Submission to the Consultation on the Accord Terms of Reference

<https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/terms-reference>

Key areas for review

1. Meeting Australia’s knowledge and skills needs, now and in the future

* NDIS driving changes within the sector, currently resulting in significant shortage of allied health, health professionals and support staff to meet the needs of the disability and aged care sectors
* Micro credentials providing opportunity for personal/professional development - meet personal goals of individuals while meeting industry/sector needs
* Decolonising the curricula to remove limiting and discriminatory teachings
* Over casualisation on the university workforce results in experienced and knowledgeable academics leaving to find sustainable work in the private sector and reduces capability to build capacity of workforce to support students with disability
* University courses that include practical hands on work based learning components that consider the life stage of the student eg. Students taking unpaid leave from work to undertake student placements
* Inherent requirements of course versus reasonable adjustments and inclusion of alternative assessment processes.
* As the Australian Government actively works towards building a pipeline of skilled workers to support sustained economic recovery (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2022), it is imperative that people with disability are effectively engaged in activities directed towards meeting these goals. This cohort who experience much higher unemployment and underemployment rates than others, have the capability to support Australia in meeting its workforce challenges

2. Access and opportunity

Recommendations include further investigation by the Australian Government to consider:

* Inclusion of disabled people as a priority cohort within Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program
* Increased funding and strengthening of accountability for widening participation activities under the Disability Support Program
* Setting targets for increasing the participation of people with disability and requiring institutions to document strategies and outcomes within the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF)
* Requiring institutions to deliver and maintain up to date Disability Action Plans that consider the whole student lifecycle
* Providing best practice guidelines and sector support to deliver effective widening participation program development that is designed in partnership with disabled people
* Explore alternative methods for driving institutional provision of targeted widening participation activities at a strategic level, examples may include through university ranking systems or required reporting within institutional Annual Reports
* Requirement for all staff to complete Disability Awareness Training https://disabilityawareness.com.au/elearning/disability-awareness/
* Barriers to inclusion have arisen from the legal system surrounding the Disability Discrimination Act, a system which is complaints-based, adversarial and expensive.

3. Investment and affordability

* Over casualisation of the university workforce results in experienced and knowledgeable academics leaving to find sustainable work in the private sector and reduces capability to build capacity of workforce to support students with disability
* Relationship between higher education and NDIA
* NDIA focus and knowledge on further education pathways for participants
* Review of Job-ready Graduates Package to include inclusion of Disability Graduate Programs and supports eg. University Specialist Employment Program (USEP), Gradwise, Stepping into Internship & PACE mentoring program, Australian Network on Disabilities (AND)

4. Governance, accountability and community

* Readily available statistics/outcomes that are shared in a way that community members can use effectively to support informed decision making (not star ratings)
* Widening participation of disabled Australians is not being prioritised by universities who have little external incentive or accountability to do so. Only 26% of Australian universities have current publicly available Disability Action Plans (DAP) and of the 37 with registered University Access and Participation Plans (UAPP), only 12 include the word disability, only three with regards to the pre-access phase of the student journey (DESE, 2020).
* Mandatory training to staff to build their knowledge of the Disability Standards for Education 2005

5. The connection between the vocational education and training and higher education systems

* Inclusion of connection between secondary schooling - VET - Higher Education (earlier interventions proven to be more successful and effective)
* Explore other programs that are currently focussing on improving this interaction eg National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program
* Benefit of work based learning components

6. Quality and sustainability

* Encourage/education on benefits of embracing Universal Design for Learning <https://www.adcet.edu.au/our-work/udl-elearning>

7. Delivering new knowledge, innovation and capability

● Ensuring the future workforce is educated about the various cohorts within community via the inclusion of awareness modules in every program eg disability awareness, cultural awareness etc

References

‌Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2022). *Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements and Completing Apprenticeship Commencements*, Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Available at:<https://www.dese.gov.au/boosting-apprenticeship-commencements>

DESE, (2020). *‘HEPPP Access and* Participation Plans’. Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Available at: https[://w](http://www.dese.gov.au/heppp/heppp-access-and-participation-plans)ww[.d](http://www.dese.gov.au/heppp/heppp-access-and-participation-plans)e[se.gov.au/heppp/heppp-access-and-participation-plans](http://www.dese.gov.au/heppp/heppp-access-and-participation-plans)

Dickson, E. (2022). Legal system barriers to the effectiveness of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) as a support for the inclusion of students with disability. Australian Journal of Education, 66(3), 281–291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00049441221127706>

Nugraha, AK & Mumpuniarti (2018). ‘Cognitive Development of Mild Intellectual Disability for Vocational Training’, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, vol. 269.

Submission prepared by four National Disability Coordination Officers.

Theresa Madson (hosted by TAFE Qld)

Lloyd Gris (hosted by University of Newcastle)

Amii Demanuele (hosted by Inner Melbourne VET Cluster)

Paul Power (hosted by Wodonga TAFE)

The NDCO program is an Australian Government Initiative. The views shared in this submission are the views of the individual NDCOs listed, and do not necessarily reflect the views of their host providers or the Australian Government.