Response to the Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper
Western Sydney University

Western Sydney University welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Accord panel in response to the questions raised in the Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper. I am responding on behalf of the University.

Western Sydney's position

Western Sydney has become the focus of political, economic and social conversations across both New South Wales and Australia.

It is the third largest economy in Australia; a destination of choice for national and multinational businesses. The construction of the Western Sydney Airport and the Bradfield precinct will further accelerate opportunities for innovation and world leading industry.

Significant population increases in the past decade have seen the region grow to over 2.6 million people. This growth will continue with an additional 1.2 million people projected to reside in the region by 2041.

Western Sydney is home to the largest Indigenous population in Australia and is an exemplar of everyday multiculturalism. It has been a key arrival point for generations of refugees and new migrants.

Higher Education attainment rates across the whole of Western Sydney now exceeds national averages, but there still exist significant gaps in attainment rates in areas such as Fairfield, Liverpool and Canterbury-Bankstown. These divides need addressing to ensure Western Sydney's economic and social success.

Western Sydney University's unique mission

Western Sydney University is a nationally significant university with global impact.

Our university is embedded in the nation's most socioeconomically dynamic and culturally diverse region. Our record of innovation, skills development and industry collaboration is unmatched in comparable settings. We have made a demonstrable impact on our region in little over three decades, producing well in excess of 200,000 highly skilled graduates, of whom a very significant proportion choose to stay and contribute to, and accelerate, the development of Western Sydney.

We are the first and only Australian university to be ranked number one in the world on any major international ranking scheme, being ranked the world's best in the Times Higher Education Impact ranking for 2022 based on our commitment to sustainability.

We are committed to being:

- A university committed to educational pathways and addressing socio-economic disadvantage for the communities of Western Sydney
- A university of choice for First Nations peoples in our region and beyond
- A university committed to research with impact addressing regional and national priorities
- A university committed to mutually beneficial partnerships to build capacity and provide the skilled workforce of the future
- A university which leads the world in sustainability
- The 'Go-To' university for industry, business and government engaging in Western Sydney.

Western Sydney University already makes a material impact on the social, economic, and cultural success of our region. In 2022, the University educated 33,161 students from the Western Sydney region, 829 Indigenous students, 11,792 students of low socioeconomic status, 13,660 students who are the first in their family to attend university, and 13,568 who speak a language other than English (including 2,327 who arrived in Australia in the last 10 years). We have also supported over 900 students with permanent humanitarian visas to study to attain a degree.

We enable the ambitions of our communities, and we collaboratively empower to create innovative regional solutions of global significance**.**

We are a catalytic institution, investing in industry partnered infrastructure projects of scale through our Western Growth strategy that generate profound economic impact, knowledge jobs and urban transformation, while delivering world-leading teaching and research facilities.

Our Challenge

Western Sydney University requires changes to funding, governance and regulatory frameworks to have the capacity and flexibility to meet our commitments to our communities' dynamic ambitions for our region.

The key changes needed are:

1. An Accord process which unites Western Sydney University with local, state and federal government stakeholders in an agreed plan to support the achievement of the University's commitment to its region.
2. Greater flexibility and certainty in our funding model to enable the University to sustainably meet the changing education, research and innovation needs of Western Sydney and bring those innovations to a global market.
3. An education and qualification funding and regulatory environment which permits the University to deliver innovative, integrated and responsive programs to meet the skills needs of the region, support life-long learning and increase work-integrated learning opportunities fopr all students.
4. Specific funding to address evidenced areas of educational disadvantage in our region, recognising the particular needs of students with multiple factors of disadvantage.
5. Increased workforce flexibility to adapt to the needs of a changing region and to drive industry attraction.

Our submission sets out the argument for changes in six sections.

1. The Role of Universities, and their funding and governance
2. The Future of Education
3. Equity and Access for all
4. The Future of Research
5. Our International mission
6. Job Ready Graduate legislation

Our submission has been informed through university-wide consultation, including with our students and staff. It also draws on sector-wide input, contextualised to Western Sydney University.

We also commend the separate submission made by Western Sydney University's Indigenous Professoriate to the Accord Discussion Paper. Whilst the ideas in their submission have informed this submission, their Voice is strong and should not be filtered.

1. The Role of Universities, their funding and governance

Addressing Qs 1-7, 34-38 and 45-48

Role of Universities

Western Sydney University urges the Panel to make a bold statement on the role and purpose of universities in Australia; a statement of higher education's centrality to the nation's wider social, economic, and cultural interests through the prism of both immediate and long-range priorities.

For Western Sydney University to meet the distinct social, economic, and cultural interests of *our* region, we need a higher education system which provides greater flexibility and increased financial sustainability.

Universities are catalysts in driving the innovation and growth essential for Australia to access global supply chains. This is the most direct way to generate new industries and create opportunities for Western Sydney and for Australia mor broadly. Our university has a proven track record in growing precisely this innovation ecosystem across our region. Now is the time to scale-up and accelerate that proven approach, leveraging Commonwealth infrastructure investment and intensifying industry collaboration and entrepreneurialism. Western Sydney University needs the right funding, regulatory and governance models to be at the forefront of this growth.

Funding Models

Our current funding system is not fit-for-*future*-purpose.

The Commonwealth Grant Scheme is driven by short-term measurement of student load. It confines every domestic student to a 'broad field of education', as if they needed the same amount of learning and level of support to achieve their full potential. It does not allow for funding to be delivered to support learners who need to integrate skills from the vocational education sector into a higher education program, or who need a microcredential to meet industry need.

Our current funding model is fractured into multiple programs which separate the intrinsic link between quality education and research, with different accounting and accountability requirements leading to increasingly complex rules and red tape which can detract from achieving outcomes for learners. It does not support diversification in the nature of the programs universities deliver.

Above all else, universities need to be agile. As institutions defined by their capacity to both engage and provoke new innovations, a funding model is needed that supports synergy with industry, and a capacity to drive and support industry to capitalise on new and emerging opportunities. That cannot occur within a one-size-fits all model.

Consolidation of multiple streams of funding, with agreed outcomes for each university to be achieved over five years, will better enable each university to meet its particular mission. Agreed outcomes should allow full flexibility in how funding is applied across accredited and quality-assured programs, including enabling level programs and microcredentials.

Governance

Moving from annual funding agreements based entirely on student load to five-yearly mission-based funding is needed to transform the sector from reactive short-term responses to load perturbations, to considered longer-term planning and responses aligned with regional and national interests.

Innovation can be stymied by regulation. Countering challenges like foreign interference and moving on priorities like building sovereign capability requires mechanisms that balance compliance with the capacity to collaborate with industry.

Australian universities have extensive obligations under both Commonwealth and state legislation. An 'It's time' approach to cooperative federalism is needed; one that synergises reporting in the national interest ahead of blunt jurisdictional constraints.

A mission-based approach to universities that account for the full range of respective institutional alignments with broader regional, national, and international priorities would better apply the sector's strengths to broader social, economic, and cultural objectives.

This Mission-Based Accord process must include the voices of Indigenous peoples.

Recommendation 1: Create five-year mission-based agreements via an Accord process between each university, the government and key stakeholders, including Indigenous voices.

Recommendation 2: Provide increased flexibility to apply government funding within the funding envelope to meet differing missions of universities.

Workforce

At Western Sydney University we recognised the need to address the increased use of casual academics in the delivery of education in negotiating our most recent Enterprise Agreement. In collaboration with the unions, we have committed to reduce the use of casual academic staff over the term of the agreement and invest in 150 additional ongoing academic staff.

We believe short-term shifts in student demand in specific areas and emerging skills needs can be better accommodated by engaging staff on 3-5 year contracts rather than through the use of casuals. This provides greater employment certainty for staff and allow universities to respond to a rapidly changing environment in a more financially sustainable manner.

There is also opportunity to create new categories of employment for staff who can contribute to education and research, but primarily through their industry experience or technical skills. Increased permeability of universities to input from industry and vice versa is necessary to enhance program relevance and stimulate innovation in key sectors.

Recommendation 3: Provide increased ability for universities to employ staff on fixed-term contracts, and in categories of employment outside the traditional models.

Universities also have a critical role to play in contributing to the advancement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. Targeted strategies should support Indigenous employment, leadership development for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, increased support and recognition of the cultural work undertaken by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Recommendation 4: Require universities to have Indigenous Employment strategies and monitor performance against these.

2. The Future of Education

Addressing Qs 8-22, Qs39 and 42

Australia's higher education system must be equipped to lead in both provoking and responding to increasingly rapid change and innovation. The approaches set out in this submission provide a foundation from which that can occur. Equally, embracing a range of additional areas of focus will be critical, including:

a) the development of new innovative and disruptive models of education, such as the NSW TAFE Institutes of Applied Technology initiative, the New Education and Training Model (NETM), and the NUW Alliance's 'Engineering Plus' program;

b) the infusion of microcredentials into the wider qualifications framework, from sub-bachelor, bachelor and through to postgraduate levels;

c) more immersive industry-based and partnered training;

Lifelong Learning and Microcredentials

Microcredentials will be a valuable part of the broader education sector's response to the worsening skills shortages and skills gaps in Australian and global workplaces. Learners will increasingly be less likely to undertake the traditional linear education journey from school to university and into continuing employment. Universities must adapt to meet the lifelong (and long-life) learning needs of contemporary society.

As part of our response to this challenge, the University is deploying microcredentials in genuinely learner-centred ways, to develop an enhanced tertiary education ecosystem with the capacity to sustainably reskill the Australian workforce to meet the challenges of disruptions brought by research discoveries and new technologies.

Recommendation 5: Position microcredentials as part of an integrated education ecosystem of learning opportunities.

Microcredentials offer a means to develop and credential capabilities that complement traditional qualifications while increasing the sector's agility to meet Australia's future workforce needs.

Microcredentials enable universities to increase the range of entry points to higher education, through diversification of recognition of prior learning and credit pathways. Microcredentials also offer opportunities for universities to credential co-curricula learning and thereby increase employability and resilience of graduates. Work-based, or Work-integrated Learning is, of course, critical in realising this objective as will be further outlined below.

Because microcredentials as articulated above have a role in relation to all players in the post-secondary education ecosystem, the 'frameworks' developed for microcredentials must also operate across all provider types (VET / HE / Industry Continuing Professional Development)

Recommendation 6: Develop shared national frameworks and platforms for microcredentials.

Microcredentials need to be developed in response to, and in anticipation of, rapidly emergent and sometimes ephemeral skills needs. They cannot be regulated in the same way as other educational offerings. Over-regulation will stifle the agility afforded by microcredentials for the sector to respond to needs of society and the economy. At same time, to ensure the microcredentials market operates

efficiently to meet the needs of learners and employers, there needs to be increased transparency and comparability of microcredentials, in terms of product design and information.

Microcredentials need to be recognised and stackable into other qualifications and explicit in career progression in workplaces. For universities, recognition of prior learning is fundamentally based on Australian Qualification Framework levels of outcomes and volume of learning and can be facilitated at scale with agreed precedent RPL databases. These features are already embedded in the draft National Microcredentials Framework. The regulatory framework for VET requires review to remove the restriction of RPL to individual cases, and the requirement that all credit must be awarded on the basis of an existing skills package.

A standardised, digital, capacity to recognise and track microcredential – and wider – qualifications is essential. It needs to be a highly interactive and agile platform that maintains standards while being accessible and readily translatable to industry need and participant goals.

The Jobs and Skills Authority could be directed towards the development of new forms of accessible data and insights needed to inform the prioritisation and planning of development. To succeed, it would require meaningful, and industry aligned, investment based on evidence of existing and emerging economic and skills development opportunities.

Recommendation 7: Promote the role of microcredentials in addressing access and successful participation in education and work by all equity groups in society.

Employers have a critical workplace role in ensuring the success of microcredentials in addressing skills shortages and gaps and equity participation. The Accord needs to establish far more significant roles and responsibilities for industry in microcredentials than it currently outlines. In many industries, training workload allocation is now entirely devoted to mandatory compliance training (WHS / cyber safety etc.) with no workload allocated to relevant upskilling.

Priority industries (skills shortages) and SMEs should be supported through the allocation of funding to support microcredentials training for workers in relevant skills. This could be supported by government by an extension of programs such as the Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program (ISLP) to microcredentials delivered by self-accrediting (i.e. low risk) providers such as universities. There is a significant role for industry to play in providing funded placements/internships and WIL. This funding could be attached to the inclusion of relevant microcredentials (e.g. those in identified priority skill areas etc.) in aligned apprenticeship schemes.

Employers and industries need to be encouraged to integrate the achievement of relevant microcredentials in their promotion and recruitment practices to ensure learners are aware of the value proposition the microcredentials holds for their career progression.

Recommendation 8: Work with employers to incentivise and fund employee participation in microcredential learning opportunities and create a learner support ecosystem.

Increasing Access to Work-integrated Learning

Work-integrated learning (WiL) creates costs for employers and students which limit participation, particularly in supervised internships or placements. Direct funding to employers to offset the costs of supervision is available in some industries, notably healthcare where this is a major cost for universities. Strategies to increase graduate numbers in specific professions will need to balance the core competencies for safe practice with support for new graduates in the workplace, and balance

responsibility for national workforce development with the distribution of cost between employers, Government, universities and individual students.

Options for incentives to expand industry participation could include direct subsidy per placement, tax concessions or related mechanisms, a student allocation that follows each enrolment or subsidised programs at discipline or institutional levels. Any incentives should leverage existing mechanisms to ensure quality and accountability, such as the Higher Education Standards, while minimizing administrative burden. Options will need economic modelling to avoid perverse incentives.

Recommendation 9: Develop options for targeted incentives to widen and increase industry participation in Work-integrated Learning.

Most Australian university students work alongside either part-time or full-time study. Placement and internships that require intensive time are a direct cost to students notably where they interfere with existing commitments for work or caring. This can be a major disincentive to student participation further entrenching economic disadvantage. Allowances for the cost of participation in WIL could be considered as part of existing payment schemes (Youth Allowance, Austudy) or as part of tax concession arrangements where applicable.

Targeted incentives could also assist in connecting future graduates to regional areas where recruitment is challenging. This should be considered as part of a package which also incentivises uptake of graduate positions in target professions such as healthcare in rural and regional communities. Incentives could include cost-of-living subsidies and or FEE-HELP debt reduction.

Enhanced Data and Regulation

National data on work-integrated learning is limited and insufficient to provide a clear understanding of provision, participation, quality and impact. Recent inclusion of a question set on WIL in the Graduate Outcome Survey has begun a longitudinal dataset but participation by universities remains optional. Deeper data, such as the level of activity in areas of high skill priority, is not collected systematically. The existing classification of Work Experience in Industry (WEI) units further confuses data capture as it is based on eligibility for HESA payment rather than a recognisable description of work-integrated learning. Leveraging existing instruments including the Graduate Outcome Survey, Student Experience Survey and HESA reporting of provision and enrolment would help overcome data constraints and support strategic decision-making for universities and industry.

Recommendation 10: Undertake co-ordinated and longitudinal data collection on WIL provision, participation, quality and impact.

In parallel, micro-schemes have created additional management burdens. The National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) created an additional regulated scheme without providing any new support or facilitation to achieve step-change. NPILF overlaps with other mechanisms such as University compacts. While focus on university-industry linkage is welcome, this should be achievable without diverting resources into additional administrative overhead.

Recommendation 11: Consolidate administrative and reporting arrangements for work-integrated learning to reduce cost and burden on industry partners and universities.

Focus on Employability and Life-long learning

Students must be prepared, not only for employment immediately upon graduation, but also for learning throughout their careers. So-called ‘soft’ – such as time management, communication,

critical thinking and resilience – are better described as employability skills as they are critical to successful transition to employment in any industry or occupation. Delivery of these employability skills is often most effectively delivered through Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) subjects. Current funding models for universities create disincentives to integrate HASS subjects into Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs, but doing so provides benefit for both students and employers.

Oversight is needed to ensure professional accreditation programs do not overly restrict program design in content or volume such that graduates have a narrow skill base.

The National Industry PhD program already supports industry-focused research projects and is delivering candidates industry knowledge and skills to better deliver translation and commercialisation outcomes. An industry fellowship scheme could build on this program, sharing expertise at a higher level across both sectors. There is also the opportunity to invert the current model for fellowships, bringing industry into the universities to be part of the development of the students throughout their studies. Government incentives could support industry to lend their expertise to curriculum development and HDR supervision. This could include not-for-profits (NFPs) and government agencies, not only the private sector. This will ensure the broad suite of skills development and industry relevant currency.

Recommendation 12: Recognise the importance of employability skills in all programs, and ensure funding for employability-related subjects does not inadvertently reduce integration of these skills into curricula.

Recommendation 13: Provide greater guidance and oversight of education requirements of professional accreditation bodies to ensure they are not counterproductive to broader development of the workforce.

3. Equity and Access

Addressing Qs 28-33 and Q40

Aim Higher

Access to education is fundamental to the social and economic prosperity of Australia, but to date, not all members of our society have equitable access to the advantages education brings.

The proportion of students from the Western Sydney region completing year 12 or equivalent is lower (59%) compared to the Rest of Sydney (64.5%). In 2021, 4.9% of the Western Sydney population were attending University, compared to 5.5% in Greater Sydney.

There is the opportunity and urgent need for the Accord process to identify how to lift higher education access and opportunity for all. Participation in higher education brings substantial economic gain as well as addressing equity imperatives. Increased equity of access would also align with wider government strategies to build labour market diversity, participation, and competitiveness.

Addressing inequities should be a key outcome of the Accord process. The Bradley review set targets for participation which have been achieved. It is now time to set specific targets for participation by target equity groups and address support for students to participate, support for universities to deliver outcomes for these students and enhance our understanding of the factors which promote success.

Recommendation 14: Define targets for participation and success of equity groups at least at population parity.

Support students to succeed

Enhanced, and targeted, support for lowSES students and the full range of equity groups is critical in lifting participation. This should include:

- changing the eligibility criteria for Centrelink Youth Allowance so that students in full time study and under the age of 18 are eligible without the requirement to show financial independence;
- creating a centralised student scholarship administrative system to support financial support being directed towards the students most in need;
- enabling students who need additional financial support during their study to access an income-contingent loan (ie HECS) to support their study;
- giving particular consideration to the needs of students undertaking work-based placements or internships through access to income-contingent loans, or 'earn-while-you-learn' programs;
- removing caps on Commonwealth supported university places for Indigenous students regardless of location or other circumstances; and
- providing access to Commonwealth supported university places for asylum seekers and refugees.

Recommendation 15: Enhance financial support for equity students to the level necessary to enable the attainment of 'Recommendation 14'.

Support programs which demonstrate success

To succeed, measures to drive increased higher education access for lowSES and other equity groups must be complemented by enhanced support for universities to deliver outcomes for students. This should include:

- recognising that students with educational disadvantage, especially those with intersectionality of factors of disadvantage, require more support whilst at university which brings greater costs to those institutions who support more student from target groups;
- developing more targeted and resourced programs to foster aspiration towards higher education among school aged children from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas; and
- agreeing medium to long term targets with universities through a compact process, with aligned funding, to enable institutions to provide access, participation and success for targeted equity groups over time.

A series of complex and variable factors create barriers or challenges to accessing higher education across equity groups. These factors occur at micro (individual), meso (institutional) and macro (sector) levels and are well-documented in Australia and internationally in both education equity research and practice. Addressing the range of barriers and challenges through a variety of methods is required for long-term improvement, including pre-access and schooling experiences through to institutional and sector-wide structural changes.

Research, practitioner experience and sector-wide trends indicate the following barriers in terms of equity of access for students from under-represented groups:

- Social – first in their family to attend high school means low levels of understanding of the complexity of the higher education environment, and potentially low levels of confidence in how to navigate it.
- Psychological – low self-efficacy or a feeling of "imposter syndrome" around whether the student is the "kind of student" who attends University
- Financial – debt-aversion when considering HECS, or a need to support self or family financially with an immediate source of income
- Cultural – for specific cultures and communities, there can be additional barriers people; for Pasifika communities, for instance (Ravulo, 2018):
    - "Internal barriers" such as universities not having a personal relevance
    - Familial expectations "can centre on the provision of financial assistance for the home" rather than time spent on university education
    - A lack of information on educational opportunities, particularly given differing experiences of education if parents' schooling was outside of Australia
    - Teacher and school expectations, where students are not encouraged or expected to excel and the prevalence of stereotyping
    - Different learning styles, where "practically/collaboratively oriented learning styles" of Pasifika students are not emphasised or valued in Australian schooling

Western Sydney University has consistently significantly higher participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Low SES and First-in-Family students than seen across the sector. Our experience has led to best-practice examples of programs which address barriers to access.

Appendix 1 provides detail of these best-practice examples and evidence of their success.

Recommendation 16: Provide enhanced support for universities to deliver successful outcomes for students from equity groups by restoring funding for HEPPP aligned with the specific equity targets of each institution.

Enhance the evidence-base

Research and evaluation frameworks are critical in ensuring the effectiveness of measures to promote access. This could include support for greater cross-institution information sharing and sector wide approaches for monitoring outcomes allowing for a better understanding of enrolment and retention outcomes for students of equity groups, and the factors contributing to improvements.

Current measures of student success focus on the completion of whole degrees. A student who manages to pass some aspects of higher degree study without completing the degree will still have gained skills and attributes from their study experience. This should not be defined as failure. It is just one part of that person's lifelong learning journey which could take many different directions in the future.

When a person who is first in family attends university that family is forever changed in terms of how they perceive the range of opportunities for learning available to them. The JRG emphasis on first year success is an example of not considering the challenges faced by many students who do not have access to quality primary and secondary education.

Recommendation 17: Provide enhanced research and evaluation of factors which promote access and success.

4. The Future of Research

Addressing Qs 23-27, and Q41

Recent public health measures, globally, have affirmed the importance of sovereign capacity, particularly in advanced manufacturing, health, agri-tech, energy, defence, and digital technology. Western Sydney University encourages the Panel to reflect on the importance of better targeted, incentivised and scaled approaches to driving university-industry partnered research and research infrastructure investment in these areas.

Supporting research entity models that are focused on centralised grand challenges that include industry, government and end-users as part of the research/translation team from the point of inception of the project, is key to fostering collaboration and mobilising stakeholders.

Models for this type of research exist across the higher education sector in Australia, including at Western Sydney University through our Strategic Research Initiatives. An agency funding model in Australia that could inform new funding mechanisms is the National Disability Research Partnerships program which operates under principles which include establishing world leading research that draws across sector expertise and delivers a pipeline to translation. Importantly, this funding model seeks to build research capacity while valuing and including all forms of knowledge, including end-user knowledge.

In NSW the James Martin Institute for Public Policy (JMI) provides an excellent example of how research can be embedded in government activities and policy making. JMI is an independent non-partisan policy institute which brings government together with academic and other experts to deliver research informed policy and practice. This model could inform other university/government partnerships.

There is also a need for the sector to work together with government and industry to address the full cost of research.

SMEs face complex challenges when engaging in university partnerships due to size and resourcing. Nevertheless, they are a vital part of the innovation ecosystem in Australia. To facilitate these important collaborations a National SME Advanced Innovation Vouchers Scheme is proposed, that would:

- lower barriers to entry staging different levels of investment that offers low cost-matching by SME's to access the scheme;
- taper investment so the company invests more to keep accessing the scheme. Focus the scheme on areas of digitalisation such as Industry 4.0/5.0 and industrial IoT in priority sectors;
- be university administered through a simple and fast-tracked process where the universities can allocate funding to SMEs based on meeting suitable guidelines and develop a simplified reporting process; and
- attach a credit points / loyalty option for Vouchers linked to various collaboration building activities and allow university alliances or groups to let businesses trade credit points across institutions to encourage multi-institution engagement and partnering.

Recommendation 18: Develop a National SME Advanced Innovation Voucher Scheme.

Research and global engagement are essential to ensure a successful response to changes in the 'mix of knowledge skills and technology' in the economy, and other imperatives including the

development of sovereign capacity. The success of these ambitions depends on Australia's investment in R&D, its global reach and uniqueness.

Delivering a responsive, world leading university sector that will take Australia forward through innovation for the next 15 -20 years needs to extend the role research, research training, global education, enterprise and entrepreneurship plays in securing this future.

To enable these ambitions, Western Sydney University endorses the position to reform research funding and to restore balance across the system, including a focus on research translation and impact in all sectors, not just the private sector.

- The 'Accord needs to address how providers can deliver most effectively to achieve national priorities and imperatives, including for **skills and industry development**, equity of access and opportunity, solving complex societal problems, and powering innovation.'
- Seeks to ensure sovereign capability and mitigate sovereign risk.

To achieve these aims the Accord can help incentivise and facilitate the relationships with business in the broadest definition.

Continued changes in the research policy and funding priorities have resulted in a level of incoherence and a lack of balance across university research. In 2021-22, the Commonwealth invested $11.8 billion in innovation and research. This is a decrease of $184.18 million (or 1.53 per cent) in spending from 2020-21.[1]

The inclusion of Industry Fellows in the ARC Linkage program is welcome and should help foster translation. This is a vital aspect of the research ecosystem but there will always be a need to support blue sky research.

It is also important that the Accord recognises that translation does not equate to commercialisation. This is only one pathway to translation with translation into policy and practice far more common and immediately impactful.

Impact has not been addressed well in Australia and it has been difficult to develop appropriate metrics. Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) was not used to allocate funding or resources to universities. There could be scope to demonstrate the value of the research ecosystem and promote impact more broadly to all stakeholders, removing the need for measures.

Program-based funding models such as those delivered through the EU's ***Horizon Program***, which supports research and innovation communities tackling grand challenges, have proven markedly effective. Such a program, in Australia, could support interdisciplinary approaches to centralised national priorities. It would support across-the-sector excellence and scale but also encourage collaboration and translation. Vitally, it would not exclude disciplines that have been unevenly supported in recent years such as those in HASS which are essential for Australia's research excellence.

The establishment of funding or a funding agency should also be considered, such as the UK's ***Advanced Research + Invention Agency*** which enables blue sky research and does not specify focus areas but instead seeks to support big visions.[2]

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[1] Universities Australia. (2023) *Research Funding*. https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/policy-submissions/research-innovations/research-funding/

[2] Advanced Research and Invention Agency. (2023). *ARIA's Programme Director Launch*. https://www.aria.org.uk/news/advanced-research-and-invention-agency-aria-4/

Recommendation 19: Identify successful models from overseas which have been shown to enhance research and innovation funding through discovery to translation; such as the U.K. Catapult Network, U.S. Innovation Roundtables, and the E.U. Horizon Europe program.

Industry currently has relatively low industry R&D investment, preferring in-house research and demonstrating a low-risk appetite for research which limits opportunities. Additionally, Australia's high proportion of SME's lower the capacity to invest in R&D. SME's also largely lack understanding of university processes and drivers. These complexities are compounded by Intellectual Property (IP) and regulatory barriers.

Universities are not incentivised to pursue commercialisation. Researchers also lack experience with industry and are currently rewarded for a focus on the quality of academic output and citations. This is coupled with a government grant structure geared to academic rather than commercialisation success. The difficulty of applying for grants also deters applications that would boost collaboration with industry in other circumstances.

The Accord presents an opportunity to incentivise collaborative research with universities and industry through targeted programs to build industry-university connectedness and to offer SME's, which are a key facet of Australia's industrial landscape, simple approaches to managing IP development. The Accord could support tailored programs to nurture early-stage research as well as the resulting potential research commercialisation. It could then provide enhanced access to seed funding to support commercialisation pathways as needed. This could be achieved through increased one-off grants which encourage commercialisation and the streamlining of grant application processes for SME's.

Business Expenditure on R&D (BERD) has been stagnant since 2008-9.[3] Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD) have increased slightly, driven in majority by HERD – that is universities cross-subsidising research from international student, commercial and other income.[4] Australia invests significantly less in GERD as a percentage of GDP in comparison to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average. GERD as a per cent of GDP has decreased substantially over the last decade, Australia sits at 1.8% of GDP vs 2.7% OECD. The current government has signalled an ambition to lift that rate, including by greater BERD.

The R&D Tax incentive is flawed policy in many respects which has been ineffective in driving increased rates of BERD. It currently does not incentivise collaboration for innovation, despite the known benefits of such incentives. As 'indirect' support, it is not targeted to national priorities and it specifically excludes HASS research, despite the centrality of those disciplines to successful adoption of many advantageous scientific/technological discoveries.

The Finkel-Ferris-Fraser Review recommended a "collaboration premium" be introduced to address the collaboration barrier. Redirecting part of the R&D tax incentive to offset costs should be considered.

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[3] Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources. (2023. *Total business expenditure on R&D (BERD).* https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/minisite/static/e809cbb0-a803-4827-a45b-51598ba272b2/australian-innovation-system-monitor/science-and-research/business-R-and-D/index.html

[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Research and Experimental Development, Businesses, Australia. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/technology-and-innovation/research-and-experimental-development-businesses-australia/latest-release*

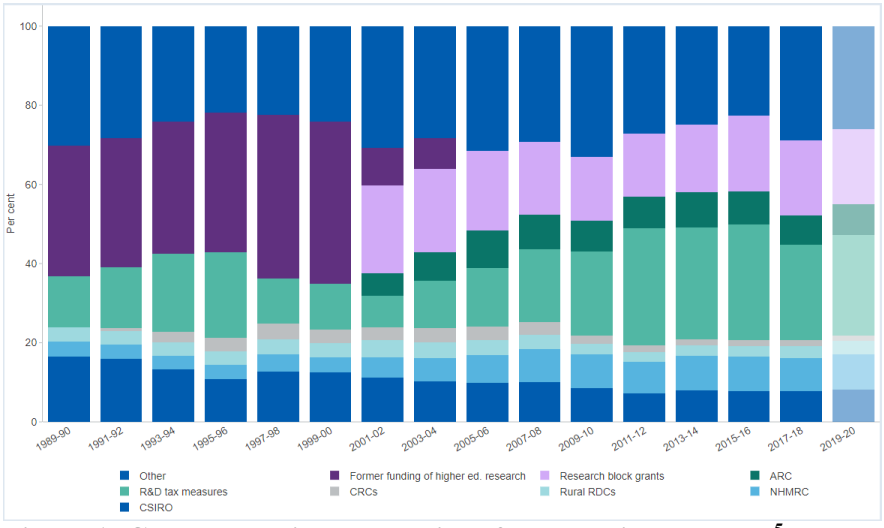

Figure 1: Government investment in R&D by major program[5]

Incentives to boost business led investment in R&D partnerships could also:

- require businesses to invest a % of turnover in new packaged partnership offerings from universities that integrate R&D Collaboration with training for up-skilling and re-skilling;
- require a % of major public purchases to be re-invested in R&D partnerships with PFROs (similar to local content mandates);
- offer premium R&D tax incentive rate for university partnerships and integrate requirements that will deepen and solidify partnerships such as, student engagements, Grads programs participation, HDR Internships, placements (linking to the WIL ambitions expressed in the Consultation Paper); and
- replace (or allow offset of) regressive taxes like payroll tax with investment in university collaboration.

Recommendation 20: Amend the R&D tax incentive to offset costs and provide incentives to boost industry R&D.

Enhancing Research Training

As part of the funding model, consideration should be given to formally embedding paid internships into all PhD programs to increase attractiveness of the PhD for a broader range of candidates, provide a more sustainable level of income for candidates and enhance their career development. 'Industry' in this context includes academia and would ensure more PhD students were engaged in teaching and reduce the need to rely on casual staff. Casual employment is often already undertaken by PhD candidates but not in a coordinated, systematic way.

This would be consistent with PhD career development either with a university or an external employer, depending on the aspirations of the PhD candidate and the availability of potential work.

Consideration should also be given to addressing the current stipend level for PhD students to ensure universities can attract the best people to develop their research and innovation skills and increase our sovereign capability in research for decades to come.

[5] Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources. (2023. *Total business expenditure on R&D (BERD).* https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/minisite/static/e809cbb0-a803-4827-a45b-51598ba272b2/australian-innovation-system-monitor/science-and-research/business-R-and-D/index.html

Recommendation 21: Increase Research Training Funding stipends for our up-and-coming researchers to ensure a pipeline of new researchers.

Recommendation 22: Create more formal requirements for higher degree research students to be engaged in university or industry employment during their candidature.

Our higher education system needs to support and develop the next generation of research leaders. Early career researchers (ECRs), particularly women, have seen their careers greatly impacted by COVID-19. Consideration should be given to incentivising the inclusion of ECRs on grants. This could include different track record assessments for grants support ECR development. The DECRA program, offering a valuable research focused period, supports very few ECRs in relation to the overall workforce. Those supported through this program have largely unproblematic track records. ECRs who have had less opportunity and less success may be excluded no matter how talented.

The ARC's now lapsed APD scheme allowed for ECRs to apply on their own for the fellowship or with a mentor named on the grant. This offered a genuine opportunity for the ECR to deliver an independent project but with mentorship throughout. The reintroduction of a scheme of this nature would support the ongoing development of Australia's future research workforce and help retain academic talent in Australia.

Recommendation 23: Incentivise inclusion of early career researchers on research grant applications to build capacity in the research workforce.

Higher Education based Startup Incubators and Accelerators (startup hubs) have emerged as a key feature of Australia's startup and entrepreneurship support landscape with many university-based startup hubs developing sophisticated program offerings and operating as key players in building innovation ecosystems across the university and its surrounding locations/communities, particularly in outer-suburban and regional areas.

University startup hubs such as Launch Pad at Western Sydney University not only provide traditional services such as acceleration programs to support student-based firm creation, but also support student entrepreneurial development to create resilient founders who build sustainable and innovative businesses that meaningfully impact society and the community. This approach delivers a superior outcome for students and also contributes more substantially to local economic development through growth of the surrounding university/region innovation ecosystem and development of a startup ready workforce

While starting firms is a criticality important component of university-based Incubator and Accelerator programmes, the newly proposed Start Up Year initiative legislation (*Education Legislation Amendment (Startup Year and Other Measures) Bill 2023)*, should consider as focus areas and impact measures not only firm creation levels but also the broader tangible benefits and value of higher education accelerators, acknowledging the importance of entrepreneurial skills attainment and mindset as a core focus of the program.

Recommendation 24: Broaden the Startup Year Initiative to include design and measurement of entrepreneurial skills building

5. Australia's International Mission

Addressing Qs 43-44

The Accord should work to formally legitimise and affirm the immense and multifaceted value of international education and engagement to the national interest. This is not only in terms of our role in educating international students here and overseas, but also in terms of our international research performance and world-leading commitment to sustainability.

International education and global engagement is a clear strength of the Australian Higher Education sector. The proven soft-diplomacy, trade, cultural and wider benefits of Australia's international mission contributes materially to our national standing and wealth. It has also become fundamental to the financial sustainability of Australia's higher education sector.

A more integrated approach to international education policy settings and support will strengthen the sector. Federal Government policies address a range of international education goals - skilled migration, quality student experience for domestic and international students, growth and diversity in the sector, financial sustainability of the sector and global brand and reputation. This can result in friction between each agency's priorities and the broader goals of the sector.

The Department of Home Affairs should actively support Higher Education's internationalisation agenda, taking account of the sector's need to diversity source markets while managing Australia's visa risk. Home Affairs has more intelligence about sources of visa risk in each market and AI to generate risk profiles that are not available to individual universities. This could be used more effectively to provide very detailed guidance on risks, access to data and sources of risk where appropriate, and granular feedback on visa refusals.

The Australian Strategy for International Education also calls for diversifying modes of delivery. An entrepreneurial sector hedging against future global competition and investing in delivery of curriculum onshore and offshore, needs regulation that addresses the challenges and opportunities of a radically transformed global international education market and does not operate as a brake on new business models.

Recommendation 25: Establish cross-portfolio working groups with university representation to address specific cross-portfolio issues, reporting to the Council for International Education.

International education revenue is now core to university funding, yet, like any exporting business, is exposed to global disruptions and competition. This results in an underlying fragility in university budgets, with universities most reliant on international student revenue deriving the most benefit in the good times, and more exposed during global disruptions. While COVID-19 highlighted this risk and the sector has largely recovered, geopolitical tensions are ongoing and the risk of disruption to international student revenue remains.

Recommendation 26: Create an insurance or trust fund arrangement to mitigate the risk of global disruptions.

Genuine Temporary Entrant (GTE) and Genuine Student settings - streamlined visa processing

Streamlined visa processing settings no longer serve Australia's national interests. The landscape

has changed significantly since GTE screening was introduced a decade ago. Education providers are recovering from the impacts of a global pandemic, AI is transforming all aspects of education and regulation and Australia is facing skills shortages. The number of skilled occupations experiencing labour shortages in Australia nearly doubled from 2021 to 2022.

Current settings are not working

The DHA website states, "the GTE requirement is not designed to exclude genuine students or those students who, after studying in Australia, go on to develop the skills required by the Australian labour market and apply to obtain permanent residency sector to assist education providers, as appropriate, to effectively target genuine students and temporary entrants."
However Ministerial Direction 69 (MD 69) which sets out the criterion for assessing student visas states a successful applicant must be both a GTE and a GS. This results in refusing genuine international students on the basis that they may intend to stay beyond graduation to pursue post study work.

- The application of MD 69 is open to interpretation and results in inconsistent visa outcomes
- The reasons given by DHA for visa rejections are often generic and not helpful to universities in understanding or contesting a visa decision
- Education providers are penalised and absorb visa risk for factors beyond their control, such as students who apply during the course of their study for a protection visa, due to changed circumstances in their home country.

GTE outsourced to universities is not cost-effective

GTE assessment imposes a significant financial burden on providers and is not cost-effective for the sector. The introduction of GTE screening in 2011 put pressure on education providers to take on immigration screening of students, which they lacked the skills and expertise to manage. Over the past decade Education Providers have made significant investment in resourcing and developing GTE screening protocols, to access streamlined processing and to mitigate the reputational risk that hinges on effective GTE screening. In 2015, 3 years after the launching GTE, a Government review reported the annual cost to providers for GTE at an average of $250,000, a total of $28 Million for the sector.[6]

Linking international education, visa settings and skills agenda

There has never been a better time to acknowledge the inherent link between international education policies that encourage providers to recruit students from around the world and migration policies that seek to support highly skilled migrants to work and live in Australia. GTE in its current form is at odds with Australia's need to attract high-quality international students to contribute to addressing current and future skill gaps in the Australian workforce.

Relatively few international students transition to permanent residence. According to the 2018 Treasury and Home Affairs report "Shaping a Nation"[7] of the 1.6 million international students examined between 2000 and 2014, only 16% became permanent residents in Australia. Is this a positive outcome for Australia's skilled workforce when being a student in Australia is a great foundation for becoming a citizen?

Recommendation 27: Replace the Genuine Temporary Entrant (GTE) visa requirement with a Genuine Student (GS) visa requirement.

[6] Department of Immigration and Border Protection. (2015). *Future directions for streamlined visa processing.* https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/future-directions.pdf
[7] The Treasury. (2018). *Shaping a Nation*. https://research.treasury.gov.au/external-paper/shaping-a-nation

A partnership between government and universities

It is difficult to manage visa risk when DHA changes the conditions of student visa without consultation with the industry and without considering possible unintended consequences. For example, uncapped work hours for students resulted in a surge in applications and non-genuine students, attracted by the opportunity to work.

The number of student visa holders in Australia has increased from a low of 315,949 at end December 2021 to 424,793 at end October 2022. Driven by unlimited work rights, offshore student visa applications surged to new records in the months of June, July, August, September, and October 2022. In October 2022, offshore student visa applications were 23,327, over 3,000 higher than the previous October record of 19,890 in October 2018. Source: data.gov.au/student visas

By implementing this change without effective sector consultation, the Government sent confusing messages to international markets, creating a perception that an Australian student visa was in effect a low-skill work visa. Uncapped work hours also contributed to universities' visa risk and made full-time study requirement and satisfactory progression and retention difficult to manage.

International graduate employability

Further work is required to change employer perceptions about Post Study Work Rights (PSWR) and outline benefits to industry of employing international graduates. There is a low awareness within industry of PSWR opportunities for international graduates; employers focus on the temporary nature of PSW. It is an ideal time with increased length of PSWR visas to work with industry to promote the benefits of employing international graduates.

Recommendation 28: Develop a program to promote the benefits of employing international students and increase business awareness of the benefits of employing international students.

Work Integrated Learning

WIL improves graduate employment outcomes and should be supported. Current settings include unpaid WIL in fortnightly limited on working hours.

Recommendation 29: Apply the fortnightly limit on international student working hours to paid work only.

Temporary Graduate and Permanent Residency settings

Recommendation 30: Automatically grant the Temporary Graduate Visa to all international students who meet eligibility requirements such as course completion and minimum conditions determined by DHA.

Recommendation 31: Increase permanent residency pathways for international students, linked to migration policy setting and addressing skills gaps.

Online delivery

The current restrictions for online study for international students studying onshore on a student visa should be reviewed to provide some degree of flexibility for students. Flexibility in delivery mode offers increased options to students and supports the development of globally competitive course offerings and business models. A degree allowing students to commence and complete introductory

courses offshore before travelling to Australia to complete advanced level and/or practical courses onshore and in-person would make international study more practical.

Key Recommendation 32: Lift restrictions on online study for international students.

To significantly build on Australia's international reputation and global footprint, a body similar to the British Council could be established to promote Australia's education globally.

The Council would have a broader remit than Austrade and DFAT, guided by a mission to take Australian education, research, culture and values to the world. The Council would:

- promote cultural, economic and educational partnerships
- support new modes of educational delivery in established and new markets
- specifically support the expansion of Australian Transnational Education, leveraging offshore education with Australia's soft power agenda
- create and support global alumni networks
- address global challenges and seek to make the world a safer place for future generations
- The Council could include celebration of indigenous culture across nations. A Federal Government 'First Nations Centre', could link with First Nations Institutes across Australian education institutes and offshore partners.

6. Job Ready Graduate legislation

Addressing Q 49.

Western Sydney University suggests the Panel consider immediate reform of the following aspects of the *Jobs-Ready Graduates* package. We made these points in our initial response to the Terms of Reference for the Accord and re-state them below.

The Student Learning Limit unfairly penalises lowSES students who can take longer to complete studies typically due to external, rather than academic factors.

Recommendation 33: Remove the Student Learning Entitlement limit of seven years study in a Commonwealth supported place (or part-time equivalent).

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) have proposed a funding cluster model that addresses equity and labour market supply concerns via consistent, clear, and longer-term evidence frameworks.

Recommendation 34: Revise changes to funding clusters and student contribution bands to achieve a more equitable division of costs and benefits for all stakeholders.

Instead of the JRG's 'Low Completion Rate' measures, universities must instead be more strongly encouraged to adopt proactive early intervention mechanisms which identify students at risk, counsels them on their study plan, supports them in their learning and provides access to supports to enable them to succeed or to take up an alternate study or work path. The 50 percent rule impacts equity target students more than other cohorts, and would be better replaced with positive steps to provide these students proven support.

Recommendation 35: Abandon Low Completion Rate measures which withdraw Commonwealth support for students with a fail rate of more than 50 percent of the units they have attempted after eight or more units have been undertaken.

The JRG's Performance-based Funding provisions and accountabilities can be better addressed through a longer-term mission-based compact.

Recommendation 36: Remove Performance-based Funding provisions and replace with accountability driven through a mission-based accord process.

Conclusion

Western Sydney University affirms its commitment to supporting the Commonwealth's Accord reform agenda. To that end, additional clarification or information can be provided on request.

Appendix 1: Best practice examples - Pre-Access Programs at Western Sydney University

Western Sydney University has delivered pre-access programs to encourage students from under-represented backgrounds towards university since 2010. This has included partnering with primary schools, high schools and community groups across the region to raise participation levels of students from key equity groups.

A key feature of Western's pre-access programs includes **delivery at scale,** with a reach including 80 primary schools, 130 high schools, 8,000 primary school students and 12,000 high school students participating in one or more programs each year across the region.

A brief summary of the scale and depth of pre-access programs delivered at the University includes:

- 7 ongoing engagement programs (2 primary school and 5 high school) with multiple touchpoints per year (250 on campus events delivered in 2022 for primary and high school students)
- 8,000 primary school students have an experience of a campus and a visit to their school by staff and Student Ambassadors every year
- 80 Western Sydney primary school partner in one or two of the primary school programs
- 130 Western Sydney high schools (out of the approx. 230 high schools in the region) partner in one or more of the 5 high school programs
- 12,000 high school students are engaged in a program each year, with multiple touchpoints in school, online or on a campus.

Key features of the approach

Western's pre-access programs are designed around the following distinguishing features, with the primary objective to raise the rates of tertiary participation across the Western Sydney region:

- **Large in scale** – both the reach in terms of number of school students engaged and in terms of the number of school partnerships
- **Relationship-based approaches** – Western staff and project officers build ongoing relationships with students, staff and school communities and become their key point of contact at the University. This is based on a whole-of-school approach as "over time there is an observable shift in school culture and prevailing norms towards tertiary participation" (Zacharias et all, 2018, p75) through highly engaged school partnerships.
- **Early intervention and engagement** – OECD, Australian and UK educational research shows (see references) children form ideas early as to whether university is a realistic option for them, starting in primary school and engaging throughout middle to senior high school raises belief and aspiration for University progression more effectively than starting in later years
- **Tailored and individualised design** – no other universities' have programs with the same level of depth designed to meet the specific needs of individual communities or cultural groups (Pacific Islander, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, refugee and asylum seeker in particular). Noting research shows that for Pasifika students in particular, increased visibility of Pacific role models, enhanced intercultural understanding amongst students and teachers and culturally specific tailored support strategies support student's access and success (Ravulo, 2019).
- **Program design directly addresses range of barriers** – the barriers commonly faced by students from under-represented groups are outlined above and programs are designed to directly address them.
- **Role modelling by our staff and students** – Program staff and students often share lived experiences and similar cultural backgrounds, which mean they are well-positioned to understand challenges faced by students and communities. This also contributes to an

ability to build meaningful connections with students and communities, through a common understanding of specific concerns and an ability to act as positive role models of higher education participation.

- **Student centred and relational approaches**– programs focus, particularly in senior high school years, on working with students on an individual basis to help them navigate the right pathway or program, understand their strengths and interests, and build confidence and self-efficacy to achieve their education and career related goals.

Additional program elements contribute to addressing the challenges faced by under-represented students, including program-specific scholarships to provide financial assistance, the opportunity to join the pool of 80 casual Student Ambassadors who support program delivery providing paid work, and a range of community-building activities specifically for Pasifika, refugee and asylum seeker students who enrol to build a greater sense of belonging and connection in the University environment.

Early phase analysis has been conducted to understand the relationship between a student's pre-access participation and their retention and success at undergraduate level. This recognises the important role that pre-access programs play not only to raise application and enrolment rates amongst equity groups, but also the impact on their continuing journey through higher education, including retention and success.

This analysis is based on the hypothesis that students who become familiar with the university environment in primary school, receive targeted advice and guidance at high school and support in their transition to higher education, will thrive in a university environment.

Preliminary research into the retention rates of program participants indicates a relationship between program participation and improved retention. Fast Forward participants have a 4.4 to 9% higher retention rate against the University average for the overall low socio-economic cohort.

Table 1: Retention rates of Fast Forward program participants compared to Western Sydney University average retention rate for the same offer year 2016-2020

Program/Category	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
All WSU	78.4%	79.8%	78.5%	78.6%	78.6%
All WSU UG	78.4%	79.9%	78.4%	78.8%	79.2%
All WSU UG Low SES *	78.4%	79.5%	77.4%	78.2%	78.1%
[redacted]					
FAST FORWARD	84.4%	87.5%	86.4%	82.6%	83.9%
Difference (+/-%) to baseline control group *	**+6.0%**	**+8.0%**	**+9.0%**	**+4.4%**	**+5.8%**

An online reflection survey was distributed to over 1,000 former program participants who are now enrolled at Western in order to seek feedback on how their experience in a pre-access program has influenced University progression and transition. The top 3 measures below were indicated as the most valuable aspects of participating in a pre-access program prior to University commencement:

1. "Feeling comfortable on a University campus"
2. "Making the right choice of University course"
3. "Feeling confident that I can be successful at University"

Preliminary analysis of the reflection survey indicates that participating in an ongoing program provides students with a valuable experience both for their transition to University and ongoing success, especially in terms of confidence in navigating the university environment.

Outcomes and participation for pre-access program participants

Currently no national centralised database of pre-access programs exists, nor an ability to monitor individual student participation or retention outcomes through a unique student identifier or alternative mechanism. Western Sydney University has the capacity to monitor outcomes for school students who participate in a pre-access program *only* if they enrol at our University, but otherwise there are limited ways of measuring the efficacy or impact of program participation at Institution level and nationally.

Research on the Queensland consortium pre-access initiatives (Zacharias, 2019) and Western's institution specific monitoring of outcomes for pre-access program participants demonstrates a positive relationship between pre-access program participation and university enrolment. 25% of the 1793 Year 12 students who participated in a pre-access high school program in 2021 went on to enrol at Western Sydney University (449 of 1793).

Table 2: Enrolment outcomes for pre-access program participants, 2021 participation to 2022 undergraduate commencement

Pre-access Program	# Y12 Students 2021	# Students to receive an offer to WSU	% to receive offers to WSU	# Enrolments	% of program participants enrolled at WSU	Offers to Enrolment Engagement Program Students (%)
New and Emerging Communities	70	31	44%	21	**30%**	68%
Pathways to Dreaming	167	43	26%	32	**19%**	74%
Pasifika Achievement to Higher Education	331	68	21%	47	**14%**	69%
Fast Forward	1225	753	61%	349	**28%**	46%
TOTAL	**1793**	**895**	**50%**	**449**	**25%**	**50%**

Pasifika Achievement to Higher Education (PATHE) program

The PATHE program targets Pasifika students in partner high schools and takes a whole-of-community approach through cultural activities, teacher network meetings, current student and family focused events to lift participation rates of Pacific Islander students across the Western Sydney region through a holistic and relational approach.

The University has seen an uplift in both enrolments from students of Pasifika backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in the last ten years. Pasifika students now make up 3% of the student body here at Western, and enrolments have grown steadily between 2012-2022, the years of operation of the Pasifika Achievement to Higher Education program.

Table 3: Pasifika Enrolments at Western and as a % of the student body 2012-2022

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Pasifika - Total	186	277	637	948	1,115	1,250	1,376	1,415	1,438	1,537	1,473
Pasifika - % of Headcount	0.46%	0.66%	1.45%	2.11%	2.51%	2.79%	2.84%	2.86%	2.92%	3.14%	3.13%