



2021 Census: Reporting remote and flexible learning students FAQs

Non-government schools across Australia complete the Non-Government Schools Census (Census) each August. The Census collects information about students who physically attend school during a 20 school day reference period.

Due to COVID-19, state and territory governments may implement or extend public health directions requiring students to undertake remote or flexible learning. The Department of Education, Skills and Employment will write to schools significantly impacted by these directions to instruct them to report remote and flexible learning students in the Census.

The following set of frequently asked questions provides more information about remote and flexible learning students and the Census.

1. What does remote and flexible learning mean?

'Remote and flexible learning' refers to alternate delivery of schooling provided to students who are not physically present at the school and learning in an alternate format. These students would normally attend school in person each day but are engaging through remote and flexible learning arrangements due to state government public health directions to respond to the spread of COVID 19.

2. Which schools can report remote and flexible learning students in the 2021 Census?

All schools should currently plan to report students who physically attend school during the Census reference period as per the [2021 Non-Government School Census Requirements](#). If there are any changes imposed by states and territories which will impact schools, we will write to affected approved authorities and instruct them to report students undertaking flexible or remote learning.

3. What happens if a lockdown is in place during the Census reference period?

The department is assessing the situation as further information becomes available. State and territory governments may implement or extend public health directions requiring students to undertake remote or flexible learning in response to outbreaks of COVID-19. If these directions significantly affect student attendance during the reference period, we will write to affected approved authorities and instruct them to report students undertaking flexible or remote learning.

4. My school has both remote and flexible learning students and students physically attending the school. How do I report them?

If your school has been written to and instructed to include remote and flexible learning students in the Census, report all students who attended school during the Reference Period (regardless of how they did so) as per normal. When reporting students, please ensure you retain student records of attendance or participation.

If your school has not been instructed to include remote and flexible learning students, submit a [Special Circumstances Application](#) for students who did not attend during the Census Reference Period.

5. We have not been provided alternative arrangements. How do I report enrolled students that cannot attend the school in the Census reference period?

Unless your school has been instructed by the department, you must not report students in the Census who did not attend during the Census Reference Period. These schools may instead submit a Special Circumstance Application to have the student considered for inclusion in the Census. The [Special Circumstances Handbook](#) contains more information about submitting an application.

For more information

See the Help and Support sections of [SchoolsHUB](#) for more Census information. For any further queries:

- email us at schools@dese.gov.au
- call us on 1800 677 027 (option 3)
- or send us a support request through [SchoolsHUB](#)