

**FACT SHEET ON FOREIGN STUDENTS IN POST-
SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

20 March 2020



**higher education
& training**

Department:
Higher Education and Training
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Department of Higher Education and Training

123 Francis Baard Street
Pretoria
South Africa

Private Bag X174
Pretoria
0001

Tel.: 0800 87 22 22

www.dhet.gov.za

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Enquiries:

Tel.: 012 312 5465/5673

Fax: 086 457 0289

Email: Khuluvhe.m@dhet.gov.za / mathibe.r@dhet.gov.za

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1. BACKGROUND

Post-School Education and Training (PSET) institutions, particularly universities, have a responsibility, as generators of new knowledge, not only for South Africa, but also for the international community. As the world is rapidly becoming a global village, PSET institutions take on a far more global mission of education and training by becoming more competitive, visible, and more attractive destination for a greater number of foreign students. In order to advance diversification and improve quality, the increasing presence of foreign students in South Africa is considered one of the fundamental elements of the greater visibility of a country's Post-School Education and Training (PSET) institutions.

The presence of foreign students is part of a broader globalisation process and represents an attempt to transform the South African PSET system. This process seeks to configure a new PSET system that opens up education and training institutions to a globalised world of knowledge, employment and investments relating to the production of knowledge. A fundamental aspect of this globalisation process is student mobility for South African students going abroad as much as for foreign students coming to South Africa to begin or finish their post-school studies.

Against this backdrop, this fact sheet provide a general overview of the presence of foreign students in the South African PSET system.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this fact sheet is to report on the profile of foreign students in the South African public ¹PSET system by answering the following key policy question *“What is the extent and nature of foreign student enrolment and completion in the South African Post-School Education and Training System?”*

3. METHODOLOGY

This Fact Sheet analyses data collected only from public PSET institutions through the Department's various management information systems, namely, the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the Technical Vocational Education and Training

¹ This report excludes foreign students in Private PSET institutions.

Management System (TVETMIS) and the Community Education and Training (CET) colleges' Annual Survey.

4. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

4.1 Foreign students

Foreign students are persons admitted by a country other than their own, usually under special permits or visas, for the specific purpose of following a particular course of study in an accredited institution of the receiving country². For the purpose of this fact sheet, foreign students refers to all students enrolled in the PSET institutions who are non-South African citizens. This means that the students who have permanent residence status are considered foreign students.

5. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This section presents results from a detailed profile of foreign students in South African public PSET institutions. The tables and figures of the findings are presented in Section 6. The principal findings are as follows:

- In 2017, 4.1 % of students enrolled in public PSET institutions were foreign. Of these, 82.4% (67 435) were enrolled in public HEIs, 13.0% (10 607) in TVET Colleges and 4.6% (3 758) in CETCs (See Table 1 below).
- The number of foreign students enrolled in public HEIs decreased from 69 381 in 2016 to 67 435 in 2017. On the other hand, the number of foreign Students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges increased from 3 206 in 2016 to 10 607 in 2017, and that in Community Education and Training (CET) colleges increased from 3 270 to 3 758 in the same period (See Table 1 below).
- The proportion of foreign students enrolled in public HEIs decreased from 7.1% to 6.4% between 2016 and 2017, while the proportion of foreign students in TVET colleges increased from 0.5% to 1.5%. The proportion of foreign students in CET colleges to total enrolment in CET colleges increased from 1.2% in 2016 to 1.5% in 2017 (See Table 3 below).

² OECD glossary of Statistical terms.

- The majority of foreign students enrolled in public PSET institutions were male with 53% being male, and 47% female (See Figure 1 below).
- The majority of foreign students enrolled in public PSET institutions in 2017 were 20–24 years old, followed by those aged 25 – 29 years and those aged 30 – 34 years in 2016 and 2017. (See Figure 3 below).
- In 2017, the highest number of foreign students were studying at the University of South Africa (24 657). UNISA enrolled 36.6% of all foreign students enrolled in public HEIS in SA in 2017 (See Table 5 below).
- In 2017, over 40% of the foreign students were enrolled for Undergraduate Degrees, followed by 15.6% enrolled in Master’s Degrees (See Figure 5 below).
- In 2017, 37% of the foreign students’ graduations were for Undergraduate Degrees. (See Figure 6 below).
- Of the foreign students enrolled in public HEIs, the majority had enrolled in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) (25 619) programmes in 2017, followed by Business and Management (18 778) and other Humanities (16 896) (See Figure 7 below).
- The majority foreign students were from Zimbabwe (25 859) in 2017. The share of students from Zimbabwe has increased by 1.4 percentage points from 37.0% in 2016 to 38.4% in 2017 (See Table 7 below).
- The largest proportion of foreign students in TVET colleges in 2017 were in the age category 20 – 24 years (53.2 %), followed by 25 – 29 years (30.0 %) and 30 – 34 years (6.9%) (See Table 10 below).
- The Eastern Cape Province recorded the highest number of foreign students (6 064) in 2017. This was followed by the Western Cape (2 216) and Gauteng (1 094). In 2016, the Western Cape had the largest number of foreign students followed by Gauteng (See Table 11 below).
- The college that reported the highest number of foreign students in 2017 is King Sabata Dalindyebo TVET College followed by College of Cape Town TVET College, which reported the highest number of foreign students in 2016 (See Table 12 below).
- Most of the foreign students in TVET colleges were enrolled for Report 191 (N1-N6), followed by NC (V) qualifications. This is in-line with the total enrolments in TVET colleges (See Table 13 below).
- About 62.9% of foreign students in TVET were from the Rest of Africa, followed by Lesotho (9.5%), Namibia (8.9%) and Zimbabwe (8.4%) (See Table 14 below).

- There were more female than male foreign students enrolled in CET colleges in 2015 and 2016. The proportion of female students enrolled in CET colleges increased by 6.1 percentage points from 58.6% in 2016 to 64.7% in 2017 (See Table 15 below).
- About 78.8% of the foreign students enrolled in CET colleges were in Gauteng CETC in 2016, followed by Northern Cape CETC (3.5%) (See Table 16 below).
- The biggest proportion of foreign students in CET colleges were enrolled in AET Level 4 (37.0%) in 2017, followed by Grade 12 (36.1%) and AET Level 3 (10.6%). A different picture was however observed in 2016. The biggest share of foreign students in CET colleges was enrolled in Grade 12 (43.7%), followed by AET level 4 (30.0%) and AET Level 3 (11.0%) (See Table 17 below).
- The highest number of foreign students in CET colleges was from Zimbabwe, followed by Lesotho. The number of foreign students enrolled in CET colleges increased from 2016 to 2017. The biggest increase was recorded among students from Lesotho (1 018), followed by Zimbabwe (949) and Swaziland (30) (See Table 18 below).
- The number of foreign students graduating in public HEIs decreased from 15 022 in 2016 to 14 495 in 2017 (See Table 2 below).
- The proportion of foreign students graduating in public HEIs decreased from 7.4% to 6.9% in this period between 2016 and 2017 (See Table 4 below).
- In 2017, the highest number of foreign students graduated from the University of South Africa (3 929), followed by University of Pretoria (1 151) and University of Cape Town (1 127) (See Table 6 below).
- The majority of foreign graduates completed Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) (5 153) programmes in 2017, followed by Business and Management (4 382) and other Humanities (3 273) (See Figure 8 below).
- The majority of foreign graduates were from Zimbabwe (5 214) in 2017, followed by Other foreign nationalities (3 114), Namibia (1 541) and Swaziland (893 (See Table 8 below).

6. TABLES AND FIGURES

This section presents the tables and figures containing the main results from a detailed profile of foreign students in South Africa.

6.1 PSET Institutions

Table 1: Number of foreign students enrolled in public PSET institutions, 2016 to 2017

Institution	2016	2017
Public HEIs	69 381	67 435
TVET colleges	3 206	10 607
CET colleges	3 270	3 758
Total	75 857	81 800

Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in November 2017

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in September 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in July 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2017, data extracted in July 2019

CLC_Annual_2016_20171107

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Note 1: Public PSET institutions refers to public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and Community Education and Training (CET) colleges.

Table 2: Number of foreign students graduating in public PSET institutions, 2016 to 2017

Institution	2016	2017
Public HEIs	15 022	14 495

Sources:

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in October 2019

Table 3: Proportion of foreign students enrolled in public PSET institutions, 2016 to 2017

Institution	2016	2017
Public HEIs	7.1	6.5
TVET colleges	0.5	1.5
CET colleges	1.2	1.5
Total	3.9	4.1

Sources: Authors' own calculations based on:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in November 2017

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in September 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in July 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2017, data extracted in July 2019

CLC_Annual_2016_20171107

CLC_Annual_2017_20190312 OQ

Table 4: Proportion of foreign students graduating in public PSET institutions, 2016 to 2017

Institution	2016	2017
Public HEIs	7.4	6.9

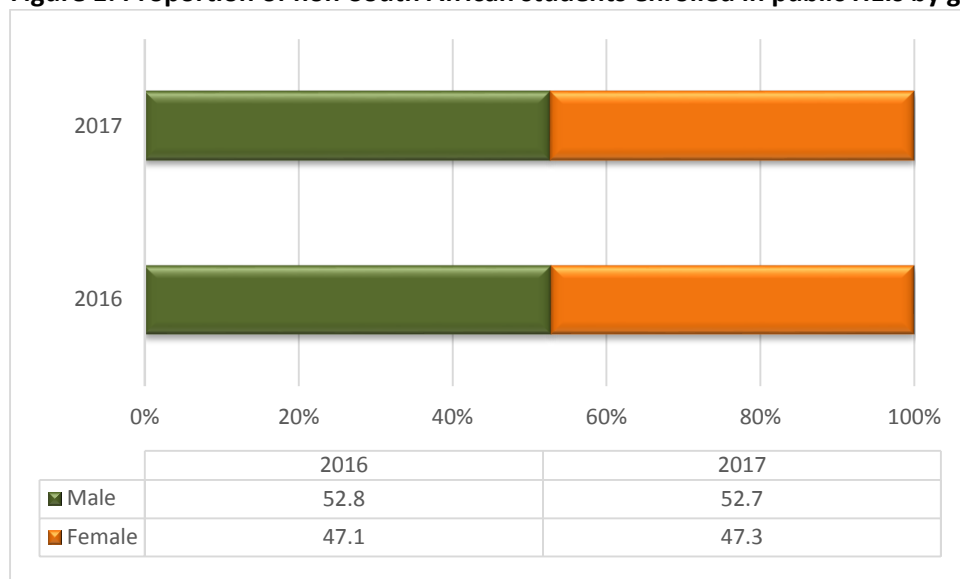
Sources: Authors' own calculations based on:

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in June 2019

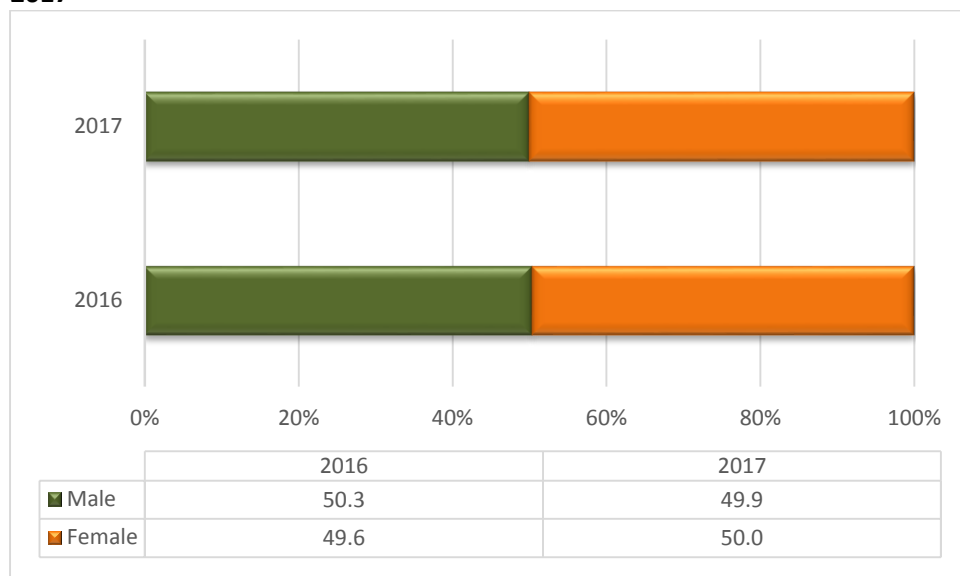
6.2 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Figure 1: Proportion of non-South African students enrolled in public HEIs by gender, 2016 to 2017



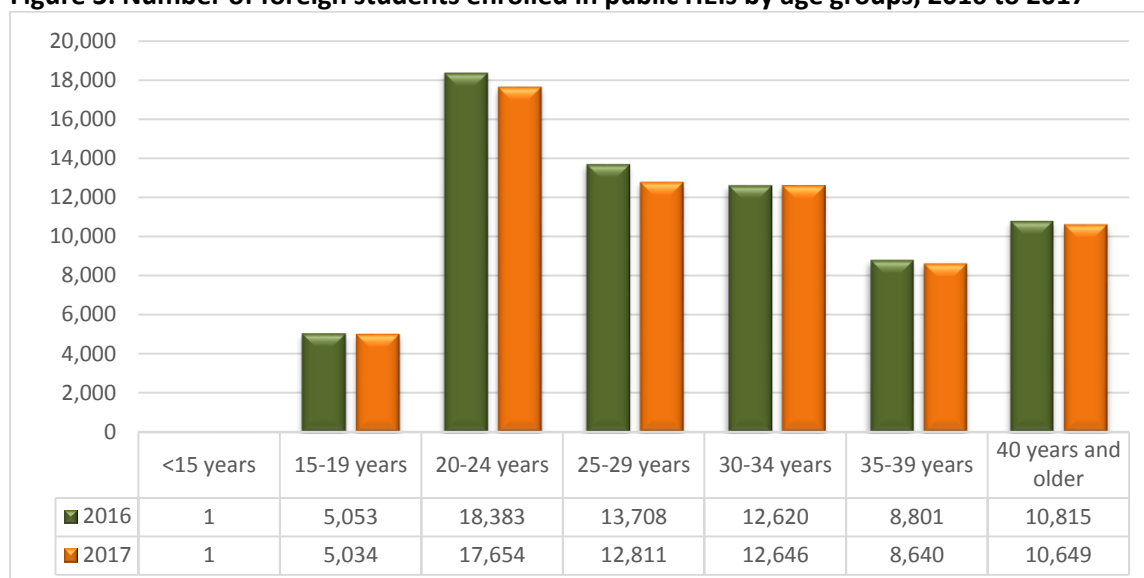
Sources: Authors' own calculations based on:
 2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in November 2017
 2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in September 2019

Figure 2: Proportion of non-South African students graduated in public HEIs by gender, 2016 to 2017



Sources: Authors' own calculations based on:
 2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020
 2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020

Figure 3: Number of foreign students enrolled in public HEIs by age groups, 2016 to 2017

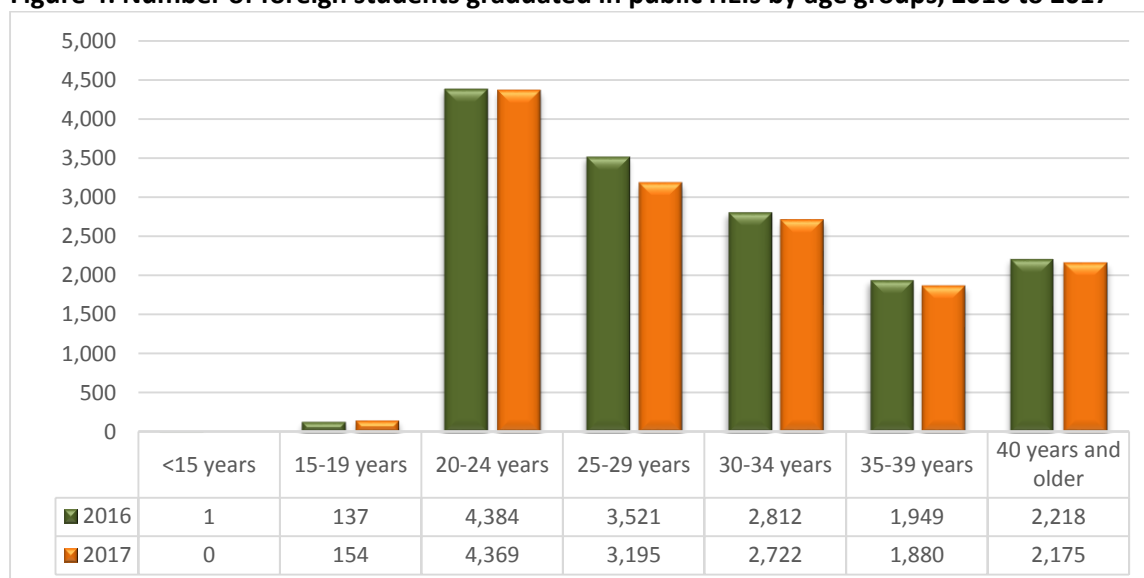


Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in November 2017

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in September 2019

Figure 4: Number of foreign students graduated in public HEIs by age groups, 2016 to 2017



Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted January 2020

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020

Table 5: Number of foreign students enrolled in public HEIs by individual institutions, 2016 to 2017

Institution	2016	2017
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	2 616	2 710
University of Cape Town	6 334	5 825
Central University of Technology, Free State	477	527
Durban University of Technology	613	600
University of Fort Hare	1 024	1 062
University of the Free State	2 016	1 847
University of Johannesburg	3 216	3 379
University of KwaZulu-Natal	3 172	2 983
University of Limpopo	243	240
University of Mpumalanga	23	35
Mangosuthu University of Technology	90	82
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	1 716	1 512
North West University	3 564	3 222
University of Pretoria	4 796	4 586
Rhodes University	1 578	1 558
Sefako Makgatho Health Science University	186	203
Sol Plaatjie University, Northern Cape	5	6
University of South Africa	25 035	24 657
University of Stellenbosch	3 300	3 347
Tshwane University of Technology	1 741	1 763
University of Venda	336	301
Vaal University of Technology	1 688	1 566
Walter Sisulu University	201	199
University of Western Cape	1 516	1 257
University of Witwatersrand	3 687	3 771
University of Zululand	208	197
Total	69 381	67 435

Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in November 2017

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in September 2019

Table 6: Number of foreign students graduated in public HEIs by individual institutions, 2016 to 2017

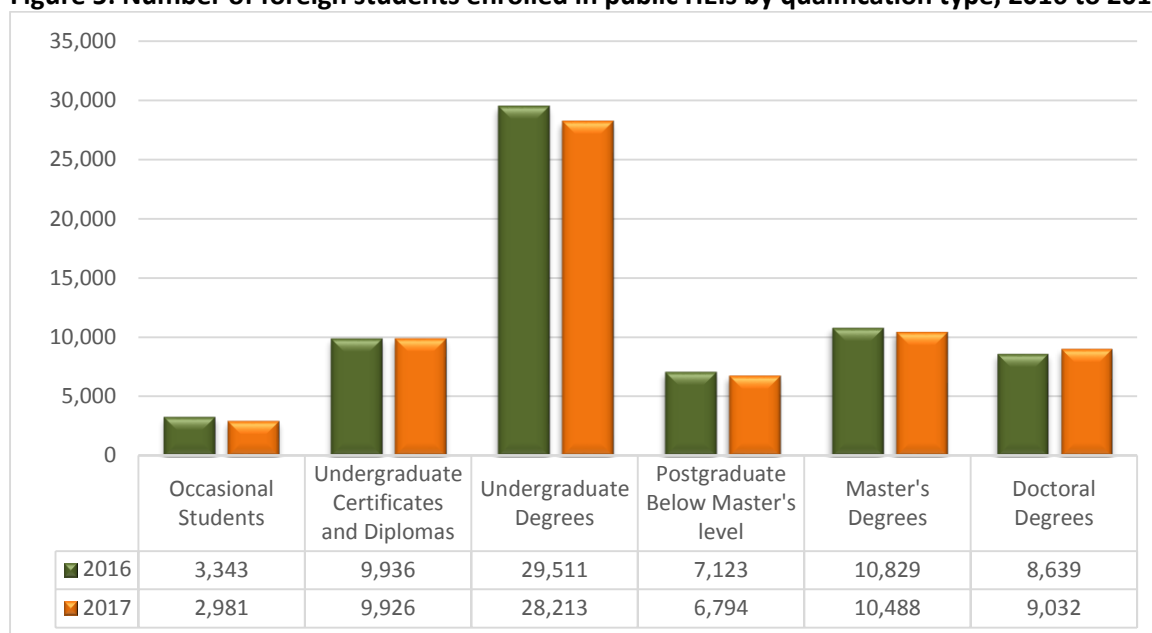
Institution	2016	2017
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	703	679
University of Cape Town	1 265	1 127
Central University of Technology, Free State	136	150
Durban University of Technology	162	157
University of Fort Hare	253	286
University of the Free State	437	444
University of Johannesburg	675	768
University of KwaZulu-Natal	726	616
University of Limpopo	52	63
University of Mpumalanga	8	1
Mangosuthu University of Technology	15	9
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	358	349
North West University	923	947
University of Pretoria	1 191	1 151
Rhodes University	559	463
Sefako Makgatho Health Science University	41	55
Sol Plaatjie University, Northern Cape	1	2
University of South Africa	4 472	3 929
University of Stellenbosch	860	935
Tshwane University of Technology	390	440
University of Venda	94	98
Vaal University of Technology	438	472
Walter Sisulu University	50	42
University of Western Cape	323	343
University of Witwatersrand	842	920
University of Zululand	48	49
Total	15 022	14 495

Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted January 2020

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020

Figure 5: Number of foreign students enrolled in public HEIs by qualification type, 2016 to 2017

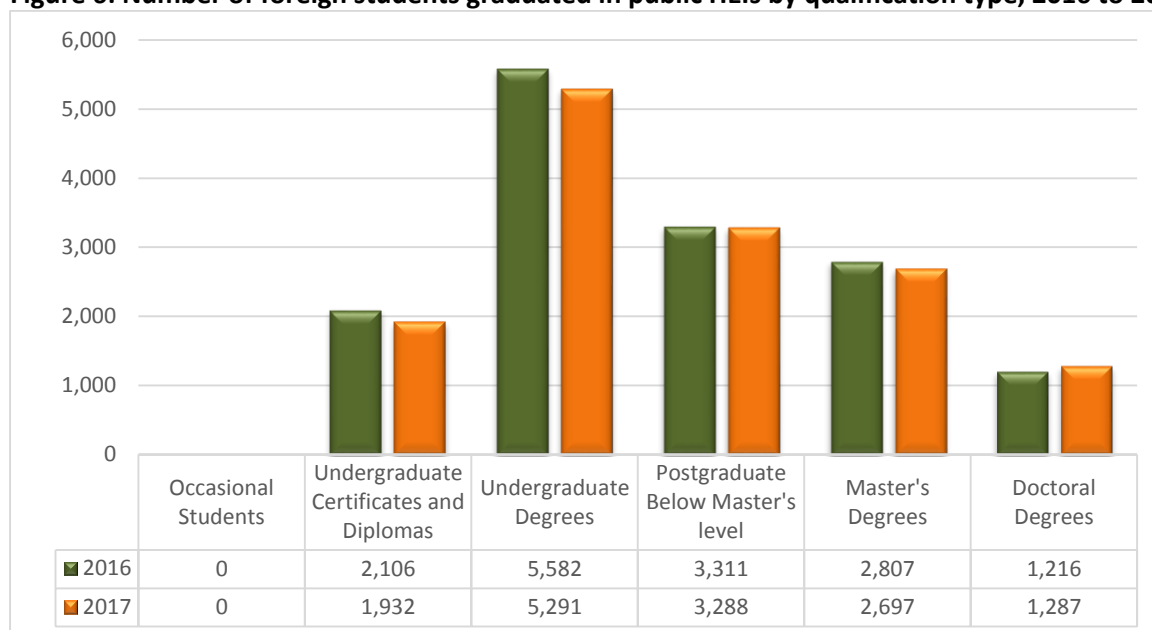


Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in November 2017

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in September 2019

Figure 6: Number of foreign students graduated in public HEIs by qualification type, 2016 to 2017

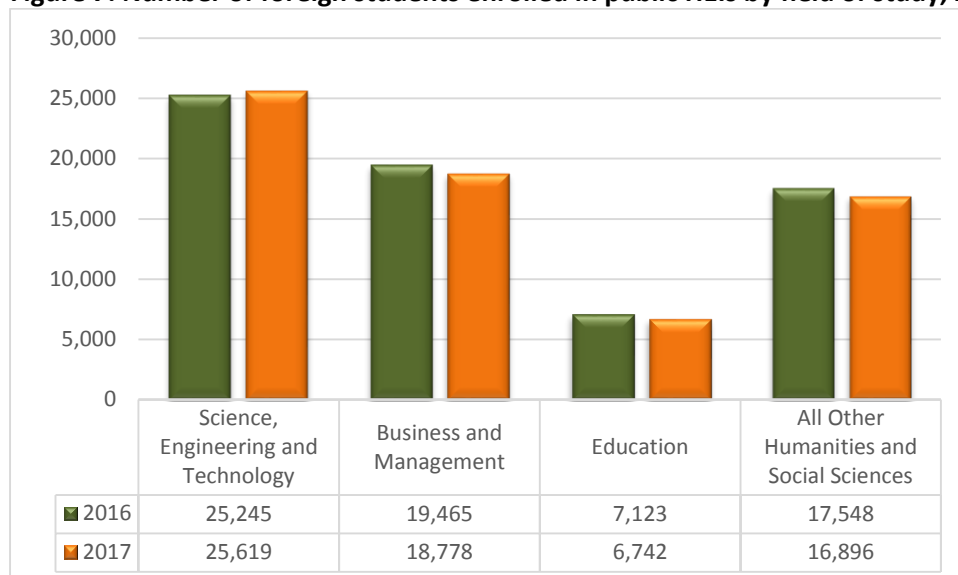


Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted January 2020

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020

Figure 7: Number of foreign students enrolled in public HEIs by field of study, 2016 to 2017

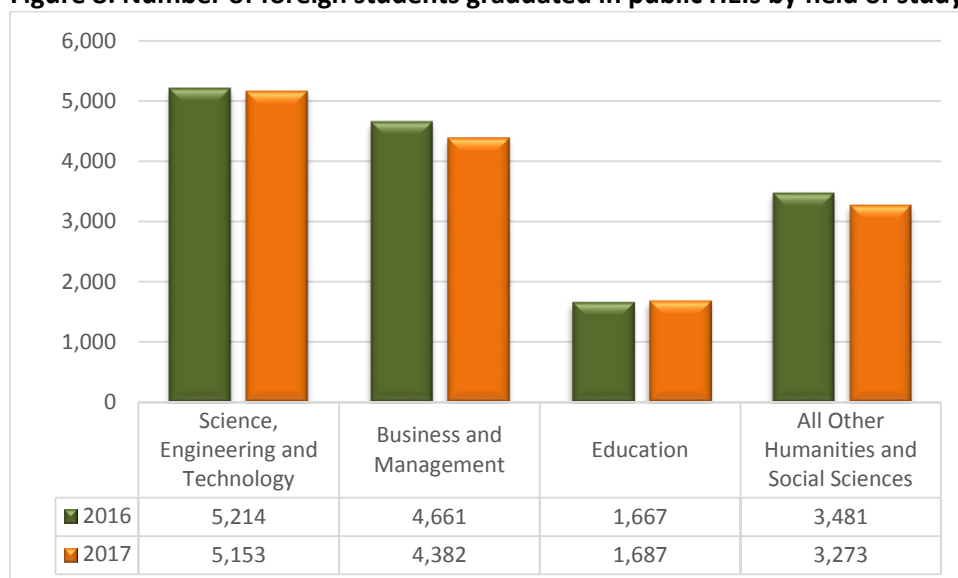


Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in November 2017

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in September 2019

Figure 8: Number of foreign students graduated in public HEIs by field of study, 2016 to 2017



Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted January 2020

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020

Table 7: Number of foreign students enrolled in public HEIs by nationality, 2016 to 2017

Nationality	2016	2017
Zimbabwe	25 642	25 859
Namibia	5 812	5 481
Nigeria	4 062	4 031
Swaziland	3 651	3 462
Democratic Republic of the Congo	3 560	3 679
Lesotho	3 437	3 499
Botswana	1 864	1 624
Zambia	1 773	1 633
United States of America	1 465	938
Kenya	1 365	1 321
Other foreign nationalities and no information	16 750	15 908
Total	69 381	67 435

Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted in November 2017

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in September 2019

Table 8: Number of foreign students graduated in public HEIs by nationality, 2016 to 2017

Nationality	2016	2017
Zimbabwe	5 483	5 214
Namibia	1 520	1 541
Nigeria	940	869
Swaziland	844	893
Democratic Republic of the Congo	745	790
Lesotho	817	854
Botswana	498	406
Zambia	444	357
United States of America	133	116
Kenya	353	341
Other foreign nationalities and no information	3 245	3 114
Total	15 022	14 495

Sources:

2016 HEMIS database, data extracted January 2020

2017 HEMIS database, data extracted in January 2020

6.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges

Table 9: Number of foreign students enrolled in TVET colleges by gender, 2016 to 2017

Year	Female	Male	Total	% Female	% Male
2016	908	2 298	3 206	28.3	71.7
2017	4 985	5 622	10 607	47.0	53.0

Sources:

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in July 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2017, data extracted in July 2019

Table 10: Number and shares of foreign students enrolled in TVET colleges by age groups, 2017

Age groups	Number	%
< 15 years	7	0.1
15 - 19 years	408	3.8
20 – 24 years	5 640	53.2
25 – 29 years	3 187	30.0
30 – 34 years	733	6.9
35 – 39 years	386	3.6
40 years and older	246	2.3
Total	10 607	100.0

Sources:

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in July 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2017, data extracted in July 2019

Table 11: Number of foreign students enrolled in TVET colleges by province, 2016 to 2017

Province	2016	2017
Eastern Cape	77	6 064
Free State	516	606
Gauteng	908	1 094
KwaZulu-Natal	209	162
Limpopo	81	114
Mpumalanga	122	157
Northern Cape	53	37
North West	89	157
Western Cape	1 151	2 216
Total	3 206	10 607

Sources:

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in July 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2017, data extracted in July 2019

Table 12: Number of foreign students enrolled in TVET colleges by college, 2016 to 2017

College	2016	2017
Boland TVET College	66	57
Buffalo City TVET College	16	15
Capricorn TVET College	21	42
Central JHB TVET College	289	281
Coastal TVET College	32	23
College of Cape Town TVET College	1012	1251
Eastcape Midlands TVET College	29	30
Ehlanzeni TVET College	13	25
Ekurhuleni East TVET College	122	61
Ekurhuleni West TVET College		90
Elangeni TVET College	10	10
Esayidi TVET College	3	6
False Bay TVET College	67	89

Flavius Mareka TVET College	38	37
Gert Sibande TVET College	24	48
Goldfields TVET College	62	65
Ikhala TVET College	6	7
Ingwe TVET College	2	35
King Hintsa TVET College	5	13
King Sabata Dalindyebo TVET College		5 859
Lephalale TVET College	22	28
Letaba TVET College	6	8
Lovedale TVET College	2	6
Majuba TVET College	109	74
Maluti TVET College	60	55
Mnambithi TVET College	2	3
Mopani South East TVET College	7	8
Motheo TVET College	356	449
Mthashana TVET College	6	1
Nkangala TVET College	85	84
Northern Cape Rural TVET College	41	29
Northern Cape Urban TVET College	12	8
Northlink TVET College		788
Orbit TVET College	29	61
Port Elizabeth TVET College	17	99
Sedibeng TVET College	89	170
Sekhukhune TVET College	9	5
South Cape TVET College		7
South West TVET College	35	67
Taletso TVET College	7	24
Thekwini TVET College	15	15
Tshwane North TVET College	3	25
Tshwane South TVET College	147	124
Umfoloji TVET College	13	15
Umgungundlovu TVET College	19	15
Vhembe TVET College	7	17
Vuselela TVET College	53	72
Waterberg TVET College	9	6
West Coast TVET College	6	24
Western College TVET College	223	276
Reconciliation		
Total	3 206	10 607

Sources:

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in July 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2017, data extracted in July 2019

Table 13: Number of foreign students enrolled in TVET colleges by qualification category, 2016 to 2017

Qualification category	2016	2017
NC(V)	308	2 029
Report 191 (N1-N6)	2 657	8 233
Occupational Qualifications	15	55
Other	226	290
Total	3206	10 607

Sources:

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in July 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2017, data extracted in July 2019

Table 14: Number of foreign students enrolled in TVET colleges by nationality, 2017

Nationality	Number	%
Lesotho	1 010	9.5
Namibia	946	8.9
Zimbabwe	889	8.4
Rest of Africa	6 674	62.9
Swaziland	206	1.9
Angola	266	2.5
Other and rest of Oceania	264	2.5
Mozambique	86	0.8
Malawi	56	0.5
Zambia	31	0.3
Botswana	44	0.4
Asian countries	66	0.6
SADC except SA	34	0.3
Zaire	7	0.1
Tanzania	3	0.0
Mauritius	3	0.0
Australia Oceania countries	1	0.0
European countries	12	0.1
North American countries	2	0.0
South / Central American countries	7	0.1
Grand Total	10 607	100.0

Sources:

TVET College Annual Survey 2016, data extracted in July 2019

TVET College Annual Survey 2017, data extracted in July 2019

6.4 Community Education and Training(CET) Colleges

Table15: Number and proportion of foreign students enrolled in CET colleges by gender, 2016 and 2017

Year	Female	Male	Total	% Female	% Male
2016	1 917	1 353	3 270	58.6	41.4
2017	2 432	1 326	3 758	64.7	35.3

Sources:

CLC_Annual_2016_20171107

CLC_Annual_2017_20190312 OQ

Table 16: Number of foreign students enrolled in CET colleges by province³, 2016 and 2017

Province	2016		2017	
	Number	%	Number	%
Eastern Cape CETC	36	1.1	21	0.6
Free State CETC	45	1.4	252	6.7
Gauteng CETC	2 578	78.8	3 013	80.2
Kwazulu-Natal CETC	103	3.1	49	1.3
Limpopo CETC	41	1.3	37	1.0
Mpumalanga CETC	82	2.5	65	1.7
Northern Cape CETC	115	3.5	6	0.2
North West CETC	2	0.1	10	0.3
Western Cape CETC	268	8.2	305	8.1
Total	3 270	100.0	3 758	100

Sources:

CLC_Annual_2016_20171107

CLC_Annual_2017_20190312 OQ

Table 17: Number and proportion of foreign students enrolled in CET colleges by programme type, 2016 and 2017

Programme type	2016		2017	
	Number	%	Number	%
AET Level 1	264	8.1	210	5.6
AET Level 2	208	6.4	293	7.8
AET Level 3	359	11.0	397	10.6
AET Level 4 (NQF Level 1)	982	30.0	1 392	37.0
Grade 10 (NQF Level 2)	-		6	0.2
Grade 11 (NQF Level 3)	2	0.1	1	0.0
Grade 12 (NQF Level 4)	1 429	43.7	1 357	36.1
Occupational Qualifications	-		-	
Other/Skills Development	26	0.8	102	2.7
Total	3 270	100.0	3 758	100.0

Sources:

CLC_Annual_2016_20171107

CLC_Annual_2017_20190312 OQ

³ CETC = Province

Table 18: Number of foreign students enrolled in CET colleges by nationality, 2016 and 2017

Country of origin	2016	2017
Zimbabwe	389	1 338
Democratic Republic of Congo	126	60
Lesotho	93	1 111
Zambia	52	32
Nigeria	33	50
Swaziland	13	454
Angola	17	18
Namibia	16	19
Botswana	61	28
Kenya	0	4
Other Foreign nationalities	414	595
Unspecified	2 056	49
Total	3 270	3 758

Sources:

CLC_Annual_2016_20171107

CLC_Annual_2017_20190312 OQ