



## **The Universities Accord and proposed responses to support Indigenous educational and employment outcomes**

Key findings from the Universities Accord interim report include the expansion of post-study work rights and fast-tracked permanent residency for international students:

- Additionally, the report highlights the aim to connect international students with industry through universities.
- The creation of up to 20 new Regional University Centres is another immediate outcome proposed in the report, supported by additional funding
- The accord review team recommends prioritising addressing student poverty and making it easier to study as key ideas - including funding for all First Nations students
- The Universities Accord faces the challenge of tackling complex issues such as domestic student funding and the need for clearer links to vocational education
- Another significant reform proposed by the Accord is to abolish the controversial 50% pass rule introduced by the former Coalition.

These key findings from the Universities Accord provide insights into its goals and proposed actions to support Indigenous educational and employment outcomes. The creation of Regional University Centres can further support Indigenous students in accessing higher education and relevant services in their local regions. Addressing issues like student poverty and making it easier to study are crucial steps towards promoting equity in education and improving outcomes for Indigenous students. By abolishing the controversial 50% pass rule, the Universities Accord aims to create a fairer assessment system that does not disadvantage Indigenous students or other marginalized groups.

The Universities Accord's key findings highlight a commitment to enhancing educational and employment outcomes for Indigenous students and provide potential solutions to address existing challenges and inequalities in the higher education

Key findings from the analysis of Indigenous educational and employment outcomes suggest that gaps still exist in the areas of employment and education, particularly in remote communities<sup>[1]</sup>.



The First Nations Workforce Analysis reveals that the tertiary educational attainment of First Nations individuals is lower than that of non-Indigenous people, and this gap widens in remote regions[2]. However, there are positive trends, as Indigenous women are increasingly completing post secondary qualifications and experiencing higher rates of employment[3].

Historically, employment rates and employment income for First Nations people have been lower than those of the non-Aboriginal population[4]. These disparities in educational attainment are reflected in employment outcomes, with a significant portion of First Nations Australians leaving school without completing their education[5].

The implications of these findings for CareerTrackers are significant. It highlights the need for targeted support and interventions to address the educational and employment gaps faced by First Nations students. CareerTrackers play a crucial role in bridging these gaps by offering meaningful opportunities for Indigenous students to gain practical experience and develop critical and transferable skills and capabilities.

By actively engaging with First Nations students, families and partnering with educational institutions, we can contribute to improving the educational and employment outcomes. We achieve this by providing mentorship, tailored training programs, and opportunities for professional development that are sensitive to the unique cultural needs and circumstances of Indigenous peoples.

Research on First Nations educational and employment outcomes highlights the persisting gaps in employment and education, particularly in remote communities. However, there are positive trends with increasing post secondary qualifications and employment rates among Indigenous women. The findings underscore the importance of providers such as CareerTrackers in supporting First Nations students by offering targeted opportunities and interventions to improve their educational and employment outcomes.

## **Implications**

Some potential implications to consider could include changes in recruitment strategies to prioritise Indigenous candidates, the need to foster cultural capability growth, and the development of support systems to ensure the successful integration of Indigenous interns into the workplace. If the Accord encourages institutions to prioritize Indigenous candidates in their recruitment processes, we need to understand how this impacts competition, and how we are prepared and aligned in terms of our values, resources, and capacity.

The Universities Accord aims to address the barriers faced by First Nations people in accessing and achieving success in higher education and employment. It highlights the



need for collaborative efforts between educational institutions, governments, and Indigenous communities to create equitable opportunities for these individuals.

## Responses

Some broad potential areas are highlighted below and there are clear parts where CareerTrackers is currently playing a role. However, there are clearly further opportunities for CareerTrackers to increase our impact and reach:

**Collaboration and Partnerships:** Establishing partnerships between educational institutions, Indigenous communities, and relevant stakeholders to develop tailored programs and initiatives. This can involve co-designing curriculum, providing cultural competency training for staff, and creating mentorship opportunities.

**Access and Support:** Implementing strategies to improve access to quality education, such as providing scholarships, bursaries, and financial aid specifically for Indigenous students. Additionally, offering academic support services, counseling, and cultural centers on campuses can help create a supportive learning environment.

**Indigenous Knowledge:** Recognising and valuing Indigenous knowledge and language by incorporating it into the curriculum and promoting its preservation. This can include the development of Indigenous studies programs, language classes, and the hiring of Indigenous talent.

**Representation and Inclusion:** Ensuring adequate representation of Indigenous people in decision-making roles. This can involve creating advisory committees, increasing Indigenous staff and representation, and fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion for Indigenous students.

**Employment Opportunities:** Collaborating with employers to create employment pathways and opportunities for Indigenous graduates as we do here at CareerTrackers with over 200 employment partners and 30 universities.

1. <https://insiderguides.com.au/5-key-findings-from-the-australian-universities-agreement-interim-report-that-international-students-should-know/>
2. <https://thepienews.com/news/interim-universities-agreement/>
3. <https://theconversation.com/these-5-equity-ideas-should-be-at-the-heart-of-the-universities-agreement-203418>
4. <https://theconversation.com/the-universities-agreement-will-plan-for-the-next-30-years-what-big-issues-must-it-address-200367>
5. <https://www.theeducatoronline.com/k12/news/universities-welcome-higher-education-reforms/282882>

