

**Part-time Senior Secondary Students in South Australian
Government Secondary Schools: a quantitatively derived picture of
some key characteristics of the students and their schools**

Background paper

for ARC Linkage research project

*“Pathways or Cul-de-Sacs:
the causes, impact and implications
of part-time senior secondary study”*

**Prepared for the South Australian Department of
Education and Children’s Services**

**By Professor Eleanor Ramsay
Adjunct Professor
Hawke Research Institute for Sustainable Societies
University of South Australia**

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Executive summary

1 Introduction

This study was conducted in 2004 and involved gathering and analysing quantitative data¹ with respect to part-time senior secondary students in DECS schools. It was undertaken to provide a broad quantitatively based picture of these students, in terms of the schools in which they are located, including their schools' geographic location and level of educational disadvantage,² as well as key characteristics of the students themselves such as their ages, their gender, and whether or not they are Indigenous or have a disability.

The intention was to increase understanding of the nature of senior secondary part-time study in the context of the relatively low secondary retention rates in this State³ and the comparatively large number of South Australian students who study in this way in their final years of secondary education.⁴ In particular, the Research Reference Group⁵ was seeking indications as to whether the varying rates, concentrations and patterns of dispersal of part-time students across the State reflect characteristics of the students themselves, or of their schools' educational policies and practices, or some combination of these factors.

In addition, the Research Reference Group was keen to gain insights into the relationship, if any, between part-time senior secondary study and, variously, levels of educational disadvantage, SACE completion rates, part-time Year 13 study, and retention to the end of secondary schooling. Behind these various dimensions of the research lay questions about why and by whom the decision is being made to study part-time, the school or the students; about whether it is a constrained choice determined by the other demands on students, or a positive educational strategy by schools to adapt educational provision to the realities of their lives; whether it enables increased student engagement with senior secondary education or instead reflects an absence of or diminishment of engagement, and low aspirations by their teachers, their parents and the students themselves; and whether part-time study enables students to complete secondary education who might otherwise leave school or instead is masking their slow slide to failure.

¹ Predominantly from DECS census data for various years as well as a limited amount of significant data from SSABSA re SACE patterns of engagement reflecting part-time study and comparative SACE completion data for part-time and full-time DECS students.

² As measured by their schools' level on the DECS's Index of Educational Disadvantage, as explained at footnote 6

³ SA's 2001 apparent retention rates (from year 7/8 to year 12) were the second to lowest nationally after the NT at 66.4% nationally overall, and 60.4% for male students and 72.5% for female (each also the second to lowest).

Recent work by Richard Teese et al for MCEETYA adjusts these apparent retention rates for factors which impact differentially on the data in the various states and territories (such as different numbers of part-time students, cross-border students, mature aged students and population changes, as well as for remoteness, SES, Indigenous, and relevant sector and policy differences). SA's final adjusted retention rate remains second to lowest nationally after all these factors have been included in the calculation, moving even closer to the lowest rates in the NT.

⁴ SA has the third to highest rates of part-time students at years 11 and 12, based on ABS data for 2001. At 17% this rate is nearly four times the national average, three times the WA rate, and 6-7 times the rate for Queensland, Victoria and NSW. Only the NT and Tasmania have higher rates and the ACT has virtually no such students. It should be noted however that different definitions of what constitutes part-time study are used in different parts of Australia so that current comparisons are inaccurate and may well over-state SA's share compared to other states and territories.

⁵ See Appendix 2 on page 15 for the membership of the Research Reference Group

2 Data summary

The data sets which formed the evidence base for this research are summarised immediately below, and listed in more detail in Appendix 1.⁶ Each provided useful insights into various aspects of the patterns of part-time study at the senior secondary level, and the relationship between that pattern and factors which may be relevant to the decision to study part-time, such as students' ages and the level of educational disadvantage of school attended.

The following sections provide an overview of key dimensions of the data and a summary of what can be inferred from the detailed analysis of each data set which was conducted by the Research Reference Group.

In brief this data provides a quantitative picture of part-time senior secondary students in DECS schools in recent years, by means of the following data slices:

- ❑ Numbers and concentrations of students aged 15-17 for the years 2001 to 2004 – all part-time students by school
- ❑ Numbers and concentrations of students in two age groupings, under the age of 20 and 20 years and older for 2003 – Year 11 and Year 12 part-time students by school
- ❑ Demographic characteristics of part-time students in 2002 and 2003 – their sex, their ages, whether or not they have a disability, and whether or not they are Indigenous
- ❑ Year 13 students in 2003 - full-time and part-time students by school
- ❑ International students for the year 2003 - by school
- ❑ Students completing some full and part time SACE studies (but not necessarily their SACE) in 2003 - by school
- ❑ Students who completed their SACE in 2003 – part-time and full-time students by school

Although some of the early data related to a range of years and ages, the majority of the data and the majority of this analysis concentrate on the year 2003 and on the two age groupings used in much DECS' data, that is, under 20 years and 20 years and over.

The DECS' Index of Educational Disadvantage⁷ was used to analyse socio-economic dimensions of the schools in which part-time students are particularly concentrated, and aggregations were also made at the state-wide level according to the two age groupings of part-time students and at the two senior year levels, Year 11 and Year 12.

The 18 DECS' Districts were also inserted in some of the analysis, for the interest of departmental officers and school personnel, but this did not prove to be very enlightening with regard to the key research questions being investigated.

To identify those DECS schools reflecting particular characteristics in terms of part-time study at the senior years, the following dimensions were explored:

- Schools with the largest numbers of part-time students aged 15 to 17 years between 2001 and 2004
- Schools with the largest numbers of 2003 part-time Year 11 students under 20 years
- Schools with the largest numbers of 2003 part-time Year 12 students under 20 years

⁶ Page 14

⁷ The Index of Educational Disadvantage was developed in 2000, using a combination of departmental and ABS data. It groups all DECS schools into one of seven ranks of educational disadvantage based on four measures: parental income; parental education and occupation; Aboriginality; and student mobility.

- Schools with the largest numbers of 2003 part-time Year 11 students 20 years and older
- Schools with the largest numbers of 2003 part-time Year 12 students 20 years and older
- Schools with the majority of part-time students in 2003, taking both year levels and all ages together
- Schools with the largest numbers of 2003 part-time students in Year 11, taking all ages together
- Schools with the largest numbers of 2003 part-time students in Year 12, taking all ages together
- Schools with the largest numbers of students completing part-time SACE studies in 2003

3 Overall picture of part-time senior secondary students in DECS' schools

Concentration in certain schools

It is significant that there is a very high and consistent level of overlap between six or seven schools which rank highly with respect to the various dimensions listed above (relating to the overall representation of part-time senior secondary students in DECS schools between 2001 and 2003 inclusively), as follows:

- Four specialist adult re-entry schools are amongst the top six or seven schools with respect to every one of the nine dimensions listed above
- One urban and one rural high school each appear in the top group of schools for more than half of these nine dimensions of part-time senior secondary study, reflecting the very large numbers of older part-time students at the urban school and of younger ones at the rural institution.

Nevertheless, it is a mistake to infer from the concentration of part-time students in a relatively small number of schools that part-time senior secondary study in DECS schools is limited to (and perhaps caused by) the specialist adult re-entry schools and the Open Access College. As discussed below,⁸ there are a significant number of part-time senior secondary students beyond those schools in which they are highly concentrated, especially for the younger cohort. Younger students made up the majority of the part-time students in this study, and they are represented across a very large number of schools, particularly at Year 12 level. And the younger students in Year 12 were not only the least concentrated in those few schools, but were also the largest cohort by far. Thus while large numbers of the younger part-time students are concentrated in just six schools, they are also represented, sometimes in large cohorts, in some 64 other schools at Year 11 and in 93 other schools at Year 12 level.

Age characteristics

This high degree of concentration in a very few schools holds true for part-time students in both of the age groupings represented throughout this study; that is, under 20 years and 20 years and over. There are some significant differences by age and by year level however, with most of the older part-time students being in Year 11 and most of the younger part-time students being in Year 12. Whereas the overwhelming majority of younger students are full-time⁹ the reverse is true for older students, 87% of whom were part-time in 2003. Nevertheless, overall younger part-time students outnumber older part-time students¹⁰ particularly in Year 12. In addition, older

⁸ See page 9 below under the heading "Younger part-time senior secondary students – other key findings"

⁹ 87% of students aged between 15 and 19 years were full-time in 2003

¹⁰ 57% of all part-time students in DECS schools in 2003 were between 15 and 19 years old whereas 43% were 20 years or older

part-time students are much more highly concentrated, with the younger part-time students being represented in a far larger number and wider range of schools¹¹ and geographic locations.

Socio-economic characteristics of part-time senior secondary students

Part-time senior secondary students are many times more likely to be studying in schools which are relatively disadvantaged and even less likely to be studying in schools which are relatively advantaged – that is, they are over-represented in schools at the lowest two levels of the DECS' Index of Educational Disadvantage and under-represented in those at the highest two levels. This is true for students at both the Year 11 and Year 12 levels, and in both age groupings, although older students are both much more highly concentrated at the lowest levels and all but completely absent from schools at the highest levels of the Index.

Geographic location

Most of the senior secondary students in this study are located in metropolitan schools, which is not surprising given their very high level of concentration in the metropolitan based Open Access College and four specialist adult re-entry schools. However a range of country schools also had relatively significant groupings of part-time students, especially the younger ones and especially at Year 12 level. There are eleven country schools amongst the list of some 37 schools (beyond the initial six with huge concentrations) having relatively high numbers of younger part-time students at the Year 12 level

Other key demographic dimensions

Part-time senior students are more likely to be female than male¹² and their higher proportions and larger numbers are more marked amongst the older grouping of part-time senior students.¹³ Female part-time students are more heavily represented amongst the older students found in the four specialist adult re-entry schools and at the lowest levels of the Index of Educational Disadvantage.

Indigenous students are not highly represented in the DECS data on part-time senior students used for this study, although it is unclear whether this reflects their small numbers at this level of education, the accuracy of the data, or the extent to which they are actually studying part-time. Nevertheless the Indigenous students who are represented in the part-time data are more likely to be female than male. This is the case for Indigenous students to a greater extent than for all students, perhaps reflecting the higher attrition rates of male Indigenous students and/or the more demanding family, community and kinship responsibilities of female Indigenous students.

Students with a disability are not particularly highly represented amongst the part-time senior secondary data, and this is the case whether or not they are attending a special school or a high school.

¹¹ 72 schools at Year 11 and 99 at Year 12

¹² 61% of all part-time students were female in 2003

¹³ Whereas 65% of the older group of part-time students were female this drops to 58% for the younger group (defined as 15-19 year olds for this particular calculation)

4 Research findings

Educational disadvantage and part-time study

There is a strong and consistent correlation between part-time senior secondary study and attending a school ranked at the lowest two levels of the Index of Educational Disadvantage, and this is true for the various ages and year levels of the students who are the subjects of this study. And the same students, to differing extents, are also under-represented in the relatively advantaged schools at the highest two levels of the Index, in comparison with full-time students at the same year level and in the same age grouping. Analysis of the series of data sets listed in Appendix 1 below consistently confirmed this pattern and revealed its varying dimensions for the different groupings of students. Overall the results of these analyses give a clear and unambiguous confirmation of the relationship between the level of the Index of Educational Disadvantage of schools attended and the likelihood of part-time study, particularly with respect to the lowest and highest two levels of the Index.

In brief, these data show that:

- Part-time students 15-17 years old are more than twice as likely to be in schools at the lowest two levels of the Index compared with full-time students, throughout the period 2001 to 2004
- Schools with a higher than average proportion of part-time Year 12 students under 20 years of age, in the year 2003, were more likely to be at the three most disadvantaged levels of the Index and less likely to be at the most advantaged two levels of the Index compared with all DECS schools
- Twice as many of the schools with the largest numbers and highest proportions of 2003 part-time Year 11 and part-time Year 12 students, both under 20 years and 20 years and older, were at the lowest two levels of the Index compared with all DECS schools; and they were also considerably less likely to be at the highest two levels of the Index than all DECS schools
- All part-time Year 11 students in 2003, regardless of their ages, were more than twice as likely to have attended a school at the lowest two levels of the Index than their full-time counterparts; and all full-time Year 11 students, also regardless of their ages, were twelve times as likely to have attended a school at the highest two levels of the Index than the part-time students
- Similarly, all part-time Year 12 students in 2003, regardless of their ages, were more than twice as likely to have attended a school at the lowest two levels of the Index than their full-time counterparts; and all full-time Year 12 students, also regardless of their ages, were more than twice as likely to have attended a school at the highest two levels of the Index than the part-time students
- In comparison to 2003 full-time SACE completing students, part-time SACE completing students¹⁴ were more than twice as likely to be located in schools at the lowest two levels of the Index, and those with bigger numbers of such students (20 or more) were even slightly more likely to be disadvantaged than the rest of the schools with part-time SACE completing students; and these same schools with part-time SACE completing students were less likely to be at the highest two levels of the Index than schools with full-time SACE completing students in 2003

¹⁴ That is, students who were studying less than 10 SACE units in the year they completed their SACE

Older senior secondary students and educational disadvantage

Analyses of the various 2003 data sets which differentiated students by the two age groupings (the younger group under 20 years and the older grouping of students 20 years and older) indicate that, along with the level of educational disadvantage of school attended, the other highly significant and related variable is the age of part-time students. Compared to the younger cohort of students, the older part-time students at both year levels are more highly concentrated in the more disadvantaged schools at the lowest two levels of the Index and are almost entirely absent from the more advantaged schools at the highest two levels of the Index.

In addition, this concentration of the older students in disadvantaged schools and their absence from the more advantaged schools applies to both full-time and part-time older students, differentiating them significantly from the younger cohort of students for whom this pattern only applies to part-time students. Taking Year 11 and Year 12 together, and looking at both part-time and full-time students in DECS schools in 2003, the older students are concentrated heavily in schools at the lowest two levels of the Index, being more than three times as likely to attend a disadvantaged school compared with younger students. And their under-representation at the highest levels of the Index is even more marked, with older students being forty times less likely to attend the relatively advantaged schools at these levels compared with their younger peers.

Looking at years 11 and 12, the similarity of the representation of part-time and full-time older students (in terms of their high concentrations in the lowest two levels of the Index and virtual absence from any schools at the highest two levels) is greater for the much larger cohort of such students at Year 11 than the significantly reduced cohort at Year 12.

Thus in 2003, the data shows as follows:

- At Year 11, both full-time and part-time older students were overwhelmingly concentrated in schools at the lowest two levels of educational disadvantage, and approaching three times as likely as younger students to attend a disadvantaged school, whether or not they were full-time or part-time
- and similarly, at Year 11, both full-time and part-time older students were almost entirely absent from schools at the most advantaged two levels of the Index, contrasting with more than a third of all DECS students in Year 11 who attended such schools
- At Year 12, while both part-time and full-time older students are many times more likely to attend schools at the lowest two levels of the Index of Educational Disadvantage, this relationship was several percentage points greater for the part-time students
- and similarly, while the older students in Year 12 were many times less likely to attend a school at the highest two levels of the Index, this was even less likely for part-time than full-time students by several percentage points

Older senior secondary students – other key findings

While the majority of part-time senior students are female, they are more highly represented amongst the older than the younger part-time students.¹⁵ There are many more older part-time students in Year 11 than younger part-time students, and the opposite is true at Year 12 level where the younger part-time students significantly outnumber the older part-time students. And this change in the ratio of older to younger students is due not only to the dramatic increase in the numbers of the younger part-time student in Year 12,¹⁶ but to an equally dramatic decline in

¹⁵ 65% of the older part-time students compared with 58% of the younger part-time students were female in 2003

¹⁶ In 2003 there were 708 younger part-time students in Year 11 and 2,225 in Year 12

the numbers of the older part-time students between Year 11 and Year 12.¹⁷ Thus while the numbers of younger part-time students trebled between years 11 and 12, they reduce by almost half for the older part-time students.

In 2003 the overwhelming majority of the older part-time students were located within a group of six schools at both Year 11 and Year 12 level. Equally significant is that this halving of the numbers of the older part-time students between the two senior year levels occurs almost entirely in these same six schools, with their numbers remaining stable in the 20 to 30 other schools with older part-time students.¹⁸

Comparison of the concentrations of part-time senior secondary students by age

As noted above, both the younger and the older part-time students are highly concentrated in a relatively small group of schools at both Year 11 and Year 12 level, but there are some interesting differences as well.

In 2003, taking students in both age groups together, a very large majority of the part-time students in both the senior years were in only seven schools (i.e., 85 percent of Year 11 part-time students and 70 percent of those in Year 12).

Yet, in 2003 there were also considerable variations in the concentration of part-time senior secondary students noted above for the younger as compared to the older part-time students.

Firstly, the older part-time students are even more highly concentrated in a few schools than the younger students:

- For the older part-time students, in Year 11 over 90 percent of that much larger cohort were located in the four adult re-entry schools, one particular urban school and the Open Access College, and 85 percent of the smaller cohort in Year 12 were in the same schools
- For the younger part-time students, their concentration in the four adult re-entry schools, the Open Access College and one particular rural school is almost 70 percent for the small cohort in Year 11 and a little under half for the significantly larger cohort in Year 12

Secondly, and as a result, in 2003 the younger part-time students were located in many more and a wider variety of schools and locations than the older part-time students:

- The older part-time students were located in 26 schools in Year 11 and 36 schools in Year 12
- The younger part-time students were located in 72 schools in Year 11 and 99 schools in Year 12

¹⁷ In 2003 there were 1,417 older part-time students in Year 11 and 734 in Year 12

¹⁸ Beyond their initial concentration in these six schools, in 2003 there were 113 older part-time students in Year 11 and 114 in Year 12, located in another 30 and 20 schools respectively

Younger part-time senior secondary students – other key findings

Amongst the 15-17 year old cohorts across the years 2001 to 2004, several schools had higher numbers and percentages of part-time students in this age range than some of the adult re-entry schools. And the very large cohort of the younger part-time students in 2003 are represented in some 66 schools at Year 11 level and 93 schools at Year 12 level beyond the group of six in which they are highly concentrated, with significant numbers (20 to 50) in some 25 of the latter.

Further, while the students completing part-time SACE studies in 2003 were also concentrated in a small group of schools (the Open Access College, the four adult re-entry schools and another four other schools with significant adult re-entry cohorts), their concentration in these schools is much less marked¹⁹ than for the part-time Year 12 students of the same age and in the same year, with 90 percent of the part-time SACE completers being spread across half of the total number of DECS schools.

Not only do the numbers of the younger part-time senior students increase dramatically between years 11 and 12 (as noted above), but at the same time their representation spreads across a much larger number of schools, with just under a hundred schools having some of the younger part-time senior secondary students in 2003. This much wider distribution is especially marked for the very much larger cohort in Year 12, with another 25 schools in 2003 having sizeable cohorts²⁰ of students beyond the six in which they were so highly concentrated. In contrast, the older part-time students are only represented in significant numbers in a handful of other schools beyond their concentration in the few schools noted above.

Further, this increase in the numbers of the younger part-time students between years 11 and 12 is even greater in the larger number of schools beyond the six in which they are highly concentrated. Thus although their numbers in these same six schools increase by nearly three times, in the 93 other schools in which they are located in Year 12 their numbers increase by more than five times. In addition their representation beyond the six schools spreads from 66 other schools in Year 11 to 93 other schools in Year 12.

Given the very large concentrations of both older and younger part-time students in a small handful of schools, it is very important to note this difference in the representation and spread of the younger part-time students and also the very large size of their overall cohort in Year 12 – more than the size of the total part-time Year 11 cohort taking both age groups together. Otherwise the impact of the former may give the misleading impression that the nature of part-time senior secondary study in South Australian DECS schools is a phenomenon limited (and perhaps caused by) the existence of the specialist adult re-entry schools and the Open Access College. In fact, as outlined above, the majority of part-time senior students are at Year 12 level, and the majority of the part-time Year 12 students are in the younger age grouping. And despite a significant concentration in only six schools, they are also represented in significant numbers in a large number and wide range of other schools beyond this group.

Geographic location of part-time senior secondary students

While the proportions of part-time senior students in non-metropolitan schools can be very high, their numbers overall are small. Thus country schools feature in those schools with very high proportions of part-time senior students in the age range 15-17 years old, and in each case these schools have very few students at this level. And although only four percent of the part-time

¹⁹ 22% of the part-time SACE completers were located in these school compared to 50% of part-time Year students in the same year (2003)

²⁰ 20 to 50 students

Year 12 students under 20 years were in the Area, District and Community schools, their proportions in these schools were close to half of all of their students at this year level.

Given their extremely high concentration in six metropolitan schools, it is not surprising that there are only three country schools with more than a handful of older part-time students. The younger part-time students at both Year 11 and Year 12 level are many times more likely to be studying at country schools than the older part-time students, although (with one exception) none of these schools have more than a modest number of part-time (or any) senior secondary students. Because of the far greater numbers of younger part-time students at Year 12 level, there are a significant number of country schools (10 out of 37) in the second ranking group of schools with relatively large numbers of part-time senior students (beyond the group of six with exceptionally large numbers).

Year 13 part-time students

- and part-time SACE completing students

The suggestion that many or even most of the part-time DECS SACE completing students may be Year 13 students repeating to improve their SACE outcomes is not confirmed by the data in this study. In 2003, at the very most, about one-third of the successful part-time SACE completing students may have been in Year 13, while at least double this were part-time Year 12 students presumably attempting SACE completion for the first time.

- and educational disadvantage/advantage

Full-time Year 13 students appear to be more educationally disadvantaged than part-time Year 13 students, and there are about twice as many part-time Year 13 students than full-time Year 13 students.

Taking full and part-time students together, Year 13 students in DECS schools in 2003 were more highly concentrated in schools at the lowest levels of the Index of Educational Disadvantage and less likely to be in the more advantaged schools at the highest two levels than other senior secondary students in years 11 and 12.

However, amongst the Year 13 students, it was the full-time but not the part-time students who accounted for their concentration in schools at the lowest two levels of the Index. Indeed the part-time Year 13 students were just as likely to be in the more advantaged schools (at the highest two levels of the Index) as the younger part-time senior secondary students in years 11 and 12, and significantly more likely to be in those relatively advantaged schools than the older part-time students in years 11 and 12.

This reversal of the level of educational disadvantage of the full-time and part-time Year 13 students compared to their fellow students in years 11 and 12 poses interesting questions. For example, the reason that the part-time Year 13 students are less educationally disadvantaged than the full-time Year 13 students may be that the former are topping up their scores from already completed SACEs rather than repeating in an effort to complete: that is, the greater educational disadvantage of the full-time Year 13 students may be explained by them being genuine repeaters struggling to complete an unsatisfactory outcome from the previous year.

International students and part-time senior secondary students

There is little correlation between schools with large numbers of international students and those with significant proportions or large numbers of part-time Year 12 students.²¹ This finding indicates that international students who are undertaking part-time studies at their home school and English as a Second Language Studies elsewhere are not having a particularly marked effect on the numbers, concentrations or distribution of part-time senior secondary students.

5 Key research and policy questions for future analysis

A number of interesting policy and research questions arise from these outcomes, some of which are suggested below.

1. Is the difference in the level of part-time senior secondary study in South Australian schools compared with other parts of Australia (other than Tasmania and the Northern Territory) largely due to the existence of specialist adult-re-entry secondary schools and the Open Access College? Are adult and returning students in other systems included in their data for overall numbers and proportions of part-time senior students in the ABS data. If not, are the South Australian proportions of full-time and part-time students more comparable with the rest of Australia if the part-time students in these specialist schools are separated out – particularly if these comparisons are made using the same definitions of part-time?
2. Why do otherwise similar schools have such different concentrations and numbers of part-time senior students? Why do some schools have no part-time senior students and others modest numbers while still others have very large numbers and concentrations, especially when such schools seem otherwise similar in terms of their sizes and locations and socio-economic make-up? Is there something different about the characteristics of their students or are there differences in school policies, structures and processes operating to produce such outcomes?
3. What is happening in those otherwise similar schools with very different part-time SACE completion rates? For example, some of the school coupled for comparative purposes²² show one of the pairs having many times more part-time completers than the other pair, this difference being such that it is not explained by the larger numbers of part-time students in the one compared to the other. Is this due to differences in attitude and policies towards part-time students and/or differences in aspirations for them among school staff? Or is it explained by characteristics of part-time students and their reasons for studying part-time?
4. What is the relationship between part-time senior secondary study and retention and engagement at these levels of schooling? Is it the availability of part-time study or the school's approach to part-time study or students' reasons for part-time study which determines this relationship?

²¹ See page 24 below

²² Schools were selected which were alike in some relevant respects (eg size and socio-economic composition) to the twenty schools already identified as having **both** a significant number (20 or more) of part-time SACE completers in 2003 **and** above the DECS' average for part-time indicative SACE completion rates. The coupled schools were then compared in terms of their numbers and proportions of part-time students and their indicative SACE completion rates. (The term "indicative completion rates" is used to indicate the need for caution in drawing any firm conclusions from these rates given that they were calculated using DECS's and SSABSA data which, for a range of reasons, are not directly comparable.)

5. Are students choosing to study part-time or are schools encouraging them to study in this way, or both? What are the characteristics of students who are making this choice, and what are their reasons for doing so? And what are the structures, processes and policy frameworks within schools which encourage or support or permit this type of senior study?
6. Should we be concentrating on students who are studying their SACE part-time or students who are part-time in terms of their school study load (FTE)? If both are of interest, what sort of data do we need to separate and compare the two types of part-time study?
7. Why do a number of schools have more part-time SACE completing students than part-time senior secondary students (and so indicative part-time completion rates in some cases above 100 percent)? Is this due to the different definitions for part-time students (and different timing of data collection) used by SSABSA and DECS? In any case, what is the relationship for students between attending school part-time and undertaking a part-time SACE load?
8. Although the necessary data was not available at the time of this study, it would be of great interest to compare the SACE completion rates of part-time and full-time students in the same schools – perhaps choosing and comparing schools with large numbers of part-time students and others with modest numbers which otherwise share similar characteristics.
9. Why do the numbers of part-time older students drop so dramatically between years 11 and 12, and why is this change concentrated entirely in the four adult re-entry schools and the Open Access College, with their numbers remaining stable in the 20-30 schools which also have some part-time older students in years 11 and 12? Are there a large number of mature aged students in the adult re-entry schools for whom Stage 1 SACE studies are more a form of community education than reflecting any intention to complete their SACE, whereas the adult students scattered in other high schools are undertaking Stage 1 units for this purpose?
10. Why are full-time Year 13 students more likely to attend educationally disadvantaged schools than part-time Year 13 students, the opposite to their fellow students in years 11 and 12? Are there significant differences in the circumstances and reasons for these full-time and part-time students being in Year 13? For example, are the full-time Year 13 students repeating in an effort to complete an unsuccessful SACE attempt from the previous year, whereas the part-time Year 13 students are in Year 13 to improve on their already completed SACE?

Appendix 1 Some details of the data

1. Overview

With one exception, all data relates to students in DECS schools, and is derived either from DECS census data returns or from the SSABSA database. The exception is the data extracted from the SSABSA Board paper on SACE engagement patterns²³ which relates to all students in the State who commenced SACE studies in the year 2000.²⁴

It should be noted that some students are recorded in this data as part-time in more than one site (eg the Open Access College and their home school) when they are in fact studying a full-time load. It should also be noted that DECS data from 2005 onwards will not be comparable with the data reports analysed in this report due to changes in data collection methodologies.

The data was provided and analysed in stages, with data requests at each successive stage being guided by discussion and analysis of the data already provided at meetings of the Research Reference Group,²⁵ as follows:

- Part-time students aged 15-17 years, for the years 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004, by school, by DECS Region, and by the DECS 2004 Index of Educational Disadvantage; total numbers and percentages of part-time students by school; and changes in numbers per annum – DECS February enrolment census data; *the first data set discussed below at pages 19 to 26*
- Part-time and full-time Year 12 students under the age of 20, for 2003 only; numbers and percentage of 15-17 year old part-time students for each school; and including international students by school - DECS mid year enrolment census data; *the second data sets discussed below at pages 26 to 33*
- Students in DECS schools who completed part-time or full-time SACE studies (but not necessarily completing their SACE), for the year 2003 only, numbers and percentages by DECS schools – SSABSA data; *also in the second data sets discussed below at pages 26 to 33*
- Part-time students by age, from 14 years to 20 years and above (as at July 1), for the years 2002 and 2003, by school; and including students' sex, Indigenous students, and students with a disability – DECS mid year enrolment census data; *also included in the second data set, and discussed below at page 32 below*
- Part-time Year 11 and Year 12 students, under 20 years old and aged 20 years and over, for 2003 only, by school; and including international students - DECS mid year enrolment census data; *the third data sets discussed below at pages 33 to 45*
- Part-time and full-time DECS students who completed their SACE in the year 2003, by DECS school²⁶ – SSABSA data; *the fourth and final data sets discussed below at pages 45 to 53*
- Part-time and full-time Year 13 students in DECS schools, for 2003 only, by school - DECS August 2003 census data; *the fourth and final data sets discussed below at pages 45 to 53*

²³ Initially considered by the Board at its meeting on May 26 2004 (Item 9.2), and subsequently included in the Board papers for meetings on June 23 2004 (Item 6.1) and July 21 2004 (Item 6.1)

²⁴ See pages 45-47 below for discussion of the data from the SSABSA Board paper

²⁵ Meetings of the Research Reference Group were convened by Ms Wendy Engliss, Curriculum Superintendent, Senior Years, on April 19, May 24, June 7, July 26, August 16, and October 26, 2004. An additional meeting was held between the Researcher and Ms Tanya Rogers, Superintendent Futures Connect and Ms Wendy Engliss on October 6th 2004 to determine the extent and nature of the final analysis. Further communication between the researcher and members of the Reference Group occurred by email between meetings.

²⁶ Note that the provision of this data to the researcher was on the basis of an agreement which included confidentiality protocols with respect to data relating to (and identifying) individual schools and so can only be reported at aggregate level in this report

A range of tables was constructed from each of the data sets, aggregating and comparing the numbers and percentages of part-time students in DECS schools in various ways, and exploring the variables detailed above. These tables were discussed by the Research Reference Group, guided by analytical notes and questions for discussion and further research. This stepped process of data gathering and analysis, discussion and questioning, leading to further data gathering and digging down into existing data, progressively built up the Reference Group's understanding of some of the key dimensions of part-time senior secondary study in DECS schools in South Australia. The sequential and accumulative picture derived from this process is outlined in the full report of this research study.

Appendix 2 Research Reference Group

Chair

Wendy Engliss Curriculum Superintendent, Senior Years, Department of Education and Children's Services

Members

Deborah Brown Research Team Leader, Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia

Tassi Georgiadis Manager, Data and Analysis Services, Department of Education and Children's Services

Virginia Gill Education Adviser, Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Jan Kelly Assistant Principal, Senior Secondary School, Open Access College, Department of Education and Children's Services

Bronte Nicholls Policy & Program Officer, Senior Years Strategy, Department of Education and Children's Services

Helen Tunbridge Superintendent, Social Inclusion, Department of Education and Children's Services

Tanya Rogers Superintendent, Futures Connect, Department of Education and Children's Services

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