



Higher Education Continuity Guarantee funding 2024-2025

Introduction

The Government is extending the Higher Education Continuity Guarantee (HECG) for 2024 and 2025. This will ensure the sustainability of, and avoid disruption to, the higher education sector while future funding arrangements are considered through the Government's response to the Australian Universities Accord process. The HECG guarantees the Maximum Basic Grant Amount (MBGA) under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) for higher education courses, designated higher education courses and medical student loading regardless of whether a provider has enrolled up to their approved funding level.

For 2024 and 2025, any providers not enrolled up to their approved funding level will be required to allocate funding to support equity outcomes for under-represented groups. Providers will be required to complete a HECG Equity Plan, for review by the Department. The parameters around what specific kinds of equity support will be eligible under these requirements are outlined below. The *Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Guidelines 2022* (Other Grant Guidelines) will be updated to reflect these requirements.

Providers will be required to report on the use of their HECG funding. Reporting requirements will be specified in their CGS Funding Agreements. Providers will have four years to spend HECG funding.

Proposed equity target groups

- Low socio-economic status (low SES) backgrounds
- Students from inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote areas
- First in family to access higher education
- First Nations Australians
- People with disability
- Students who experience cumulative disadvantage, such as regional First Nations students transitioning into university and people with disability transitioning out of university into employment.

Permissible list of uses for HECG funding

Activities funded under the HECG must directly support under-represented or disadvantaged students. This funding cannot be used for activities that are currently funded through other Government equity programs (such as Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) and the Disability Support Program (DSP))

Emphasis should be placed on Tier 1 initiatives in the first instance. Tier 2 initiatives may then be proposed for the Department's consideration.

Tier 1

Providers must make reasonable efforts to use HECG funding on new initiatives or to bolster existing initiatives to provide additional support for equity cohorts that focus on building the pipeline and ensuring success and outcomes for students.

Initiatives and interventions should aim to address barriers and meet the needs of targeted groups, to improve the number of prospective students accessing education, and provide support for students to succeed.

Examples of equity initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Outreach and pre-access activities focused on building the pipeline, such as working with young people and non-school leavers, schools, career advisors, community, TAFEs and local/state government.
- Initiatives that promote access and participation, such as support for students as they explore educational options and navigate the admissions process, including career and pathways advice.
- Additional enabling course costs (NB: limited by student demand) including:
 - course development and support for students
 - use as enabling loading for universities that exhaust, or do not have, allocations (noting the Commonwealth contribution is already covered by funding of Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs), which can be used for enabling courses).
- Cost of study e.g. scholarships and/or bursaries, assistance with accommodation and other living expenses) to incentivise students to enrol.
- Emergency cost of living support so students can keep studying.
- Student belonging and engagement services and support, including those designed to assist under-represented groups in areas such career planning, employability and job readiness (e.g. mentoring, drop in services, networking, study help).
- Innovative delivery models such as equity arrangements in the Victoria University block model, and addressing barriers to student success to promote completion and optimise completion time.
- Support for accessible and financially viable work integrated learning for equity students, such as job brokering, bursaries, staff and/or systems to coordinate student placements.
- Support for transition to employment.



Tier 2

The following activities can be considered once providers have made reasonable effort to identify Tier 1 activities.

- Capital works such as construction of, or upgrades to, capital and infrastructure for the specific purpose of “improving access and outcomes for equity groups”. This could include a contribution towards equity student accommodation, or fit out for study areas (similar to the capital works for study hubs) and blended learning, and upgrades to digital equipment to improve access and quality of experience.
- Improved transport facilities specifically designed to assist targeted groups.
- Improved capabilities for online, remote or other innovative learning environments.
- Curriculum development to make courses more inclusive and support universal course design.

Other

Providers may also propose other equity-related initiatives that are not funded from another continuing source for discussion with the Department.

Questions

If providers have any questions or concerns about the permissible uses for equity funding please contact cgs@education.gov.au.

