

Distance Education Enrolments

Key Points

Distance education enrolments at independent schools have increased consistently over the last five years, with enrolments increasing by 52%. In 2020-2021, FTE enrolments increased by 12.4% or 433.8 FTE students. While there is a temptation to attribute high growth from 2020-2021 to the impact of COVID-19 and more parents selecting distance education, it is worth noting that enrolments increased at a higher rate in the 2017-2018 period (16.4% or 453 students).

Distance education student enrolments represent 2.9% of all FTE enrolments in independent schools in 2021, up from 2.2% in 2016.

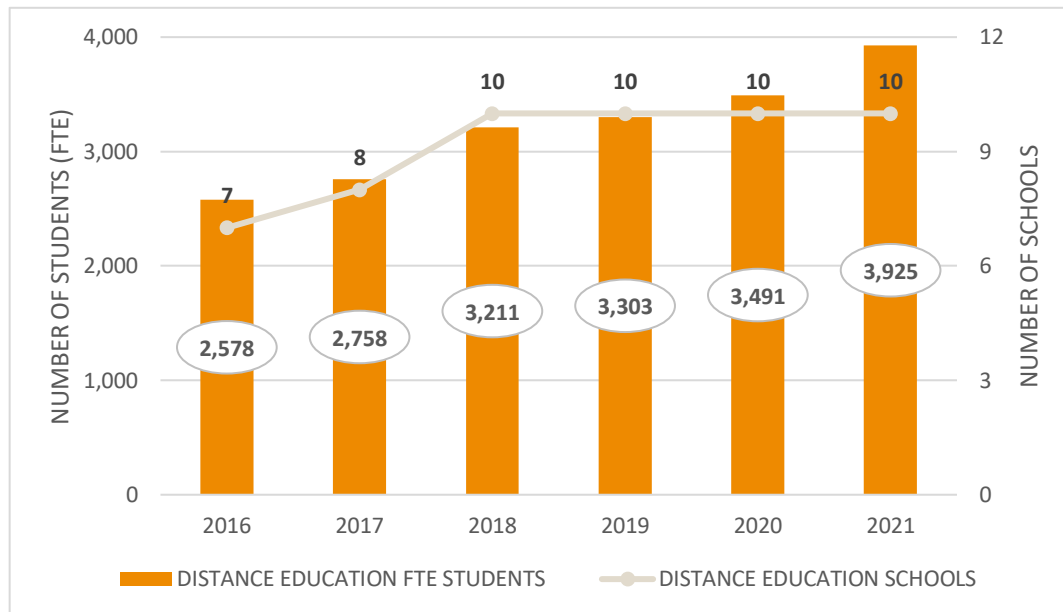
The number of schools catering for distance education students have remained static since 2018, with 10 schools catering for distance education students.

Enrolments

In 2021, the independent school sector catered for 3,925 FTE distance education enrolments, a significant increase from 3,491.2 FTE distance education enrolments in 2020. This increase of 433.8 FTE enrolments is equivalent to a 12.4% increase in enrolments in 2020-2021 (refer Figure 1).

Over the last five years, from 2016-2020, distance education enrolments have increased consistently each year. Over this five-year period, full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments increased by 1,347 enrolments, which represents a 52% increase in the number of FTE enrolments and an 8.8% average annual growth rate.

Figure 1: Distance Education FTE Enrolments & Number of Schools Attended, 2016-21



In the period from 2016-2021, annual rates of increase have ranged from 2.9% (+92 students in 2018-2019), to 16.4% (+453 students in 2017-2018). The percentage increase from 2020-2021 of 12.4% was the second highest rate to occur in the 2016-2021 period (+434 students).

However, at the individual school level it is apparent that distance education enrolments can be subject to significant enrolment changes annually. In 2020-2021, enrolments at three schools increased by more than 120 students. The greatest annual reduction at any school occurred from 2019-2020 when enrolments at one school reduced by over 175 students.

Independent Distance Education Schools

While distance education enrolments increased by 1,347 FTE students from 2016-2021, the number of schools catering for distance education students increased by only 3 in this period, increasing from 7 schools in 2016 to 10 schools in 2021 (refer Figure 1).

The number of independent schools catering for these students have remained static at 10 schools over the last four years from 2018-2021, a period where enrolments increased by 714 students.

Nine of the 10 schools catering for distance education in 2021 had distance education students enrolled each year from 2018-2021.

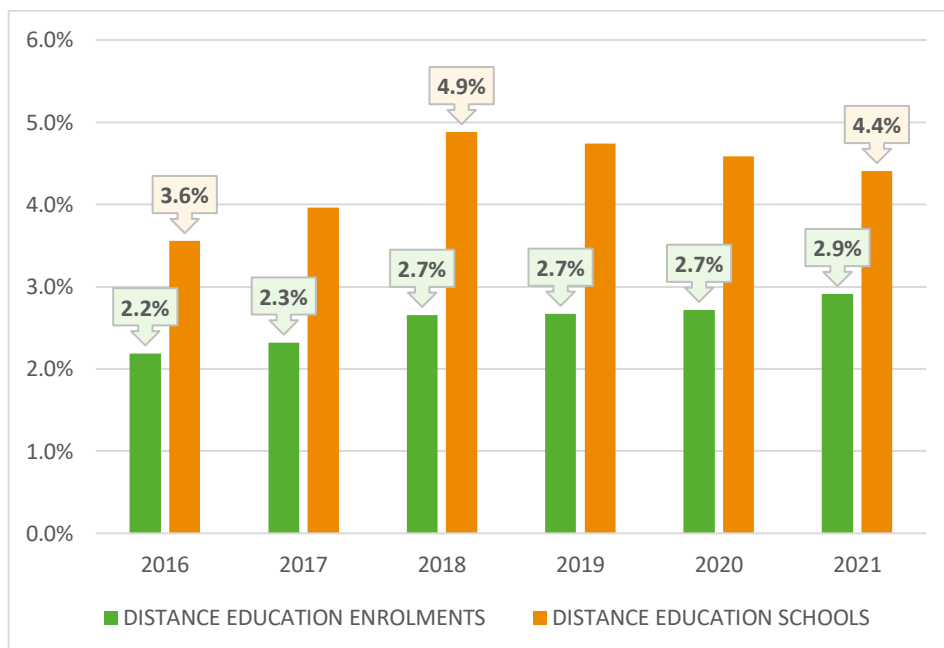
In 2021, one school that had previously enrolled distance education students between 2016-2020 had no students enrolled, while one new school commenced offering distance education.

Proportion of Independent Schools & Independent School Enrolments

The proportion of independent school enrolments that are distance education student enrolments have increased over the 2016-2021 period. In 2021, distance education enrolments represented 2.9% of all FTE enrolments at independent schools, up from 2.2% in 2016 (refer Figure 2).

It is of interest to note that distance education students represented 2.7% of independent school enrolments in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 i.e. growth in distance education student enrolments in these periods were in accord with growth experienced by the independent school sector in these periods.

Figure 2: Distance Education Share of Independent School Enrolments and Schools, 2016-2021



Five years ago, in 2016, the seven independent schools catering for distance education represented 3.6% of the 197 independent schools in Queensland. In 2021, the number of independent schools catering for distance education students represented 4.4% of 227 independent schools in Queensland (refer

Figure 2).

Year Level Enrolments

In 2021, more distance education students were enrolled in secondary year levels than primary year levels (43% in primary years compared to 57% in secondary year levels). In 2016, distance education students were distributed equally across primary and secondary year levels (50% each).

The highest distance education enrolment levels tend to be in secondary year levels, with highest enrolments in 2021 in Year 9 (454 students), followed by Year 10 (433 students) and Year 8 (397 students).

Table 1: Distance Education Enrolments by Grade, 2016-21

Year	P	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	TOTAL
2016	87	141	169	188	234	230	229	228	256	207	234	185	190	2,578
2017	121	140	196	186	215	272	232	254	265	260	221	232	164	2,758
2018	127	167	202	223	249	263	301	280	340	309	318	243	183	3,211
2019	120	169	193	220	219	266	276	350	328	373	327	263	199	3,303
2020	153	160	194	223	245	252	282	316	391	407	380	283	206	3,491
2021	161	233	220	235	274	275	304	343	397	454	433	380	216	3,925

Note: FTE enrolments rounded.

Net in-migration characterises most year levels, with out-migration tending only to occur from Year 10 to Year 11 and from Year 11 to Year 12 (which is common across all schools, tending to reflect students entering alternative education and employment opportunities) (refer Table 2).

In 2021, there was net in-migration of 470 students into Years 1 to Year 12 that had previously not been attending distance education schools in Prep to Year 11 in 2020 (who became the Year 1 to Year 12 cohort in 2021) (refer Table 2). This was the second highest level of net in-migration in recent years, with 484 students having entered distance education schools from 2017-2018.

Table 2: Apparent Progression -Distance Education Enrolments, 2016-21

Period	P-1	Y1-2	Y2-3	Y3-4	Y4-5	Y5-6	Y6-7	Y7-8	Y8-9	Y9-10	Y10-11	Y11-12	Net In-migration
2016-17	53	55	17	27	38	2	25	37	4	14	-2	-21	249
2017-18	46	62	27	63	48	29	48	86	44	58	22	-49	484
2018-19	42	26	18	-4	17	13	49	48	33	18	-55	-44	161
2019-20	40	25	30	25	33	16	40	41	79	7	-44	-57	234
2020-21	80	60	40	49	28	51	61	81	61	26	-1	-67	470

Highest in-migration from 2020 to 2021 occurred into Year 1 and Year 8, with 80 more Year 1 students in 2021 than were in Prep in 2020 and 81 more Year 8 students in 2021 than were in Year 7 in 2020.