

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012**

Outcome 2 – Schools and Youth

Outcome 3 – Tertiary, Skills, International and Indigenous Strategy

DEEWR Question No. CA0019_12

Senator Scullion provided in writing.

Question

ABSTUDY recipient

What reporting or audit mechanisms are in place to determine an ABSTUDY recipient is in fact attending the specified course?

Answer

Enrolment and attendance reviews are undertaken on a regular basis by the Department of Human Services (Centrelink), who have responsibility for the delivery of the ABSTUDY scheme. These checks ensure students remain qualified for their payment by satisfying their applicable Activity Test or study load requirement.

Universities

Centrelink exchanges data weekly with universities, apart from Victoria University and the University of Melbourne, via the Centrelink Academic Reassessment Transformation (CART) system of weekly data exchange. Victoria University and the University of Melbourne are intending to have implemented the CART system by early 2012. Until this occurs, these universities exchange data with Centrelink on a semester basis.

If the student is studying less than the required 75 per cent of a full time study load (or an approved concessional study load) a review is initiated for action by Centrelink. The study load requirements for initiating a review are not based on physical attendance, but rather the amount of study load undertaken.

Vocational Education Training (VET) Institutions

Enrolment and attendance checks with VET institutions are completed at least once per semester at the beginning of each semester for the preceding semester. These include checks for sufficient workload.

Students who are currently entitled to receive a payment (even if currently suspended) and have indicated that they are undertaking full-time studies (or part-time study for eligible ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement recipients) are selected for enrolment matching.

Student data lodged by VET institutions on the Centrelink website is matched against student payment recipients by Centrelink and reviews of students are created for follow up as required.

Secondary Schooling

Enrolment and attendance checks with secondary schools are undertaken as follows: attendance checking in terms two, three and four (except Tasmania which has only three terms) and enrolment checking once per term.

Attendance and enrolment checks occur at the start of the next term (for example, term two checks are conducted at the start of term three). Students who are currently entitled to receive a payment (even if currently suspended) and have indicated that they are undertaking full-time studies are selected for enrolment matching.