

Audit Planning Memorandum

Student attendance and engagement: Years 7 to 10

Background

Research, including sources cited on the Department of Education (DoE) website, shows attendance and engagement affect student attainment and future achievementsⁱ.

In August 2017, there were 15 438 students enrolled in Years 7 to 10 in government schools in Tasmaniaⁱⁱ. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) reports student attendance for Tasmanian students for years 7 to 10 at 87.5% for 2017. This is lower than the national average of 89.6% and lower than all other states except the Northern Territoryⁱⁱⁱ.

Student engagement is measured by DoE as a level of educational risk using the number of days a student is absent from school. Educators commonly describe the following aspects of student engagement:

- Cognitive - motivation, self-regulation, strategic thinking, investment in learning
- Emotional - happiness, anxiety, interest, boredom, reactions to school/teacher, sense of belonging
- Behavioural - involvement, effort, attention, participation, following the rules.

Student engagement is complex as there are many factors that affect student participation aside from those that a teacher can influence, including peer pressure, performance anxiety, mental health, family and other social issues. A student who is disengaged in one class may be an active participant in another.

DoE's information systems provide attendance data throughout each term by student, class, year group or school. However, passive disengagement, where students are present but not fully participating, is only reported within schools or in students' end of term results.

Regional offices use several indicators to collect information about student engagement such as survey results, reports from teachers and observations during school visits.

A 2012 national report on *Student Academic Engagement*, described interactions between teachers and students as central to student engagement^{iv}.

This audit will examine how effectively DoE is collecting information about student attendance and engagement and whether that information is used to improve students' levels of educational risk.

Audit objective

The objective of this audit will be to express an opinion on the effectiveness of the management of student attendance and engagement in Years 7 to 10.

Audit scope

The audit will cover full and part-time students in Years 7 to 10 at Tasmanian government high schools between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2017.

At the commencement of 2016, there were 56 government schools teaching Years 7 to 10 in Tasmania. Schools are allocated to Learning Services Regions (North - LSNR or South - LSSR) each of which is divided into three locations:

- LSNR- Central (10 schools including Deloraine and Prospect)
- LSNR- West (10 schools including Burnie)
- LSNR- East (13 schools including St Marys)
- LSSR- One (11 schools including New Norfolk)
- LSSR- Two (six schools including Kingston)
- LSSR- Three (six schools including Clarence)

The audit will also include fieldwork and analysis of data from all high schools offering Years 7 to 10.

Audit criteria and report structure

The first section of the report will provide context about student attendance and engagement, the second will discuss our analysis of attendance and engagement data. Sections three and four will address the audit criteria.

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Chapters / Criteria	This will cover
1. Context section	1.1 Government's investment in education
	1.2 Relationship between attainment, attendance, engagement and retention
	1.3 Roles and responsibilities
2. What does attendance and engagement data show?	2.1 Identify any trends, including problems or improvements and the results of the student satisfaction survey
3. Is student attendance managed effectively?	3.1 Introduction, including relevant legislative requirements (Ministerial Instructions and Secretary's Instructions)
	3.2 Student attendance is recorded, analysed, reported and monitored
	3.3 Student attendance data is used to inform decisions and responses
	3.4 DoE involves parents, guardians and others in improving student attendance
	3.5 DoE supports and measures improvement in student attendance
	3.6 DoE has strategies for managing and improving student attendance
4. Is student engagement managed effectively?	4.1 Introduction, including relevant legislative requirements (Ministerial Instructions and Secretary's Instructions)
	4.2 Student engagement is recorded, analysed, reported and monitored
	4.3 Student engagement data is used to inform decisions and responses
	4.4 DoE involves parents, guardians and others in improving student engagement
	4.5 DoE supports and measures improvement in student engagement
	4.6 DoE has strategies for managing and improving student engagement

ⁱ University of Western Australia (WA), *Student attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts*, report commissioned in 2012 by Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

ⁱⁱ Total Enrolments, Headcount Government Secondary schools 15,438, FTE 15436.6, p.35, Department of Education Key Data 2016/17, accessed at << <https://documentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/Documents/DoE-Annual-Dataset-2016-17.pdf>>> on 30 January 2017.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia-data-portal/student-attendance#View2>, accessed 24 January 2018

^{iv} The 2012 report titled the 'MCEECDYA Project: *Student Academic Engagement*' was conducted by Edith Cousin University and Department of Education Western Australia (DOEWA) for an Australian Government funded project, approved by the former Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Child Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) now the Standing Council for School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC).