

5 Entry into the pharmacy labour force

It is important to monitor the numbers of pharmacists migrating into and out of Australia and the numbers of pharmacy students being trained, in view of rising rates of prescription dispensing and identified shortages of pharmacists.

5.1 Migration

In 1999–00, 155 overseas pharmacists permanently migrated to Australia. Of these, 52 were from Asia, 34 from the Middle East and Africa, 29 from New Zealand and 16 from the United Kingdom and Ireland (Table A.18). The number of overseas pharmacists coming to Australia temporarily for short-term or long-term employment has increased steadily, from 21 in 1995–96 to 82 in 1999–00 (Table A.17). A further 28 people temporarily migrated for education in 1999–00.

However, many of the pharmacists that migrate to Australia each year do not enter the pharmacy labour force. In pharmacy, permanent migrants must have their qualifications assessed by the Australian Pharmacy Examining Council (APEC) before they are allowed to practise in Australia. Migrants other than those who received their qualifications in New Zealand, the United Kingdom or Ireland must complete APEC's examination procedure, which includes two examinations and a period of supervised practice in an approved pharmacy. Those who are assessed as eligible to practise, and who wish to work in pharmacy, must then apply for registration through a state or territory pharmacy registration board.

The number of overseas-trained pharmacists assessed by the Australian Pharmacy Examining Council (and previously by NOOSR) as eligible to practise in Australia varies from year to year. In recent years it has ranged from 10 in 1996–97 to 33 in 2000–01 (Table 7).

Pharmacists also left Australia. In 1999–00, 47 Australian pharmacists permanently migrated from Australia, most to New Zealand, North and South America and the United Kingdom and Ireland. There were 64 who migrated temporarily overseas for employment for 12 months or more. The most popular destination was the United Kingdom and Ireland (Tables A.18 and A.17).

There were 43 pharmacists from the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand who temporarily came to Australia for short-term or long-term employment, and 45 pharmacists who permanently migrated from these countries. Assuming that these pharmacists, as well as the 34 pharmacists who were assessed by APEC as eligible to practise, applied for registration as pharmacists, there was a gain of 11 pharmacists to the labour force due to permanent or temporary migration in 1999–00. However, in that year there were also 133 Australian pharmacists who returned to Australia after a long-term stay.

Table 7: Assessment of skills of overseas-trained pharmacists for eligibility to practise in Australia, 1995–96 to 2000–01

Sex/assessment	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	1998–99	1999–00	2000–01
Males						
Sat preliminary exam	5	15	35	39	39	61
Passed preliminary exam	2	7	16	26	21	29
Sat final exam	7	8	9	16	23	21
<i>Passed final exam</i>	6	2	4	12	18	13
Females						
Sat preliminary exam	23	28	49	58	58	67
Passed preliminary exam	14	14	20	30	34	45
Sat final exam	23	12	22	22	24	33
<i>Passed final exam</i>	14	8	13	18	16	20
Persons^(a)						
Sat preliminary exam	28	44	84	97	97	128
Passed preliminary exam	16	22	36	56	55	74
Sat final exam	30	20	31	40	47	54
Passed final exam	20	10	17	32	34	33

(a) Includes in some years applicants whose sex was not indicated.

Sources: NOOSR in DETYA and DEST annual reports for 1993–94 to 1998–99; Australian Pharmacy Examining Council Inc., for 1999–00 to 2000–01.

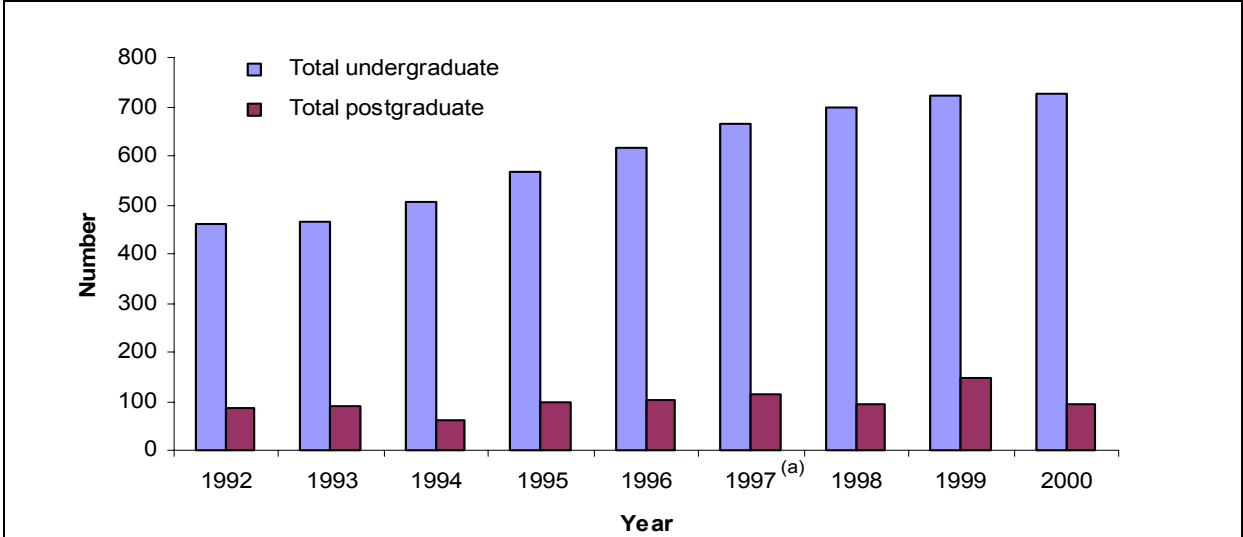
5.2 Education

The number of Australian permanent resident students commencing undergraduate courses has increased steadily, from 463 in 1992 to 727 in 2000, a 57% increase (Table A.19 and Figure 8). The increase is mainly due to the introduction of new pharmacy courses at Northern Territory University, Charles Sturt University and La Trobe University.

The number of students commencing postgraduate courses varies considerably from year to year, with the highest number in 1999 (147 students). This was largely due to a big increase in the number of postgraduate students commencing at Monash University (Table A.20 and Figure 8). Over recent years, the numbers of postgraduate completions by Australian students has remained fairly steady, from 79 in 1997 to 73 in 2000 (Table A.21 and Figure 9).

The proportion of the pharmacy student population who are female has risen over the past decade. In 1995, 58.6% of all students commencing courses were females, and this increased to 65.9% in 2000 (Table A.19). This indicates that the trend towards more women in the pharmacy labour force will continue.

In 2001 there were 34.9 commencing pharmacy students per 100,000 of the population aged between 15 and 24 from capital cities, 36.4 from metropolitan centres, 4.3 from large rural centres, 23.0 from small rural centres, 8.6 from other rural areas and 1.3 from remote areas (Table A.22).

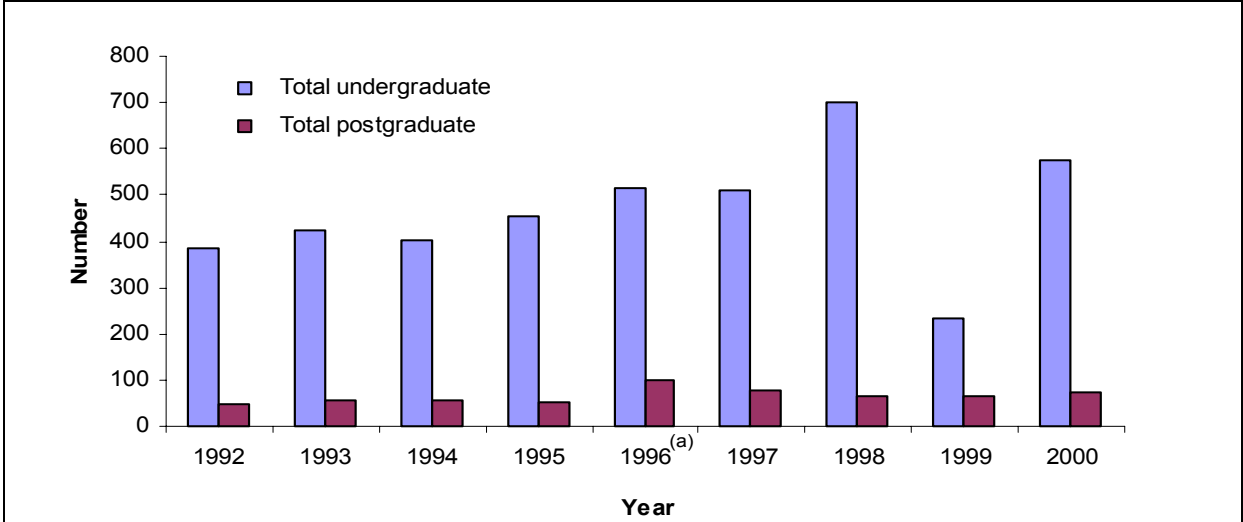


(a) Includes New Zealand citizens, who were included with Australian permanent resident students' data for 1997.

Source: Table A.19.

Figure 8: Australian permanent residents commencing pharmacy courses: course level, year of enrolment, 1992 to 2000

The number of Australian permanent resident pharmacy students completing bachelor degrees has also increased over the past decade. There were 649 course completions in 2000. There was a temporary increase in 1998 and then a decrease in the number of students completing courses in 1999 due to the introduction of an extra year of study for pharmacy undergraduate degrees at University of Queensland, University of South Australia, Monash University and University of Sydney (Table A.21 and Figure 9).



(a) Includes New Zealand citizens, who were included with Australian permanent resident students' data for 1996.

Source: Table A.21.

Figure 9: Australian permanent residents completing pharmacy courses: course level, year of completion, 1992 to 2000

The number of fee-paying overseas students enrolled in undergraduate pharmacy degrees in Australia increased steadily from 212 in 1993 to 337 in 2001, an increase of 91% (Table A.23). More overseas students also enrolled in postgraduate courses over this time, peaking at 56 students in 2001.