Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report

Submission 3

September 2023

UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

Universities Australia acknowledges Country

We honour and respect the Indigenous peoples who have been, and continue to be, the Custodians of the lands, skies, and waterways upon which we at Universities Australia, and our member universities live and work.

We acknowledge that Indigenous Elders and knowledge holders maintain and nourish Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Research, teaching, and the academy, both locally and abroad, have benefitted from the enrichment and innovation these gifted knowledge systems grant.

We recognise all Indigenous staff and students who work and study at Australian universities. The significant contributions they make within the Higher Education sector impact far beyond the footprint of their institutions.

We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded, and that connection to Country and Culture has been maintained, nourished, and continues to thrive.

We pay respect to Elders and knowledge holders, past and present, as we listen carefully, tread lightly, and nurture those who are our future.

Preamble

As the university sector's peak body, Universities Australia (UA) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Accord Interim Report. UA's April submission laid out 29 reform recommendations, developed and endorsed by UA's 39 member universities. This three-page response complements that original submission, reaffirming the sector's commitment to its agreed positions and elaborating on our key points and recommendations as they pertain to the considerations of the interim report. (**Appendix 6** illustrates how the university sector's 29 agreed recommendations map to the interim report).

The issues included in this three-page response are derived from discussions in UA's Accord Ideas Workshop, held in Parliament House on August 10, 2023. These discussions built in turn upon a brief in-house survey sent to members in advance, asking them to identify the five considerations from the interim report they considered to be of the highest priority to the sector. Therefore, in this submission, we explore both the top priorities for pursuit, and the items of greatest joint concern to the sector at this time.

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Part 1: Response to the Accord Interim Report

Funding the future

The Australian Universities Accord is an opportunity to drive lasting reform that delivers a higher education system capable of meeting the current and future needs of the nation. The university sector wholeheartedly shares this ambition, and the sense of urgency that accompanies it. Australian universities are powerhouses of innovation, advanced knowledge and productivity. They prepare Australia's future leaders not only to hone skills in their chosen fields, but also to think in novel ways, imagine new solutions, and understand the consequences of their choices. Australia needs a strong education system that is resilient in every component, including, but not limited to, higher education. Without this, Australia's prosperity flags and Australians suffer.

Substantial and sustainable government investment in university activities is needed to meet current and future national education and workforce interests. Over at least a decade, government investment in universities has significantly declined, while the cost of running a university in Australia has risen (**Appendix 1**). The Job-ready Graduates package further cut the average level of government funding per student place, shifting additional costs onto students and universities. The 2023 Intergenerational Report emphasises the need for proactive investment and reforms in education and training, and also projects a decrease in funding for education as a percentage of gross domestic product, from 1.7 per cent in 2022-23 to 1.2 per cent in 2062-63.[1] Having endeavoured to meet the nation's needs on increasingly constrained budgets for decades, universities now call for the Accord to adequately fund the shared ambitions of the government and the sector.

This would require a new funding model. We believe that model should be based on the following principles:

First Nations at the heart of Australia's higher education system: The funding model should facilitate access to appropriate resourcing for Indigenous staff, students and communities in the higher education sector.

Accessibility: Higher education should be accessible and affordable to all students while promoting equal opportunities for all types of people in every discipline.

Accountability: The funding model should be transparent and accountable, with clear metrics to measure performance. The performance metrics should be aligned with the objectives of the funding model, such as equity targets, Indigenous self-determination, affordability, and accessibility. The metrics should be reviewed every five years to ensure the funding model is achieving intended outcomes.

Affordability: The funding model should provide an affordable education to students. The cost of the degree should align with the average salary by discipline, which would help students make informed decisions about their education investment.

Equity: The funding model should ensure that students are not discriminated against based on their gender, ethnicity, or social status. The equity targets should aim to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in each discipline, without compromising on quality of education and student success.

Sustainability: The funding model should be sustainable over the long term, with a balanced funding mix of government, student and private contributions. The funding mix should be reviewed every five years to ensure it aligns with changing economic and social conditions.

Transparency: The model must be transparent in its approach to setting the cost of a degree, including use of projected salary data by discipline and equity targets for achieving equal participation of all genders of graduates from each discipline. This will ensure that students and other stakeholders understand how the system works and can make informed decisions about their education.

Mission-based partnership agreements

UA believes that the most effective way to administer funding to the sector is through a significantly improved process of mission-based partnership agreements. UA was pleased to find our recommendation for these agreements prevalent in the considerations of the interim report. This suggestion is foundational. Currently, universities are overburdened by compliance and reporting requirements, taking significant resources away from universities' core missions. Mission-based partnership agreements would allow for tailored investment, target-setting and reporting. This would permit universities to get back to the essential work they do in and for their communities, while still providing government with appropriate oversight to ensure taxpayer dollars are invested wisely. Well-designed and implemented mission-based partnership agreements would serve as the bedrock supporting all other policy changes and program adjustments arising from the Accord process.

The essence of these agreements lies in the notion that university funding should be flexible and subject to a university's discretion in meeting the needs of its students and regions. Our proposition involves tying university mission- and place-based priorities to a base funding level. This is complemented by additional funding based on programs, all of which would be administered through a flexible funding mechanism. Each of these funding components should be based on the principles outlined

above, to ensure equitable outcomes for students, government, universities, and communities.

Meanwhile, incorporating accountability and compliance measures through the mission-based partnership agreements not only increases transparency as universities pursue their agreed missions, but also encourages meticulous planning, budgeting and execution at the university level. The prospect of funding consequences, if objectives are not met or renegotiated, incentivises this approach. Similarly, levers to encourage certain performance outcomes through funding arrangements have a strong precedent. Consequently, the federal government can ensure responsible allocation of taxpayer funds.

UA believes that targets like those highlighted in the interim report (e.g., increased employment of higher education qualified individuals, increased enrolment from low SES, regional, remote, and First Nations communities) should be set by the government for the sector, but also refined by universities based on regional needs to ensure they are appropriate to context. Aligned with appropriate funding principles, targets should recognise the importance of greater public investment in universities to meet the learner and workforce targets Australia requires.

Concerns: administrative and regulatory impact

The effectiveness of the proposed mission-based partnership agreements hinges on alleviating current burdensome administrative, legal and regulatory complexities. The interim report acknowledges this need, yet also introduces various new bodies, programs, administrative procedures and outcomes. Each of these new items will have their own new reporting requirements, thus *increasing* the existing administrative burden.

While these concepts hold merit, they must be integrated into a unified, strategic, system-wide reform to avoid obstructing the success of mission-based partnership agreements and, subsequently, the Accord's success.

Learning for life

UA was pleased to see the interim report engage substantively with issues of lifelong learning and skills development, particularly for equity students, as UA and our members have long advocated for development of this area. UA supports enhanced connectivity between higher and vocational education for a lifelong, student-focused learning experience. The National Skills Passport is a logical first step in that process, and should preferentially be built on the existing My eQuals platform.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Review

The interim report proposes progressing the recommendations of the AQF Review in full as a matter of priority. While there are many aspects of the AQF Review that require urgent implementation, others may require further consideration to be aligned with desired outcomes of the Accord process. Therefore, UA recommends that the panel consider the development of a National Lifelong Learning Strategy (UA recommendation 12, **Appendix 6**) as a matter of priority, working with industry, unions and governments to do so. Progressing the recommendations of the AQF Review within that context will ensure they remain fit-for-purpose in the current context.

Work-integrated Learning (WIL) and compulsory placements

Workforce preparation is a priority across education, industries, and government, as acknowledged in the interim report. We urge the panel to consider the principles of WIL outlined in the National Higher Education Work-integrated Learning Strategy (**Appendix 2**) in terms of WIL being an educational experience. This strategy highlights the existing and potential benefits of WIL for higher education providers, industry and government. The interim report's suggestion of co-design should encourage continued collaboration with industry (in conjunction with, and in addition to the industry advisories universities already have) without giving industry partners decision-making power, as this would undermine universities' self-accrediting status.

Appendix 3 provides an overview of the ideal state of health professions and clinical education as described by the Health Professions' Education Standing Group (HPESG).

Concerns: compulsory placement stipends

In many areas of national workforce need (e.g., health, education) degree courses include compulsory placements. UA welcomes the report's focus on placement poverty and suggestions of student stipends for compulsory placements. These stipends should reflect a cost-of-living allowance rather than payment for a work-based placement. The latter risks redirecting the focus away from a quality educational experience to payment for work.

Furthermore, widening participation and workforce growth will not be possible unless more industry placements are unlocked and governments work with industry, the professions and education providers to provide fair and accessible access to these placements. In many cases, the cost of placements imposed by states and territories has become untenable. We recommend a multi-stakeholder committee be established to determine how best to unlock more – and more diverse – quality placements and how to design and administer stipends to support students as they undertake them.

A roadmap for research

A plan to move towards funding the full cost of research

Research and research training are chronically underfunded, despite their crucial role in driving Australia's prosperity. Increased funding from government will alleviate the current dependence on international student revenue, enabling research sector sustainability. This will empower universities to strategically invest in vital areas such as teaching, research infrastructure, workforce stability and student well-being. The ensuing long-term benefits will span the sector.

This is best achieved through a whole-of-government approach that shares the burden, commencing with all Australian Government agencies committing to providing at least 50 cents of indirect funding for every $1 of direct funding they grant. UA estimates the associated cost of this measure would be up to approximately $3.5 billion over four years across the whole of government (to 2027-28), depending on timing and staging. This is the minimum requirement to maintain Australia's research capability.

An immediate increase in the base stipend for PhD students (i.e., $35,000 in 2025) followed by a review of the Research Training Program (RTP) are also recommended. The review of the RTP should make provision for the increase in the base stipend whilst maintaining the current numbers funded under the scheme. Universities and other industry-funded scholarships typically follow the rate set in the RTP. Hence, this should drive co-investment from portfolios outside education. **Appendix 4** outlines an indicative roadmap towards funding the full cost of research.

We also call on government to prioritise funding for university programs that support and elevate Indigenous research, Indigenous academics and promote Indigenous self-determination. More needs to be done to support First Nation Higher Degree by research (HDR) students to pursue research degrees. Low completion rates in undergraduate degrees, low funding for stipends for what is often a mature-age cohort, and a lack of appropriate mentorship and supports are all contributing factors.

Enhanced support for university engagement with industry and government

The positive impact of university-industry collaboration on the economy is indisputable, and as such, long-term investment that rewards partnerships is needed. UA urges the government to adopt Recommendation Two from the 2016 Review of the Research and Development Tax Incentive (RDTI) by Ferris, Finkel and Fraser. It proposes a higher rate for the RDTI concerning businesses collaborating with universities and publicly funded research agencies.

Concerns: research evaluation and integrity

The interim report suggests a 'light-touch' metrics-based assessment system for research quality. It is unclear what purpose this would serve. UA proposes that the Department of Education works with the ARC and TEQSA to develop evaluation capabilities and reasonable evaluation processes aimed at supporting TEQSA's existing regulatory functions and to develop an appropriate set of quality indicators for research training.

The *Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research* outlines researcher expectations and institution guidance for handling research misconduct. UA would welcome the resourcing and strengthening of an appropriate independent research integrity body that would have the capacity for investigation and review to protect the integrity of the entire Australian research system.

Interrogating a Tertiary Education Commission

The interim report proposes a possible Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). A TEC did not feature in the UA submission and interest in the idea across the sector varies. Therefore, UA recommends that the panel consider the possible advantages of a TEC, the real potential for unintended consequences, before settling on a position.

If a TEC is recommended, we suggest it should be proposed as a medium- rather than short-term action. The effective development of a TEC will be a complex process that will need to be done exceptionally well to realise shared aspirations. This will require care and caution in all phases of development.

Finally, the interim report suggests a possible First Nations Higher Education Council that would sit within a TEC. This suggestion has potential. However, this Council may be more effective as a First Nations *Education* Council, given the interconnectedness of Indigenous advancement across schools, VET and higher education. Indigenous self-determination, sustainability over time and strong connections to university operations would be critical to this Council's success.

Ultimately, UA is unlikely to form a position on a TEC at least until further details become available. We recommend the panel carefully consider the risks and benefits of a TEC set out in **Appendix 5**.

Part 2: Appendices

Appendix 1. Government investment in universities vs operational costs of running universities

As has been the case in many sectors of the Australian economy, universities have experienced significant increases in their operating costs in recent years. However, over the decade from 2009 to 2019 – pre-pandemic figures – Australian Government grants (excluding HECS-HELP) covered less and less of universities' operating expenses. As Figure 1 shows, total expenses from continuing operations per enrolled student increased by 35 per cent during that decade. However, relevant government funding for universities increased by just two per cent over the same period.

Figure 1: Total operating expenses and Australian government grants per enrolled student, 2009 to 2019

- Total expenses from continuing operations per enrolled student
- Australian government grants per enrolled student
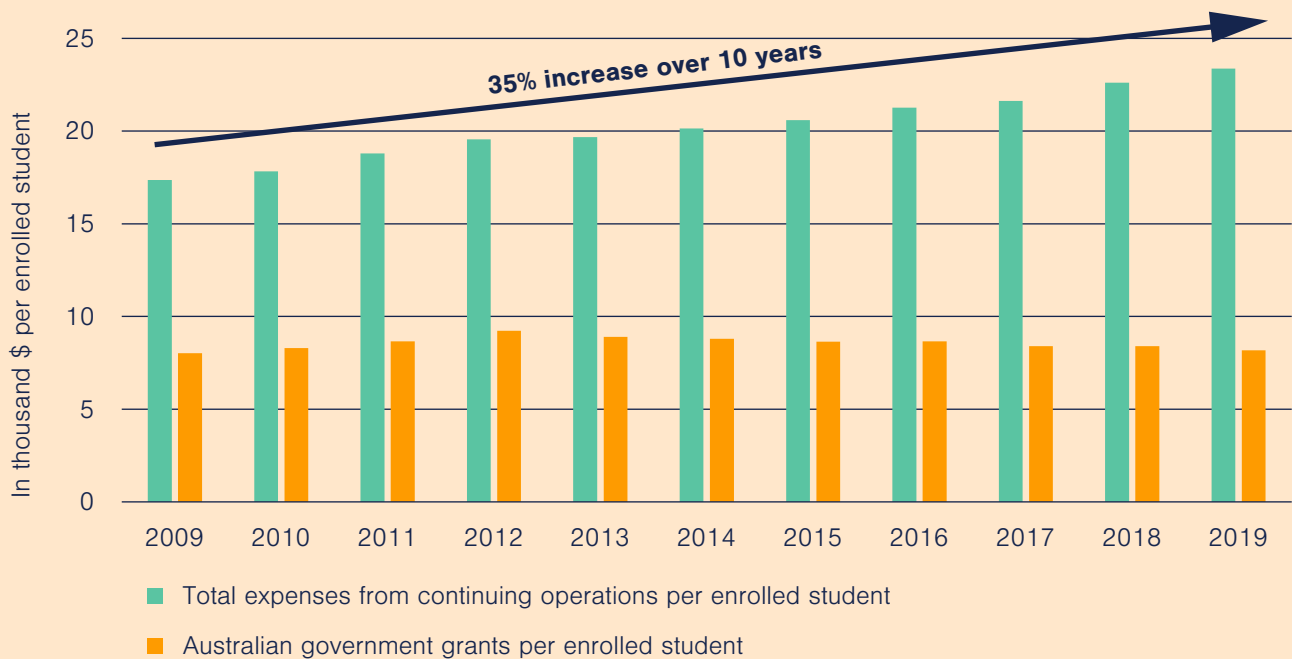
Source: Department of Education Higher Education Finance Reports, 2008 to 2021; Department of Education, 2021 Student Enrolments Pivot Table.

Similarly, Australian Government grants (excluding HECS-HELP) has fallen from 0.7 per cent of GDP in 2009 to 0.6 per cent of GDP in 2019.

Having endeavoured to meet the nation's needs on increasingly constrained budgets for decades, universities now call for the Accord to adequately fund the shared ambitions of the government and the sector. Universities are critical to the nation's future, and can't do more with less.

National Higher Education Work-integrated Learning Strategy

Acknowledgment of Country

We honour and respect the Indigenous peoples who have been, and continue to be, the Custodians of the lands, skies, and waterways upon which we at Universities Australia, and our member universities, live and work.

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WIL: A learning model for the future

Education transforms lives. It spreads knowledge, sparks ideas and develops the skills people need for jobs and life. Work-integrated learning (WIL) connects student learning with work and careers as part of a continuum, spanning foundational study in schools through to advanced study in higher education.

WIL provides important experiences and relationships. These help students, teachers and partners to use and adjust what they learn in a fast-changing world where businesses and organisations need to respond quickly and effectively. WIL is a vital requirement for many degrees that prepare students for specific professions where they must demonstrate competent, real-world workplace practice.

Australia's skills needs are changing and university-educated workers with the knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences necessary to meet these needs are fundamental to Australia's workforce. With skills shortages across industry, WIL facilitates the linkages necessary to fill these gaps whilst preparing individuals for the future of work and learning in a diverse and sophisticated economy.

The integration of work-based learning experiences into higher education is a necessary part of preparing people for their future of work and learning in a diverse and sophisticated economy.

This strategy for work-integrated learning in higher education aims to bring higher education providers, industry and government together to provide high-quality, responsive and sustainable opportunities for students to learn through real work experiences. The strategy seeks to define roles, build partnerships and facilitate collaboration between each group to create innovative and adaptable WIL programs.

High-quality WIL experiences are complex. They need educators, higher education providers, organisations and students to work collaboratively together. The strategy recognises the importance of quality, not quantity, in WIL. The strategy also acknowledges the role of higher education curricula, governance and management in ensuring the success of WIL programs.

Effective WIL programs for students need support structures and curriculum design that blend work experiences with other learning tasks. This strategy suggests including orientation and lead-up activities, responsive management, iterative industry experiences and reflection to build insight.

High-quality WIL experiences are innovative. They adapt to changing needs and evolving work practice. The strategy encourages industry to think creatively and embrace new ways of preparing students for work and improve workplaces. It recognises the apprehension to engagement that may sometimes exist, but aims to demonstrate the overwhelming benefits of getting involved in WIL when higher education providers, communities and government provide appropriate support.

Sustainable WIL programs adapt to the capacity and needs of industry and students. They are also inclusive for diverse groups of students. By working together, WIL partners can develop a pipeline of well-prepared, career-ready professional graduates who are ready to meet the demands of the modern workforce.

The National higher education work integrated learning strategy is a guidance document designed in partnership between Universities Australia (UA), the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN), the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), the Australian Industry Group (AiG), the Business Council of Australia (BCA) and university experts to provide clarity and commitments from higher education providers, partner organisations and governments in meeting the education and professional needs of the future.

Successes of the previous strategy

The 2015 National Strategy on Work-integrated Learning in University Education was a collaborative effort involving various partner organisations which recognised the benefits of WIL for student growth, employability, workforce skills, productivity and industry-community collaborations. Partners included Higher education Australia, the Australian Collaborative Education Network, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Industry Group.

The 2015 strategy laid the groundwork for enhancing WIL in Australian higher education and increasing the capacity of stakeholders to deliver it. It facilitated collaborations between higher education and industries, aimed at addressing Australia's workplace and skills needs. As a result, higher education providers improved their capabilities and established national expectations for WIL practices. This led to increased attention and participation in WIL, stronger research collaborations between higher education and businesses, new working relationships and improved access to talented graduates for industry.

Given the evolving landscape of Australia's skills needs and global challenges, collaboration among higher education, businesses, government and community groups is becoming increasingly crucial. WIL has now become a core practice in university operations, benefiting stakeholders and fostering robust university-industry relationships. The updated National Higher Education Work-integrated Learning Strategy emphasises a unified approach to delivering and reporting WIL activities across a broader, more integrated higher education ecosystem. It seeks to simplify definitions, improve access to these activities within higher education, streamline partnerships with partner organisations and enhance communication across the university sector.

For successful implementation, appropriate support and involvement of industry and community partners are vital. Leadership and support for all aspects of WIL are essential, and integrating WIL activities within communities around higher education providers fosters greater collaboration among higher education, students and partner organisations. By making WIL a community-centred activity, a stronger sense of community and collaboration is promoted. Ultimately, WIL must become a core activity for Australian higher education providers and industry partners to prepare graduates for a dynamic and evolving future of work.
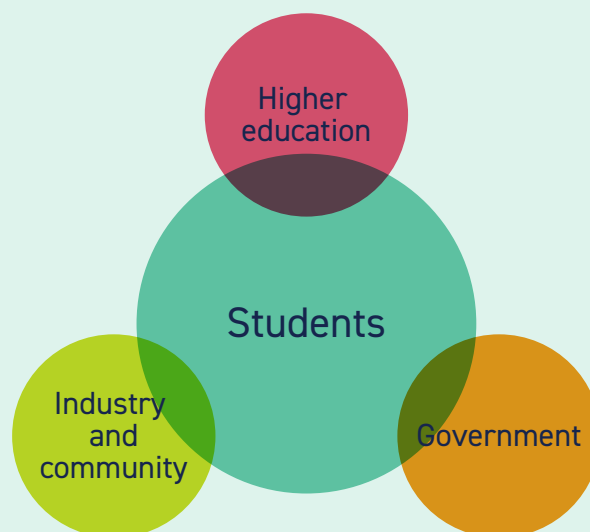
Figure 1: Work Integrated Learning Partnership model. Higher education WIL is a partnership between education providers, industry and community partners and government, with students at the centre of this education and professional development model.

Definitions

To date, WIL has referred to an activity undertaken in the context of a work-related arrangement, be that a project, placement or internship. However, these definitions do not reflect the lifelong learning component of WIL for higher education providers and partner organisations. Instead, the National Strategy provides the following definition that encompasses a scaffolded approach to WIL, reflecting the developmental stages of engagement between higher education providers, students and industry and community partners. This definition also captures the life-long experiences of students entering higher education at different life stages and for different purposes.

This strategy aligns with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HES Framework), where WIL encompasses any arrangement where students undertake learning in a work context as part of their course requirements.

Work-integrated Learning (WIL) directly links student learning to work and career through effectively designed experiential activities relevant to the students' discipline of study. It is an educational approach involving three parties – the student, higher education provider, and a partner organisation– that uses authentic experiences to allow students to actively integrate theory with meaningful practice as an intentional component of the curriculum.

The defining elements of WIL are:

1. **Experiential activities:** engage students in hands-on tasks, and reflection on their experiences, that are related to real-world practice.

2. **Relevant to the students' discipline of study:** the experience supports and correlates to the student's knowledge and skill development requirements as part of their study and/or career aspirations and professional development.

3. **An educational approach:** intentionally supports student learning through a range of practice models.

4. **Involving three parties - the student, the higher education provider and partner organisation:** all three partners are engaged in the experience, where the partner organisation can be an employer, client, community organisation, government agency, or an educational institution (where the higher education provider is an employer or client).

5. **Authentic experiences:** tasks/projects undertaken by the student are related to activities expected at a place of practice (e.g., a workplace, a community, or remotely online with a partner organisation).

6. **Actively integrate theory with practice:** the student is an active participant (i.e., not an observer) within the context of the place of practice where the tasks are intended to be purposefully applied. They are applying, critiquing and forming opinions about principles, theories, and knowledge learnt through formal teaching to authentic practice.

7. **Meaningful practice:** the tasks are work-focused and relevant to the student's discipline of study and have relevant purpose for the partner organisation, whereby the student engages with the tasks in a similar way to that expected of a working professional.

8. **Intentional component of the curriculum:** a formal component of the curriculum, best implemented with assessment including feedback from the partner organisation.

9. **Reflection and career development learning:** students process learning and transfer knowledge across contexts through facilitated reflective activities with educators or industry partners. Career development activities and conversation are embedded within the WIL activities to promote professional identity development and career management skills.

See **Appendix B** for a list of different types of Work-integrated Learning and **Appendix C** for a list of resources useful for implementing WIL.

Purpose

The pathway to success

The National Higher Education Work-integrated Learning Strategy describes good practice in WIL and sets out the roles and responsibilities of partners, higher education providers, industry and organisations and government. To enable this vision, action is needed from all partners in WIL. The following recommendations set out the next steps to be taken to realise widespread, high-quality and sustainable WIL.

Higher education providers

Curriculum:
- Make WIL a core component available across all courses, ensuring that a range of WIL activities are embedded through a scaffolded model that builds on knowledge developed throughout a student's program.
- Promote innovative forms of WIL (placement and non-placement WIL) that adapt to changing work practice.
- Design inclusive WIL experiences to enable access and participation that supports a diverse student population.
- Embed formal Career Development Learning in curricula that is progressively scaffolded through the student life cycle to contribute to career-ready graduates.

Participation:
- Provide different forms of WIL to enable student access and include diverse employers; working with industry to meet student learning outcomes and business needs.
- Create effective community and industry partnership models for different types of businesses, including large businesses and SMEs.

Quality:
- Develop, share and use good practice in higher education and with peak bodies (ACEN, industry groups).
- Develop sector-wide measures and advice on high-quality WIL, including options for benchmarking. Correlate measures with national data reporting through the QILT GOS, SES, ESS, and GOS-L annual surveys for domestic and international students.

Investment:
- Foster the development of WIL within higher education with investment in staff capability and industry relationships and their management.

Partner organisations

Partnership:
- Make higher education-industry partnerships a priority for all stakeholders.
- Foster creation and sharing of WIL solutions for SMEs, not-for-profit organisations and regional/remote businesses that are fit-for-purpose.
- Encourage and support employers to capitalise on a successful WIL placement by offering ongoing casual, part-time or graduate employment to the student.

Participation:
- Work collaboratively with industry and industry sector peak bodies to promote and support WIL.

Quality:
- Create advice on the effectiveness of brokering and supporting WIL through third party arrangements.
- Develop methodologies to gather data and feedback to monitor industry participation and experience of WIL.

Government

Participation:
- Address barriers to access to WIL considering diversity and funding models.
- Foster participation in WIL by international students by excluding all WIL from the working limits in the international student visa.
- Facilitate WIL engagement from more employers through partnership programs between higher education providers and industry, and support third party brokers in facilitating complementary placements between higher education providers and partner organisations.

Policy:
- Place WIL as a learning activity in regulatory and policy settings to distinguish it from work.
- Broaden accepted WIL descriptors in policy to value WIL in all disciplines and in diverse formats.

Quality:
- Establish sector-wide measures and reporting to monitor progress, value and quality including data gathering through national surveys (e.g., GOS, SES, ESS).

Regulation:
- Review regulatory requirements to shift the focus from mandatory placements, identified through outdated measures in CRICOS, to all forms of WIL, whether core or elective.
- Exclude all WIL from the working limit condition in the international student visa.

Funding

Funding is a key driver of a successful WIL strategy. Delivery of the necessary linkages, collaborations and skilled workforce of the future requires investment from multiple stakeholders, including government. To ensure the sustainability of WIL, federal and state/territory and local governments could consider options that encourage and support WIL engagement across the nation. These include:

Funding for students:
- Bursaries and/or stipends to support participation in WIL with priority schemes aligned to national skill development needs and equity student groups.
- Accommodation and travel subsidies for individual student circumstances.
- Direct payments for mandatory training in health and teaching professions.

Funding for higher education:
- Support for researching, developing, implementing and evaluating innovative and flexible WIL programs that favour co-creation and meet work demands.
- Priority support for collaboration with SMEs and regional businesses.
- Support for teaching that supports at-scale and transdisciplinary WIL.
- Support for infrastructure such as innovation hubs.

Funding for industry:
- Incentive schemes to encourage participation in WIL activities, particularly for SMEs, such as tax incentives and opt-in programs.
- Wage subsidies and/or training supplements into a Lifelong Learning Trust to encourage payment for students undertaking work-based WIL.
- Support for infrastructure designed to facilitate and grow WIL.
- Priority schemes for SMEs and regional businesses where participation is costly.
- Priority schemes for industries with acute skill gaps and talent shortages.

Partner commitments

Working in partnership, higher education providers, industry and government commit to ensuring high quality and sustainable WIL programs for students. These commitments focus on ensuring accessible and high-quality WIL delivery within and between industry partner organisations and are appropriately funded and supported through government policy and funding arrangements.

Higher education providers, industry partner organisations and government commitments take a people-centred approach to good WIL practice that recognises the different responsibilities and impacts of certain activities on WIL.

Higher education provider commitments

Higher education providers focus on learning, linkage to work and the student experience to deliver WIL. Their role is to co-create and co-deliver effective WIL programs and experiences with industry and community partners and manage, monitor and evaluate activities and relationships to continuously improve outcomes.

Critical issues in making WIL core to higher education include integration across all aspects for learning, growing and maintaining effective partnerships and improving the evidence base for quality WIL. This integration should reflect both the translational – education into employment – and non-translational importance of WIL, to reflect the variety of significant WIL experiences for students.

An integrated and scaffolded approach

Higher education providers design and deliver WIL curriculum that engages students in meaningful work-related tasks that relate to students' discipline, intended career and/or professional development. The WIL curriculum is purposefully designed to increase students' agency, participation and responsibility towards becoming a working professional.

Higher education providers commit to providing a supportive environment for WIL across complementary domains and continuous improvement of WIL that is responsive to industry and community practices. The environments for WIL will reflect the unique place- and mission-based strategies and contexts of each higher education provider, responding to regional, equity, Indigenous and international student, industry and community needs.

Effective WIL curriculum:

- uses course, learning and task/activity design that aligns with qualification learning outcomes, relevant graduate outcomes and enables the evidence of learning

- is scaffolded in various forms throughout the program to develop employability over time

- includes emerging applications of study and reflects contemporary work practices

- targets inclusive, equitable and accessible WIL models in class, work, virtual and/or hybrid formats

- gathers complementary assessment inputs including partner organisation feedback on student performance

- requires students to critically reflect on the intersection of theory and practice to support application of knowledge, encourage innovation and enable improvement

- provides insights into professional norms, values, culture and practice, encouraging the development of professional identity to prepare students for future work

- encourages career development learning through building self-awareness, career planning for a range of career futures, awareness of the changing world of work, development of job search strategies and professional networks, communication of capabilities and achievements and identifying personal and professional development, and

- reflects professional accreditation requirements and partner organisation expectations of new workers.

Effective WIL practice:

- ensures all components of a WIL experience must meet the Threshold Standards, as outlined in the TEQSA Guidance Note[1]
- enacts policies, procedures and processes to assure safe and meaningful WIL, including partner suitability checks, risk management and legal matters, financial arrangements and supervisor quality
- implements identifiable leadership and governance structures for WIL
- supports WIL by adequate and effective IT and administrative systems
- uses evidence to evaluate and benchmark WIL programs against targeted outcomes and good practice to develop strategies for improvement
- regularly reviews partnership arrangements and agreements for quality assurance and sustainability, and
- gathers, reviews, and acts on feedback from students, educators and partners to refine and improve WIL design and delivery.

Figure 2: Successful design and delivery of WIL requires productive interplay between all aspects of student learning (diagram adapted from the work of Patrick C-J et al (2014) Leading WIL: A distributed leadership approach to enhance work-integrated learning final report 2014)

1 Guidance note: Work-integrated learning | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (teqsa.gov.au)

Working in partnership

Higher education providers recognise that WIL involves students, higher education staff and partner organisations and is only successful when all stakeholders are actively engaged. Higher education providers are committed to collaborating effectively with each stakeholder group and individual stakeholders. This includes streamlining access to WIL opportunities and creating focal points for student, industry and community engagement.

With **students**, higher education will:

- promote awareness of WIL with students and partners to encourage active engagement, communicate expectations, and establish requirements of involved parties
- foster early and deep engagement with WIL and career development activities
- design WIL that builds confidence and self-determination
- partner with students to design inclusive and safe WIL offerings that cater to different student needs, including those of equity and international students
- guide students to receive and use feedback on WIL activities to inform future learning and development
- adequately prepare students for diverse WIL experiences, accounting for study context, individual backgrounds and personal circumstances
- minimise systemic barriers to participating in WIL, enabling all students to engage in and benefit from WIL activities, and
- create a centralised team or area within the higher education provider as the focal contact point for all students, industry and government WIL engagement.

With **staff**, higher education will:

- recognise WIL expertise and practice through professional recognition and career progression
- build capability and provide guidance, mentorship and professional development for staff involved in WIL practice

- support research and scholarship to promote excellence in WIL

- raise awareness of the value of WIL and foster collective commitment to WIL, and

- manage workload to allow higher education staff to design and deliver quality WIL.

With **industry partners,** higher education will:

- invest adequate resources to identify, establish, build and sustain meaningful partner organisations to expand WIL offerings

- implement institutional structures that grow awareness and facilitate seamless partnerships between the higher education provider and partner organisations

- foster co-creation of quality WIL offerings through collaboration with partner organisations

- introduce flexible models of WIL that encourage engagement among diverse organisation types, including micro and small businesses

- provide guidance, mentorship and professional development for partner staff involved in WIL practice

- collaborate with partner organisations to develop, implement and evaluate strategies to increase access and equity in WIL, and

- monitor and evaluate industry partnerships for continuous improvement.

Measures for quality assurance and improvement in WIL

Evidence-based practice sits at the core of effective higher education practice. The purpose of gathering, reviewing and evaluating evidence is to identify and understand areas of good practice, those requiring improvement and guide decisions on future policy, pedagogy and curriculum.

Evidence can be perceptual (what stakeholders think), behavioural (what stakeholders do) and outcomes based (what stakeholders achieve). It is critically important that institutions gather and monitor data

relating to students, educators, partner organisations and the systems associated with WIL practice to ensure intended outcomes and drive continuous improvement. Appropriate data gathering will help ensure compliance with Fair Work Australia as well as conformity with local employment and workplace legislation for international students.

Types of evidence collected include perceptual, behavioural and outcomes evidence. See **Appendix A** for a list of evidence types collected by WIL partners.

Higher education providers will share evidence for WIL to learn from exploration of effective practice at peer institutions, benchmark performance in the provision of WIL and of its outcomes, further develop insights into WIL and its development and expand WIL programs and activities.

Higher education providers will gather and share data on good practice in WIL:

- student participation in different forms of WIL, including breakdowns by field, stage of study and personal characteristics

- different WIL activities embedded into qualifications by field and stage of study

- inclusion of ACEN-sponsored items in the Graduate Outcomes Survey to enable national benchmarking on the impact of different forms of WIL on graduate employment outcomes and aspects of work readiness

- nature and extent of engagement with partner organisations for the purpose of WIL, and

- higher education will track employability development of students overtime through embedding the Career Registration process, similar to those developed in other countries, such as the United Kingdom.

See **Appendix A** for a list of evidence collected by higher education.

Partner organisation commitments

WIL is a collaborative activity and cannot occur without partners who engage students. Partners become involved in WIL for various reasons. Key among these is the development of students as competent, workplace-ready graduates. Through WIL, students undertake tasks while gaining insight into work environments. Through WIL, students are exposed to real-life, agile and complex work environments and are assisted in developing mindsets and behaviours to be able to learn and be resilient. In all experiences, WIL is an educative experience and could serve to prepare students to potentially work with the partner in the future.

WIL partner organisations include small, medium and large businesses, community and non-government organisations, industry and employer associations and unions, and levels of government. Partner organisations have different levels of resource capacity to engage in WIL. The range of WIL types caters for varying levels of engagement and activity (See **Appendix B** for a list of different types of WIL). Those with limited capacity will strive towards the best practice commitments below.

Active engagement in WIL

Partner organisations who are actively engaged in quality WIL commit to:

- developing strong relationships with higher education providers and all students including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences to help develop future talent
- building WIL into the organisation's workforce strategy where students are seen as a valuable contribution, the beginning of the worker pipeline and included in workforce development planning
- a culture that accepts students and their ideas, integrates them into teams and promotes belongingness

- devoting sufficient resources to enable quality WIL engagements for students, being cognisant of government support programs for partner organisation involvement in WIL activities
- developing and providing internal policies, training material and opportunities around work-based WIL, orientation, OHS policies, supervision and assessment
- designating a person to lead WIL engagements/ experiences and developing an internal plan around time commitments, staff involvement and communication with the student and higher education partners
- preparing staff to engage with students, effectively supervise, mentor, provide meaningful feedback and complete assessments (where relevant)
- encouraging students in the development of professional identity, along with building confidence and self-determination, and
- contributing to WIL activities with higher education providers which may include co-creation, co-design, co-delivery and co-assessment.

Figure 3: Partners draw together planning, activities, capability and collaboration to create effective WIL in partnership with higher education.

Growing value through evaluation

Monitoring WIL outcomes for partner organisations and students provides the basis for improving value. This requires active collaboration between partner organisations and higher education providers.

Partner organisations who are actively involved in improving WIL commit to:

- making higher education-industry partnerships a priority for all stakeholders
- providing feedback on the quality and professional capabilities of students engaged
- providing feedback on the WIL process and communication with the higher education
- completing higher education surveys and broader government instruments to enable the collection of data, evaluation and improvement of WIL policies, practices and support
- considering, and where appropriate acting on, student and higher education feedback on the student's workplace experience, level of partner organisation support and learning opportunities for the organisation
- reviewing the organisation's own communications and procedures and workplace learning environment for WIL, to ensure it enables equity and inclusion, and
- where possible, broadening the organisation's WIL activities and the number of students engaged as part of the organisation's ongoing workforce development strategy.

Partner associations support the growth and innovation of quality WIL by familiarising their members with and directing them to:

- the benefits and opportunities for partner organisations engaging in WIL
- the various types of WIL, including initiatives available for specific business needs or for those with resource constraints, e.g. multi-enterprise or multi-discipline projects that can enable involvement by SMEs; virtual WIL to facilitate regional WIL; competitions for students addressing a partner's workplace issue
- professional development and resources to support engagement and good practice in WIL (e.g. guides and exemplars). For a list of resources to support engagement and good practice, see **Appendix B**
- support available from government and higher education for involvement in WIL
- government information on WIL and programs that are targeted at specific industry sectors, organisation sizes, community groups and underrepresented cohorts of students, and
- supervision and mentoring capabilities required by employees directly involved with WIL activities.

Government commitments

WIL programs have been proven to be a highly effective means of enhancing student learning, employability, industry workplace readiness, and productivity. By providing students with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience on real-world work projects and in work environments, WIL bridges the gap between education and the workforce. Supporting WIL in addressing future knowledge, skills and workplace needs is essential for Australia's education and workforce future.

Investing in WIL programs not only benefits individual students, but also strengthens Australia's economy by preparing a highly skilled and capable workforce for the future. WIL programs provide benefits to all partner organisations beyond workforce readiness. These include:

- greater financial and resource support for research
- innovation and collaboration between partners
- streamlining of pathways into and out of different industry and education sectors, and
- creation of dedicated strategies and pipelines for building closer linkages between industry, higher education and communities.

By providing leadership through the regulation and governing acts for industry and community engagement, the government can support the conditions upon which future generations of professional graduates collaborate across sectors to inform, adapt and evolve Australia's research, teaching and professional workforce. These conditions include ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to support the educative role of WIL, students are supported through regulatory and industrial conditions through Fair Work Australia, and supported by relevant federal and state accreditation and regulatory bodies. Resources to support these conditions, which include existing measures for Fair Work Australia conditions and the TEQSA Threshold Standards, are available in **Appendix C**.

Sector collaboration and sustainable funding

Government commitment to establishing a national WIL infrastructure mechanism is crucial to the impact WIL makes for the nation going forward.

As part of this, collaboration between governments, higher education providers, and industry is essential in the development and delivery of successful WIL programs. Such collaboration brings together the diverse perspectives and expertise of each sector, allowing for a more comprehensive and effective approach to preparing students for the workforce and meeting the needs of employers.

The government recognises the importance of this collaboration and is committed to supporting it through various means, including funding arrangements, tax incentives and partnership opportunities. Options to support WIL include:

- grants and subsidies to support the development and delivery of WIL programs in and between higher education, industry and communities
- higher education funding arrangements to enable WIL programs for students, including arrangements for student fees to be used to support engagement, especially if WIL programs are mandatory
- ensuring higher education Performance-Based Funding (PBF) arrangements support ongoing development of WIL initiatives and support responsive behaviours to changing cultural and environmental conditions that affect WIL
- tax incentives to ensure Australia's businesses (particularly small to medium enterprises, which make up 90 per cent of Australia's businesses) are able to effectively and equitably engage with WIL programs and also share in the benefits and outcomes
- wage subsidies for employment-based WIL (e.g., degree apprenticeships), and
- additional supports through ABSTUDY, Austudy and Youth Allowance to support students undertaking WIL activities on a full-time basis.

Resources to support the provision of WIL programs between higher education, industry and communities include:

- relevant department and agency support, such as the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Industry, can provide support and resources to help higher education and industry connect and collaborate effectively
- development and dissemination of information packs and programs targeted at specific industry and community groups to generate awareness of the benefits and opportunities of WIL, and
- introducing sector-wide measures and reporting to monitor progress, value and quality including data gathering through national surveys (Graduate Outcomes Survey, Student Experience Survey and Employer Satisfaction Survey), such as using ACEN's pre-developed indicators for QILT.

Sustainable funding requires significant investment which necessitates accountability measures to ensure Australia continues to receive the benefits of supporting WIL. These measures could include:

- funding arrangements directed towards programs and initiatives that align with industry workforce needs
- funding conditions, such as the requirement to report data on the experiences and outcomes of the program
- accountability measures to support the continued investment and public good of WIL programs, such as through a mission-compact process, and
- evaluative research to measure the effectiveness of different models to ensure the efficacy and responsiveness of WIL programs is adequately monitored and changes made accordingly.

Government WIL collaboration	
Sustainable funding	**Partner commitments**
• Confidence in enabling risk taking and WIL engagement. • Business tax incentives • Grants and subsidies for engagement.	• Professional, job and career ready graduates. • Expanded research and collaborative projects for SMEs. • Other partners to engage with Government and universities.
Higher education committments	**Evaluation and reporting**
• Co-creation and codelivery of critical thinking, professional, and adaptable students.	• Success indicators and measures to inform future collaborations.

Figure 4: Government WIL collaboration model to inform the success of WIL funding and engagement by and between government, higher education and industry.

Quality assurance and improvement

The collection and reporting of WIL data is crucial in ensuring that these programs continue to effectively meet the needs of students, employers and the wider economy. By monitoring and analysing WIL data, governments can make informed decisions about the design and delivery of these programs, as well as assess their impact on student outcomes and workforce development. This data could also help inform further research and program and policy development into innovative models for closer collaboration between higher education providers and partner organisations in creating a workforce pipeline in certain sectors.

Types of data to be collected, analysed and reported include:

- participation rates
- program completion rates
- student satisfaction and feedback
- employer satisfaction and feedback
- graduates' employment outcomes
- impact of WIL on specific industries and regional economies
- linkages, including partnerships, research and commercial agreements associated with or developed through WIL, and
- increased workforce participation of equity groups and Indigenous graduates.

Partner success indicators and measures

The following indicators and measures provide clarity on the specific items each partner is responsible for collecting and reporting of data. This data can be provided through a medium most appropriate to each partner and where reporting instruments require such data. The intent of these indicators and measures is to monitor and improve WIL experiences amongst partners and students.

Higher education

High education indicators	Higher education measures
Students participating in WIL.	Enrolments in WIL units/subjects across all disciplines as a % of total discipline enrolments. All students (undergraduate, postgraduate & HDR). Equity students. International students. Indigenous students.
Improved student employability and confidence.	Student perceptions on skill development and perceived employability from WIL (Student Experience Survey). Graduate perceptions on perceived employability from WIL (Graduate Outcomes Survey).
Employment outcomes associated with WIL.	Association between WIL participation and graduate outcomes.
Partner organisations participating in WIL.	Number of WIL partnerships per higher education provider.
Partner organisations' satisfaction with WIL.	Industry feedback on student performance in WIL (Employer Satisfaction Survey). Industry feedback on value of WIL to the organisation, including the retention of industry partners re-engaging with WIL. Industry feedback on the availability, engagement and co-design of WIL.
Institutional provision of WIL.	Governance/policy. Systems. Quality assurance and improvement. Relationships and communication.
Quality WIL staffing.	Recognition and reward for staff excellence in WIL. Institutional culture. Scholarly practice. Professional development.
Quality improvement for WIL.	Preparation of partners and students. Evaluation and reporting. Benchmarking and standards. Research and development.

Partner organisation

Partner organisation indicators	Partner organisation measures
Number of businesses engaging in WIL.	Increased numbers of partners engaging from small, medium and large companies, community and non-government organisations, industry and employer associations and unions, and levels of government. Proportion of partner organisations re-engaging in WIL. Increase in regional, rural and remote WIL activities.
Levels of satisfaction with work readiness and employability of graduates who have completed WIL as part of their studies.	Increasing levels of satisfaction with work readiness and employability of graduates, assessed through the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching. (Employer Satisfaction Survey).
Availability of and access to WIL activities relevant to the organisation.	Knowledge of how to access WIL and what resources are available to develop WIL programs, support networks, and available funding opportunities. Accessibility of higher education communication and support to establish, facilitate and evaluate WIL programs.
Suitability of the student pool.	Satisfaction with the suitability of the students available to undertake the WIL activity with the partner in line with each stage of study.
Confidence in student skills and capabilities.	Student knowledge and technical capabilities. Student ability to develop skills, learn in the workplace, their resilience and critical thinking capacity. Whether the student will, or has, gained employment with the partner.
Satisfaction with the WIL activity.	WIL program content and design. Higher education support in setting up, facilitating and evaluating the WIL program.
Involvement in student learning lifecycles.	Evidence of relevant and practicable involvement in student development throughout the length of the student's program.
Capability development and innovation in the partner organisation.	Employee development through WIL supervision, mentoring, activity co-design/development and/or assessment. Innovation in organisational re-design, and workforce development planning.
Improved research collaboration.	Development of relationships with higher education providers. Collaboration on research projects. Access to higher education knowledge, facilities and resources.

Government

Government indicators	Government measures
Student participation, retention and completion rates.	Enrolments in WIL units/subjects across all disciplines as a % of total enrolment: All students (undergraduate and postgraduate) Equity students International students Indigenous students.
Student engagement and motivation in higher education.	On-campus / in-placement/program participation as a measure of overall participation in higher education activities.
Improved student employability and confidence.	Student and employer perceptions on skill development, work-readiness and professional conduct.
Graduate employment outcomes.	Association between WIL participation and graduate outcomes.
Transferable skills development.	Association between WIL participation, work-readiness and employer satisfaction and professional skills development.
Return on investment.	Public good evaluation of investment based on economic contributions of the higher education-industry partnership.
Industry impact.	Industry-linked programs, collaboration or partnerships. Increase in academic workforce derived from industry. Increase in industry workforce involved in research through higher education.
Region impact.	Student, employee and employer mobility following completion of WIL program and graduate work outcomes. Impact of WIL programs on regional economic growth, including investment in local industries and level of economic activity.
Community impact	Level of community participation and support for WIL activities. Development and creation of WIL-responsive initiatives within community to support students and employers.

Appendix A – Evidence from higher education

Partners in WIL will collect, analyse and draw insights from complementary types of evidence for WIL. Evidence includes:

Perceptual evidence

- Student perspectives on experiences, challenges and successes in WIL (e.g., Student Experience Survey, institutional/qualification or program-based student surveys, focus groups on aspects of WIL). This should span aspects of employability, including skill development, perceived employability, work-readiness, career development learning and professional identity formation.
- Graduate perspectives on how WIL enhanced aspects of their employability (e.g., ACEN endorsed items in Graduate Outcomes Survey, institution-led data from surveys and focus groups on WIL experiences).
- Educator perspectives on the resourcing and implementation of WIL, challenges, good practice and areas for improvement (e.g., survey and focus group data).
- Partner organisation data on WIL student performance and organising, preparing for and taking part in WIL, including wins, challenges and areas for improvement (e.g., survey, interview or focus group data gathered by institutions, accrediting bodies or professional associations, aggregated evaluations on student performance).

Behavioural evidence

- Provision and resourcing of WIL across qualifications and field of study.
- Student participation in different forms of WIL (e.g., institutional reporting by qualification, field of study and personal characteristics, Department of Education as Work Experience in Industry (WEI) units for mandatory WIL using TACSI element).
- Student engagement with WIL and related content (e.g., day/time/length of time of online content interaction; repeated content viewing; etc.).

- Partner organisation participation in different forms of WIL (e.g., institutional reporting in industry engagement or data from industry or accrediting bodies).
- Educator and partner organisation access to and participation in professional development activities for designing and delivering WIL (e.g., training modules, learning communities of practice).
- External and/or student partner participation in the creation and design of WIL programs.

Outcomes evidence

- Assurance and quality of student learning during WIL (e.g., pre- and post-WIL capability audits, mapping against qualification learning outcomes, professional accreditation standards or skill/attribute/capability frameworks, Higher Education Standards Framework, ACEN institutional quality assurance framework, TEQSA Guidance Note).
- Impact of WIL on student success (e.g., institutional data comparing retention and grade point average of students completing different types of WIL, or not).
- Impact of WIL on graduate employment outcomes (e.g., full-time employment, general employment and overqualification data and ACEN-endorsed items in the Graduate Outcome Survey, institutional data linkage on WIL participation, Graduate Outcomes Survey and Graduate Outcomes Survey-Longitudinal).
- Effective governance and management of WIL (e.g., effective management systems, timely reporting, risk management, legal and compliance).
- Ongoing recognition and development of WIL (e.g., WIL research and scholarship, awards, successful career paths for WIL staff).

Appendix B – Types of WIL

- Higher apprenticeships/degree apprenticeships and cadetships – integrated program of structured education and training and paid work that leads to a VET or higher education qualification at the Australian Qualifications Framework Level 5 or above
- Placements and internships
- Professional practice arrangements and practicums
- Field experiences
- Consulting
- Online projects
- Micro-placements
- Inter-disciplinary student teams
- Multi-company projects
- Incubators and start-ups
- Competitions
- Hackathons

Appendix C – Resources for implementing the strategy

The following resources have been provided by ACEN to support engagement in WIL. These resources are indicative of the broader suite of resources available through individual institutions, governments and industry groups.

ACEN WIL contacts list for higher education providers.

1. ACEN Industry Resources: acen.edu.au/resource-type/industry-resources/

2. Higher Education and Employment in Australia: The Impact of Internships: production-ribit.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws. com/documents/Ribit-Research-Higher-Education-Australia.pdf

3. National WIL strategy: wplgetengaged.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/ national-wil-strategy-in-university-education-032015.pdf

4. Workers' Rights and Restrictions: immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/working-in-australia/ work-rights-and-exploitation

5. Workplace Health and Safety Act 2001: legislation.gov.au/Details/C2011A00137

6. Fair Work Ombudsman List of Awards: fairwork.gov.au/awards-and-agreements/awards/ list-of-awards.

7. Fair Work Ombudsman Unpaid Work: fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/fact-sheets/unpaid-work/unpaid-work

8. How to make the most of Work Integrated Learning: for Workplace Supervisors: murdoch.edu.au/Work-Integrated-Learning/_ document/Misc/How_to_make_the_most_of_WIL_ WORKPLACE_version.pdf

9. Uni Students – Good News for your Business: cdn.aigroup.com.au/Workforce_Development/ FactSheets/Employer_guide_UniStudents.pdf

10. Developing strategies to maximise industry contribution and engagement with the WIL experience: acen.edu.au/wil-impact/industry-engagement/

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Appendix 3. The ideal state of health professions and clinical education

Health Professions' Education Standing Group (HPESG) | May 2023

The ideal future state of Health Professions Education (HPE) in Australia is one in which:

1. Education and training the future **health workforce**:
   - is recognised as **critical to national wellbeing**
   - **supports the provision of quality care** to address diverse and dynamic community needs, and
   - delivers **workforce self-sufficiency** through Australian-based education - with only minimal, short-term need to recruit overseas-qualified staff.

2. These objectives are achieved through **long-term collaborative planning and deep partnerships** between governments, the professions, health services and tertiary education providers. Alliances recognise partners' shared responsibility to meet Australia's future health workforce needs.

3. All stakeholders receive **high quality and timely data** from a common, trusted and authoritative source **about changing health workforce and skills needs** to inform their decision-making about funding, enrolments, course delivery and the provision of placements.

4. Domestic and international students in all disciplines can readily access affordable and sufficient **clinical placements that provide high quality learning and diverse experiences** - see Box 1.

5. Tertiary education providers operate under **streamlined health professional accreditation processes** across disciplines and between education and professional accreditation. Processes:
   - focus on outcomes, are evidence-informed, allow for innovation and remove artificial distinctions between NRAS and non-NRAS disciplines, and
   - do not duplicate accreditation/registration processes and requirements through TEQSA or ASQA.

6. Tertiary education providers have access to funding to **evaluate** the impacts of educational innovations in health professional education.

Box 1. Ideal placements are ones where:

- placement settings and locations support students' flexible learning needs and their contribution to patient care while reflecting accreditation and health service requirements
- placement volume and capacity match tertiary education provider need and changing workforce demand
- placements can be accessed nationally and efficiently
- placement funding models are consistent, transparent and equitable across disciplines, services and jurisdictions and support interprofessional learning
- placement resources (such as tools to assess placement capacity and quality placement models) are accessible nationally by tertiary education providers
- students can access financial resources, where needed, to meet living costs while on mandatory placements, and
- virtual placement and simulation approaches can replace, or be augmented with, actual placements, where evidence shows this to be equal to or better than the latter.

How might we get there?
Health workforce planning and development

- Establish an enduring, national, cross-portfolio, multi-jurisdictional mechanism to undertake comprehensive health workforce planning across the health, aged care and disability sectors[2]. Planning will:
   - be underpinned by robust, national workforce supply/demand data interrogable at state, regional and local levels to enable timely mapping of workforce stress points
   - include data on clinical placement capacity, availability, diversity and quality, and
   - incorporate scenario planning and ongoing examination of the impacts of new technology on workforce and skills needs.

- Ensure inclusion of the tertiary education sector voice from the outset in all health workforce policy formation and planning.

- Build on universities' regional infrastructure[3] to act as anchor sites for workforce development.

- Establish agreements between Health and Education departments and tertiary education providers that provide funded support for:
   - regionally customised health workforce outcomes

- tertiary education providers to offer accredited programs that enable professionals to work to their full scope and/or in new or advanced practice roles across the disciplines, and
- education models that can skill/reskill/upskill new and existing workforce quickly, while ensuring quality outcomes. Models could include:
  - ▶ micro-credentials and fast-tracking students based on recognised RPL and competency framework assessments as well as traditional post-graduate training
  - ▶ combining ongoing health service work with further study ("earn as you learn" apprenticeship-type models or paid student assistant roles)
  - ▶ an easy-to-navigate tertiary system with clear pathways within and between sectors to support career progression and upskilling/reskilling for advanced practice roles, and/or
  - ▶ promoting student diversity and participation to better reflect and respond to service need.

Placements

- Task National Cabinet Health Ministers with the development and oversight of a national health workforce framework. The framework will:
  - align health workforce planning with the provision of funding and placements to tertiary education providers for students in health professional courses in each jurisdiction, and
  - establish consistent and transparent processes for the above in each state and territory.
- Establish transparent and accountable partnership agreements between health/aged care/disability services and tertiary education providers regarding placements. Agreements:
  - recognise the reciprocal contributions of health services, practitioners, universities and other tertiary education providers to current and future health care and workforce development
  - acknowledge and draw equitably on the funds that flow to education and health service providers for teaching, training and research, and
  - commit to increasing quality interprofessional education during placements.
- Establish a pooled workforce development fund[4] specifically to develop new/expand existing placement capacity and quality in health services. Funds could be drawn on for:
  - supervisor training and credentialling
  - grants for partnership approaches between universities and health, ageing and disability services to develop quality, sustainable placement models to address identified local workforce/skills

needs including in rural and remote Australia
  - supervisor and student accommodation especially in regional/rural locations, and
  - student bursaries where students lack the financial capacity to complete mandatory placements.
- Invest in primary, aged and disability care and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector as quality teaching, training and research systems.
- Expand and uplift supervision capacity by:
  - increasing the inclusion of supervision activities in health practitioner position descriptions
  - having supervision included in practice standards set by Health Boards under AHPRA, and
  - increasing use and acceptance of interprofessional supervisory models.
- Ensure the next National Health Reform Agreement Addendum includes shared Commonwealth and State responsibilities for:
  - reporting on the delivery and performance of teaching, training and research in the tertiary and community health sectors, and
  - upholding health workplaces to be safe and supportive learning environments that enable flexible career progression and pathways.

Accreditation

- Build on the growing focus on learning outcomes rather than processes.
- Remove the artificial distinction between NRAS and non-NRAS professions by:
  - bringing all health disciplines under the oversight of AHPRA for registration, accreditation and workforce data collection purposes, and
  - regularly bringing tertiary education providers, health professional and accrediting bodies together to share and participate in accreditation development and progress.
- Consolidate accreditation processes between TEQSA, ASQA and the health professions to reduce duplication and enable joint assessments of shared academic and health professional areas.
- Provide options for universities to synchronise health professional accreditation into a common agreed cycle for all disciplines, where this is preferred[5].
- Ringfence a proportion of NHMRC or MRFF funding for dedicated health services research including Health Professions Education models that can be shared with accrediting bodies and the professions.
- Bring accreditation bodies and the university sector together on a two to three-yearly basis to discuss relevant findings from the above and their incorporation into education/accreditation.

Appendix 4. Roadmap towards funding the full cost of research

The challenges in funding research are three-fold. First, the direct costs of undertaking research are rarely funded, requiring in-kind support from universities for salary gaps and other project-based costs. Second, the indirect costs funded via the Research Support Program (RSP) have been eroded over time from a high of approximately 50 cents in the dollar to an average of 20 cents in the dollar. This is a result of the introduction of new funding schemes and sources (including industry and philanthropy) without a concomitant increase in the RSP. Indirect costs cover the provision of common research infrastructure and support within universities necessary to undertake project funded research.[6]

Similarly, the level and number of HDR student stipends which can be funded via the Research Training Program (RTP) have been eroded over time so that many research students increasingly straddle the poverty line.[7][8] Universities have (through international student revenue) always managed to fill these gaps. This is unsustainable and the system is at a critical inflection point.

UA acknowledges the economic challenges facing the country and therefore suggests the need for a roadmap towards the full cost of research. Below is a high-level indicative draft of a measured and staged roadmap which would support Australia's immediate and long-term economic success. This is not an ambit claim, it is pragmatic, fiscally responsible triage.

2024-25 Budget

An immediate funding boost for the indirect cost of research via a whole-of-government approach

All government agencies should commit to providing 50 cents of indirect funding for every $1 of grant funding they award (from 2025), as well as targets for grant success rates at or above current levels.

This should apply to all current and future Category 1 grant programs across government.

For the Department of Education this can be achieved cost neutrally by:

- Limiting the use of existing Research Support Program support by supporting only grants in the Education Portfolio at 50 cents to the dollar and continuing to provide indirect costs support for Category 2-4 funding during a transition period, or
- Redirecting RSP funding to the ARC and to other existing initiatives (e.g. Trailblazer) to support indirect costs.

Other government bodies, principally health, agriculture and defence would have to review the scope and size of their programs with the benefit of more control in terms of the nature and recipients of indirect costs for the research they support. This would require additional investment across whole of government agencies over the Forward Estimates (the size of that investment depends on plans for growth in other portfolios and the relative contributions of state governments).

- An approximate sum of $750 million to $1 billion per annum – or up to around $3.5 billion over the forward estimates if implemented from 2025. Alternatively, this could be managed through a four-year staged transition establishing a transition path to the 50 cents target - approximately $2 billion over the forward estimates.

Other administrative changes would be required to RSP (if it is retained) to ensure that indirect costs flow at the time of award, eliminating the current two-year lag. This will eliminate the current structural disadvantage (created by this funding lag) for regional/smaller/less research-intensive universities to increase and diversify their research footprint. In health and other portfolios, it would provide the flexibility to directly fund delivery partners (e.g. Medical Research Institutes and Hospitals) rather than indirectly through universities as happens at present, with a net reduction in the administrative overhead of grant funding.

In this context, the government could commit to further modelling of the full cost of research by refreshing the valuable Allen Consulting Group Report "Recognising the full cost of university research".[9] This could be undertaken by the recently established consultancy arm of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Immediate changes to the Research Training Program

RTP stipends have been indexed since 2017 using CPI annual movement to December from two years prior to the relevant academic year.

- For example, the 2023 base amount = 2022 stipend amount X (1 + December 2021 CPI).
- This lag means that the already low stipend base funding is yet to reflect the massive cost of living increases of 2022 (7.8 per cent Dec annual change[10]) and 2023 (already approx. 2.21 per cent from January to June[11] and expected to reach around 3¼ by December[12])

There is a misconception that PhD students are mostly young people continuing their studies. In fact, around one third of domestic students are in their 30s and a further third are 40+ at time of enrolment – i.e., people who are returning from industry, often with families and mortgages.

DoE Budget estimates should already factor in a 2024 stipend amount of $32,192.[13]

To reflect that a) stipends have never been competitive with alternative employment and increasingly less so b) the indexation lag has compounded this issue for

current students, UA recommends that the 2025 stipend amounts be rebased at $35,000 and indexed thereafter. Additionally, indexation for the Forward Estimates period should be calculated as CPI using a June-June reference period or 3.5 per cent (whichever is higher) to drive progress towards a living wage for RTP recipients and eliminate future lag issues.

Any increase in the base stipend should not come at the expense of HDR placement numbers – which should continue to be budgeted for at current levels.

- PhD students comprise more than half of the total research effort[14] and are also a critical component of the university teaching workforce.
- As the demand for higher education is projected to increase due to the 'Costello babies' leaving school, Australia's needs to invest in research training as PhD students will only become more critical in educating our future workforce.

UA estimates that this would cost approximately $257 million over the Forward Estimates – an increase of approximately 5 per cent over current program funding. This will not bring the base stipend amount up to a living wage, but it will put this within striking distance for universities as they continue to top up stipends from internal revenues.

This increase in funding should be accompanied by a review of the research training ecosystem focused on increased flexibility for universities in the use of RTP funding.

- This could include consideration of relaxing the 10 per cent cap of RTP funding for overseas HDR students. A small increase to 15-20 per cent would retain the original policy intent, cost the government nothing, and have immediate benefits for universities in managing their funding allocations and prioritising additional scholarship support from internal funding sources.
- International HDR students are critical contributors to Australia's research efforts, especially in disciplines with declining domestic enrolments (such as IT, science and agriculture).

Set the scene for coming years through a series of Budget Comebacks

For 2025-26 – commit to bringing forward proposals around infrastructure issues, medium and long-term target setting for research funding and research training objectives.

For future Budgets – commit to bringing forward proposals for an assessment of Australia's progress towards supporting the full cost of research and the impact of measures in support of business investment in R&D.

2025-26 Budget

Bring forward a proposal for a critical evaluation of university infrastructure

The government should consider commissioning an independent assessment of current research infrastructure capacity and future needs – both in terms of nationally critical infrastructure (such as that funded through NCRIS) and at an institutional level.

Bring forward proposals which would seek to identify appropriate medium to long-term targets for government research investment (including research training)

This could be informed by refreshed research on the full indirect cost of research.

This should focus on calibrating government, industry and university investment with respect to the social and economic value of university research as well as identify areas of need with respect to advanced skills to inform research training policy.

Targets should be considered in the context of relevant international comparators.

By 2030

Implement (as appropriate) findings from infrastructure evaluation (see above)

This should include consideration of direct investment in R&D to reduce the upfront cost barrier facing Australia's SMEs.

Undertake a review of the impact of policy changes with respect to government, industry and university investment in research

This should be based around progress towards previously agreed targets, their continued relevance and appropriate remedial action as necessary – recalibrating priorities for post-2030.

**Approximate funding requirements over the forward estimates**

Figure 2: Funding Required to implement 50 cents of indirect funding per $1 of competitive grants
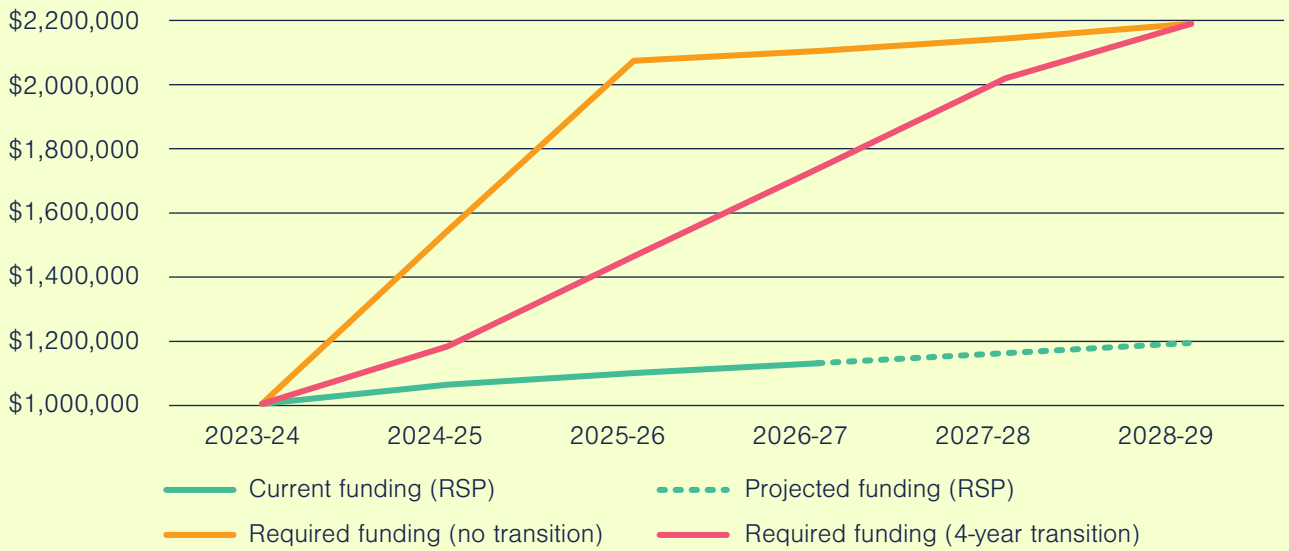
Source: 2023–24 Portfolio Budget Statements - Department of Education

Note: 2028-29 is included to show the convergence point of the two pathways to the $0.50 target.

Figure 3: Funding required to maintain RTP places at a base stipend of $35,000 (UA internal analysis) ($'000)
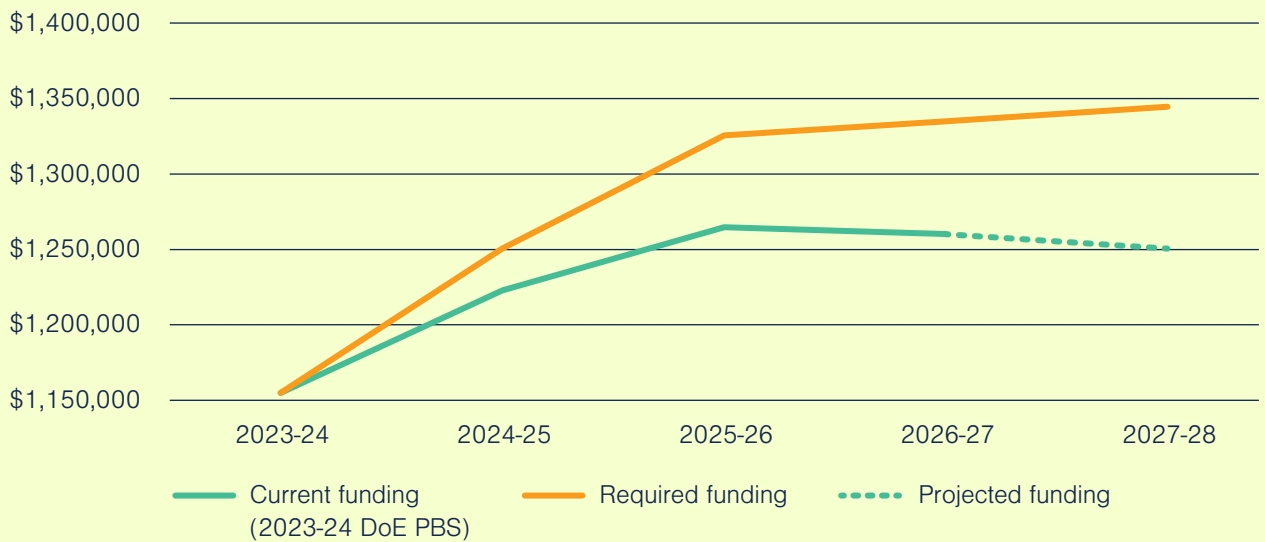
Source: 2023–24 Portfolio Budget Statements - Department of Education

Appendix 5. Policy principles for a Tertiary Education Commission

The introduction of a Tertiary Education Commission would be a very significant change to the sector, and one that would be immensely complex to implement. UA did not include a recommendation for a TEC in our April submission outlining the sector's agreed positions. However, given the interest that has been expressed in an Australian TEC in the interim report, we propose the following underpinning principles, should such a body be sensibly contemplated.

A Tertiary Education Commission could be useful if:

- it sits at the strategic level
- it does not disrupt universities' founding Acts
- it has clear, well-thought-out terms of reference shaped via a stakeholder consultation process. There should be a mechanism built in to review terms of reference periodically to ensure they remain fit for purpose
- it sets tailored metrics and objectives in collaboration with each university
- it has a mandate to help universities achieve their respective missions in the interests of the nation and their local communities
- it has the remit to create funding agreements with institutions that allow for diversity of missions and are underpinned by the strategic goals of individual universities and the sector
- it looks to the future to provide long-term, strategic direction for the sector in the nation's interests. This should include strategic planning for the Australian education landscape and providing recommendations on achieving a sustainable and equitable tertiary education sector that articulates with school education
- its work does not crossover with TEQSA or any other regulating body. It should be an authority that supports institutions to achieve their sector-wide goals, not a regulator, and
- it is not siloed, and does not work only with the Department of Education. It should have whole-of-government alignment.

A Tertiary Education Commission could be harmful if:

- there are inconsistencies in the TEC's control across different areas, which would result in a fragmented and confused policy environment
- it reduces university autonomy and universities' capacity for differentiation from others
- it is solely connected to the Department of Education. This would be particularly challenging in the research funding space, given that research funding may be sought from other government departments. This would reduce the capacity for strategic administration of whole-of-government support for university activities
- its activities overlap with those of TEQSA, and
- it creates additional administrative burden, with reporting required to both the Department of Education and the TEC.

Appendix 6. Traffic light analysis: Mapping the sector's agreed positions to the Accord Interim Report

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 1: Mission-based Partnership Agreements (Compacts) Establish partnership agreements between universities and government, based on the locations and specific institutional visions of each university, with a flexible funding envelope that includes a minimum basic grant amount for university operational activities based on an appropriate funding measure (such as student load combined with other factors). This should be combined with financing for additional, vision-based and place-based program delivery of national and university priorities in teaching and learning, research, access and equity, community engagement and innovation. It should align to a five-year cycle to ensure program implementation, completion and evaluation, alongside other regulatory requirements. Combined with an annual accountability and compliance mechanism for reporting against agreed targets, government and universities can deliver the programs needed to respond to Australia's education future.	Strong alignment	Recognising and formalising the crucial role institutions play in their communities through the Accord process and mission-based compacts. How best to design a funding model which provides longer-term stability, that is dynamic in responding to changes in student mix and demand, and that protects against rapid shifts in funding that are beyond the capacity of institutions to adapt. Reducing the extent to which core higher education functions rely on funding from insecure income streams, and decreasing the extent of cross-subsidisation throughout the system. A new funding model that considers: • additional mission-based loadings reflecting location and student demographics • discipline mix that meets Australia's skills needs both nationally, regionally and locally, and • providing certainty and stability to institutions of funding over a longer period. How to establish a new funding model for higher education, that: • is student-centred, needs-based, ensuring the funding available is sufficient to provide access to high-quality higher education for students from equity backgrounds and from different locations • helps achieve attainment and equity targets, and recognises the different costs of delivery in regional Australia, and • strengthens Australia's higher education research capacity.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 4: Supporting infrastructure Develop a new infrastructure financing facility to ensure every university student and researcher in Australia has access to high quality teaching and research facilities.	Strong alignment	To ensure an enduring and sustainable funding model for higher education, the review will continue to give consideration to the following policy areas: • ways to support and maintain critical teaching and research infrastructure. Ensuring the system encourages improvements in quality learning and teaching, responds to new curriculum approaches that take account of the pace of new knowledge production, and provides for appropriate teaching infrastructure. Ensuring ongoing investment in critical research infrastructure and its maintenance.
UA recommendation 5: Research infrastructure Continue support for national research infrastructure.	Strong alignment	Ensuring ongoing investment in critical research infrastructure and its maintenance. Identifying ways to support and maintain critical teaching and research infrastructure.
UA recommendation 7: Progressing equity goals: the Bradley Review Review the unmet and partially met access and equity recommendations set out in the Bradley Review and progress and implement those that apply.	Strong alignment	How to establish a new funding model for higher education, that: • is student-centred, needs-based, ensuring the funding available is sufficient to provide access to high-quality higher education for students from equity backgrounds and from different locations • helps achieve attainment and equity targets, and recognises the different costs of delivery in regional Australia. Creating specific higher education participation targets for students from underrepresented backgrounds and equity groups to achieve parity by 2035. These groups will include students from low socio-economic, regional, rural and remote backgrounds and students with disability. Exploring the potential for a student-centred, needs-based funding model (similar to that used for determining school funding) that recognises the additional costs involved in teaching students from equity groups and underrepresented communities.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 8: Income support for students In the spirit of the Bradley Review, consider post-secondary students in policies and programs to address cost-of-living issues.	Strong alignment	Reducing the cost of living barriers to higher education through improved income support measures and more opportunities for part-time study. Changing income support payment arrangements, including eligibility tests around independence, part-time study and unpaid work placements.
UA recommendation 9: Refine HECS-HELP policy settings Ensure HECS-HELP policy settings are fit-for-purpose and are serving the original policy intent to remove financial barriers to higher education.	Strong alignment	Reducing the cost-of-living barriers to higher education through improved income support measures and more opportunities for part-time study. Exploring new HELP policies to encourage graduates to stay in needed occupations/ communities. Revising student contribution amounts and HELP repayment arrangements to ensure students are not being overly burdened with debt and that repayment arrangements are fair and integrate more effectively with the wider tax and social security system. Examining changes to HELP to make it fairer and support growth in participation.
UA recommendation 10: Indigenous attainment targets Set the higher education attainment target for Indigenous graduates in line with non-Indigenous graduates and align new attainment targets with the targets in Closing the Gap.	Strong alignment	Setting targets to raise First Nations participation and completion rates in higher education. Creating specific higher education participation targets for students from underrepresented backgrounds and equity groups to achieve parity by 2035. These groups will include students from low socio-economic, regional, rural and remote backgrounds and students with a disability.
UA recommendation 11: Uncapped places for Indigenous students Remove barriers to Indigenous participation by providing uncapped Commonwealth supported places for all Indigenous Australians, regardless of their postcode.	Strong alignment	Ensure that all First Nations students are eligible for a funded place at university, by extending demand driven funding to metropolitan First Nations students.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 16: Work Integrated Learning Work with universities, industry, representative and accrediting bodies to support the implementation of the National Work Integrated Learning Strategy, with a focus on creating a learning ecosystem that enables engagement between all stakeholders.	Strong alignment	Considering new models of WIL delivery that combine study with paid employment/work-based learning (cadetships, degree apprenticeships). Secure greater levels of curriculum co-design between industry and HE. Increasing the absorptive capacity of new knowledge by Australian employers through greater collaboration with universities. Improving Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and placements by providing participating students with better incentives and financial support. The creation of stronger links between industry and education, particularly in regional areas and other areas with low participation and attainment rates. Appropriate reform of pathways to registration, placements and accreditation – for more streamlined approaches. Require academics working in profession-based education to maintain more active contact with the professions – for better skills currency transfer to students.
UA recommendation 24: Training the future research workforce Ensure Australia has the correct policy settings and level of funding to be competitive in training a future research workforce that will support the nation's needs. As part of this, lift the rate of PhD stipends without impacting the number of HDR places or stipends offered, to maintain an attractive pathway for the higher degree students who will be required for the nation's future.	Strong alignment	Increasing PhD stipend rates. Creating research training targets for equity groups. Encouraging taxation adjustments to make industry-linked and part-time research training scholarships tax-free, in line with full-time scholarships. Boosting the capability of Australia's research workforce capacity by: • supporting post-doctoral staff for their future careers whether in the sector or beyond • providing significant professional development for the academic workforce in research skills.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 26: Indigenous advancement in universities Prioritise funding for university programs that value Indigenous knowledge systems in universities, support and elevate Indigenous research and Indigenous academics, and promote Indigenous agency and autonomy.	Strong alignment	Increasing funding for First Nations knowledges and for collaboration and partnerships between First Nations communities, governments, and universities. Increasing funding for First Nations knowledges and for collaboration and partnerships between First Nations communities, governments, and universities. Creating research training targets for equity groups. Moving towards a self-determined approach to national funding and policy settings in relation to First Nations students, employment, teaching, research and engagement, with universities mirroring this approach within their institutions, as is the case in some institutions today. Enhancing research capability for First Nations knowledges and for collaboration and partnerships between First Nations communities, governments, universities and industry. Supporting a First Nations-led review of access, participation and outcomes for First Nations students and staff, research, teaching, use of First Nations knowledges, and First Nations governance and leadership within universities. Professional development opportunities for staff, to help them gain and develop skills in teaching, research and management, with a focus on increasing the number of First Nations researchers and leaders in universities. Embedding and promoting First Nations research knowledge systems, including investing in programs targeted at incentivising and supporting First Nations students to undertake and complete HDR programs.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 2: Replace the Job Ready Graduates Package Replace the Job-ready Graduates package with a new funding model for teaching and learning based on principles that ensure: • student contributions do not deter students from undertaking higher education, nor influence student choice, • any changes to the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) preserve the fundamental policy intent of the scheme – that graduates contribute to the cost of their higher education when they can do so, and • funding settings maximise access to university (e.g., extending demand-driven funding to all Indigenous students, regardless of where they live).	Some alignment	Cease the 50 per cent pass rule, given its poor equity impacts, and require increased reporting on student progress. Ensuring the ongoing affordability of higher education for students, including adjusting student contributions instituted by the JRG package. Establishing a framework of strong values and clear principles for public and private investment that underpins the higher education funding system. Ensuring the ongoing affordability of higher education for students, including adjusting student contributions instituted by the JRG package. How best to design a funding model which provides longer-term stability, that is dynamic in responding to changes in student mix and demand, and that protects against rapid shifts in funding that are beyond the capacity of institutions to adapt. Developing a stronger understanding of the true costs of the core activities in higher education, increasing transparency and improving pricing, quality, performance and efficiency.
UA recommendation 3: Transitional Fund Loading Changes to funding arrangements should include a transitional funding provision to ensure certainty of funding without negative consequences for all institutions across the entirety of the transitional period.	Some alignment	Provide funding certainty, through the extension of the Higher Education Continuity Guarantee into 2024 and 2025, to minimise the risk of unnecessary structural adjustment to the sector. Interim funding arrangements must prioritise the delivery of supports for equity students to accelerate reform towards a high equity, high participation system.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 6: Fix regulation overlaps Initiate a detailed regulatory stock and flow analysis to determine areas of overlap, inefficiency and red tape across tertiary education.	Some alignment	Using arrangements between industry, unions and governments to progress the recommendations of the Review of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) – this should be a matter of priority. Ensuring tertiary education regulation, including the role of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), enables innovation in the tertiary education system. Ensuring regulatory frameworks can meet future objectives and challenges: • reviewing the TEQSA Act to ensure the agency is fit for purpose in light of other changes in this Review • improving coordination of regulatory functions between TEQSA and ASQA including potential sharing or referral of powers between regulators.
UA recommendation 12: Lifelong Learning Strategy Develop a National Lifelong Learning Strategy that provides a vision for Australia's education future and a foundation for recognising individuals' lifelong learning experiences, skills and interests as they align with skills needs. As part of this strategy, increase funding for higher education to enable life-long learning through attainment of microcredentials and the extension of Income Contingent Loans to such offerings.	Some alignment	Encouraging students from underrepresented groups to aspire to higher education and fulfil their potential. Increasing access to preparatory and enabling programs to provide more pathways into higher education. Providing scaffolded learning support to help students achieve their qualification in minimum time and with minimum debt. Making it easier for students to enter, exit and return to higher education through a consistent national approach to tertiary education admission and the recognition of existing learning experience and credentials. Expanding and updating flexible modular qualifications and programs in key areas of workforce demand, with increased development of microcredentials, associate degrees and advanced diplomas. Examining new and effective mechanisms for rapid reskilling, including microcredentials.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 13: Lifelong Learning Trust Establish a Lifelong Learning Trust that provides an equity-based funding arrangement for people to access ongoing skills development for work or interest in support of their career life.	Some alignment	Developing a universal learning entitlement to ensure Australians can gain the qualifications and credentials as they need or desire. The creation of a universal learning entitlement that helps all Australians access high-quality tertiary education and makes lifelong learning a reality. As a priority element of the universal learning entitlement, ensuring that all students from equity cohorts are eligible for a funded place at university.
UA recommendation 14: Recognition of Prior Learning framework Develop a nationally consistent, transparent and accessible Recognition of Prior Learning framework that would enable a post-school education ecosystem to support student skills and knowledge needs at different life stages.	Some alignment	Better standards and admission practices/ credit recognition – reducing duplication, streamlining pathways. Consideration of wider adoption of best practice in RPL and development of a set of guiding principles for RPL. Potential for restructured course design that recognise competencies/ RPL rather than meeting minimum/ mandatory hours of practice.
UA recommendation 15: Recognition of Prior Learning Unit In support of an RPL framework, create a unit within Jobs and Skills Australia dedicated to skills mapping to post-secondary education curricula could be established to help inform admissions practices, the application of Recognition of Prior Learning assessment and assessment review.	Some alignment	New policy levers to enhance capability across the tertiary education sector, enabling it to respond rapidly to Australia's skills needs and deliver the necessary numbers of graduates with professional, disciplinary and high order generic skills. Greater collaboration between VET and HE for skills development. Improving the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and relevant work experience through a national skills passport or similar mechanism. Improving skills pathways by creating qualifications that are more modular, stackable and transferable between institutions and institution types. Cooperative Skills Centres for rapid upskilling/ reskilling.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 17: Compulsory Placement Support Framework Federal and state governments should work closely together, and with universities and industry, to develop a framework to support and resource compulsory placements for health and education students across Australia.	Some alignment	Addressing barriers that prevent VET and higher education working together, especially in courses and institutions that involve both sectors. Increasing student mobility and pathways across sectors through cultural and institutional arrangements, enabling consistency in RPL and credit recognition and greater levels of course co-design with RPL built in. Co-designing a framework to guide WIL and placement experience with higher education institutions, VET, industry, employers, professional accreditation bodies and governments.
UA recommendation 18: International education visa changes Replace the genuine temporary entrant visa requirement with a genuine student visa requirement that focuses on a student's academic record.	Some alignment	Ensuring the integrity and accessibility of visa pathways for international students.
UA recommendation 21: Matching OECD R&D Investment by 2030 Increase Australia's level of research and development investment to at least be equal to the OECD average by 2030.	Some alignment	Research funding needs to be put on a sounder and more predictable footing. Extending the use of research brokers and research challenge mechanisms and bodies. Moving over time to ensure National Competitive Grants cover the full cost of undertaking research. Developing a national, holistic policy for research training. Increasing immediate investment in the ARC.
UA recommendation 22: Full cost of research by 2030 Work towards funding the full cost of research by 2030.	Some alignment	Making the cost of university R&D, innovation and scholarship activities across all universities transparent. Ensuring ongoing investment in critical research infrastructure and maintenance, i.e., NCRIS to move to sustainable, ongoing funding.
UA recommendation 23: Funding indirect costs of research Implement a target for indirect cost of research at 50 cents to the dollar by 2025, funded across the whole of government.	Some alignment	How best to ensure sufficient funding for the Australian university research sector to meet national research priorities. Encouraging government to become an exemplary user of university research, using it to address nationally significant complex problems and enhance sovereign capabilities and becoming an example to industry on how to use university research capability.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 25: Engaging international academics Align Australian migration policy with higher education policy to better enable engagement of the global academic workforce.	Some alignment	Ensuring that international education supports broader Australian foreign policy objectives, for example, strengthening relationships with India and the Pacific.
UA recommendation 27: the R&D Tax Incentive Implement and augment Recommendation Two from the 2016 Review of the R&D Tax Incentive, to introduce a premium rate to the Research & Development Tax Incentive for businesses collaborating with universities, especially in the small and medium enterprise sector.	Some alignment	Incentivising university/end-user collaboration programs, such as the ARC Linkage Grants, the Trailblazer Universities Program, Australia's Economic Accelerator, the Cooperative Research Centres Program, National Reconstruction Fund and the R&D Tax Incentive.
UA recommendation 28: Building capacity in SMEs Build capacity in the small and medium enterprise sector to be able to better absorb R&D.	Some alignment	Encouraging government to become an exemplary user of university research, using it to address nationally significant complex problems and enhance sovereign capabilities and becoming an example to industry on how to use university research capability. Offering postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers extra skills-oriented training in parallel with PhD study or postdoctoral work. Encouraging institutions to offer innovative PhD and professional doctorate models, including using portfolio, project, and multi-part dissertation formats and revitalising HDR coursework offerings. Upskilling the research workforce – training in translation/commercialisation/Entrepreneurship.
UA recommendation 29: Direct investment in business R&D Increase emphasis on direct investment in business research and development.	Some alignment	Incentivising university/end-user collaboration programs, such as the ARC Linkage Grants, the Trailblazer Universities Program, Australia's Economic Accelerator, the Cooperative Research Centres Program, National Reconstruction Fund and the R&D Tax Incentive. Developing measurement which indicates how useful university research is to end-users. Establishing a target for the number of PhD candidates employed in industry undertaking a PhD relevant to their firm.

UA Accord recommendations	Alignment	Considerations and proposals from the Accord Interim Report
UA recommendation 19: International education visa changes Automatically grant temporary graduate visas to all international students who meet the course requirements for graduation and relevant character conditions.	No alignment	
UA recommendation 20: JSA Migration Employment Unit Establish a unit within Jobs and Skills Australia that provides advice on migration-related issues, ranging from the suitability of visa types to fill occupations through to differences in regional and state-based skilled occupation lists.	No alignment	

Endnotes

1   Treasury. '2023 Intergenerational Report'. Canberra: Australian Government, 24 August 2023. treasury.gov.au/publication/2023-intergenerational-report. (p. 184).

2   These sectors draw on the same health/care workforce, but policy and funding is across different portfolios and government tiers.

3   Such as regional training hubs, University Departments of Rural Health, Rural Clinical Schools and regional campuses.

4   Potentially administered through Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) with funds from Education, Health/Aged Care and Social Services.

5   This approach supports reduced duplication across disciplines and facilitates interdisciplinary learning/teaching.

6   campusmorningmail.com.au/news/time-to-fund-what-research-really-costs/

7   Single person poverty line = $601.50 per week ($31,278 per annum after tax) compared to the 2023 base stipend of $29,853. melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/4710153/Poverty-Lines-Australia-March-Quarter-2023.pdf

8   mga.monash.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/MGA-HDR-Stipend-Report-2022.pdf

9   www.education.gov.au/download/1924/allen-consulting-group-issues-paper/2498/document/pdf

10   www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/consumer-price-index-australia/jun-quarter-2023

11   Based on 2023 March Quarter CPI of 1.4% and March to June CPI of 0.8%

12   rba.gov.au/publications/smp/2023/aug/overview

13   This is the 2023 amount of $29,853 X (1 + 0.078) = $32,192.

14   Postgraduate students provided 44,255 out of 81,090 Person Years of Effort into R&D in 2020. Source: ABS Research and Experimental Development, Higher Education Organisations, Australia

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