

Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Budget Estimates Hearing – May 2023

KEY BRIEF

Topic: International Students

Responsible Deputy: Stephanie Foster PSM, Associate Secretary, Immigration

Key Messages – Program Year 2022-23 to date (31 March 2023) highlights

- This program year to the end of March 2023 continues to be a record year for the student visa program, with close to pre-pandemic level of interest for studying in Australia.
 - 417,213 **global student visa lodgements** were the highest ever in the history of the program compared to the same period over previous years (since 2001-02 when reports became available).
 - 428,496 **student visas granted globally** is the highest ever in the history of the program compared to the same period over previous years (since 2001-02 when reports became available).
 - Several nationalities, who were amongst the existing top 10 source countries, experienced a three digit percentage increase in visa grants (**Table 1 refers**).
- Numbers of students in Australia have now returned to pre-pandemic levels, with 582,758 onshore as at 31 March 2023.
- From 1 July 2023, unrestricted work rights for student visa holders will cease, and be replaced with a 48 hour per fortnight limit. This represents a 20 per cent increase on the working hour cap before the pandemic.

Key Points

- 417,213 student visa applications were lodged between 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023 made up largely by the three largest sectors being:
 - 53 per cent (219,906) were for study in the Higher Education (HE) sector;
 - 28 per cent (114,893) in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector; and
 - 12 per cent (51,464) in the Independent English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sector (**Table 2 refers**).
- From 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023, 511,149 student visa applications were finalised globally. This is a 54.7 per cent increase when compared to the same period (pre-pandemic) in 2019-20 (330,284 finalisations).
- As at 31 March 2023, there has been a 64 per cent decrease in the number of student visa applications on hand when compared to 30 June 2022 (144,567 applications on hand compared to 51,643 on 31 March 2023).

- In March 2023, the overall median processing time for Student visa applications across all sectors was 15 days, compared to 40 days in July 2022 (62.5 per cent reduction). Median processing times were:
 - 41.9 per cent lower (at 18 days in March 2023 compared to 31 days in July 2022) for the offshore student visa caseload; and
 - 91.5 per cent lower (at 11 days in March 2023 compared to 130 days (4 months) in July 2022) for the onshore student visa caseload.
- The age of the on hand student visa caseload has also dropped. At 31 March 2023, 65.6 per cent (33,857) of the student visa applications on hand were less than one month old; and 86 per cent (44,418) were less than two months old.
- As at 31 March 2023, China (111,494), India (96,455) and Nepal (56,423) were the top three source countries for student visa holders in Australia – accounting for 45 per cent of the 582,758 student visa holders in Australia.
- Of the number of temporary visa holders onshore (2.4 million), students accounted for 23.9 per cent of them as at 31 March 2023.
- There has been an increase in non-genuine applicants and fraud in student visa applications, with a corresponding decrease in the offshore student visa grant rate compared to the same period (pre-pandemic) in 2019-20. The offshore grant rate in 2022-23 to 31 March 2023 was:
 - 51.1 per cent in the Vocation Education and Training sector (compared with 63.9 per cent over the same period in 2019-20).
 - 84.5 percent in the Higher Education sector (compared with 89.4 per cent over the same period in 2019-20).

Key Statistics

Table 1: Student visa activity (lodged and granted) compared (2019-20 to 31/03/2020 and 2022-23 to 31/03/2023) top 10 nationalities

Student visa activity by nationality Financial Year (months 1 July to 31 March)						
Citizenship Country	Activity type					
	Lodged			Granted		
	2019-20	2022-23	Difference	2019-20	2022-23	Difference
India	65,710	77,608	↑ 18.1%	47,862	77,438	↑ 61.8%
China, Peoples Republic of (excl SARs)	67,924	68,156	0.3%	59,612	73,770	↑ 23.8%
Nepal	26,944	32,944	↑ 22.3%	20,084	31,096	↑ 54.8%
Colombia	14,661	22,180	↑ 51.3%	12,959	26,304	↑ 103.0%
Philippines	11,936	21,067	↑ 76.5%	8,111	19,416	↑ 139.4%
Pakistan	9,195	17,070	↑ 85.6%	6,522	13,803	↑ 111.6%
Thailand	8,394	16,619	↑ 98.0%	7,278	16,815	↑ 131.0%
Brazil	14,860	16,381	↑ 10.2%	13,812	17,274	↑ 25.1%
Bhutan	3,057	13,273	↑ 334.2%	2,448	10,775	↑ 339.3%
Vietnam	10,849	12,837	↑ 18.3%	9,194	13,788	↑ 50.0%
Others	116,461	119,078	2.2%	104,676	125,519	↑ 19.9%
Grand Total	349,991	417,213	↑ 19.2%	293,167	428,496	↑ 46.2%

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Table 2: Student visa activity by sector: Lodgements, Grants and Grant rates

Student visa activity by sector Financial year (months 1 July to 31 March)						
Sector	Activity type					
	Lodged		Granted		Grant Rate	
	2019-20	2022-23	2019-20	2022-23	2019-20	2022-23
Foreign Affairs/Defence	3,537	3,281	3,462	3,443	99.3%	96.9%
Higher Education	180,673	219,906	153,991	224,756	92.5%	88.6%
Independent ELICOS	33,983	51,464	30,960	55,431	91.7%	92.0%
Non-Award Sector	12,111	9,212	12,398	9,938	99.6%	99.3%
Postgraduate Research	10,273	11,236	8,760	13,270	97.6%	97.8%
Schools	7,213	7,221	6,653	7,003	92.3%	93.5%
Vocational Education/Training	102,201	114,893	76,943	114,655	83.0%	77.5%
TOTAL	349,991	417,213	293,167	428,496	90.2%	86.3%

Table 3: On hand student visa applications compared

On Hand Age	Snapshot Date		Difference
	30/06/2022	31/03/2023	
1 14d or less	22,238	18,071	18.7%↓
2 15d - 21d	8,916	7,950	10.8%↓
3 22 d - 1m	11,757	7,841	33.3%↓
4 GT 1m - 2m	22,685	10,568	53.4%↓
5 GT 2m - 3m	17,647	1,952	88.9%↓
6 GT 3m - 6m	31,178	1,948	93.8%↓
7 GT 6m - 9m	8,687	895	89.7%↓
8 GT 9m - 12m	9,464	543	94.3%↓
9 GT 12m - 18m	7,187	778	89.2%↓
10 GT 18m - 24m	2,134	477	77.6%↓
11 GT 24m	2,674	620	76.8%↓
Grand Total	144,567	51,643	64.3%↓

Table 4: Student visa holders in Australia by sector

Sector	Date			
	31/03/2023	31/03/2022	31/03/2021	31/03/2020
Foreign Affairs or Defence Sector	3,375	1,252	2,130	4,393
Higher Education Sector	331,431	181,640	192,716	330,497
Independent ELICOS Sector	41,629	5,092	4,382	22,952
Non-Award Sector	9,075	977	163	4,834
Postgraduate Research Sector	26,397	22,534	21,193	27,069
Schools Sector	11,291	7,586	10,758	17,949
Vocational Education and Training Sector	159,549	117,752	146,432	160,219
Student (Not Further Specified)*	11	11	11	11
Grand Total	582,758	336,844	377,785	567,924

*Repealed Student (subclass 560) visa

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Handling instructions

2019-20 remains the pre-pandemic comparison period for consistency with estimates documents prepared for 2022-23.

COVID-19 travel restrictions were implemented progressively from 1 February 2020 with a total restriction (unless exempt) in effect from 20 March 2020.

Consultation

- The Chief Statistician has cleared the statistics contained within this brief.

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