Key AEIOU staff involved in the ACE initiative:
- Dr A James P Morton
  BSc (Med), Chairman and Founder, AEIOU Foundation
- Mr Alan Smith
  CEO, AEIOU Foundation
- Dr Laurie Sperry
  Regional Manager AEIOU Regional Autism Program, AEIOU Foundation

Key Griffith University staff involved in the ACE initiative includes:
- Professor Jacqueline Roberts
  Director, Autism Centre of Excellence
- Professor Claire Wyatt-Smith
  Dean—Academic (Arts, Education and Law)
- Professor Debra Henly
  Dean—Academic (Health)
- Professor Greer Johnson
  Director, Griffith Institute for Educational Research
- Professor Donna Pendergast
  Dean and Head of School, Education and Professional Studies
- Dr Leonie Rowan
  Deputy Head of School (HDR & Postgraduate Studies), Education and Professional Studies
- Professor Joy Cumming
  Professor, Education and Professional Studies
- Dr Amanda Webster
  Lecturer, Education and Professional Studies
- Dr Wendi Beanish
  Lecturer, Education and Professional Studies
- Dr Yoon-Suk Hwang
  Lecturer, Education and Professional Studies
- Dr Barbara Garrick
  Lecturer, Education and Professional Studies
- Dr Michael Davies
  Lecturer, Education and Professional Studies

“ACE is dedicated to providing a social dividend. It is committed to research and professional practice that makes a difference for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.”
Professor Claire Wyatt-Smith, Dean—Academic (Arts, Education and Law)
Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are lifelong conditions that affect approximately 1 in 160 children and their families. Over 350 Queensland children were diagnosed with ASDs every year. Autism Spectrum Disorders affect every part of a person’s life from how they play and work, to how they learn and interact with family, friends, and strangers.

Rates of Autism Spectrum Disorders are at an all-time high in Queensland school children with figures released in April 2010 on Education Queensland’s website indicating that 9978, or 2.05 per cent of state school students in 2009, had a verified ASD status. The incidence of ASDs is clearly increasing.

The majority of research surrounding Autism Spectrum Disorders is from a health and/or clinical psychology perspective. However, ASDs have a profound influence on a learner’s ability to positively participate in educational settings. ASDs shape a learner’s educational experiences as well as their wellbeing and success throughout their lifespan.

**The ACE Partnership**

In recognition of the escalating numbers of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders and the emergent education issues, Griffith University has established the Autism Centre of Excellence (ACE), a joint initiative with the AEIOU Foundation, Australia’s largest provider of best-practice early intervention and support services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Griffith University is a university committed to undertaking cutting edge research to address educational needs. In the field of learning difficulties, Griffith has a strong track record of successfully delivering pre-service and postgraduate Education courses. The university also has an established reputation for quality teaching graduates in the field of Expertise and Belief

The Plan to Success—How We Get There

The establishment of the Griffith University ACE provides the government and education sectors with a unique opportunity to consolidate and build upon the individual strengths and investments already made by Griffith and AEIOU in the ASD arena.

It is essential that the Government address the educational issues associated with ASDs via ACE’s pioneering six point plan that will prepare the next generation of educators and further enhance the skill set of current educators and practising professionals.

This innovative plan is the first of its kind in Australia and responds to education workforce and research development needs. It comprises:

1. **Bachelor Programs and Clinical Placements**
   - This will be a four year undergraduate teacher preparation program (Bachelor of Education: Primary and Bachelor of Education: Secondary) within an education core course and dedicated electives focusing on ASDs. Griffith is committed to offering the first embedded emphasis of ASDs in teacher education.

2. **Graduate Certificate and Master of Autism Education**
   - The Graduate Certificate in ASDs will articulate into the Master of Autism Education, both of which will be developed and offered to graduates, practising educators and practising professionals working with learners with ASDs.

3. **Master of Education (Research)**
   - The Master of Education (Research) offered by Griffith University allows students the opportunities to undertake specialist research in ASDs. Griffith is committed to offering the first embedded emphasis of ASDs in teacher education.

4. **Doctor of Philosophy**
   - This research higher degree offers opportunities for a concentrated and sustained focus on research into transitions for learners with ASDs. Central to the research will be the progression of the learner from home through stages of school learning, and into workplaces and further education.

5. **Doctor of Education**
   - The professional doctorate program provides opportunities for practising professionals in a range of fields (e.g. psychologists, teachers, nurses) to undertake research relevant to their area of practice, with a focus on meeting the needs of learners with ASDs.

6. **Research**
   - Some of the key issues being targeted in research initiatives include:
     - Transitions for learners with ASDs
     - Facilitating engagement and achievement in curriculum across educational settings for learners with ASDs
     - Experience of people with ASDs
     - Inclusion and belonging for learners with ASDs
     - Social learning and relationships of learners with ASDs
     - Cross cultural and Indigenous perceptions and experiences with ASDs.

Outcomes—What Will Success Look Like?

Research outcomes and community benefits of the Autism Centre of Excellence will include:

- The establishment of a leading research and practice centre of excellence to inform government policy at state and national levels.
- Research-based evidence into effective practice for improved outcomes for learners with ASDs.
- Enhanced education workforce capabilities to meet the needs of learners with ASDs in Australian classrooms (P–12).
- Expanded research into effective interventions to meet the learning, social and developmental needs of learners with ASDs across the lifespan.
- Research into transitions from Prep through to adult and workplace learning, specifically addressing learning needs and effective teaching and assessment practices.
- Strengthened international networking to support practitioners, policy officers and teachers.
- Concentration of doctoral and postdoctoral research and postgraduate students working collaboratively on issues relating to learning and ASDs.