

National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting 2015

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acara AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM,
ASSESSMENT AND
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1. Purpose

The document outlines the key components of the national standards on which government and non-government providers of school attendance data in Australia are requested to draw when providing data for reporting purposes, including, but not limited to, the following outputs:

- National Report on Schooling in Australia
- National Education Agreement (NEA) reporting
- National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) reporting
- National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) reporting
- Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators
- Report on Government Services (ROGS)
- *My School* website

2. Background

Student attendance is recorded by schools for various purposes, such as meeting legislative requirements to determine the whereabouts of each student on each school day. While there is a legal obligation for schools to record attendance and absences, there is also a parental obligation for students to attend school. Student attendance data can also be used for a range of operational, accountability and strategic purposes by government and non-government schools, education authorities and other government agencies.

Student attendance data recorded and stored by schools are also collected and reported by state and territory education authorities for government schools and by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training for non-government schools. Student attendance data are reported for several purposes, including reporting student attendance rates at school level on the *My School* website and at national, state and territory and school sector levels in various national reports.

The rate of attendance for full-time school students in Years 1–10 is a Key Performance Measure (KPM) in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia* agreed by Education Ministers as the basis of national reporting on school education and is reported in the annual *National Report on Schooling in Australia*. It is also a performance indicator in the National Education Agreement (NEA) the National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) and the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA), and is a reporting requirement of the *Australian Education Act 2013* (Regulations). It is also reported in the annual *Report on Government Services (ROGS)* and *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators*.

However, historically, there have been limitations on the use of attendance data for national reporting and for research, because of differences in collection methodologies between jurisdictions and between school sectors. This meant that it was not possible to report a national attendance rate, or rates for each state and territory as the data were not comparable across school sectors and jurisdictions.

These data quality issues provided the rationale for collaborative work which resulted in the first version of the *National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting* which were agreed to by education authorities in all jurisdictions in October 2012.

This has enabled consistent and comparable reporting of attendance rates for students in Years 1 to 10 for government, Catholic and independent schools in Australia.

These standards have been implemented to the following schedule:

- 2013: non-government schools across Australia
- 2014: government schools in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory
- 2016: government schools in New South Wales (when a new data collection system is implemented).

The implementation of the standards has allowed for the reporting of national and state and territory attendance rates from the 2014 reporting year¹.

This document supersedes the first edition and governs the student attendance collection for the 2015 school year.

3. New student attendance measures

In December 2013, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to increase the level of transparency and improve Indigenous school attendance and education ministers agreed to the implementation of this decision.

There will be a new national KPM for student attendance, namely the student attendance level, as measured by the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students attending school 90 per cent or more of the time to be reported from 2015 for Semester 1.

It was also agreed that the existing *My School* measure of the attendance rate be disaggregated by Indigenous status². Both the attendance rate and the attendance level measures will be published twice-yearly, for Semester 1 and for Term 3 of the school year.

The *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia* has been revised to reflect these decisions.

Student attendance rate

The student attendance rate measure is defined as:

the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1 to 10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended over the period.

From 2015, student attendance rate data for school reporting will be collected for Semester 1 and Term 3 for all students in Years 1–10 disaggregated by Indigeneity (subject to privacy thresholds) and reported on *My School* twice yearly.²

Student attendance rate data for national reporting will continue to be collected for Semester 1, disaggregated by state and territory, school sector, Indigenous status, remoteness, year level and gender. The revised national KPM now specifies Semester 1 as the reference period for this collection.

¹ With caveats for NSW

² Attendance rates by indigenous status were first published on *My School* in December 2014.

Student attendance level

The student attendance level measure is defined as:

the proportion of full-time students in Years 1-10 whose attendance rate is greater than or equal to 90 percent over the period.

From 2015, the student attendance level data for school reporting will be collected for Semester 1 and Term 3 disaggregated by Indigeneity (subject to privacy thresholds) at the school level and reported on *My School* twice yearly.

Student attendance level data for national reporting will be collected for Semester 1 only, disaggregated by state and territory, school sector, Indigenous status, remoteness, year level and gender. The new national KPM specifies Semester 1 as the reference period for this collection.

4. Governance

The *National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting* have been updated based on advice from the Student Attendance Data Working Group, with representation from all jurisdictions and sectors, and have been endorsed by education authorities in all jurisdictions.

Reviews and updates of the national standards will be undertaken by ACARA as required.

5. Overview

The scope of the data collection includes all full-time students enrolled in Years 1–10 in all government, Catholic and independent schools in all Australian states and territories. Ungraded students in Years 1–10 are included as well as students who are enrolled for all or part of the reference period.

The reference period for data collection for national reporting is Semester 1 of the school year.

There are two reference periods for data collection for school level reporting: Semester 1 of the school year and Term 3 of the school year.

The reporting requirement tables in Part 6 have been developed to describe each key component of the *National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting*.

The tables are based on the following template.

Definition	Description of the key component of the <i>National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting</i>
Reporting standard	Outlines the reporting standard(s) that are applicable to each key component.
Additional notes/ examples	Additional information about the business rule or key component, including caveats if applicable, and any relevant examples of how the reporting standard can be applied.

6. Reporting requirements

6.1 Attendance rate calculation formula

The formula for calculating the attendance rate (%) is as follows:

$$100 \times \frac{\text{Actual days in attendance (see 6.2)}}{\text{Possible school days (see 6.3)}}$$

6.2 Actual days in attendance (numerator)

Definition	Actual days (or part-days of) in attendance are defined as the number of days that a student actually attends school over the collection period, on a possible school day (see Section 6.3).
Reporting standard(s)	There are two possible calculation methods as listed below. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sum of possible school days minus sum of absent days Sum of days that a full-time student is present at school on each possible school day. This number cannot exceed the number of possible school days.
Additional notes/examples	Refer to Section 6.8: Student enrolment types for the definition of students, Section 6.10: Part-day absences for details regarding the reporting of part-days and Section 7: Treatment of incidents/absences for details regarding the treatment of absences.

6.3 Number of possible school days (denominator)

Definition	Possible school days are defined as the number of days that a student is <u>expected</u> to attend school over the collection period, as defined in Section 7: Treatment of incidents/absences.																					
Reporting standard(s)	Sum of possible school days per full-time student (see Section 6.8: Student enrolment types, for the definition of full-time student to be included) that meets the standards as documented in the remainder of the document.																					
Additional notes/examples	<p>Example 1 shows a scenario of when a student has moved schools during the collection period:</p> <p>Student A, a full-time student, was enrolled for 40% at school X and 60% at school Y of semester 1. If there were 99 possible school days in semester 1. School X records 40 possible days (40%) and 59 possible days (60%) for school Y.</p> <p>Example 2 shows a scenario of when a non-school day (See Section 7: Treatment of incidents/absences) occurs: there are 20 full-time students enrolled in school X for weeks 1 and 2.</p> <p>Sum of possible school days for 20 full-time students</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mon</th> <th>Tue</th> <th>Wed</th> <th>Thurs</th> <th>Fri</th> <th>TOTAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Week 1</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 2</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>Public holiday</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>80</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL	Week 1	20	20	20	20	20	100	Week 2	20	20	Public holiday	20	20	80
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL																
Week 1	20	20	20	20	20	100																
Week 2	20	20	Public holiday	20	20	80																

Sum of actual days in attendance for 20 full-time students						
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL
Week 1	18	20	20	17	17	92
Week 2	20	20	Public holiday	20	20	80

Attendance rates						
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL
Week 1	90%	100%	100%	85%	85%	92%
Week 2	100%	100%	Public holiday	100%	100%	100%

The overall attendance rate for this school for these two weeks would be 96% (172 actual days in attendance divided by 180 possible school days).

Example 3 shows a scenario with 20 full-time students and one part-time student (0.6 FTE) who only attends school X on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Note the part-time student is full-time at state level (See Section 6.8 Student enrolment types) and attends another school for the remainder of the week.

Sum of possible school days for 20.6 students

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL
Week 1	21	21	21	20	20	103
Week 2	21	21	Public holiday	20	20	82

Sum of actual days in attendance for 20.6 students

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL
Week 1	18	17	20	19	17	91
Week 2	17	21	Public holiday	19	20	77

Attendance rates

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL
Week 1	86%	81%	95%	95%	85%	88%
Week 2	81%	100%	Public holiday	95%	100%	94%

Overall attendance rate for this school for these two weeks would be 91% (168 actual days in attendance divided by 185 possible school days)

6.4 Proportion of students who attend school 90% or more of possible days calculation

The formula for calculating the proportion of students who attend school 90% or more (of the time) is as follows:

$$\frac{100 \times \text{Sum of possible school days for students attending more than or equal to 90\%}}{\text{Sum of possible school days for all students (see 6.3)}}$$

The above formula solves two problems that arise with reporting a simple proportion of students with attendance rates greater than or equal to 90%.

Firstly, it overcomes a problem that students enrolled at multiple schools during the collection period will be counted multiple times across schools. Secondly, it overcomes a problem that students enrolled at a school for only part of the reporting period are likely to have a lower attendance rate, and therefore unduly influence the simple proportion of students at 90% or more attendance.

In determining the calculation, the denominator is the same denominator as is used for the average rate of student attendance. The numerator is the sum of possible or enrolled days for students whose actual days divided by their possible days is greater than or equal to 90%.

Definition	The proportion of students who attend school 90% or more of possible days is defined as the sum of possible school days that a student is <u>expected</u> to attend school over the collection period, for students whose actual days (or part-day of) in attendance divided by their possible school days is greater than or equal to 90%, divided by the sum of possible school days for all students.																																			
Reporting standard(s)	In calculating the proportion of students who attend school 90% or more of possible days, both the number of possible school days and actual school days attended must be collected at an individual student level.																																			
Additional notes/examples	<p>Example 1 shows the calculation of the proportion of students who attend more than 90% or more of possible days. The attendance rate (actual days attended divided by possible days attended) is retained for each student. The possible days is summed for those whose attendance rate is greater than or equal to 90% (sum=200). This is divided by the total possible days for all students (sum=445) to get the proportion of students who attend more than 90% of possible days. (45%)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Student</th> <th>Actual days</th> <th>Possible days</th> <th>Attendance rate</th> <th>Possible days ≥ 90%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> <td>100%</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>86</td> <td>100</td> <td>86%</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>32</td> <td>45</td> <td>71%</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>90</td> <td>100</td> <td>90%</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>88</td> <td>100</td> <td>88%</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> <td></td> <td>445</td> <td></td> <td>200</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Student	Actual days	Possible days	Attendance rate	Possible days ≥ 90%	1	100	100	100%	100	2	86	100	86%	0	3	32	45	71%	0	4	90	100	90%	100	5	88	100	88%	0	TOTAL		445		200
Student	Actual days	Possible days	Attendance rate	Possible days ≥ 90%																																
1	100	100	100%	100																																
2	86	100	86%	0																																
3	32	45	71%	0																																
4	90	100	90%	100																																
5	88	100	88%	0																																
TOTAL		445		200																																

6.5 Level of disaggregation

Definition	Outlines the minimum disaggregation requirements for national reporting.
Reporting standard(s)	Attendance data for national reporting are required to be disaggregated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school level: state, geo-location and sector • student level: sex, year level, indigenous status.
Additional notes/examples	Refer to Section 6.11 Ungraded students for further detail on the reporting of ungraded students if applicable. These disaggregations are regarded as the minimum for national reporting and additional disaggregations may be required for future reporting.
Caveats:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School level attendance data will not be reported for schools with five or fewer students.

6.6 Data collection period

Definition	Collection period for which the student attendance data must be reported.
Reporting standard(s)	Student attendance data for national reporting are required to be reported for Semester 1 annually. Student attendance data for school level reporting are required to be reported for Semester 1 and Term 3 annually.
Additional notes/ examples	The actual start and end dates of Semester 1 and Term 3 will vary slightly; these are dependent on student year level, jurisdictions and sector operational requirements.
Caveats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance data is not collected / reported for school studies undertaken through distance education.

6.7 School types

Definition	Schools to be included in the student attendance data reporting dataset.
Reporting standard(s)	Only schools that fall within the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) definition below are included.
Additional notes/ examples	<p>A School as defined in the NSSC is: <i>an education establishment which satisfies all of the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>its major activity is the provision of full-time day:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>primary education</i> <i>secondary education</i> <i>distance education</i> <i>special education</i> <i>any combination of the above.</i> <i>it is possible for a person to enrol and be active in a course of study provided by that school's formal curriculum for a minimum of four continuous weeks (excluding breaks for school vacations).</i>

6.8 Student enrolment types

Definition	Students to be included in the student attendance data reporting dataset.
Reporting standard(s)	Full-time students, at state level by sector, enrolled in Years 1-10 at any time during the collection period.
Additional notes/ examples	<p>A full-time student as defined in the NSSC:</p> <p><i>is one who undertakes a workload equivalent to, or greater than that prescribed for a full-time student of that Year (level). This may vary between states and territories and from Year (level) to Year (level). The minimum workload for a full-time student would ensure that a student could complete a given Year (level) in a year</i></p> <p>Includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - students who were enrolled for part of the collection period but who may no longer be enrolled in the school (see 6.9 Movement during collection period). - full-time students enrolled part-time at multiple schools within the same sector, where the total enrolment at the state level is 1.0 or greater. Students' attendance records in these cases may be maintained at both schools and apportioned where possible. <p>Excludes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - part-time students (state level) - students enrolled part-time at multiple schools across multiple sectors. <p>It is noted that there may be informal arrangements between schools where a student may attend multiple schools, but remains enrolled full-time at one school. All absences and attendances would then be attributed to the main school. It is estimated that the number of students in these arrangements are small.</p>
Caveat:	Students enrolled full-time at state level but across multiple schools in the same sector are excluded from SA and QLD government, all Catholic and independent schools. There is minimal impact to the attendance rates due to the low numbers of students with multiple / shared enrolments.

6.9 Movement during collection period

Definition	Descriptions of how absences and attendance are treated for students who move schools during the collection period.
Reporting standard(s)	Absences and attendances are recorded and attributed to multiple schools, providing that a given student meets the definition of full-time at each school.
Additional notes/ examples	<p>Includes students who were enrolled for part of the collection period but who may no longer be enrolled in the school.</p> <p>Example 1 shows a scenario of when a student moves schools during the collection period: Student A, a full-time student, was enrolled for 40% at school X and 60% at school Y of semester 1. If there were 99 possible school days in semester 1. School X records 40 possible days (40%) and 59 possible days (60%) is recorded for school Y. All absences are attributed back to the appropriate school where the absence occurred.</p>

6.10 Part-day absences

Definition	Description of part-day absences and how they are reported upon.
Reporting standard(s)	Part-day absences are to be reported and included in the calculated figures. Part-day absences may be reported as 0.5 or to two decimal places e.g. 0.47.
Additional notes/ examples	The definition and reporting of part-day absences varies depending on individual arrangements for any given school. For example Vic. and WA have policy or legislative definitions for part-day absences, where any absence of greater than two hours but less than a full day is reported as a part-day of 0.5.
Caveat:	<i>The duration and reporting of part-day absences varies dependent on individual arrangements for any given school and jurisdiction. However, there is minimal impact on national and jurisdictional attendance rates.</i>

6.11 Ungraded students

Definition	Description of ungraded students will be reported if applicable.
Reporting standard(s)	Any ungraded students will be reported as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ungraded primary 2. Ungraded secondary
Additional notes/ examples	The NSSC states: <i>Students in ungraded classes who cannot readily be allocated to a year of education should be included as either ungraded primary or ungraded secondary, according to the typical age level in each state or territory.</i> <i>Students in secondary support units, physically located in a primary school and vice versa, are to be counted as ungraded in either primary or secondary school.</i> Students reported as ungraded primary or ungraded secondary will be included in totals of Years 1–10.
Note:	<i>Government schools in Tas. and ACT assign all students to applicable grades, therefore, there are no ungraded students reported for these jurisdictions. There are only ungraded secondary students in WA and NT government schools, all primary students are assigned to applicable grades.</i>

7 Treatment of incidents/absences

The table below provides a general description of incidents/absences that may be applicable to schools, how these incidents are to be treated and whether they should be included in the sum of possible school days. Note that actual descriptions in jurisdictions and sectors may differ. However, the general basis of the absence is the same. Also not all descriptions may be applicable to all jurisdictions/sectors.

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / excluded
<p>A. Unexplained/unauthorised absences Absences where the school does not receive any explanation, or where the reason for absence is considered unacceptable. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy • Unexplained • Without parent/guardian approval • Unacceptable explanations as determined by the school 	Absent	Included
<p>B. Religious/cultural absences Approved/notified absences due to recognised religious or ceremonial activity</p>	Absent	Included
<p>C. Parent-approved absences Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family event • Extended holidays 	Absent	Included
<p>D. Medical Approved/notified absences due to medical reasons. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness • External medical appointment with health care professionals including counselling 	Absent	Included
<p>E. Disciplinary (Out-of-school) Disciplinary action that is <u>not</u> on school grounds. Includes suspensions but excludes internal suspensions (see F).</p>	Absent	Included
<p>F. Disciplinary (In-school) Disciplinary action that is <u>on</u> school grounds. Includes internal suspensions</p>	Present	Included
<p>G. Behavioural reasons Behavioural absences, e.g. disengagement. Excludes disciplinary action (see E or F).</p>	Absent	Included

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / excluded
<p>H. Bereavement Approved/notified absences due to bereavement. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funeral • Personal bereavement 	Absent	Included
<p>I. School closed School closed for religious, public or other holiday. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexpected temporary school closure • Strike action/industrial action • School unavailable • School choice • Individual school calendars • All classes cancelled for the day 	NA	Excluded
<p>J. Natural disaster/event Natural disaster/event where students are unable to travel to school <u>and</u> school is closed.</p>	NA	Excluded
<p>K. Approved educational absence Attendance at approved/sanctioned school events where the student is not required to attend school. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excursions • Flexible timetable • Attending another school • VET activities 	Present	Included
<p>L. Work experience programs Approved participation in/attendance at work experience related programs. School is responsible for students on these programs. NSSC states that <i>students' time spent on work experience programs, as part of the school curriculum or program, should be treated as time in school.</i></p>	Present	Included
<p>M. Employment Short-term employment. School is not responsible for students during this period; however, student remains officially enrolled.</p>	Absent	Included
<p>N. Explained other absent Absences from school due to acceptable reasons, other than any of those listed in this table.</p>	Absent	Included

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / excluded
<p>O. Exemptions</p> <p>Approved exemptions such as certificate of exemptions, only for exceptional circumstances. Reasons for exemptions must not conflict with other descriptions in this table.</p> <p>Includes approved short-term employment for NSW and SA such as employment in the entertainment industry where approval and exemption from class has been given by the appropriate school personnel.</p> <p><i>Note: Due to the low number of absences in this category, some jurisdictions may choose to include these absences as possible school days. Although this is not recommended, this has minimal impact to the national and jurisdictional attendance rate.</i></p>	NA	Excluded
<p>P.</p> <p>P.1. Detention/Juvenile Justice/Suspension/Immigration Detention Centres – notified</p> <p>School is notified that student is at the relevant centre. See P.2 for not notified absences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WA: Student is enrolled in main school but is part of Immigration Detention Centre. 	NA	Excluded
<p>P.2. Detention/Juvenile Justice/Suspension/Immigration Detention Centres – not notified</p> <p>If school is not notified, then the student would be absent for 'unexplained/unauthorised' reasons.</p>	Absent	Included
<p>Q. Behaviour centre</p> <p>Absences of students who are moved to a behaviour centre, but who nevertheless remain enrolled in their main school. All data are attributed back to main school.</p>	Absent	Included
<p>R. Tutorial centres</p> <p>Absences at the main school for students who are moved to a tutorial centre, but who nevertheless remain enrolled in their main school.</p>	Present	Included
<p>S. Expelled</p> <p>Student is no longer enrolled at the school.</p>	NA	Excluded

8 Acknowledgement

The *National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting 2015* has been prepared in conjunction with the Student Attendance Data Working Group that includes representatives of Australian, state and territory education departments, the Catholic and independent school sectors, the ABS, the Productivity Commission and ACARA.

9 Acronyms used in this publication

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
ISCA	Independent Schools Council of Australia
KPM	Key Performance Measure
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
NEA	National Education Agreement
NERA	National Education Reform Agreement
NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
NSSC	National Schools Statistics Collection
ROGS	Report on Government Services
VET	Vocational Education and Training