

# Memorandum of Understanding

## Widening Tertiary Participation in Queensland: 2018-2019

Universities in Queensland and the Queensland Department of Education have, since 2009, collaborated on efforts to stimulate interest in tertiary study to improve the tertiary participation of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds (low SES) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. This 2018-2019 MOU builds on previous MOUs, and encodes the parties' agreement to continue their collaborative efforts to widen tertiary participation in Queensland.

### Background

The parties acknowledge that the collaborative approach undertaken by the Widening Tertiary Participation members has resulted in:

- expanded and strengthened partnerships across institutions and with schools, communities and other organisations;
- increased interest in tertiary study in schools characterised as having deep, long-term engagement with the program; and
- Queensland becoming established as a leader in coordinated outreach partnerships between universities, schools and communities.

### Commitments

Participating universities agree, within resourcing available, to:

- maintain and build on existing partnerships with schools, communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and other organisations, to widen tertiary participation in Queensland;
- maintain the Widening Participation Working Group as a body under the Higher Education Forum (HEF) and to report to the HEF as required;
- participate in joint initiatives that support this work including projects arising from the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program National Priority Pool;
- actively seek other sources of funding to support state-wide initiatives; and
- review this MOU at the end of 2019, considering the public policy and resourcing context at that time.

**The Department of Education** endorses this agreement and offers its cooperation in implementing widening participation projects in state schools. The Department also agrees to continue hosting the position of Project Manager: Widening Participation, and facilitate access to data and information relevant to implementation of school outreach and Indigenous engagement activities in schools. Project management costs will be met by sources external to the Department including Australian Government grant funding.

This MOU is not intended to be legally binding and merely constitutes a statement of the mutual intentions of the parties with respect to its contents. Each party represents to the other that, in relation to this MOU:

- (a) its provisions do not constitute or create any promise, representation, right or obligation binding on or in favour of any party; and
- (b) it does not contain sufficient matters or detail for the parties to enter into a legally binding agreement.



**Professor Greg Craven**  
Vice-Chancellor  
Australian Catholic University



**Professor Peter Høj**  
Vice-Chancellor and President  
The University of Queensland



**Professor Margaret Sheil AO**  
Vice-Chancellor  
Queensland University of Technology



**The Honourable Grace Grace MP**  
Minister for Education and Minister for  
Industrial Relations, Queensland



**Professor Greg Hill**  
Vice-Chancellor and President  
University of the Sunshine Coast



**Professor Ian O'Connor**  
Vice-Chancellor  
Griffith University



**Professor Scott Bowman**  
Vice-Chancellor and President  
Central Queensland University



**Professor Sandra Harding**  
Vice-Chancellor and President  
James Cook University

# Principles and Priorities

## Scope

This MOU encompasses all outreach and engagement activities with prospective domestic undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds undertaken by participating universities and commonly funded through the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP). All such activity will be consistent with the Other Grant Guidelines (2012) for HEPPP Partnership activities (see Appendix 1).

## Principles

Based on evidence from evaluation of Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation activities, and from Australian and International research, ongoing outreach activity is guided by the following principles.

1. The decision for people from low SES backgrounds to undertake tertiary study is a journey involving multiple factors including awareness, aspiration, achievement, affordability and access.
2. Universities are uniquely placed to contribute to tertiary awareness and preparation by: providing de-mystification experiences for first-in-the-family and other non-traditional students; providing encouragement and inspiration through role models and awards/prizes; value-adding to learning and achievement, especially with discipline-specific connections; and providing advice about alternative pathways for admissions and scholarships.
3. Place-based interventions require depth and longevity, and involve community development, capacity building and partnership with other agencies.
4. Effective widening participation activities involve early and ongoing engagement and robust tertiary preparation which is people-rich and responsive to local context. Examples include: use of enrolled university students as role-models or 'ambassadors'; supporting student learning in key curriculum areas or through intensive academic preparation; and scaffolded development of career management skills.

Consistent with the Other Grant Guidelines (2012), widening participation is concerned with promoting tertiary study as a viable option rather than the merits of a particular institution. It is distinct from university recruitment that is clearly targeted at individuals who are ready to choose a course or institution. Competitive university marketing and recruitment activity is not affected by this agreement.

## Priorities

Participating universities agree to prioritise three bodies of outreach and engagement work targeting potential students from low SES backgrounds. Activity undertaken with schools and communities should be inclusive of diverse cohorts such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, first-in-family students, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people from rural and remote locations, and students with a disability.

1. **School outreach** – a coordinated approach to building interest, understanding and preparation for tertiary study focused on students from low SES backgrounds and their families/caregivers.
2. **Adult and second-chance learners** – focusing on low SES background post-school-age individuals including those who require additional academic preparation to access study opportunities.
3. **Indigenous engagement** – a community engagement approach focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in communities and schools, to complement activities undertaken with school students and adult learners.

Universities will make decisions regarding their degree of engagement with each of these bodies of work based on local needs and consistent with the approach outlined below. These outreach activities are complementary to Participation activities occurring within universities to support retention, success and completion of enrolled university students.

# 1. School Outreach

Participating universities will maintain a coordinated approach to school outreach, ensuring that the greatest number of school students from low SES backgrounds have access to quality tertiary awareness and preparation programs.

- a. All school students from low SES backgrounds, when making choices about in-school and post-school study, are entitled to an appropriate level of tertiary awareness and preparation, so that their choices are informed by an understanding of tertiary options and possibilities, and by a positive attitude towards their own capabilities.
- b. Given the large numbers and geographic spread of schools serving low SES communities, and the need to minimise gaps and duplication in outreach efforts, each university will focus its efforts on a cluster of schools, as agreed and attached.
- c. Each university will give priority to the lowest SES state secondary schools in their cluster (Quartile 1) with Quartile 2 and other state and non-state schools targeted according to need and availability of resources. Activities may focus on Years 4 to 12 noting the importance of the middle school years (Year 6 to Year 10) in identity formation and developing a positive attitude to completing secondary school and pursuing further education and training.
- d. Universities will prioritise depth of engagement over breadth, noting this will impact on the number of schools engaged depending on the size, complexity and remoteness of schools in a cluster, and the resources available to each university. Participating universities will continue to investigate ways to maximise reach to rural and remote schools and seek additional funding to support deeper engagement in these locations.
- e. As well as providing school outreach activities in agreed cluster schools, universities may develop a shared school arrangement by consulting with universities with an existing school partnership to ensure any new activity does not duplicate existing activity or compromise partnership arrangements. The Widening Participation Project Manager should be consulted for advice on existing partnership arrangements and to negotiate any difficulties in developing a shared school arrangement.
- f. Universities with a shared school arrangement will share information and negotiate program offerings, ensuring that program duplication is avoided, program delivery is sustainable, and operational coherence from a school perspective is maintained.
- g. Engagement with individual schools will be brokered locally between the school and university involved and will be at the discretion of the school principal.
- h. The approach taken by Queensland universities is consistent with the HEPPP evaluation report<sup>1</sup> which recommended university collaboration within defined geographic regions to ensure coverage of relevant schools and to minimise HEPPP spending on activity which promotes individual institutions (recommendation 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Acil Allen Consulting 2017, Evaluation of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program, Melbourne.

## 2. Adult and Second-chance Learners

For post-school-age people, particularly those who have not had a successful or complete secondary school experience, accessing tertiary study may require bridging or preparatory study and significant adjustment to work, family, finances and lifestyle.

- a. Engagement is likely to require recognition of life circumstances which impact on tertiary participation and the need to offer flexible solutions, practical assistance, and connection with appropriate support services.
- b. Activities may include support for provision of career development and accessible pathways information.
- c. Student pathways and transitions are strengthened through connection with other community organisations and institutions, including VET providers and QTAC.

The *You to Uni* website developed by Griffith University as a Widening Tertiary Participation project provides a portal for adult learners to find out about tertiary study and link to all Queensland universities, TAFE Queensland and QTAC.

## 3. Indigenous Engagement

While all widening participation activities will be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and value their linguistic and cultural diversity, additional Indigenous engagement activities are required to address specific barriers to educational participation and success. Such activity builds on recent positive trends in school completion and higher education participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

- a. Indigenous engagement projects will take a community engagement and capacity-building approach, including culturally appropriate consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in the development and implementation of activities and alignment with the university's Indigenous Education Strategy.
- b. As well as building aspiration and capacity for higher education, a community engagement approach includes building wider family and community support and making information on university courses, pathways and financial assistance more accessible.

### Analysis and Reporting

Consistent with the Working Group's terms of reference, and to facilitate coordination of activity and monitoring of outcomes, participating universities will:

- provide the Working Group with a schedule of planned Partnership activities, including activities in shared schools;
- report on engagement with schools and other widening participation activity delivered in a format agreed by the Working Group; and
- where appropriate to do so, participate in other joint evaluation and monitoring activities as determined by the Working Group and coordinated by the Widening Participation Project Manager.

The Project Manager will continue to monitor and report on application and enrolment rates for Year 12 students from engaged schools, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as Higher Education student data for low SES, Indigenous, regional and remote students in Queensland.

# Terms of Reference: Widening Participation Working Group

## Membership

Comprise up to three representatives from each university, at least one of whom should be an Indigenous representative or their nominee.

## Terms of Reference

As requested by the Vice-Chancellors, the Working Group will:

- monitor implementation of activities outlined in the Widening Tertiary Participation in Queensland MOU;
- manage co-ordinated delivery of widening participation activities, including school cluster arrangements which seek to minimise gaps and duplication;
- coordinate the development and implementation of any joint activities including National Priority Pool Projects;
- undertake research and evaluation activities as appropriate, including ongoing monitoring of tertiary applications and enrolments from low SES, Indigenous and other under-represented groups;
- coordinate seminars and processes which allow for the sharing of good practice, support the professional development of widening participation staff, and showcasing of outcomes;
- facilitate resource development and sharing as appropriate;
- monitor relevant public policy of significance to the widening participation agenda, and provide advice to the Vice-Chancellors as appropriate; and
- report annually to the Higher Education Forum on implementation of the MOU and the functioning of the Working Group and recommend changes as appropriate.

The Working Group will meet twice a year or more frequently if required.

A chair will be elected at the first meeting following endorsement of this MOU.

# Appendix 1: Extract from Commonwealth of Australia: Other Grants Guidelines (Education) 2012

[Complete Guidelines document available at: [www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2012L00281](http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2012L00281)]

## 1.70 Component B – Partnership objectives

1.70.1 The objectives of the Partnership Component of the HEPPP are to increase the total number of people from low SES backgrounds who access and participate in higher education through effective outreach and related activities with appropriate stakeholders including, but not limited to, schools, State/Territory Governments, VET providers and community groups. Partnership activities for prospective domestic undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds may:

- a. assist in improving the understanding and awareness of higher education as a viable post-school option;
- b. assist in pre-tertiary achievement, either at school or via an alternative pathway, to enable consideration for access to higher education;
- c. encourage an increase in the proportion of such people who apply for attendance at a *provider*; and
- d. support such people in linking with higher education *providers*.

1.70.5 Partnership activities undertaken by the *provider* are intended to:

- a. support collaboration between providers to ensure a coordinated approach to identifying and engaging with appropriate stakeholders including, but not limited to, schools, State/Territory Governments, VET providers and community groups to encourage the participation of prospective domestic undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds in higher education; and
- b. concentrate resources to most effectively target low SES communities where aspirations to enter higher education are low and where matriculation to universities is poor.

## 1.80 Conditions of funding

1.80.1 To receive funding, Partnership programs must meet the Component B (Partnership Component) objectives outlined at section 1.70.1 and the principles outlined at section 1.80.5.

1.80.5 Providers will need to demonstrate in their proposals capacity and commitment to undertake Partnership activities that reflect the following principles:

- a. **Collaboration.** Collaboration by providers with other key stakeholders at the local, regional and/or State/Territory levels which may include, but is not limited to, school staff, community groups, other universities and the VET sector, is encouraged. This includes collaboration in program design and implementation, and in terms of engaging student communities through programs, rather than targeting individuals. *Providers* should ensure that activities complement other existing similar programs and activities being undertaken in the same region. Where provider Partnership activities occur within the same region, competition is discouraged.
- b. **Early intervention and continuing engagement.** The program of activities should focus on the long-term process of building awareness, aspiration and achievement by engaging with people from a low SES background early in their pre-tertiary education years. Programs are to be targeted and age appropriate.
- c. **Awareness.** *Providers* are to ensure that programs promote awareness of, and either provide pathways to, or information on, accessing higher education.
- d. **Integrated and multi-layered.** *Providers* are to ensure that duplication of effort does not occur. Partnership activities are to be complementary to other programs and activities already being undertaken. Partnership activities also need to be targeted toward the specific needs of prospective domestic undergraduate students from a low SES background.
- e. **Participation focus.** Partnership activities, strategies and messages from *providers* are to promote the benefits of and encourage participation in higher education, generally. They are not to be directed at promoting the benefits of a single *provider*.
- f. **Evidence based.** *Providers* will be required, as part of their Partnership programs, to provide an 'evidence base' for proposed programs. This will need to include intended program outcomes, methods for achieving these outcomes, and associated measures for tracking outcomes. For experimental and pilot projects, *providers* will need to demonstrate how the program will achieve the objectives outlined at section 1.70.1 and the principles outlined at section 1.80.5.