

Ref: OI-20-00698

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2 December 2020

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9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your request, received on 13 October 2020, for the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. *an update for 2019 on fees-free first year students according to high school decile. Attached is info I was provided on 2017 and 2018. Please provide information on 2019 up to the most recent stats.*
2. *Please also provide ethnic and gender breakdown of fees-free students for 2019, and ethnic and gender breakdown of non-fees-free tertiary students for 2019. The 2018 info, I note, is here: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education/fees-free>*
3. *Also please provide up to date info on course completion for 2019, and the amount of govt money spent on fees-free courses so far that were either failed or withdrawn from.*
4. *Please advise also if the average cost is any different in 2019 than it was for 2018: "The Average course cost in 2018 for Student Achievement Component (SAC) is 2018 was approx. \$2,800." – TEC*

1. *Update for 2019 on fees-free first year students according to high school decile.*

I am releasing the information requested regarding the decile breakdown of students receiving Fees Free in the attached table at Appendix 1. The data builds on the information you were provided last year. As you may know, deciles are a measure of the socio-economic position of a school's student community relative to other schools throughout the country. For example, decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students. A school's decile does not reflect the quality of education the school provides.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) only holds information about the decile rating of the school a learner attended for approximately 80 percent of learners. As deciles relate to the overall socio-economic status of the school, it may not reflect the socio-economic status of a particular learner. In addition, not all students in the tertiary education system attended a New Zealand secondary school. Therefore, care should be taken about drawing any conclusions from the data provided, and caveats about this information have been provided at Appendix 1.

2. *Please also provide ethnic and gender breakdown of fees-free students for 2019, and ethnic and gender breakdown of non-fees-free tertiary students for 2019.*

I am refusing this request under section 18(d) of the Act on the basis that the information asked for will shortly be available on the Education Counts website. I have asked my Ministerial Services team to notify you when this information goes live. However, I note the TEC has recently proactively released a paper which provided demographic data on fees-free learners collected from 2019 enrolment data submitted by tertiary education organisations (TEOs) in the Single Data Return, Industry Training Register and manual fees-free enrolment returns: <https://www.tec.govt.nz/about-us/information-releases/ministerial-papers/>



3. *Up to date info on course completion for 2019, and the amount of govt money spent on fees-free courses so far that were either failed or withdrawn from.*

In providing updated information to the first part of this question, we have consulted with the Ministry of Education (MoE) who provided you this information last year. Rather than transfer this part of your question to MoE under section 14(b)(ii) of the Act, we have provided this information at Appendix 2 for your convenience.

The second part of this question asks for the amount of government money spent on Fees Free course that were either failed or withdrawn from. Due to Fees Free being allocated at a learner level rather than at the individual course level, we are unable to provide a breakdown of dollars per non-completed or withdrawn courses. For each learner, TEOs report a list of courses and their associated costs to the TEC. This list is then validated and checked against the learner's remaining entitlement. If the total fees equal more than the learner is entitled to (\$12,000 or 1 EFTS (Equivalent Full-time Student)) then TEC will cap the amount and only allocate what is under the cap. Deciding how this is spread across a learner's various courses is left up to the TEO and is not reported back to the TEC.

4. *Please advise also if the average [course] cost is any different in 2019 than it was for 2018*

A course is a single unit of learning roughly equivalent to a paper. Therefore, a number of courses make up a qualification. It is also important to note that the following average course cost figure is not the average fee for a full year of study.

The average course cost in 2019 for Student Achievement Component (SAC) was approximately \$2,820. This figures includes part-time study and excludes compulsory course costs.

However, it is important to note that there is considerable variability in course costs due to a wide range of factors (course level, mode of delivery, etc). Therefore the average course cost is nearly twice as much as the median course cost. As a comparison in 2019 the median course cost for SAC was approximately \$1,522 compared to approximately \$1,500 in 2018.²

While I appreciate you have asked for up to date information, including any 2020 data, please note we would caution any present 2020 data being compared with full year data for 2019 or 2018. In any event we are refusing this under section 18(d) of the Act on the basis that the information asked for will shortly be available on the TEC website. My Ministerial Services team will notify you when this information goes live.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

The TEC intends to publish its response to this request on our website with your personal details removed. Consistent with the Act, we are publishing responses in the interests of transparency and accountability, and to improve access to official information.

Nāku noa, nā



Tim Fowler
Chief Executive
Tertiary Education Commission

² This data is as of 6 November 2020 so there could be minor differences to any previously published information.

School decile for students enrolled in tertiary education



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2019 Fees free learners (tertiary) attended by subsector and school decile				
School Decile	Te Pūkenga (NZIST)	Private Training Establishment	University	Wānanga
1	450	565	555	30
2	430	325	580	15
3	800	490	960	25
4	930	600	1525	15
5	905	415	1210	<5
6	1735	650	2435	10
7	1285	625	2730	<5
8	1165	465	2860	<5
9	885	565	4050	0
10	560	405	3925	0
Unknown	3045	1920	1800	40

Caveats

- Fees-free enrolments include data on all students who receive a fees-free financial benefit for the first-time in 2019.
- The data has been compiled specifically to respond to this question. It uses administrative data collected by the Tertiary Education Commission for the purposes of funding tertiary education. Care should be taken when making comparisons with other data collected or compiled for other purposes.
- Results are based on information reported through the Single Data Return (SDR) and collection systems for the purposes of funding tertiary education. The data does not include any reporting outside of these systems and relies on the accuracy of data reported to the TEC by TEOs. The data is for provider based study only and excludes
- The “Unknown” decile measure includes decile 99, which indicates the school’s decile has not been published, and any other learner in the cohort where the decile is not known.
- Learners may be enrolled in multiple subsectors.
- This data is for the 2019 calendar years.
- All values have been rounded to the nearest 5.
- For privacy reasons where there are fewer than 5 learners, the numbers have been marked as <5.

Course completion status for fees-free students in tertiary provider-based study

First-time fees-free students in 2018

<i>Completion status</i>		
Failed at least one course	10,870	25.7%
Withdrew from at least one course	6,700	15.8%
Unique student count of those who did not complete at least one course	14,845	35.1%
All fees-free students	42,340	100.0%

First-time fees-free students in 2019

<i>Completion status</i>		
Failed at least one course	10,445	25.0%
Withdrew from at least one course	6,760	16.2%
Unique student count of those who did not complete at least one course	14,640	35.1%
All fees-free students	41,730	100.0%

2018 fees-free students continuing in 2019

<i>Completion status</i>		
Failed at least one course	1,925	28.2%
Withdrew from at least one course	1,555	22.8%
Unique student count of those who did not complete at least one course	2,870	42.0%
All fees-free students	6,830	100.0%

Notes

- 1 Counts are for students in provider-based study, excluding industry training.
- 2 Counts are for unique students, excluding multiple enrolments.
- 3 Counts have been rounded to the nearest 5.
- 4 A student may not complete one or more courses but still go on to complete their qualification.
- 5 Counts for 2018 and 2019 may have changed from previously provided figures. This is due to ongoing reconciliations, when further enrolment information is received from providers which may change a learner's fees-free eligibility.