

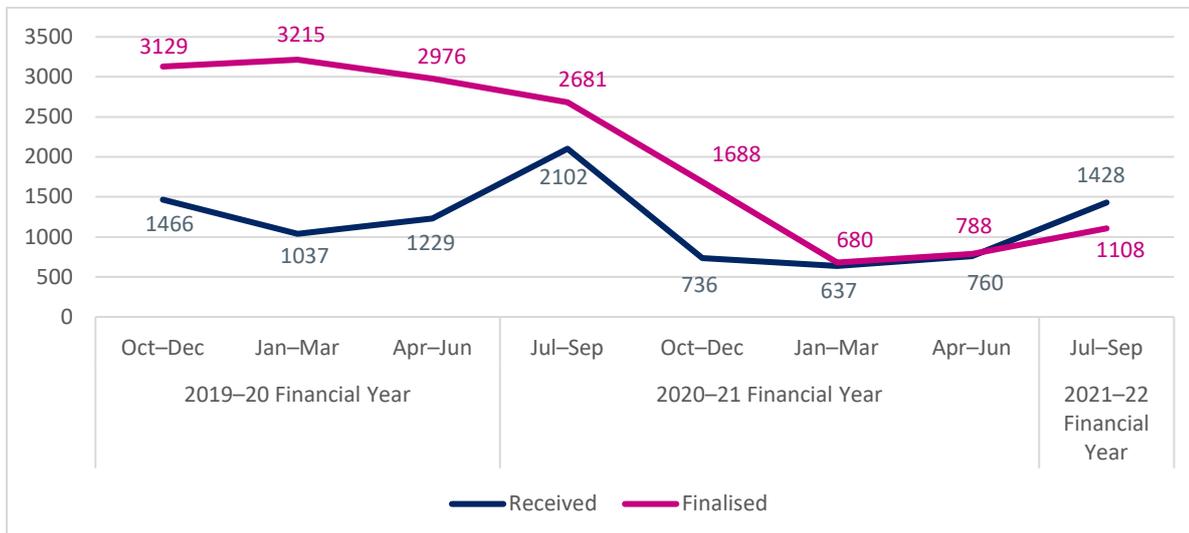
Quarterly Update: 1 July–30 September 2021

VET FEE-HELP

Between 1 July and 30 September 2021, the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office) received 1,428 VET FEE-HELP complaints. This was a 32 per cent decrease compared to the same period last year, when we received 2,102 complaints.

During this quarter, we finalised 1,108 complaints, which was a 59 per cent decrease compared to the 2,681 complaints we finalised in the same period last year. The current caseload includes a higher proportion of complaints about providers that are still operating or responding to contact, which means they are more complex and take longer to finalise.

Figure 1: VET FEE-HELP complaints received and finalised



VET FEE-HELP Student Redress Measures

The [Student Redress Measures](#) will close to new complainants from 1 January 2023. There is a risk that some eligible complainants may miss the deadline to have their debt considered under the Redress Measures because they are not aware they have a VET FEE-HELP debt or do not know they can make a complaint to our Office. To reduce this risk, the Office is working with the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) to raise awareness of the Office’s role in handling these complaints and highlight the importance of students contacting the Office by 31 December 2022.

As of 30 September 2021, the Office had recommended DESE re-credit VET FEE-HELP debts for 10,948 complaints comprising 63,138 units of study. The total value of this debt was \$171.29 million, consisting of \$142.87 million in tuition fees and \$28.42 million in loan fees.

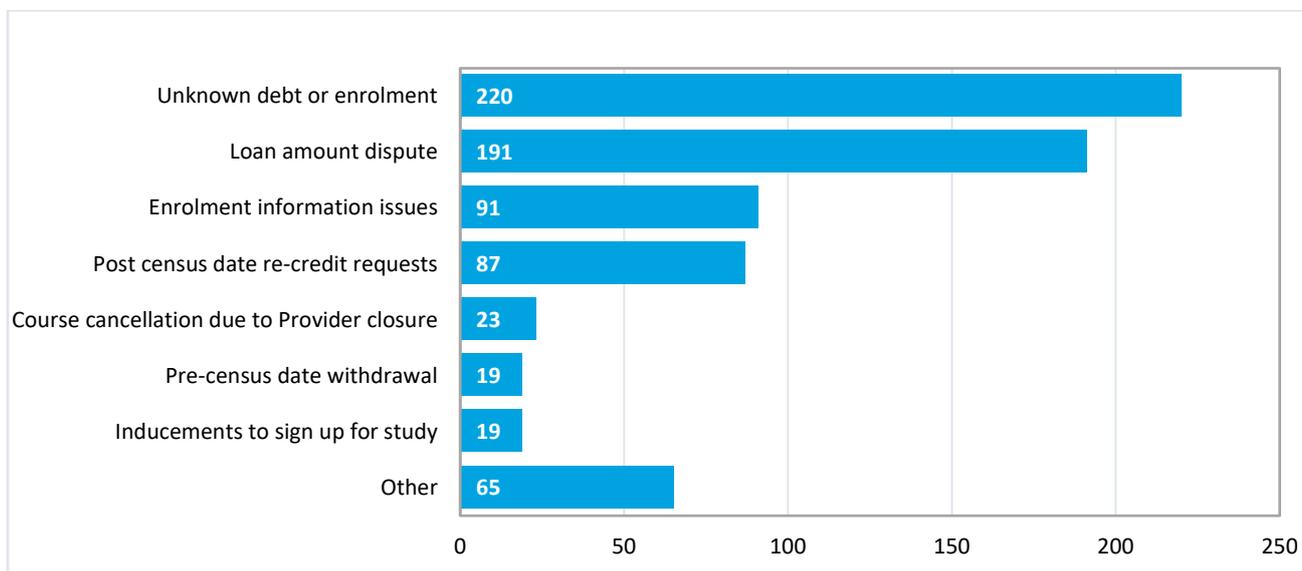
In addition to making individual recommendations, the Office continues to work with DESE to develop Secretary Initiated Actions (SIAs). These enable DESE to make re-credits for multiple students at once and, as of 30 September 2021, had resulted in more than \$3.0 billion dollars being re-credited to students.

On 30 September 2021, the Office had 1,730 open VET FEE-HELP complaints, a 32 per cent increase compared to 1,314 open complaints on 30 June 2021. The Office is investing additional resources to progress these assessments and continues to work with DESE to develop potential new SIAs.

VET FEE-HELP complaint issues

Figure 2 below shows the type and number of issues we identified in VET FEE-HELP complaints we assessed during the quarter.

Figure 2: Issues in VET FEE-HELP complaints received and assessed during 1 July–30 September 2021



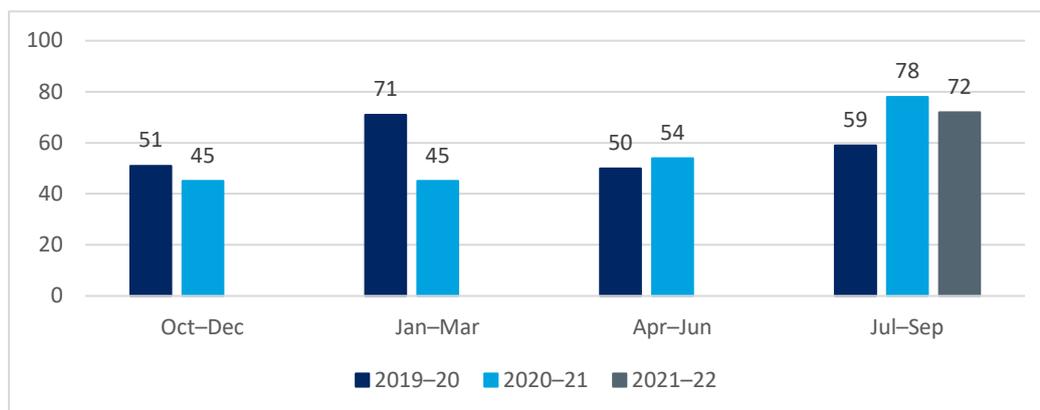
VET Student Loans

Between 1 July and 30 September 2021, the Office received 72 complaints about VET Student Loans approved course providers. This number varied only slightly compared to the 78 complaints we received during the same time last year.

Figure 3 below shows the number of VET Student Loans complaints the Office received during each quarter since 1 July 2019.

Complaints to the Office about VET Student Loans approved providers include complaints about providers that are open and providers that have stopped trading. Our approach to assessing and seeking to resolve complaints may vary according to the provider’s trading status.

Figure 3: VET Student Loans complaints received

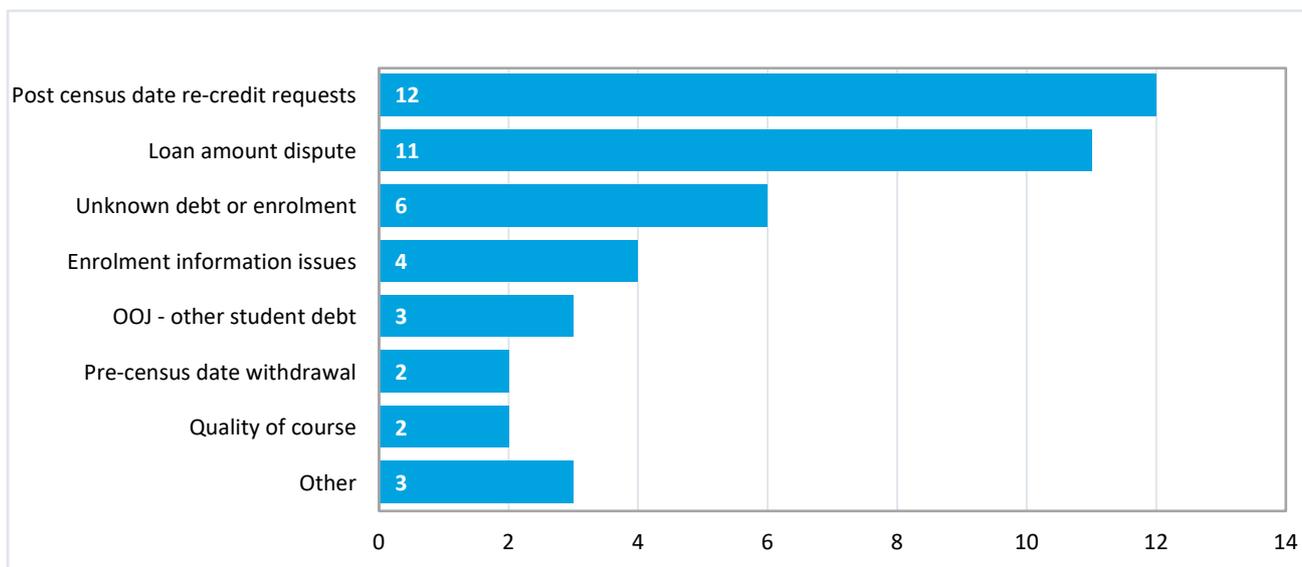


VET Student Loans complaint issues

Figure 4 shows the issues identified in the VET Student Loans complaints the Office received and assessed during the quarter.

The most common issues in complaints about the VET Student Loans program relate to requests for re-credits made after the census date (28 per cent of assessed complaints) and loan amount disputes (26 per cent).

Figure 4: Issues in VET Student Loans complaints received and assessed during 1 July–30 September 2021



Case Study: Provider not responding to student complaint

A student withdrew from their Diploma course, but the provider continued to charge them fees. They contacted the provider to ask it to stop charging fees and provide a partial re-credit of the amounts it had charged. The provider failed to respond to the student, so they contacted our Office for assistance.

We made enquiries to the provider to determine if it had received and responded to a complaint from the student.

In response to our request, the provider advised it did not have any record of receiving a formal complaint or a withdrawal request from the student. It also told us it was prepared to re-credit the 2 units of study it had charged after the student's last date of participation in the course.

As the provider agreed to the remedy the student requested, the Office decided not to investigate the matter further and finalised the complaint.

Changes to this quarterly update

We recently simplified the format of our Quarterly Updates and removed some figures that were included in previous reports. This new format focuses on key complaint issues and complaints received and closed during the quarter. We will continue to provide an expanded annual summary of complaints figures, issues and additional information on complaints.

We want to ensure that this reporting is useful to consumers, industry and stakeholders. We welcome feedback about these changes. Feedback can be provided through email to vetstudentloans@ombudsman.gov.au.

Data and glossary of terms

Refer to [Data and glossary summary VET Student Loans Ombudsman quarterly updates](#) for definitions of complaints, issues and other terms. Our data is dynamic and regularly updated. This means there may be minor differences when compared to the last quarterly update. Previous quarterly updates are available on the Ombudsman's website.

[More information is available at vet.ombudsman.gov.au/how-we-can-help](http://vet.ombudsman.gov.au/how-we-can-help)