

Student Equity Strategy

2014 - 2017

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1. CONTEXT

Curtin University's Ethics and Social Justice Commitment Statement and its underlying values provide the platform for an environment that is inclusive and just at all levels.

Curtin University's commitment to equal opportunity is reflected in a range of policies and support services to ensure all students and staff; irrespective of race, gender, beliefs or culture, receive fair and just treatment.

The Curtin Student Equity Strategy 2014-17 provides a strategic and operational framework to proactively address issues of student equity, inclusion and diversity. It acknowledges and supports other plans and strategies within Curtin University that promote social inclusion including:

- the *Reconciliation Action Plan*;
- the *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan*; and
- the *Diverse Sexuality and Gender Identity Inclusion Strategy*.

This Student Equity Strategy is underpinned by:

- Curtin's *Strategic Plan 2013-2017*;
- Curtin's *Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Plan 2013-2017*; and
- Curtin's *Ethics and Social Justice Commitment Statement* and its underlying values.

In addition, the Student Equity Strategy articulates how Curtin will meet its obligations in regard to State and Federal equity legislation. In particular, this Strategy is informed by:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992

- Disability Services Act 1993
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The long-term aim of the Student Equity Strategy 2014 to 2017 is:

To facilitate and grow a higher education environment at Curtin University that is inclusive and supportive of students from all backgrounds.

The Student Equity Strategy aims to achieve the following objectives.

1. *Recruit* students from identified equity target groups, by:
 - a. Increasing Indigenous, regional, and school and mature age Low Socio-Economic Status (LSES) community awareness and understanding of HE as a viable post-school option;
 - b. Developing positive attitudes towards HE and inspirational leadership in Indigenous, regional and school and mature age LSES communities;
 - c. Supporting capability development of Indigenous, regional, and school and mature age LSES communities pre-university, where this relates to undergraduate course eligibility requirements; and
 - d. Increasing Curtin applications from Indigenous, regional, and school and mature age LSES people.
2. *Retain* students from identified equity target groups, by:
 - a. Facilitating a HE environment that is inclusive and supportive of Indigenous, external (online) and LSES students;
 - b. Supporting Indigenous, external (online) and LSES students to succeed in their studies; and
 - c. Facilitating a positive student experience for Indigenous, external (online) and LSES students.
3. *Place* graduates from identified equity target groups, by:
 - a. Supporting Indigenous, external (online) and LSES students to identify and develop realistic but aspirational goals for their studies and career;
 - b. Providing opportunities for Indigenous, external (online) and LSES students to gain practical experience related to their studies and career goals, through work integrated learning, volunteering and employment opportunities; and
 - c. Supporting Indigenous, external (online) and LSES students to gain skills and experience that will position them as attractive to employers.

3. PRIORITIES

In consideration of the changing political and educational climate, and in accordance with the University's Strategic Plan 2013-17, the following are identified as key priorities to be addressed through the Student Equity Strategy 2014-17:

1. Recognising, promoting and educating staff about values which support equity, inclusion and diversity, including Curtin's commitment to student equity and their role in this;
2. Building leadership and capacity within equity target groups;
3. Addressing the digital divide experienced by equity target groups, particularly those from regional communities, and issues related to access to equitable teaching, learning and support opportunities for external (online) students; and
4. Addressing the gaps in entry pathways for equity target groups, in relation to specific capability development for particular undergraduate programs.

3.1. Equity Target Groups

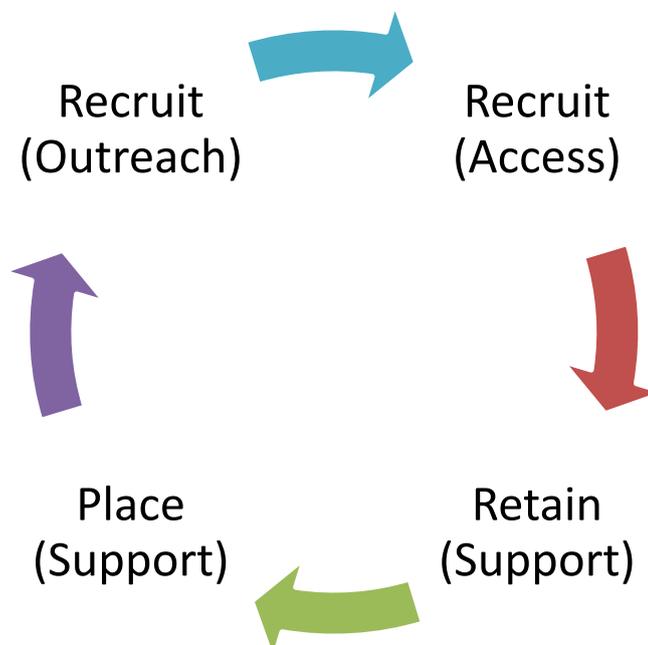
In addition to working to ensure that all Curtin systems and processes are inclusive and supportive of people from *all* backgrounds and do not disadvantage or discriminate against any group of people, the Student Equity Strategy 2014-17 will focus on promoting access to higher education for people from LSES backgrounds, defined as people who have experienced social, educational, distance and/or financial disadvantage, measured by the lowest 25% SEIFA index ranking or other proxy measure. The Strategy will prioritise initiatives which proactively target and progress substantive equality for people who are from LSES backgrounds and particularly those who are:

1. Indigenous Australians;
2. Studying externally (online) or reside in/have relocated from regional communities;
or
3. Not progressing into university directly from high school.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

A range of initiatives support achievement of the Student Equity Strategy objectives. Implementation of the Student Equity Strategy 2014-2017 will revolve around the Recruit, Retain, Place model illustrated in Figure 1, representing the Student Life Cycle.

Figure 1. The Higher Education Student Life Cycle



Initiatives will be implemented at each phase of this model to ensure continuous delivery of Student Equity objectives across students' HE journey.

In addition to ensuring all University systems and processes are equitable and do not discriminate against any group, Table 1 summarises the key initiatives which will directly contribute to the Student Equity Strategy at each phase for 2014-17. The majority of specifically equity-focused initiatives will be funded through the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP), with other initiatives already supported as part of core business for particular areas of the University. The distribution of HEPPP funding will be determined in consultation with key stakeholders on an annual basis, in accordance with the HEPPP guidelines and the expected HEPPP allocation to Curtin in the applicable year. An example budget for the 2014 allocation of HEPPP funding is provided as reference in Appendix A. Additional initiatives consistent with this model may also be developed over the 2014-17 time period to support the Strategy, where appropriate.

Table 1. 2014-17 Student Equity Strategy Initiatives

Initiative	Responsibility	Description	Funding source (2014)
Recruit (outreach)			
AHEAD (School, Adult Learning & Community programs)	Ethics Equity & Social Justice	Multifaceted partnerships strategy to enhance awareness/understanding of HE as a viable post-school option, strengthen aspirations to pursue HE, and to increase capability and eligibility to apply for HE programs for school students, adult learners and other LSES people in the community. Includes a focus on Indigenous and regional communities.	HEPPP (Partnerships baseline) HEPPP (Participation baseline) HEPPP (Partnerships Competitive Grant)
Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME)	Ethics Equity & Social Justice	Mentoring program linking Indigenous high school students (including in regional areas) with current Curtin University students to improve school completion rates and encourage students to consider their post-school options, including in regional areas.	HEPPP (Participation baseline)
Future Student Services	Future Student Services	School visits (metro & regional), parent and mature age information sessions, course brochures and the Student Box portal provide information to assist prospective students to consider and apply for Curtin programs.	Future Student Services
Faculty-based Outreach	Faculty of Science & Engineering	Events, excursions and activities which seek to increase interest and awareness of Science and Engineering careers and study programs, typically targeted at secondary school students. Indigenous Engineering Summer School	Faculty of Science & Engineering

	Curtin Business School	Indigenous school visits with Business and Commerce based activities delivered to regional and remote schools through the Follow the Dream program	External (Follow The Dream & other NFP organisations)
Community Support Projects	Curtin Volunteers!	Community support projects run by volunteer students engage, support and provide positive role models for low SES communities in Perth and regional WA.	HEPPP (Participation baseline) Community Life
Recruit (access)			
AHEAD (into University)	Ethics Equity & Social Justice	Development and trial of a MOOC-like program, which demystifies academic practices and assists LSES people to identify skills that will help them to succeed in HE, delivered in an accessible and convenient way. Pre-application careers assistance for prospective students engaged in AHEAD outreach programs.	HEPPP (Partnerships Competitive Grant)
Entry pathways and ATAR bonus schemes	Ethics Equity & Social Justice	Investigation into gaps in existing entry pathways and development of potential solutions to enhance access to HE for equity target groups, particularly in regard to achieving specific capabilities or skills required to succeed in more specialised courses.	HEPPP (Participation baseline)
	Curtin Teaching & Learning, Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Science & Engineering	Bridging and enabling programs which seek to up-skill and prepare students to transition into undergraduate study, including UniReady, ABC/ITEC and Enabling Course for Science, Engineering & Health.	Curtin Teaching & Learning, Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Faculty of Science & Engineering

	Admissions & Scholarships	StepUp and Special Consideration ATAR bonus schemes facilitate admission into Curtin programs for applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds and selected LSES schools.	Admissions & Scholarships
Bridging/Enabling Program Support Services	Centre for Aboriginal Studies	Mentoring program for current indigenous ITEC/ABC students in CAS, mentored by current UG Indigenous students. CAS Student Services provide Indigenous-specific support to students in CAS programs.	HEPPP (Participation baseline) Centre for Aboriginal Studies
	UniReady	UniReady Student Services provide advice and assistance to enhance retention and success of students in UniReady programs.	UniReady
	Academic Support Services	A range of specialised services provide assistance for general and discipline-specific academic issues that may affect bridging/enabling students' capacity to persist with their studies, including The Learning Centre, START, Robertson Library, CBS Communication Skills Centre, Health Sciences English Language Development, UniEnglish, and more.	Faculties Support Services
	Specialist Wellbeing Support Services	A range of specialised support services provide assistance for wellbeing and/or health issues that may affect bridging/enabling students' capacity to persist with their studies, including START, Counselling & Disability Services, Careers Centre, Health Services, Student Support & Outreach Service, Multifaith Service, and more.	Support Services

Financial support	Admissions & Scholarships	Financial support via scholarships for current/prospective students from equity target groups, and small grants to support students experiencing severe financial hardship, affecting their capacity to continue and/or succeed in their studies.	HEPPP (Participation baseline) Admissions & Scholarships
Retain (support)			
Student Equity Support	Student Transition and Retention Team (START)	<p>Student Wellbeing Advisory Team provide initial response to equity-related student enquiries and proactive support of students identified as members of an equity target group, as well as case management and referral to specialist support services and/or EESJ as appropriate.</p> <p>Events and programs that support students to transition into Curtin and persist with their studies, including mainstream student mentoring programs and UniPASS, an academic support program providing peer-assisted study sessions in selected units with high failure rates across all Faculties.</p>	HEPPP (Participation baseline) START
	Counselling & Disability Services	<p>Student Support & Outreach Service (Social Worker) provides support in managing wellbeing issues in a proactive and preventative manner.</p> <p>Small emergency funds and equipment to assist students in crisis.</p> <p>Specialist support for mental health conditions and/or managing a disability while studying, including in regional locations and online.</p>	Counselling & Disability Services HEPPP (Participation baseline)

		Group programs raising awareness and assisting in management of mental health and wellbeing issues, including in the regions.	
	Health Services	Medical assistance for health issues impacting on students' capacity to study.	Health Services
	Multifaith Services & Facilities	Facilitates religious life in the university, including the provision of religious facilities, and assists students to get connected with local faith communities.	Multifaith Services & Facilities
	Academic Support Services	A range of specialised services provide assistance for general and discipline-specific academic issues that may affect students' capacity to persist with their undergraduate studies, including The Learning Centre, START, Robertson Library, CBS Communication Skills Centre, Health Sciences English Language Development, UniEnglish, and more.	Faculties Support Services
Indigenous Student Support	Centre for Aboriginal Studies	Cross-faculty events to engage and support Indigenous students, including those in mainstream courses and their communities. Elder in Residence. Indigenous Support Coordinator offers specialised guidance and support for Indigenous students in CAS and mainstream courses.	HEPPP (Participation baseline)
	Counselling & Disability Services	Camp for Indigenous students transitioning from bridging programs into mainstream courses, run by CDS as a means	HEPPP (Participation baseline)

		to maintain the connections and peer support established during the bridging programs. Provision of localised counselling services specifically for Indigenous students, located within CAS.	Counselling & Disability Services
Staff Professional Development	Counselling & Disability Services	Professional development for staff supporting Indigenous and LSES students with wellbeing concerns.	HEPPP (Participation baseline) Counselling & Disability Services
	Ethics Equity & Social Justice, Organisational Development Unit	Professional development in cultural awareness, competency and responsiveness.	Organisational Development Unit HEPPP (Participation baseline)
Place (support)			
Career Development	Careers Centre	Earn While You Learn source and recruit current Curtin students from equity target groups into part-time or casual paid work on campus. Career Development Consultants (CDC) work with current students from equity target groups, offering individual career appointments, group workshops and formal career assistance to support students' development and management of career goals. The CDC also works with staff across the University to support embedding of career development into curriculum and co-curricular programs.	HEPPP (Participation baseline)

Leadership & Volunteering programs	Curtin Leadership Centre AIME START Ethics, Equity & Social Justice	Leadership, volunteering and employment opportunities for current Curtin students to develop leadership skills and experience within a social justice perspective. Opportunities include being an AIME mentor, UniPASS Peer Learning Facilitator, Curtin Coach, Curtin Volunteer and more.	HEPPP (Participation baseline) Curtin Leadership Centre
Student Equity Management & Administration	Ethics Equity & Social Justice	Coordination of the Student Equity Strategy, including management of HEPPP funding and strategic projects. Development and implementation of strategies to raise awareness of the Student Equity Strategy across Curtin and its stakeholders.	HEPPP (Participation baseline)

In addition to the above initiatives, a number of broader strategic University projects will supplement these initiatives through ensuring student equity is built into all Curtin operations in 2014-17, including:

- Living Our Values project (DVCE)
- Reconciliation Action Plan (DVCE)
- Transforming Learning at Curtin (DVCE)
- Strengthening Indigenous Outcomes project (DVCE)
- Curtin Indigenous Employment Pool (HR)

4.1. Implementation Principles

The approach taken in developing and implementing the Student Equity Strategy will be informed by the following principles:

- Partnership and community-based programs must be developed in collaboration with partners and the community through a deep understanding of the particular needs and opportunities relating to equity target groups within that region.

- Wherever possible, existing mainstream University programs/services should be built upon to meet the needs of equity target groups, rather than new programs established specifically for equity target groups (i.e. Universal access and support principles are integrated wherever possible into core business).
- All programs should focus on adding value through diversity rather than adding-on distinct deficit-focused equity programs.
- All programs must have clear, measurable objectives (which relate to the objectives of the Student Equity Strategy) and be based on sound rationale gleaned through research and/or best practice.
- Community-based programs should focus on regions in which Curtin has an existing positive and strong relationship.
- Where possible, HEPPP funding should be directed to support operational expenses/material costs rather than discrete salaries to maximise job security and assist in moving towards embedded delivery of equity programs.
- All programs must be consistent with and (wherever possible) strategically aligned to the following:
 - Curtin Strategic Plan 2013-17
 - Transforming Learning at Curtin (TL@C)
 - EQUIP
 - Living our Values
 - Reconciliation Action Plan

5. ACCOUNTABILITY

It is the responsibility of all Curtin University staff to ensure that all systems and processes are inclusive and supportive of people from all backgrounds and do not directly or indirectly disadvantage or discriminate against any group of people. In some cases this may require some adjustment to standard or existing systems or processes.

In addition, specific areas or dedicated staff may hold responsibility for services or programs which proactively target identified equity target groups, as outlined in this strategy.

The Executive Manager accountable for the Strategy is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) Education. The Director, Corporate Values and Equity has management responsibility for the Strategy with the Manager, Student Equity and Diversity being responsible for planning, co-ordination and review.

6. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

This Student Equity Strategy aligns to the Curtin Strategic Plan 2013-17. In this way, it will contribute towards the following primary Curtin Key Performance Indicators.

Strategic Plan Theme	Strategic Plan KPI	Contribution through the Student Equity Strategy
Teaching and Research	Student Demand	Increase enrolments from equity target groups
	Student Experience	Facilitate an inclusive and supportive environment for all students
Engagement and Impact	Graduate Reputation	Develop students to become socially responsible leaders
	Industry Engagement	Work in collaboration with external partner organisations
	Corporate Social Responsibility	Increase retention and completion of Low SES and Indigenous students
People and Culture	Student Satisfaction	Facilitate an inclusive and supportive environment for all students
Financial Security	Financial Sustainability	Ensure HEPPP funding is utilised specifically for targeted pilot initiatives, while Curtin's core business systems/processes are adjusted to be equitable and sustained as such, through embedding/mainstreaming proven initiatives

The specific Key Performance Indicators for the Student Equity Strategy 2014-2017 are:

1. Number of domestic undergraduate students from nominated equity target groups as a percentage of total domestic undergraduate students
2. Retention rate of domestic undergraduate students from nominated equity target groups
3. Number of domestic undergraduate completions from nominated equity target groups

7. PROMOTION

The benefits and successes of individual initiatives, and the Student Equity Strategy as a whole, will be actively promoted internally to Curtin students and staff; externally to partners and communities involved in the Strategy; and to industry and graduate employers.

This will occur through a range of strategies to be identified through a comprehensive communication plan.

8. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Monitoring and evaluation is to be integral to all programs for reporting purposes.

DIICSRTE Guidelines indicate that HEPPP reporting requires demonstration of progression of domestic undergraduate students from LSES, in terms of participation, retention and success. The University must report to the Department on outcomes achieved each calendar year, in the format specified by the Department.

All initiatives implemented through this strategy (regardless of their source of funding) will be required to report to the DVC Education (or nominee) on:

- the demonstrable impact for equity target groups of that initiative; and
- achievement/progress towards proposed outcomes

Evaluation and reporting will occur on an annual basis and be co-ordinated by Ethics, Equity and Social Justice, with information collected to be used to compile Curtin University's Institutional Performance Portfolio and HEPPP reports to the Commonwealth government, as required.

The HEPPP report will be submitted to Planning and Management Committee and Council for noting each year.

9. GOVERNANCE

The Student Equity Strategy is developed and co-ordinated by Ethics, Equity and Social Justice. The DVC Education has oversight of this area.

Two levels of governance ensure the strategic directions of the Student Equity Strategy and its implementation, a reference group and an operational group.

9.1. Reference Group

The Participation, Equity and Partnerships (PEP) Group provides strategic advice and supports the strategic implementation of the Student Equity Strategy across all areas of the University. Members of this group have primary responsibility for meeting University Key Performance Indicators relating to the participation and success of people from equity target groups. The Group meets quarterly and is chaired by the Director Corporate Values and Equity and the Executive Officer is the Manager, Student Equity and Diversity.

The terms of reference of the PEP Group are:

- To provide direction and support for the development, implementation and evaluation of the Student Equity Strategy and related programs; and
- To encourage and facilitate implementation of initiatives, systems and processes in all areas of the University, which support the Student Equity Strategy; and
- To monitor the development, implementation and evaluation of student equity and diversity programs.

9.2. Student Equity Strategy Operational Group

The Operational Group consists of staff responsible for the implementation and delivery of projects specifically targeting student equity and diversity. The Group is chaired by the Manager, Student Equity and Diversity and meets every fortnight.

Appendix A: 2014 HEPPP Budget Allocation

Initiative	Expense	Amount
AHEAD	AHEAD in School	\$1,593,336
AIME	AIME sponsorship	\$123,920
Community Support Projects	Curtin Volunteers!	\$96,067
Entry pathways & ATAR bonus schemes	Addressing gaps in entry pathways (re: specific capabilities and for particular equity groups)	\$100,000
Bridging/Enabling Program Support Services	CAS Mentoring Program	\$172,889
Financial Support	Equity Scholarships & Hardship Grants	\$56,000
Student Equity Support	UniPASS	\$124,000
	Emergency support for students in crisis (SSOS)	\$14,500
	Student Equity Support (Student Wellbeing Advisory Team)	\$200,000
	Regional Counselling (individual & group programs)	\$103,337
	LSES Student Counselling (individual & group programs)	\$42,209
	Online counselling service	\$1,800
	FSE Equity Support	\$54,070
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$539,916</i>
Indigenous Student Support	CAS Counselling Service	\$29,542
	Indigenous Bridging Student Camp	\$21,060
	Strengthening Indigenous Outcomes (including Elder in Residence)	\$296,859
	Indigenous student events	\$5,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$352,461</i>
Staff Development	Counselling Staff PD on LSES & Indigenous student issues	\$56,750
	Cultural awareness, competency & responsiveness training	\$10,000
	Equity staff PD	\$50,000

	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$116,750</i>
Career Development	Earn While You Learn	\$99,408
	Career Development Consultant (current equity students)	\$107,961
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$207,369</i>
Student Equity Strategy Management	Student Equity Strategy staffing	\$366,456
	Communication Strategies	\$100,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$466,456</i>
Total Expenses		<i>\$3,825,164</i>