



Australian Universities Accord Panel
13 December 2022

Submission of priorities for the Australian Universities Accord

The Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE) is pleased to provide feedback to the Australian Universities Accord Panel.

ACCE is national association, subject expert, and thought leader in career education and development. ACCE was established by the Victorian Government in 1975 to train teachers in secondary schools to support student subject choices and transitioning. We have a proud history of service to the education, government, and community sectors and deliver high-quality career resources, training, and consulting services across Australia.

Key areas for review

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

- Industry priorities and jobs of the future must be supported by industry involvement in the development of course requirements or new courses. Industry has a responsibility to participate in the development of its future workforce.
- Every tertiary course should make explicit the transferable skills that are developed during the course so that students are aware of what they will gain.
- Both vocational and higher education pathways should be promoted to ensure that students can move equitably between both systems.
- Work experience at school should be replaced by industry immersion programs linked to curriculum and assessed as part of school outcomes. Students in tertiary education should enter paid cadetships during their higher education and training courses to ensure they are able to enter the workforce prior to completion/or at the end of their tertiary studies.

2. Access and opportunity

- Australian students are not universally prepared to make sound pathway choices as career education is not mandated in Australia. Consequently, the flow-on effect in tertiary education is that they have no or low understanding of the workforce. Many graduates swap or leave tertiary courses because they are uncertain about their career choices. As a result, it takes them longer than necessary to enter their career and become productive citizens. It also results in marketplace employment gaps. This situation is worse for vulnerable cohorts who have less exposure to education and employment opportunities.
- Each university department and TAFE department needs to provide career guidance to support students. If departments compete for funding, there is a chance that career guidance may be biased. It is essential that career guidance is offered by CICA endorsed career professionals who are governed by the profession's ethical standards to be independent of institutional biases and deliver the best outcomes for students.

- Young people are increasingly not work ready and at an employment disadvantage. Many young people do not gain employability skills so work experience through practicums is essential for their success.
- To support Aboriginal students, courses must be redesigned using indigenous teaching and learning methodologies. ACCE has successfully redesigning its two RTO career development courses and is qualifying six Aboriginal learners as career professionals to Close the Gap for indigenous students and adults. Two learners are employed in its Jobs Victoria Career Counselling service.
- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds face financial barriers to study. It is imperative that any movement between vocational and higher education courses includes recognition of prior learning or credit transfer, and cost-capping to reduce the total cost to complete higher education.

3. Investment and affordability

- To fill Australia's employment needs and have highly qualified citizens the Government must better fund courses, or places at higher education.
- Students who wish to move from a vocational course to complete a higher education course may experience financial disadvantage because they need to pay more to enter from the vocational pathway.
- Poor course choices or course non-completion can become financially draining and punitive for learners trying to recoup funds. This is a significant barrier to underrepresented cohorts and vulnerable learners in the community.
- Education and employment funding should be linked, and there should be consistency in funding and outcome requirements between higher education and vocational education across Australia.
- There are too many universities in Australia for the size of the population. Dual sectors tertiary institutions should be a priority. There should be seamless pathways between vocational and higher education and innovation in the structuring of qualifications across the sectors including recognition of work placement/practicums.
- Seamless pathways need to accept a lower dual sector qualification path to other qualifications.
- Replace the ATAR as a means of identifying student ability. In 2016 only 26 per cent of domestic undergraduate admissions were made on the basis of an ATAR, and no international student has one.¹

4. Governance, accountability, and community

Many universities overseas have strong links to industry and Australian industry needs to be more accountable and involved in the tertiary education sector.

¹ S. Pilcher and K. Torii (2018). Crunching the number: Exploring the use and usefulness of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), Mitchell Institute paper No. 01/2018. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.

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

The Australian education system needs to understand the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) and how learners can transition between school, vocational studies, and university courses. The AQF is unique in the world and provides opportunities for learners to transition between higher education and vocational training as required across their lifespan but is rarely promoted or explained to students at any level of education.

6. Quality and sustainability

- Monitor the quality of offshore brokers who are recruiting international students. There should be regulations built around their services. Some international students receive degrees from Australian universities yet are unemployable overseas because the university does not have a relationship with the employers in a student's home country.
- The role of schools is to prepare students for the workforce (jobs). The role of tertiary education providers is to prepare young people for the workforce (skills). Australia fails at both as it has no career development strategy across the lifespan.

7. Delivering new knowledge, innovation and capability

- Universities need to forge greater alliances with industry for research to support commercialisation and many universities overseas can demonstrate this successfully.
- Current funding based on research has driven a publish or perish mentality that is not necessarily linked to innovation or improvements for students, staff, or industry and should be reviewed and linked to student employment outcomes.

If you have any questions about this submission, please contact:

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