**Office of the Deputy Provost**

# UQ Diversity and Inclusion response to Australian Universities Accord Terms of Reference

We, the undersigned as a coalition of the University of Queensland’s Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Committees, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Review of Australia’s Higher Education System Terms of Reference. We appreciate the significant task that you have ahead, and the critical nature of it.

We also acknowledge the integral role that equity, diversity and inclusion has on the outcomes of the higher education sector, and the broader community it serves. Research tells us that diverse and inclusive teams are[[1]](#footnote-1):

* 11 times more likely to be highly effective
* 10 times more likely to be innovative​
* 6 times more likely to provide excellent customer service​
* 4 times more likely to work extra hard​
* 10 times more likely to be very satisfied​
* 4 times less likely to leave their job in the next 12 months​
* 4 times less likely to feel work has a negative or very negative impact on their mental health​
* 5 times less likely to experience discrimination and/or harassment​

We make the following recommendations for the Review terms of reference based upon the principle that diversity and inclusion enhances outcomes across all aspects of a university and the community it serves:

1. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should be more clearly and explicitly framed as **underpinning all Key Areas for review,** with identifiable actions and targets.

## Key Area 2: Access and Opportunity

1. Key Area 2 needs to be strengthened to ensure inclusion and equitable opportunities continue to exist throughout the student journey and not just during initial access points.
2. Widening participation to higher education is often considered through singular identity lenses / factors, but people are complex; therefore, our responses need to be equally complex. We know that cumulative disadvantage has a disproportionate impact on students looking to go to University, and we need to ensure that institutions consider their widening participation efforts through an intersectional lens.[[2]](#footnote-2)
3. Outcomes from Key Area 2 should seek to identify clear targets for the access and inclusion of under-represented groups (approximately equal to the percentage of any given group in the general population). These targets will further enable universities to embed concrete goals into their strategic objectives around inclusion and provide targets that all universities should be working towards.
4. LGBTQIA+ students should be specifically mentioned in this section, particularly given the context that LGBTQIA+ youth are at higher risk of experiencing homelessness, poor mental health outcomes and encounter significant and specific barriers within the education system alongside the other identities named.
5. It should also be made clear that the diversity of the staff who work in Universities must be addressed both to support success of students from under-represented groups during their study, and to have visible career pathways for them.

## Key Area 4: Governance, accountability, and community

1. The first point within this area, which talks about regulatory and workplace relations obligations, should include specific details around what these obligations are. For example: providing a safe learning environment that is free from discrimination.

## Key Area 6. Quality and sustainability

1. Care should be taken not to over-commodify the valuable contribution that international education makes to Universities. This limitation also undervalues the positive impact that diversity and inclusion make on the broader sustainability of an institution (4 times less likely to leave their job in the next 12 months).
2. Workforce sustainability should also be expressly included. The short-term nature of research funding schemes works against the continuing employment of many Early Career Researchers and international staff.
3. Other aspects of sustainability should also be considered here, particularly environmental, given the fact that climate change and the subsequent need for mitigation and adaptation mechanisms will drive the teaching, research and innovation sectors in future years.

## Key Area 7. Delivering new knowledge, innovation, and capability

1. The current wording on the first point under Key Area 7 lends significant weight to the translation of research to commercialisation, without placing value on the benefits associated with research such as pure basic, strategic basic and applied research. It is not always known how research will be able to be applied in future, and without basic research, there are no foundations on which to build.
2. The synchronicity with the ARC review seems to have relevance to other key areas and should also be considered a cross-cutting principal.

## Consultation

1. Specific focus groups should be convened for people from diverse groups to inform and reflect on the findings of the panel. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus groups, LGBTQIA+ focus groups, People with Disability focus groups, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse focus groups. The voices of all underrepresented communities should be included at all stages, with multiple opportunities and formats for contribution made available (focus groups, surveys, letters etc).

Yours sincerely



Professor Pauline Ford

**Deputy Provost and**

**Chair, UQ Gender Steering Committee**

This submission is supported by:

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1. Adapted from Diversity Council Australia (O’Leary, J. and D’Almada-Remedios, R.) DCA Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022: Mapping the State of Inclusion in the Australian Workforce, (Infographic) Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. References: <https://issr.uq.edu.au/case-study-investigating-effects-cumulative-factors-disadvantage> and

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1638348> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)