

Department of Education
Australian Government

Friday 15th September, 2023

Dear Department of Education Colleagues,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to the *Support for Students Policy: Guidelines Consultation Paper*.

The Equity Practitioner in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) strongly supports the goal of this policy in ensuring that people who gain access to higher education have the best possible chance of success, and we are pleased to see that the 50% pass rule has been immediately ceased as a result of the disproportionate impact on students from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education.

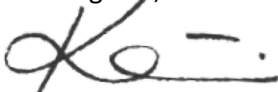
In relation to the guidelines for the *Support for Students Policy*, we are very pleased to see increased accountability for higher education providers in monitoring student progress and providing proactive outreach and innovative supports to enable students to complete their higher education degrees. We believe that this approach strengthens social mobility.

The introduction of the Support for Students Policy should be linked to the recommendation outlined in the Accord Report to introduce a 'needs based funding' model to universities. This would enable greater accountability for universities to direct targeted funding to supporting students who have the greatest need to succeed with their studies. For students from low socioeconomic backgrounds they often perform as well as, if not better than their high socioeconomic peers in terms of WAM (Li and Dockery, 2014), however other external and systemic factors often result in lower university completion rates. Therefore, by linking needs based funding to monitoring, proactive outreach and innovative supports provisioned under the *Supports for Students Policy*, it would enable the funding to be directed to students who do not have the means to afford additional supports to successfully complete their studies. This could include financial support, learning support (including peer programs) and wellbeing support to provide holistic support.

As outlined in the policy intent, "the new requirements will re-enforce the need to assess academic and non-academic suitability, both in the lead up to enrolment and on an ongoing basis", EPHEA continues to advocate for equitable admissions process that breaks down systematic barriers to access for equity groups. We recommend universities embed an equity lens when implementing this policy.

Thank you for taking the time to review this submission and we look forward to receiving the updated guidelines in due course.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kylie', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Kylie Austin

President, Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia