%

(a) Data excludes students whose permanent home address is overseas.

(b) Low SES postcode measure is based on the students' postcode of permanent home residence, with the SES value derived from the 2006 SEIFA Education and Occupation Index for postal areas, where postal areas in the bottom 25% of the population aged 15-64 being classified as Low SES. This is the normal method that has been used by DIISRTE over many years.

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