

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012**

Outcome 3 – Tertiary, Skills, International and Indigenous Strategy

DEEWR Question No. EW0846_12

Senator Scullion asked on 20 October 2011 , Hansard page 91

Question

Enrolments at Universities

Senator SCULLION: I asked about the attendance regarding secondary, but what reporting audit mechanisms are in place to determine whether an ABSTUDY recipient in the tertiary area is, in fact, attending a specified course? How do you deal with that? Mr Pattie: With the universities there is an IT system that is linked with Centrelink and this reports the enrolments at the university directly. That directly then affects the students' payments. Senator SCULLION: Would that attendance be based on attending lectures and would there be a rollcall of some form for each lecture? I understand the secondary environment; I understood very clearly how that would all work. But in a tertiary environment, particularly in areas of VET, I am not sure how it would necessarily work. The problem is that in tertiary we have everything from a VET course at the rural college in Katherine through to a PhD in Melbourne. It may be necessary to help me by breaking that down on notice. Mr Pattie: In the university sector it is the enrolment in the course. In the VET sector it is a little bit more difficult in the sense that the linkage is not automatic with Centrelink. It is a little bit tricky. Senator SCULLION: So I have enrolled and attended day 1. Again, this is for the crows; I am not sure if I am going to continue to attend, but the cheque keeps arriving in the mail for me to attend. Let us go to the university example. I think you indicated earlier in your answer that it was a combination of enrolment and attendance, and I was curious as it is often pretty hard to round us all up in one spot anyway—it was hardly like in secondary school. Is it only enrolment or are there some other triggers along the way? Mr Pattie: It may be easier if we give you another flow chart, if you like, to show how it works. Senator SCULLION: I would appreciate that. If you can break that flow chart down into VET, undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD, and give us some indicators about what are the trigger points for compliance. Thank you.

Answer

To qualify for an ABSTUDY Tertiary or a Masters and Doctorate Award, a student must undertake the course in which s/he is enrolled. A student is considered to be undertaking the course who meets the institution's requirements in relation to attendance and submission of coursework. A student will be considered to be not undertaking the course where the institution advises that the student is not meeting the institution's requirements in relation to attendance and submission of coursework

There is a legislative requirement that ABSTUDY recipients must advise the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) of any changes to their circumstances that might affect their eligibility for their ABSTUDY payment. These 'notifiable events', which include changes to study load, are listed in the *Student Assistance Regulations 2003*.

Enrolment and attendance reviews are undertaken on a regular basis by the Department of Human Services, who have responsibility for the delivery of the ABSTUDY scheme. These checks ensure students remain qualified for their payment by satisfying their applicable Activity Test or study load requirement.

Vocational Education Training (VET) Institutions

Enrolment and attendance checks with VET institutions are completed at least once per semester at the beginning of each semester for the preceding semester. These include checks for sufficient workload.

Students who are currently entitled to receive a payment (even if currently suspended) and have indicated that they are undertaking full-time studies (or part-time study for eligible ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement recipients) are selected for enrolment matching.

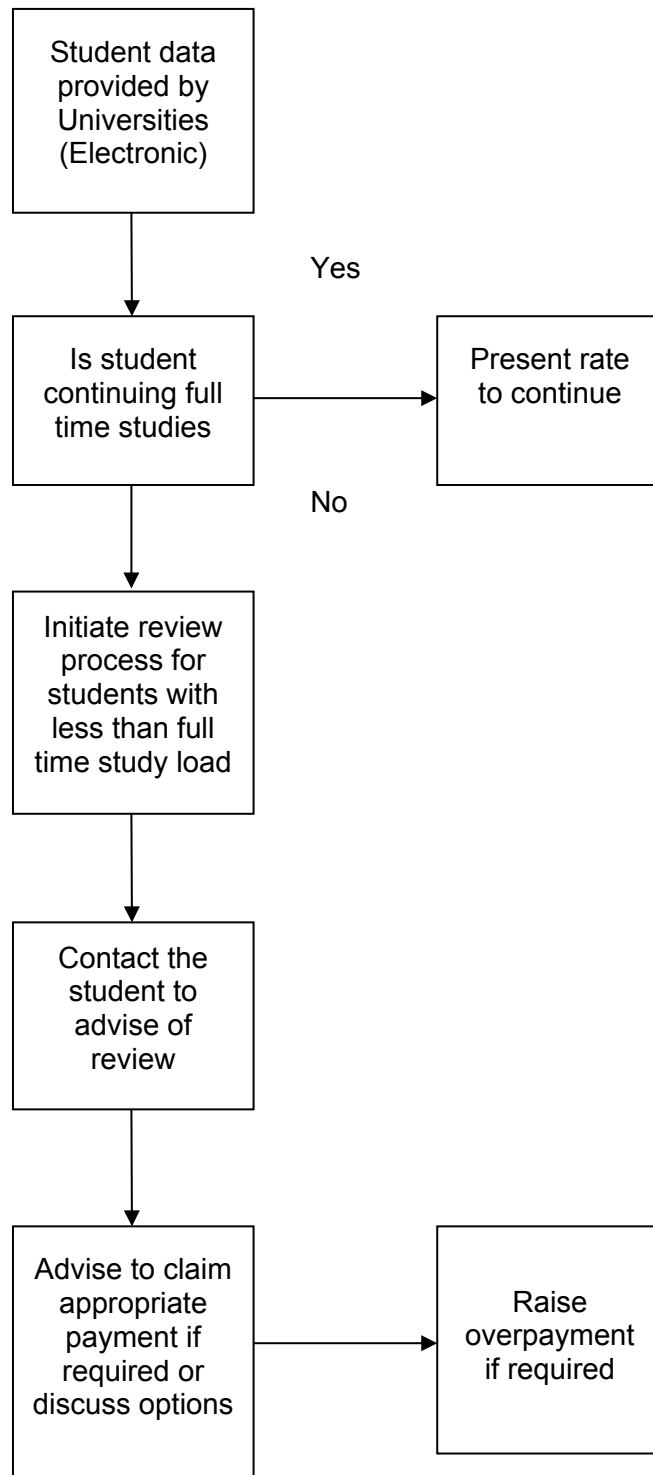
Student data lodged by VET institutions on the Centrelink website is matched against student payment recipients by Centrelink and reviews of students are created for follow up as required.

Universities

Centrelink exchanges data weekly with universities, apart from Victoria University and the University of Melbourne, via the Centrelink Academic Reassessment Transformation (CART) system of weekly data exchange. Victoria University and the University of Melbourne are intending to have implemented the CART system by early 2012. Until this occurs, these universities exchange data with Centrelink on a semester basis.

If the student is studying less than the required 75 per cent of a full time study load (or an approved concessional study load) a review is initiated for action by Centrelink. The study load requirements for initiating a review are not based on physical attendance, but rather the amount of study load undertaken.

DHS - University Enrolment Compliance Procedures



DHS - VET Enrolment Compliance Procedures

