Western Australian Auditor General's Report



Audit Results Report - Annual 2019 Financial Audits



Report 21: 2019-20

12 May 2020

Office of the Auditor General Western Australia

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The Office of the Auditor General acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Audit Results Report - Annual 2019 Financial Audits

Report 21: 2019-20 May 2020



THE PRESIDENT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

THE SPEAKER LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

AUDIT RESULTS REPORT - ANNUAL 2019 FINANCIAL AUDITS

This report has been prepared under the provisions of section 24 of the *Auditor General Act* 2006 and covers financial audits completed since 5 November 2019 including:

- opinions and results of audits on controls, financial statements and key performance indicators of WA's 4 universities and 5 TAFEs for the year ended 31 December 2019
- opinions and results of audits of university subsidiaries and request audits
- key financial indicators commonly used to analyse financial health, and graduate survey results for the tertiary education sector
- other audit opinions issued, including statutory authorities, local government entities and cemetery boards
- audit certifications of financial and statistical information produced by entities to discharge conditions of Commonwealth funding, grants and other legislation and Royalties for Regions program agreements.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance provided by the senates, governing councils, vice chancellors, managing directors, chief executive officers, chief finance officers and others during the conduct of the annual financial audit program and in finalising this report.

CAROLINE SPENCER AUDITOR GENERAL 12 May 2020

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Auditor General's overview

This report summarises the results of the annual audits of the 4 public universities, their subsidiaries and the 5 TAFEs for the 31 December 2019 reporting year. The report also contains the results of a small number of other annual audits of statutory authorities, local government entities and cemetery boards.



We issued clear (unqualified) opinions for all the universities and TAFEs on their financial statements, controls and key performance indicators.

I commend the universities and TAFEs for their transition to the new or revised accounting standards for recognition of revenue, income and leases for their 2019 financial reporting. For some of the entities these were arguably the most significant changes to Australian Accounting Standards since the adoption of Australian equivalents to International Financial Reporting Standards.

Our audit findings indicate that entities have generally improved financial management controls in recent years. This year there was also a slight improvement in information system and risk management controls. However, 48% of information system controls are unresolved from the prior year which means there is no reason for complacency. I recommend that executive management in each entity gives priority to monitoring information system confidentiality, integrity and availability.

As we moved into 2020, COVID-19 has had an increasing impact on university and TAFE staff, students and operations. At the time of audit finalisation, with international travel bans implemented but other restrictions not yet announced, the uncertainty unfolding for the sector was recognised as a significant event occurring after the end of the financial year, albeit of unquantifiable impact. I advise entities to be cognisant that good business governance and controls can be at risk during times of disruption, crisis and urgent response. I encourage entities to maintain good controls, particularly over cash, expenditure and assets. It is also essential to focus on the security of information systems, which may be the subject of increased cyber-attacks and phishing.

I wish to thank my staff and the staff in the audited entities who contributed to the audit process and outcomes.

Executive summary

This report contains the findings from the financial audits of universities and TAFEs for reporting periods ending on 31 December 2019, and other State government entity and cemetery board audits finalised since 5 November 2019¹. Three local government audits finalised since my Report 16: March 2020 are also included in this report.

Western Australia's public tertiary education sector comprises 4 universities and 5 TAFEs (2 metropolitan and 3 regional). The universities had combined assets of \$7 billion and the TAFEs \$1.2 billion at 31 December 2019. Total revenue of this sector in 2019 was \$3.4 billion (universities \$2.9 billion and TAFEs \$509 million), including Commonwealth and State funding. Further details of the sector's revenue and expenditure are included in Appendix 3.

To ensure the sector produces timely and accurate financial reports, it is important that university and TAFE management keep appropriate accounts and records. An effective internal control system is essential for accurate reporting, to alert management to irregularities in electronic environments and manual procedures, and to help prevent, detect and investigate errors and fraud.

The *Auditor General Act 2006* (AG Act) requires the Auditor General to annually audit the financial statements, controls and key performance indicators (KPIs) of universities and TAFEs, all of which have a 31 December reporting date.

A clear (unqualified) audit opinion generally indicates that satisfactory financial controls are in place. It also indicates that financial statements are complete, accurate, comply with relevant legislation and applicable accounting standards; and fairly represent performance during the year and the financial position at year end.

Key findings

- We issued clear audit opinions:
 - on financial statements, controls and KPIs of the 4 public universities and the 5 TAFEs
 - on the financial statements of 7 university subsidiaries and request audits
 - o for 8 other smaller entities
 - for 3 local government entities
 - for 10 certifications.

(page 6 and Appendices 1 and 2)

Management issues

- There were 23 financial and management control weaknesses identified at universities and TAFEs, compared to 34 last year. Twenty-six per cent were unresolved from the previous year, the same percentage as last year. (page 9)
- We identified 88 information system control issues at the universities and TAFEs.
 Forty-eight percent were unresolved issues from the previous year. Last year there were 90 issues and 57% were unresolved prior year issues. (page 10)

¹ Audit Results Report – Annual 2018-19 Financial Audits of State Government Entities, Report 12, November 2019 reported on the 2018-19 financial audits completed by 5 November 2019

Annual leave and long service leave liabilities of the universities increased by 11.4% and by 1.7% for TAFEs in 2019, with a combined total of \$351 million at year end. (page 11)

Potential effects of COVID-19 in 2020

The universities and the 2 metropolitan TAFEs recognised in the Notes to their 2019 financial statements that it was too early, at the time of finalising their financial statements, to estimate the potential effect of COVID-19 on the entities. (page 13)

Financial and performance measures

- The universities predominantly rated low to medium risk for their financial performance against financial indicators in 2019. The risk levels were similar to 2018. (page 15)
- We have summarised significant financial transactions of universities and TAFEs noted during our audits. Key financial ratios and information commonly used for assessing financial performance are also presented. (pages 14 and 22)
- The results of surveys of university and TAFE students and graduates are presented to show performance measures for each institution. (pages 20 and 24)

Recommendation

1. Universities, TAFEs and other entities should address identified financial management, KPI and information systems control weaknesses in a timely manner to ensure the continuing integrity of their financial controls and external reporting.

Audit opinions for universities, TAFEs and others

Management of the universities and TAFEs are responsible for keeping proper accounts and records to enable the timely and accurate preparation of financial reports.

An effective internal control system should operate to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to alert management to irregularities in procedures. They also assist universities and TAFEs to prevent, detect and investigate errors and fraud.

The Auditor General is required to issue an audit opinion for each university and TAFE to the responsible Minister. The opinion relates to:

- financial statements assurance that the financial statements and supporting notes are materially complete, accurate, reliable and comply with relevant legislation and applicable accounting standards. The vast majority of State government financial statements are general purpose and, as a minimum, comply with Australian Accounting Standards and, for most, with the Treasurer's Instructions.
- controls assurance that, in all material respects, controls were adequate to provide reasonable assurance that the receipt, expenditure and investment of money, the acquisition and disposal of property and the incurring of liabilities were in accordance with legislative provisions.
- The scope of this opinion addresses the specific requirements of the AG Act, and is not as broad as it would be if required to address all aspects of Australian Auditing Standard ASAE 3150 Assurance Engagements on Controls. To issue our opinion, we test the design and implementation of key controls.
- key performance indicators (KPIs) assurance that the KPIs are relevant, appropriate, based on reliable data and, in all material respects, fairly present the performance of the entity in achieving its desired outcomes. Our audits include testing manual and computerised processes for collecting and reporting the KPIs, and verifying the accuracy and completeness of the information reported.

It should be noted that the audit opinions relate to historical information reported in the financial statements and KPIs and are not predictive of future expectations.

Clear opinions were issued for all universities and TAFEs

For the year ended 31 December 2019, we issued clear audit opinions on the financial statements, controls and KPIs of all universities, university subsidiaries and for the 5 TAFEs. University and TAFE audit opinions are included in their annual reports which are tabled in Parliament.

UNIVERSITIES Opinion on financial statements, controls and KPIs	Opinion issued
Curtin University (Curtin)	12/03/2020
Edith Cowan University (ECU)	12/03/2020
Murdoch University (Murdoch)	13/03/2020
The University of Western Australia (UWA)	11/03/2020

Source: OAG

Table 1: Audit opinions issued for universities

TAFEs Opinion on financial statements, controls and KPIs	Opinion issued
Central Regional TAFE	06/03/2020
North Metropolitan TAFE	09/03/2020
North Regional TAFE	11/03/2020
South Metropolitan TAFE	09/03/2020
South Regional TAFE	17/03/2020

Source: OAG

Table 2: Audit opinions issued for TAFEs

Some universities use subsidiary companies to conduct activities on their behalf. The audit opinions we issued for these subsidiaries relate to financial statements only as they are not required to submit KPIs. The financial results of the subsidiaries are included in the consolidated financial statements of their controlling university. Annual reports of subsidiaries are not required to be tabled in Parliament.

UNIVERSITIES' SUBSIDIARIES AND REQUEST AUDITS Opinion on financial statements, controls and KPIs	Opinion issued
Edith Cowan University	
Australian Pathways Education Group Pty Ltd (for year ended 30/06/2019)	09/03/2020
Murdoch University	
Alan and Iris Peacocke Research Foundation	16/03/2020
Innovative Chiropractic Learning Pty Ltd	20/03/2020
Murdoch College Properties Pty Ltd	31/03/2020
Murdoch Retirement Services Pty Ltd	18/03/2020
The University of Western Australia	
Perth USAsia Centre Limited	04/03/2020
The University Club of Western Australia Pty Ltd	05/03/2020
UWA Accommodation Services Pty Ltd	Audit in progress
UWA Sport Pty Ltd	Audit in progress
Young Lives Matter Foundation UWA Ltd	Audit in progress

Source: OAG

Table 3: Audit opinions issued for universities, TAFEs, subsidiaries and request audits

Emphasis of Matter paragraph in some opinions

If a matter is appropriately presented or disclosed in the financial report but, in our judgement, is of such importance that it should be drawn to the attention of financial report users, we may include an Emphasis of Matter paragraph in our audit opinion.

The universities and the 2 metropolitan TAFEs recognised the uncertain effect of COVID-19 in an 'event occurring after reporting date' Note to their financial statements (refer page 13).

Eleven other audit opinions were issued

In addition to the tertiary education sector audits reported above, we issued a further 8 opinions for State government entities since 5 November 2019. We also issued 3 opinions for local government entities since our Report 16: March 2020 (Audit Results Report – Annual 2018-19 Financial Audits of Local Government Entities). Please refer to Appendix 1 on page 26.

Ten audit certifications were issued

Throughout the year, we conduct audit work to certify financial and statistical information produced by entities. The audit opinion enables entities to meet conditions of State or Commonwealth funding or specific grant requirements or legislation. Our opinion is usually also required to enable entities to receive ongoing funding under existing agreements or to apply for new funding.

Our Report 12: November 2019 (Audit Results Report – Annual 2018-19 Financial Audits of State Government Entities) detailed 141 certifications issued by 5 November 2019, including 121 certifications under the Royalties for Regions program – predominantly for the 30 June 2019 period.

We have since issued a further 10 certifications including 1 for a local government entity. Please refer to Appendix 2 on page 27.

Management and reporting issues at universities and TAFEs

Financial control and reporting issues

Every entity is responsible for developing and maintaining adequate systems of internal control to ensure legislative compliance, as well as accurate recording and reporting financial information and KPIs. These control systems reduce the risk of error and fraud, and provide assurance to management and auditors that management reports and financial statements are materially correct.

During our interim audits, we assess compliance with key aspects of legislation, current best practice, and the ability of internal control systems and procedures to record and report reliable financial information and KPIs.

We reported 23 financial and management control weaknesses to the universities and TAFEs for 2019, compared to 34 for 2018.

We rated 65% of the control weaknesses as moderate risk, meaning they were of sufficient concern to warrant taking corrective action as soon as possible. Normally these matters require procedural improvements, and if not addressed, they could escalate to a significant risk. Twenty-six percent were unresolved prior year issues, the same result as last year.

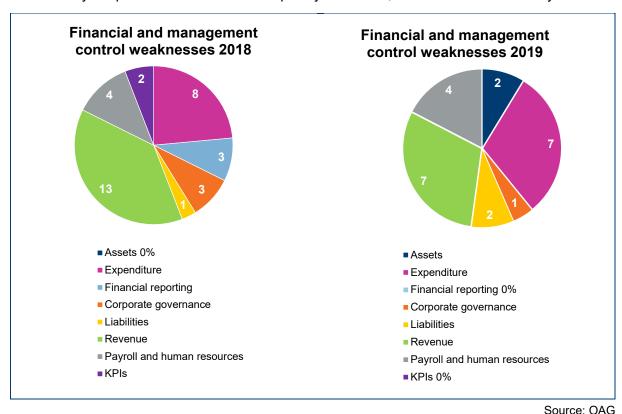


Figure 1: Financial and management control weaknesses for 2018 and 2019

The proportion of findings relating to expenditure increased this year. These predominately related to purchasing card control procedures including cardholders not acquitting their accounts within the timelines set by management. Cards were also not promptly cancelled with the financial institution when no longer required.

The main revenue control finding was that some TAFE students were not being charged resource fees to cover materials purchased by the TAFE and consumed or transformed during tuition, and there was no evidence an appropriate officer approved an exemption.

In addition to the above controls findings for the universities and TAFEs, we reported 2 moderate and 2 minor control findings to 2 other 31 December reporting entities.

Information system control issues

Each year we audit the design, implementation and operating effectiveness of information system (IS) controls at selected universities and TAFEs. These audits provide insights about the extent to which controls enable reliable and secure processing of financial and key performance information.

In 2019, we identified 88 IS control weaknesses across the 4 universities and 5 TAFEs we reviewed. We rated 55% of the weaknesses as moderate and the remaining 45% as minor. Entities should action moderate findings as soon as practicable.

Of the weaknesses identified:

- 43% related to information security issues. These included system and network vulnerabilities and unauthorised and inappropriate access
- 41% related to information technology (IT) operations issues. These included the processing and handling of information, monitoring and logging user activity, and management and review of access privileges
- 48% were unresolved findings from our previous audits.

If not addressed, IS control weaknesses have the potential to compromise the confidentiality, integrity and availability of key computer systems. Figure 2 shows the distribution of our findings across the 6 control categories we assessed during our audits.

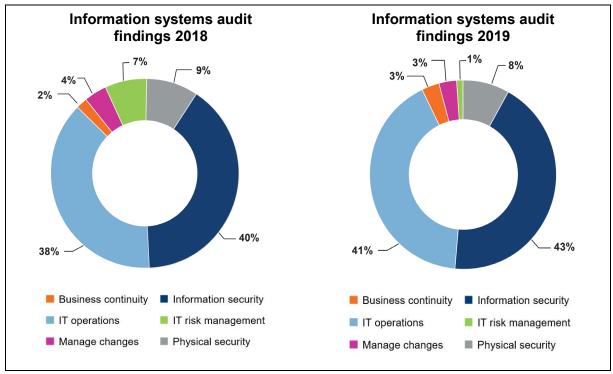


Figure 2: Information systems audit findings in 2018 and 2019

Source: OAG

More information on our IS audit results was recently included in Report 18: April 2020 (Information Systems Audit Report 2020 – State Government Entities)

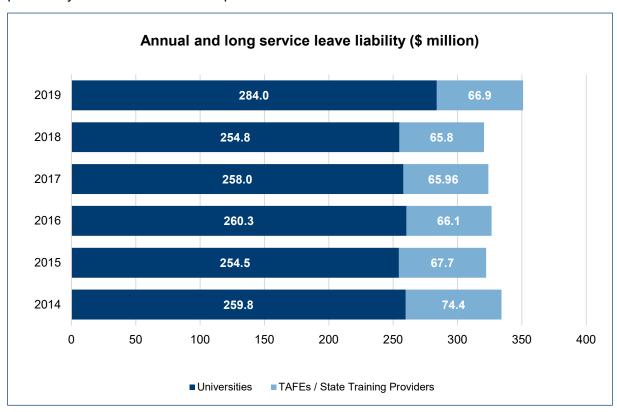
Universities' and TAFEs' management of leave liabilities

Universities and TAFEs have significant leave liabilities, \$284 million and \$67 million respectively, which require proactive management. The combined total leave liability of universities and TAFEs at 31 December 2019 was \$351 million, with universities reporting an 11.4% increase in 2019.

The increase at universities was partly due to a need to re-calculate long service leave liabilities after receiving advice that their previous calculation of long service leave liability for professional employees was incorrect. The adjustment was identified during 2019 as a result of information that clarified the interpretation of the Fair Work Act 2009, in particular, that employees were entitled to their long service leave at an earlier point.

Management at the universities conducted a comprehensive assessment and re-calculated their long service leave liability at 31 December 2018. It was deemed impractical to re-perform this assessment for earlier periods. Where appropriate, an adjustment of the opening leave liability provision was recorded against equity at 1 January 2019. The 2019 long service leave liability of professional employees was then calculated and presented in each university's 2019 financial statements.

One TAFE reported a decrease in its total leave liability at year end compared to the previous year. All other TAFEs reported an increase.



Source: OAG calculated from annual financial statements of universities and TAFEs

Figure 3: Combined universities and combined TAFEs' leave liabilities

Note: Universities increase in 2019 was largely due to an adjustment to correct timing of long service leave entitlement in accordance with the requirements of the Fair Work Act 2009.

Universities and TAFEs need to proactively manage their leave liabilities. Large balances can lead to payouts at a higher pay rate than when the entitlement accrued. A leave management plan is necessary to ensure that staff schedule and take regular leave for their health and wellbeing. Developing staff to perform the tasks of others is also important for business continuity. Furthermore, staff rotation, like segregation of duties, is recognised as an important risk management tool as it can prevent and identify practices that contribute to error, collusion or fraud.

Best practice entities for financial reporting and controls

The universities and TAFEs were again timely in submitting their financial statements. Seven submitted their financial statements on the same date or earlier than the previous year. The quality of financial statements was also generally good. One university and 2 TAFEs submitted high quality statements within the agreed timelines, and also met our other best practice criteria. Our 3 best practice entities for 2019 were:

- Murdoch University
- North Metropolitan TAFE
- South Metropolitan TAFE.

Timely preparation of good quality financial statements and KPIs, and being audit ready, enables entities to release resources for other important tasks.

Our criteria for achieving best practice status include:

- clear (unqualified) opinions on the financial statements, controls and KPIs
- being audit ready early, ideally by 31 January
- good quality financial statements and KPIs, supported by reliable working papers and submitted for audit within the agreed timeframe
- management resolution of accounting standards and presentation issues (before the audit process begins)
- key staff available during the audit process
- assessment of the number and significance of control weaknesses we identified.

Potential effect of COVID-19 on entities in 2020

There was no financial effect of COVID-19 on universities or TAFEs for the 2019 reporting year. However the universities and the 2 metropolitan TAFEs included an 'event occurring after reporting date' in the Notes to their 2019 financial statements in this regard. This recognised that it was too early, at the time of finalising their financial statements, to estimate the potential effect of COVID-19 on the entities.

At that time, in early March 2020, there was significant uncertainty regarding the anticipated effect of COVID-19 on overseas students commencing or re-commencing their studies in 2020, due to the international travel restrictions in place at that time.

A state of emergency was declared in Western Australia on 15 March 2020 in response to the global public health situation, accompanied by unprecedented restrictions on individual movement, social gatherings and business operations. Entities across Australia, beyond the education sector, have been affected with significant socio-economic impacts evident at the time of presenting this report to Parliament.

We have not analysed the effect to date, however for the first semester 2020, universities and TAFEs took various actions, including:

- extensive use of online teaching and learning, where practicable
- academic calendars adjusted to enable variations to student assessment
- reducing financial burden on students through refund of parking fees, reduction in the student services and amenities fee, and enabling payments of fees through a hardship payments scheme
- student support grants to address financial hardship, rent and accommodation
- expanding VPN capacity to support remote working and learning by staff and students.

All entities need to be cognisant that good business governance and controls can be at risk during times of disruption, crisis and urgent response. There are some who will seek to take advantage of any sense of chaos for their own interests. We encourage entities to maintain good controls, particularly over cash, expenditure and assets throughout 2020. It is also essential to focus on the security of information systems, which may be the subject of increased cyber-attacks and phishing attempts. During and after this crisis, management needs to monitor financial activity even more closely than normal, and follow-up on potential concerns.

Universities' financial performance in 2019

Reporting changes adopted in 2019

Universities applied the new and revised accounting standards of the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) from the application date of 1 January 2019 for public sector entities and other not-for-profit entities.

The universities elected to apply the modified retrospective option in the standards for their transition. The benefit of using this approach was comparative figures for prior years did not need to be restated, therefore reducing the amount of work required. A detailed note to the financial statements discloses the impact of these changes in accounting treatment from 1 January 2019.

Reporting of leases - AASB 16

The key change of AASB 16 is that the majority of operating leases, which were previously recorded off-balance sheet, are now required to be capitalised on the balance sheet (Statement of Financial Position). Accordingly property, motor vehicle and equipment leases are now accounted for as right-of-use assets and their associated lease liability.

Using this approach, from initial application of AASB 16 on 1 January 2019, universities recognised right of use assets and the lease liability.

Reporting of revenue and income under AASB 15 and AASB 1058

From 1 January 2019, revenue from contracts (AASB 15), such as grant money received with performance obligations, is reported by allocating the grant money to each performance obligation and recognising the revenue as or when the obligations are satisfied. Similarly, grant money received with an obligation to acquire or construct an asset that will be retained by the entity (i.e. a capital grant under AASB 1058) is recognised as or when the obligation to acquire or construct the asset is satisfied. This means a grant received for the construction of an asset is recognised as revenue in stages during the construction. The full value of the grant is recognised by the time the constructed asset is put into operation. Prior to introduction of the new standards, this practice of deferring revenue recognition was common in the private sector but not for not-for-profit public sector entities.

Under AASB 1058, transactions relating to assets acquired at significantly less than fair value also have new recognition principles.

The implementation of these standards by the universities resulted in adjustments of opening equity and recognition of deferred revenue.

Selected significant financial transactions

Details of significant 2019 financial transactions that we noted during our audits are listed below. Most of this information is reported in each university's annual report, and we have included them here for the convenience of Parliament. By reporting these items, we are not implying that we have any residual concern with these transactions.

Assets

Curtin commenced construction of the \$300 million Greater Curtin project, named 'Exchange', during 2019 – a new precinct with student accommodation, hotel, retail, commercial and car parking space. As part of this arrangement, Curtin early-adopted AASB 1059: Service Concession Arrangements. The current year treatment resulted in the recognition of \$39 million of service concession assets and a corresponding

- liability. This reflects Curtin granting the operator of Exchange, the right to operate existing and to construct and operate new accommodation.
- UWA's property plant and equipment increased by \$30 million for the year due to additional capital investment for EZone, a new student hub for Engineering and Mathematical Sciences. Ezone started in 2018 and is expected to be completed in early 2020, as it was estimated to be 90% completed at 31 December 2019.
- ECU's property, plant and equipment increased from \$806 million in 2018 to \$847 million in 2019 largely due to \$39 million capital spending on the Joondalup biosciences research and teaching laboratories.
- Each universities' investment in Education Australia Limited increased from \$22.9 million in 2018 to \$39.7 million in 2019 following the most recent independent fair value assessment conducted in 2019.

Liabilities

On 11 April 2019, ECU issued \$120 million of AUD fixed rate medium term notes with a 3% per annum coupon rate and a settlement date of 11 April 2029. This notes issue is recorded by ECU as part of their long term financial plan to fund strategic goals.

Revenue

Murdoch's fees and charges income increased by \$27.6 million (28.8%) to \$123.4 million. Murdoch attributes this to the increase in overseas fee paying onshore students from their ongoing international welcome scholarship and increased marketing efforts.

Expenditure

UWA's employee related expenses increased by \$14 million to \$541 million partly due to an increase in FTE, a 2% wage increase, and the additional long service leave expense resulting from reassessment after clarification of leave requirements under the Fair Work Act 2009. (see page 11)

KPIs

UWA reported 13 KPIs for 2019, of which 7 were new and 5 were prepared using revised methodologies. Preparing and auditing the new datasets and amended methodologies of these KPIs was a significant task for UWA staff and our auditors.

Key financial ratios of universities

The Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) uses a number of benchmark indicators to assess the financial performance of universities. These measures include liquidity, diversity of revenue, dependence on international student fees, operating result and borrowings to equity ratio.

We have used each university's audited financial statements² to show performance against these indicators for the 5 years ending 31 December 2019. Table 4 summarises the risk ratings inferred by these indicators.

² Financial ratios are calculated using the university figures, not their consolidated results.

2019 – Summary of universities' ratios							
Liquidity / current ratio	2 universities rated as low risk, 1 as medium and 1 as high risk						
Diversity of revenue	2 universities rated as low risk and 2 as medium risk						
Operating results	All 4 universities reported a surplus						
Borrowings to equity ratio	3 universities rated as low risk and 1 as high risk						
Dependence on international students	3 universities rated as medium risk and 1 as low risk						

Source: OAG calculated from audited annual financial statements using DESE benchmarks

Table 4: University financial risk inferred by selected 2019 financial performance ratios Note: These ratings are based on criteria set by the Australian Government DESE

Liquidity / current ratio

The liquidity or current ratio assesses an entity's ability to meet their debts as and when they fall due. The traditional accounting formula is current assets divided by current liabilities.

DESE considers a ratio of more than 1 low risk and below 0.75 high risk. Based on this rating, ECU and Murdoch were low risk, Curtin was medium risk and UWA high risk, when assessed on this indicator for 2019.

Liquidity / Current ratio	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Trendline 2015 ↔ 2019
Curtin	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.0	
ECU	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.3	
Murdoch	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.1	
UWA	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.7	

Source: OAG calculated from audited annual financial statements

Table 5: Liquidity ratio for universities

As the liquidity ratio recognises current assets only, we have also shown in Table 6, details of the universities' total current and non-current cash and other financial assets for each year. Each university's liquidity ratio would improve if their non-current liquid assets were included in the calculation.

Current and non-current cash and other financial assets (\$m)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Curtin	549	504	567	630	688
ECU	287	315	328	371	496
Murdoch	171	195	171	208	196
UWA	779	830	889	871	922

Source: OAG calculated from audited annual financial statements

Table 6: Investments of universities (cash and other financial assets)

Diversity of revenue - dependence on Australian Government funding

Universities can reduce their financial risk by diversifying their revenue sources. Each university has a different capacity to generate revenue, depending on factors such as location, size, courses offered, extent of research activity, perceived standing and student profiles.

For its 2019 benchmarking DESE considered universities with 55% or less of revenue received from Australian Government funding low risk and between 55% and 65% medium risk. Australian Government financial assistance includes Commonwealth Grant Scheme and other grants, HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP payments. For 2019, Murdoch and UWA rated as low risk while Curtin and ECU were a medium risk for this indicator.

Diversity of revenue (dependence on Australian Government funding)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Trendline 2015 ↔ 2019
Curtin	56%	57%	56%	60%	57%	
ECU	64%	62%	61%	61%	58%	
Murdoch	56%	50%	59%	55%	52%	\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\
UWA	53%	52%	50%	51%	47%	

Source: OAG calculated from audited annual financial statements

Table 7: Diversity of revenue (dependence on Australian Government funding) ratio

Operating result

Universities are not-for-profit organisations but their operating result is a useful measure of financial performance. Large deficits or a trend of consecutive deficits indicates a need for review and analysis.

All universities reported a surplus for 2019.

Operating result	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Trendline 2015 ↔ 2019
Curtin	7%	4%	8%	3%	8%	\\\\\
ECU	7%	6%	6%	5%	8%	/
Murdoch	0%	11% *	0.6%	2.7%	5%	<u> </u>
UWA	3%	3%	8%	3%	10%	

Source: OAG calculated from audited annual financial statements

Table 8: Operating result as a percentage of total operating revenue

Borrowings to equity ratio

Legislation permits universities to finance their activities by borrowing. DESE considers universities with 7% or less of their equity represented by borrowings to be low risk. Greater than 10% rates as high risk.

Curtin, Murdoch and UWA remain low risk, while ECU is high risk on this indicator.

^{*} Murdoch received revenue of \$34 million from its subsidiary, Murdoch Retirement Services Pty Ltd, in 2016. Without this revenue the ratio would have been 2%.

Borrowings to equity ratio	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Trendline 2015 ↔ 2019
Curtin	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%	0%	0.8%	
ECU	11%	9%	11%	8%	18%	/
Murdoch	1%	1%	0.5%	0.4%	0.7%	
UWA	7%	8%	8%	7%	6%	

Source: OAG calculated from audited annual financial statements

Table 9: Borrowings to equity ratio

Note: Curtin's borrowings exclude amounts for the Chemistry Centre (WA), as offset by lease revenue.

Dependence on overseas student fees

Universities can diversify their revenue sources by encouraging overseas students to study their courses. However, the general view is that universities should not be overly dependent on this source of income.

For its 2019 benchmarking DESE considered universities with 15% or less of operating revenue from fee-paying overseas students low risk and between 15% and 25% medium risk. Based on these criteria, 3 universities rate as medium risk and UWA as low risk for this indicator.

Overseas student fees ratio	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Trendline 2015 ↔ 2019
Curtin	19%	20%	19%	18%	17%	
ECU	17%	20%	21%	23%	24%	
Murdoch	18%	11%	12%	16%	21%	
UWA	11%	13%	15%	16%	14%	

Source: OAG calculated from audited annual financial statements

Table 10: Fees from overseas students as a proportion of total operating revenue

Equivalent Full Time Student Load for universities

Universities measure their student enrolments as Equivalent Full Time Student Load (EFTSL). As this information is released by the DESE in September of the following year, the 2019 student enrolment information is not yet available.

The following table shows the EFTSL for the universities from 2015 to 2018, and the percentage of these enrolments relating to international students. ECU's EFTSL has increased each year, as has their proportion of international students. Curtin and UWA had an overall decreasing trend in their EFTSL with Curtin's proportion of international students also decreasing while UWA's proportion of international students increased.

EFTSL	2015			2016		2017	2018	
	EFTSL	% International						
Curtin	35,609	33%	35,002	32%	34,354	31%	34,239	30%
ECU	17,294	18%	18,267	20%	19,078	21%	19,299	21%
Murdoch	15,526	45%	15,665	43%	15,172	36%	16,058	37%
UWA	19,675	19%	19,565	20%	19,416	23%	18,911	23%

Source: Data from Australian Government DESE

Table 11: EFTSL (all students) and percentage of EFTSL that is international students

Universities' graduate survey information

This section presents survey results of students graduating from university. These survey results are not usually reported in each university's annual report.

Tables 12 and 13 present graduate responses to the Graduate Outcome Survey, a national online course evaluation survey conducted by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE)³. Graduates are surveyed approximately 4 months after completing their courses. The 2019 information relates to students who completed their studies in 2018.

Graduate satisfaction of undergraduate students

Table 12 presents the survey results showing the percentage of graduates who were satisfied with their overall undergraduate study experience.

Graduate satisfaction	2016	2017	2018	2019
Curtin	81.9%	81.1%	80.5%	83.5%
ECU	84.8%	85.3%	84.0%	83.5%
Murdoch	80.5%	80.3%	80.2%	83.0%
UWA	74.4%	74.2%	75.2%	76.0%
Western Australian university average	81.3%	81.4%	81.1%	82.5%
National university average	80.6%	79.4%	79.7%	80.0%

Source: Australian Graduate Survey and Graduate Outcome Survey data (unpublished) from DESE

Table 12: Graduate satisfaction survey results for university graduates

Graduate destination of domestic undergraduate students

Table 13 shows the percentage of domestic undergraduate level graduates in employment, including full-time, part-time or casual, in the year after graduation. The numerator includes those graduates who are employed, irrespective of whether they want to work more hours.

Graduate destination	2016	2017	2018	2019
Curtin	87.6%	87.0%	87.2%	86.4%
ECU	86.3%	82.5%	82.4%	83.1%
Murdoch	84.8%	82.8%	84.0%	82.4%
UWA	83.2%	82.2%	83.4%	80.9%
Western Australian university average	86.4%	84.9%	85.4%	84.2%
National university average	86.5%	86.7%	87.2%	87.0%

Source: Australian Graduate Survey and Graduate Outcome Survey (unpublished) data from DESE

Table 13: Graduate destination survey results for university graduates

³ University survey results available on the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) website. QILT is administered by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

TAFEs' financial and other performance in 2019

Initial application of revised accounting standards

Similar to the universities, the TAFEs also used the modified retrospective approach on initial adoption of the new accounting standards. Under the specific transition provisions in the standards, TAFEs did not restate their comparatives. Notes to the financial statements of each TAFE detail the impact of application from 1 January 2019.

Reporting of right of use assets and lease liabilities

Right of use assets and lease liabilities of TAFEs for 2019 were recognised under the new accounting standard, AASB 16 Leases. Examples of assets are State Fleet leased vehicles and Government Regional Officer Housing leased properties. This resulted in an increase in depreciation and amortisation expenses for right of use assets, and also in finance costs. There was a decrease in employee benefits expense and supplies and services, as lease payments are no longer expensed.

At 1 January 2019, as shown in the Notes to the financial statements, all TAFEs elected to apply the option to measure the right of use assets equal to the lease liability.

Revenue from contracts and income of not-for-profit entities

TAFEs now account for revenue from contracts with customers either over time or at a point in time, based on when the related performance obligations are satisfied. Any distinct goods or services are separately identified and the contract price, as well as any discounts or rebates, are allocated to the separate elements. An example is a training contract with an organisation to train its employees.

Enrolment records

The Department of Training and Workforce Development's (DTWD) 2019 review of invalid enrolments indicated a potentially higher than normal error rate across the TAFE sector.

The TAFEs' transition to their new Student Management System (SMS) was completed in January 2019. SMS is the key system for student applications, enrolments, fees and life cycle management as students progress through their studies. Data integrity is essential as TAFEs are funded based on Student Curriculum Hours submitted as part of the Delivery and Performance Agreement and forms the basis for any clawbacks of funding provided to the TAFEs in the previous year.

Invalid enrolments can have a significant impact on the funding provided to the TAFEs and the reported KPIs. In addition to TAFEs' own testing of the data, we also performed additional testing to obtain reasonable assurance that the invalid enrolment error was within an acceptable threshold at each TAFE.

In addition to the as-yet unquantified impact of COVID-19 on the education sector, the Lower Fees, Local Skills policy announced by the Government in October 2019 is expected to impact TAFE enrolments in 2020. Under the policy, effective from 1 January 2020, course fees for targeted vocational qualifications reduce by 50%. TAFEs' ability to accurately record the expected increase in student enrolments and maintain the integrity and security of SMS is paramount.

Selected significant financial transactions

Listed below are significant 2019 financial transactions we noted during our TAFE audits. Most of this information can be found in each TAFE's annual report. By reporting these items, we are not implying that we have any residual concern with these transactions.

Assets

South Metropolitan TAFE's property, plant and equipment reduced by \$21 million due to transfer of the Beaconsfield Campus to DTWD.

Liabilities

South Metropolitan TAFE reported a \$1.2 million increase in income received in advance, mainly due to early 2019 enrolments for 2020 courses. There were no early enrolments in 2018 for 2019 courses, due to the planned implementation of SMS in January 2019.

Revenue

- North Metropolitan TAFE reported a \$1.1 million (4%) reduction in fee for service revenue, as international student enrolments fell in 2019 for the second consecutive year.
- South Metropolitan TAFE brought \$1.2 million of discovered artwork to account during

TAFE financial results and liquidity

We have used each TAFE's audited financial statement to present their financial results. In 2019, the 5 TAFEs again reported deficits, as shown in the following table.

Deficit financial results (\$000s)	2018	2019
Central Regional TAFE	(9,323)	(5,040)
North Metropolitan TAFE	(7,797)	(12,411)
North Regional TAFE	(3,141)	(5,216)
South Metropolitan TAFE	(3,982)	(7,061)
South Regional TAFE	(5,309)	(3,624)

Source: OAG from audited annual financial statements

Table 14: Financial results of TAFEs

Note: TAFEs are not funded for depreciation and amortisation which is reported in their Income Statements. The combined total was \$39.1 million in 2019.

Although all TAFEs recorded deficits for the period, most had a favourable liquidity ratio at 31 December 2019.

The liquidity or current ratio is a traditional way of assessing an entity's ability to meet its debts as and when they fall due. A ratio of more than 1 is generally accepted as low risk. Table 15 shows that on this basis, 4 TAFEs were low risk. However, care should be taken in concluding on the broader financial position of an entity solely on this indicator which compares current assets to current liabilities.

Liquidity / current ratio at year end	2017	2018	2019
Central Regional TAFE	1.8	1.3	0.8
North Metropolitan TAFE	1.8	1.6	1.3
North Regional TAFE	1.8	1.9	1.1
South Metropolitan TAFE	1.6	1.8	1.5
South Regional TAFE	1.5	1.8	1.4

Source: OAG calculated from audited annual financial statements

Table 15: Liquidity / current ratios for TAFEs

TAFE student enrolments

Student curriculum hours (SCH) is the measure used to report the quantum of training delivered by the TAFEs. In 2019, a total of 21 million SCH of training was delivered by the 5 TAFEs through their Delivery and Performance Agreements (DPA) with DTWD. Overall this was a 2.1% decrease on the 2018 delivery.

DPA hours delivered	2017	2018	2019	Trendline 2017 ↔ 2019
Central Regional TAFE	1,929,043	1,857,162	1,890,188	
North Metropolitan TAFE	8,804,997	8,559,701	8,466,292	
North Regional TAFE	1,078,535	1,101,631	978,071	
South Metropolitan TAFE	7,290,774	7,464,046	7,226,171	
South Regional TAFE	2,333,204	2,480,070	2,444,591	
TOTAL DPA hours delivered	21,436,553	21,462,610	21,005,313	

Source: OAG from audited annual KPIs

Table 16: Hours of DPA training delivered

Cost per Student Curriculum Hour

The cost per SCH is a key financial performance measure. It is calculated by dividing the total cost of services by the total number of SCH of training delivered, including both DPA and other training delivered.

Many factors influence this measure, so this data alone should not be used to compare TAFEs. However, it provides a high level indication of efficiency. Factors can include regional location and economic conditions, the relative cost of different courses offered and student demographics.

Cost per SCH	2017	2018	2019
Central Regional TAFE	\$30.30	\$30.42	\$28.77
North Metropolitan TAFE	\$15.30	\$17.68	\$18.01
North Regional TAFE	\$63.76	\$52.27	\$54.64
South Metropolitan TAFE	\$18.43	\$17.70	\$19.69
South Regional TAFE	\$22.79	\$22.70	\$22.75

Source: OAG from audited annual KPIs

Table 17: Cost per SCH

TAFE student and graduate survey information

TAFE students' satisfaction surveys are conducted by the DTWD. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) also surveys TAFE graduates at the end of each year. Figures in the tables below are from the TAFEs audited KPIs.

TAFE student satisfaction

DTWD administers the student satisfaction survey for TAFEs. This annual survey is a measure of the quality of the service provided by the TAFEs.

The student satisfaction rating reports the percentage of 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied' respondents to the survey. Table 18 compares satisfaction ratings provided by students studying in the last 3 years against the State average of our TAFEs including the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA).

Student satisfaction	2017	2018	2019
Central Regional TAFE	90.3%	92.0%	92.6%
North Metropolitan TAFE	84.6%	85.3%	83.5%
North Regional TAFE	90.9%	93.1%	91.1%
South Metropolitan TAFE	87.1%	87.8%	87.7%
South Regional TAFE	90.0%	90.3%	91.7%
State average for TAFEs and WAAPA	87.3%	88.2%	87.5%

Source: OAG from audited annual KPIs

Table 18: Student satisfaction survey results for TAFE students

TAFE graduate achievement and destination ratings

NCVER conducts the student outcomes survey of TAFE graduates annually. The aim of the survey is to measure vocational education and training graduates' employment, further study and other opinions of the training undertaken. Tables 19 and 20 show the results published in 2017, 2018 and 2019 for TAFE graduates who completed their TAFE courses during 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively.

TAFE graduate achievement

The graduate achievement rating is an indicator of the extent to which TAFE graduates consider they have fully or partly achieved their main reason for undertaking their training.

Graduate achievement rating	2017	2018	2019
Central Regional TAFE	89.1%	87.2%	87.7%
North Metropolitan TAFE	79.6%	76.9%	79.0%
North Regional TAFE	90.5%	92.4%	83.3%
South Metropolitan TAFE	81.0%	79.5%	76.8%
South Regional TAFE	86.1%	84.1%	79.6%
TAFE Australia	83.2%	82.1%	81.9%

Source: OAG from audited annual KPIs

Table 19: TAFE graduate achievement survey results

TAFE graduate destination

The graduate destination indicator is the proportion of graduates in employment and shows the extent to which TAFE is providing relevant and quality training that improved graduates' employability.

Graduate destination rating	2017	2018	2019
Central Regional TAFE	80.6%	78.9%	79.3%
North Metropolitan TAFE	66.1%	64.1%	61.2%
North Regional TAFE	88.0%	88.4%	84.4%
South Metropolitan TAFE	73.2%	68.4%	66.3%
South Regional TAFE	74.5%	75.1%	75.3%
TAFE Australia	73.1%	72.4%	71.3%

Source: OAG from audited annual KPIs

Table 20: TAFE graduate destination survey results

Appendix 1: Other audit opinions issued since 5 November 2019

31 December 2018 reporting date Statutory authorities Opinion on financial statements, controls and KPIs	Opinion issued
Legal Contribution Trust – for 6 months ending 31/12/2019	18/03/2020
The Anzac Day Trust	25/03/2020
Western Australian Institute of Sport (01/07/2018 to 31/12/2019)	10/03/2020

Source: OAG

30 June 2019 reporting date – Audits completed since 5 November 2019 Cemetery Boards – audited under the Cemeteries Act 1986 Financial statements only. There is no statutory deadline for the Boards to submit their financial statements for years ending on 30 June	Opinion issued
Albany Cemetery Board	17/12/2019
Bunbury Cemetery Board	12/12/2019
Geraldton Cemetery Board	09/04/2020
Kalgoorlie-Boulder Cemetery Board	10/12/2019
Western Australian Energy Disputes Arbitrator	25/02/2020

Source: OAG

2019 reporting date – Audits completed since 3 March 2020 Local government entities – Auditor's report on financial report	Opinion issued
Shire of Cuballing	13/03/2020
Shire of Kulin	03/04/2020
Shire of Laverton	07/04/2020

Source: OAG

Appendix 2: Certifications issued since 5 November 2019

Unless stated, the following certifications were for the year ended 30 June 2019. The statements prepared by management were confirmed and no adverse reports were issued.

Client	Certification relates to	Date certification issued
Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	Indian Ocean Territories – Service Delivery Arrangements	16/12/2019
Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Western Australia's Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements expenditure claim	31/03/2020
Electricity Generation and Retail Corporation	Compliance with Electricity Corporations (Electricity Generation and Retail Corporation) Regulations 2013, Part 2, Division 3, on Segregation Arrangements for year ended 31 December 2019	25/02/2020
Public Transport Authority of Western Australia	National Partnership Agreement on the Implementation of Major Infrastructure Projects in Western Australia 2014-2019	
western Australia	METRONET: Business Case Development	28/01/2020
	METRONET: Denny Avenue Level Crossing Removal	28/01/2020
	METRONET: Lakelands Business Case	28/01/2020
	METRONET: Thornlie-Cockburn Link	28/01/2020
	METRONET: Yanchep Rail Extension	28/01/2020
	Nicholson Road Grade Separation	28/01/2020

Source: OAG

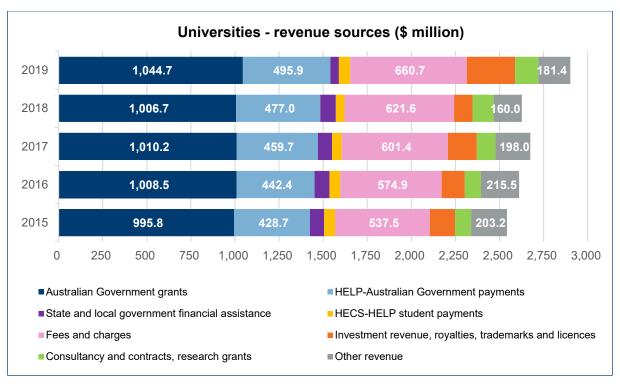
Local government certifications

Local government	Certification relates to	Date certification issued
Shire of York	Claims by administrative authorities - Pensioner deferments under the <i>Rates and Charges (Rebates and Deferments) Act</i> 1992	16/12/2019

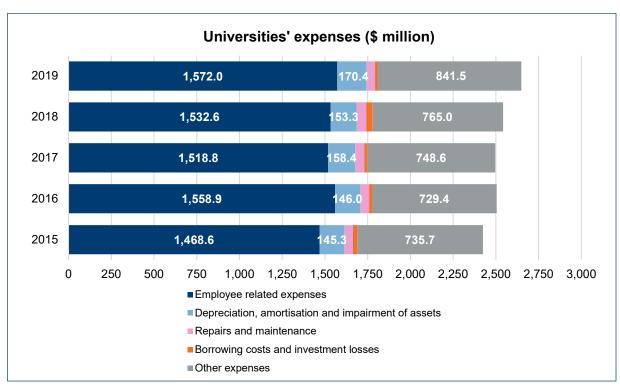
Source: OAG

Appendix 3: Universities' and TAFEs' expenditure and sources of revenue

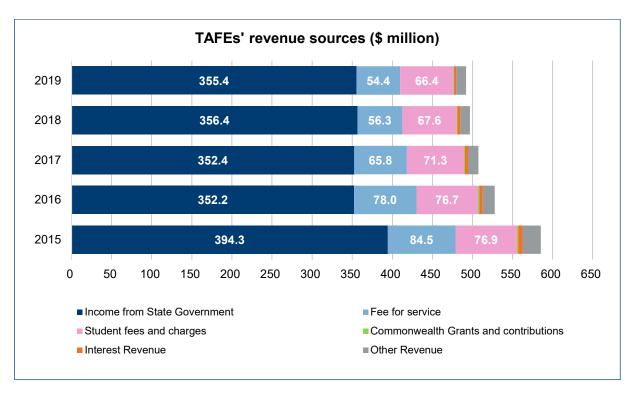
The following breakdown of total revenue sources and total expenses by categories for the past 5 years for the universities and TAFEs are provided for the information of Parliament.



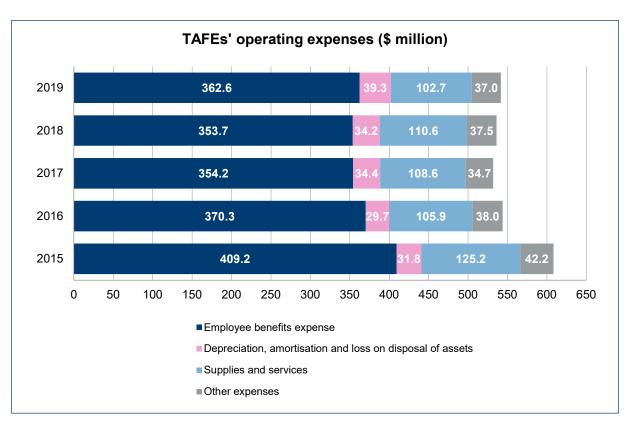
Source: OAG calculated from annual financial statements of universities



Source: OAG calculated from annual financial statements of universities



Source: OAG calculated from annual financial statements of TAFEs



Source: OAG calculated from annual financial statements of TAFEs

Glossary

AG Act Auditor General Act 2006

Clear opinion (or unqualified opinion)

Auditor General's opinion expressed when an audit concludes that in all material respects the financial statements, controls and KPIs are presented fairly in accordance with the enabling legislation of the entity, Australian Accounting Standards (including Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Treasurer's

Instructions, where applicable.

DESE Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, formerly

functions of the Australian Government Department of Education and Training

DPA Delivery and Performance Agreements between each TAFE and the Department

of Training and Workforce Development for training to be delivered

DTWD Western Australian Department of Training and Workforce Development Term used to describe clients audited by the Auditor General, including **Entity**

departments, statutory authorities, corporations, subsidiaries, cemetery boards

and request audits.

EFTSL Equivalent Full Time Study Load – a measure of universities' student enrolments. Financial Work performed to enable an opinion to be expressed regarding a report about audit financial or performance matters prepared by the party who is accountable for the

financial transactions or the performance summary.

FM Act Financial Management Act 2006

IS Information systems, primarily computerised systems.

KPI Key performance indicator – information about service performance or outcome

achievement.

Letter to entity management that conveys significant audit findings and results of Management letter

the audit. A copy is also sent to the responsible Minister.

Materiality Magnitude of an omission or misstatement of accounting or performance

> information that, in the light of context or circumstances, makes it probable that the judgement of a reasonable person relying on the information would have been

changed or influenced.

NCVER National Centre for Vocational Education Research – conducts student outcomes

surveys of VET students, including TAFE students.

OAG Office of the Auditor General

QILT Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching – reports universities' survey results

on behalf of the DESE.

Auditor General's opinion expressed when an audit identifies that the financial Qualified opinion

> statements or KPIs are likely to be misleading to users, controls were inadequate, there was material conflict between applicable financial reporting frameworks, or

an unavoidable limitation on audit work.

SCH Student Curriculum Hours – a measure used by TAFEs for student training hours

delivered.

Relative importance in the circumstances, in relation to audit objectives, of an Significance

item, event or information, variation or problem the auditor identifies.

STP State training providers, restructured as TAFEs in April 2016.

TAFEs from April 2016, previously state training providers. An acronym for **TAFEs**

technical and further education but now used as name for colleges providing

vocational education and training.

Treasurer's Prescribed requirements at a minimum level with respect to financial

Instructions administration that have the force of law and must be observed by public sector

entities under the FM Act, which includes the TAFEs.

Auditor General's reports

Report number	2019-20 reports	Date tabled
20	Local Government Contract Extensions and Variations and Ministerial Notice Not Required	4 May 2020
19	Control of Monies Held for Specific Purposes	30 April 2020
18	Information Systems Audit Report 2020 – State Government Entities	6 April 2020
17	Controls Over Purchasing Cards	27 March 2020
16	Audit Results Report – Annual 2018-19 Financial Audit of Local Government Entities	11 March 2020
15	Opinion on Ministerial Notification	28 February 2020
14	Opinion on Ministerial Notification	31 January 2020
13	Fee-setting by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and Western Australia Police Force	4 December 2019
12	Audit Results Report – Annual 2018-19 Financial Audits of State Government Entities	14 November 2019
11	Opinion on Ministerial Notification	30 October 2019
10	Working with Children Checks – Follow-up	23 October 2019
9	An Analysis of the Department of Health's Data Relating to State-Managed Adult Mental Health Services from 2013 to 2017	9 October 2019
8	Opinions on Ministerial Notifications	8 October 2019
7	Opinion on Ministerial Notification	26 September 2019
6	Opinions on Ministerial Notifications	18 September 2019
5	Fraud Prevention in Local Government	15 August 2019
4	Access to State-Managed Adult Mental Health Services	14 August 2019
3	Delivering Western Australia's Ambulance Services – Follow-up Audit	31 July 2019
2	Opinion on Ministerial Notification	26 July 2019
1	Opinions on Ministerial Notifications	19 July 2019



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