



Briefing Note: The impact of COVID-19 on tertiary education in New Zealand: Initial impact on participation

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Cc:			
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Drafter:	Warren Smart	DDI:	
Key Contact:	Shona Ramsay	DDI:	9(2)(a)
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note the analysis which takes an early look at the impact of COVID-19 on participation in tertiary education, both in provider-based and workplace-based learning.

Summary

- We have used part-year data to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on participation in tertiary education.
- The provider-based participation data shows there was a significant increase in domestic students in 2021, while international enrolments declined significantly in both 2020 and 2021. Between 2019 and 2021, the number of domestic students increased by 11% and international students decreased by 33%.
- For domestic students, there were large increases in study in fields such as Building at the non-degree level, while there were large increases in Teacher Education, Behavioural Science and Nursing at the bachelors degree and higher levels.
- The workplace-based participation data showed that apprentice numbers increased significantly in 2020 and 2021, while trainee numbers have decreased. Apprentice numbers increased by 49% between 2019 and 2021, while the number of trainees decreased by 14%.

- An important caveat on these findings is that they represent participation as at August 2021. It is not clear what the impact of the Level 4 and 3 lockdowns from August 2021 will have on tertiary participation going forward.
- The Ministry will publish the analysis on the Education Counts website on 2 December 2021.

Proactive Release

- a **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once the analytical report has been published.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree.**



Shona Ramsay
Senior Manager, Tertiary Education
Te Puna Kaupapahere | Policy

17/11/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

8/12/2021

Background

1. The Ministry has used part-year indicative data as-at-August for 2019, 2020 and 2021 to take an early look at how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on participation in tertiary education during the pandemic.
2. This report is the first in a series that will look at the impact of COVID-19 on tertiary education. Further analysis will cover areas such as achievement of the cohort studying through the pandemic and post-study outcomes. Additional analysis may also be undertaken into participation.
3. An important caveat on these findings is that they represent participation as at August 2021. It is not clear yet what the impact of the Level 4 and 3 lockdowns from August 2021 will have on tertiary participation going forward in the last part of 2021 and into 2022.

High level findings

Provider-based tertiary education

The as-at-August data showed that the number of students at tertiary education providers increased from 365,585 in 2019 to 382,610 in 2021. This represents an increase of 4.7%.

Domestic students

4. The as-at-August data showed that:
 - a. the number of domestic students increased by 11% between 2019 and 2021 (student numbers were 310,970 in 2019 and 345,910 in 2021), with most of the increase coming in 2021 after enrolments had been relatively flat between 2019 and 2020. The significant increase in domestic students in 2021 reversed a general trend of decreasing participation since 2012, after the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC).
 - b. analysis of when domestic students first enrol in a year suggests that the pick-up in tertiary enrolments began in the second half of 2020 and accelerated in the first half of 2021. This data also suggests that the second half of 2021 has seen enrolments start to decrease compared to the same time in 2020.
 - c. in terms of study-related characteristics, between 2019 and 2021:
 - i. there was an increase in students at all levels of study between with particularly high growth rates in Level 3-7 non-degree qualifications
 - ii. there was a much higher rate of growth for part-time students than full-time students, especially at non-degree level
 - iii. in terms of sub-sector, the highest student growth rate was in Te Pūkenga, while wānanga showed the smallest growth rate.
 - d. The fields of study to show the largest increases by broad type/level of qualification between 2019 and 2021 were:
 - i. *Bachelors degree or higher* – there were significant increases in equivalent full-time students (EFTS) in traditional ‘safe-haven’ areas such as Teacher Education, Nursing, and Behavioural Science
 - ii. *Level 3-7 certificates/diplomas* – the largest increases in EFTS were in the Building field of study. Many of the other areas to show significant

increases are in areas covered by the Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund (TTAF). The Tourism field of study showed a significant decline in EFTS

- iii. *Level 1-2 certificates* – there were large swings in the number of EFTS in the field of Language and Literature, especially in the area of Te Reo Māori. The number of EFTS in Language and Literature decreased in 2020 and then recovered in 2021.
- e. In terms of demographic characteristics, the data showed that between 2019 and 2021:
 - i. Those aged over 25 years showed higher rates of growth
 - ii. women had a higher rate of growth than men
 - iii. Māori students had the lowest rate of growth, while Asian students had the highest.
- f. When comparing enrolment patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic with the GFC, the data showed that:
 - i. in Level 3-7 certificates/diplomas, the significant increase in EFTS in the Building field of study compared with a decrease in EFTS during the GFC
 - ii. in Bachelors degree or higher study, there were a number of fields of study which displayed an increase during both COVID-19 and GFC. These areas included: Teacher Education, Nursing, and Business and Management.

International students

- 5. The analysis of international students only includes those tertiary providers that receive Student Achievement Component funding, and/or had students with student loans or allowances, and/or Youth Guarantee programmes. It excludes providers such as English Language Schools.
- 6. The as-at-August data showed that international students decreased by 33% between 2019 and 2021 (student numbers were 54,660 in 2019 and 36,770 in 2021). Although the number of international students decreased overall, the number of students studying offshore has increased and was 22% of international students in 2021, compared with 3.7% in 2019.

Workplace-based tertiary education

- 7. The analysis of workplace-based tertiary education was split into apprentices and trainees.

Apprentices

- 8. The August year-to-date data showed that:
 - a. The number of apprentices increased by 49% between 2019 and 2021. Although the numbers starting apprenticeships was negatively impacted during the Level 4 and 3 lockdowns in the first half of 2020, apprenticeship numbers increased significantly in the second half of 2020. This growth continued in 2021.
 - b. The number of apprentices in the Building field of study was the largest contributor to this increase.

- c. Māori, Pacific Peoples and women saw high rates of growth in apprentices between 2019 and 2021, albeit off a lower base.
- d. The increase in Building apprentices during COVID-19 compares with a decrease in Building apprentices during the GFC.

Trainees

- 9. The August year-to-date data showed that:
 - a. The number of trainees decreased by 14% between 2019 and 2021. Like apprentices, the number of starting trainees was negatively affected by the lockdowns in 2020, but although numbers rebounded in the second half of 2020, it did not fully offset the drop earlier in the year.
 - b. There were significant decreases in trainees in most ethnic groups between 2019 and 2021, the exception being the Asian ethnic group. Also, there were larger decreases for women than men.

Further advice on Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund

- 10. The Ministry will provide further advice on the outcomes of TTAF to date. This will include enrolment increases, especially for demographic groups, and financial benefits they have gained. In future, when learners have had time to complete their studies, we could assess further post-study outcomes.

Publication of the analysis

- 11. We intend to publish the report on the Ministry's Education Counts website on 2 December 2021. We will work with your office on communications messages related to the publication of the analytical report.

Annex 1. The impact of COVID-19 on tertiary education in New Zealand: Initial impact on participation

The full report is attached to this Briefing Note for your reference.