

One third might drop-out

“Students consider leaving for practical and financial reasons”

A third of Australian and New Zealand tertiary students seriously consider leaving study before graduation, a study by the Australian Council for Educational Research has found.

Results from more than 25,000 students at 29 Australian and New Zealand universities show that, on average, 33 per cent of tertiary students consider leaving their institutions before graduation.

Further, according to the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement report, this figure is an underestimate, as it excludes students who have already discontinued their study.

Universities have been very

successful in engaging students into study. The findings underline the challenges that institutions face in engaging students through to graduation.

Field of education has a significant effect on students' 'early departure' intentions. Science and agriculture students are the most likely to remain engaged through to graduation. Architecture, education and creative arts students report being most likely to depart prior to degree completion.

Students from remote backgrounds, students with disabilities, international students, and Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Maori and Pacific Islander students all report higher than average intentions of leaving study before completion.

Students are significantly more likely to consider leaving for practical or financial reasons rather than due to the quality of education.

Engaging students in the

overall educational experience, providing effective individual support, and setting high expectations, however, may induce students to complete their education.

The report reveals that university staff members underestimate the extent of the problem. In 2008, while about one out of every three Australasian students seriously considered departing their institution before graduation, staff saw the number as closer to one out of 10.

According to ACER principal research fellow Dr Hamish Coates, managing student engagement effectively is vital to enhancing student retention.

“The early departure rate varies from 22.0 per cent at one institution to 44.9 per cent at another. Clearly, these figures are serious, and carry relevance for students and institutions, for the professions and for the economy as a whole,” he says.



Thinking outside the tank

Seven Monash students will lead the call for broader political debate with the launch by television personality Charles Firth from The Chaser of a new youth organisation called Left Right Think Tank.

Left Right is the brainchild of student Thom Woodrooffe who developed the organisation to provide young Australians with the opportunity to contribute to government policy.

It is Australia's first independent and non-partisan think tank for young people.

The organisation's executive is made up entirely of student volunteers.

“We have developed an amazing team of dedicated volunteers who all bring diverse skills to the organisation,” Woodrooffe said.



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