

# Student equity in focus

## Recommendations from the Australian Universities Accord

### Equity recommendations released in 2024:

- To meet the future skills requirement of our workforce, tertiary attainment in Australia must increase substantially.
- To do this, our higher education system must be more inclusive of historically underrepresented cohorts.

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## Participation Targets



The three equity cohorts identified in the 2008 Bradley Review are still underrepresented in higher education.

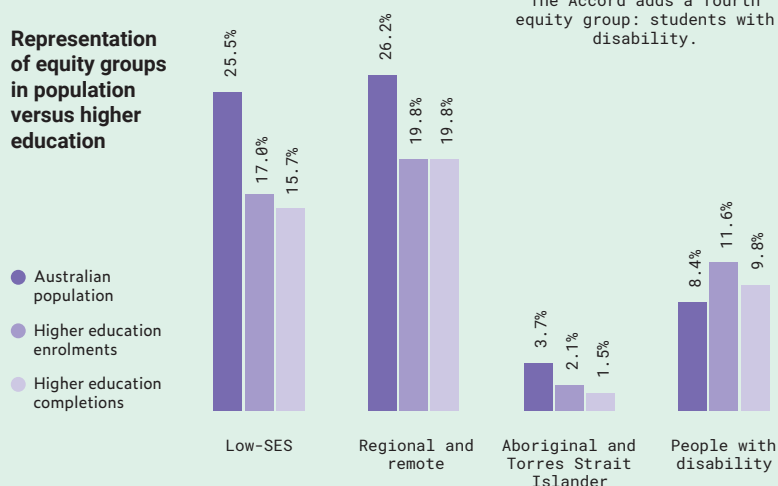
- Students from low-SES backgrounds
- Students from regional and remote areas
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

The Accord recommends setting targets for achieving population parity representation by 2050.

**Parity** means that students from these groups would be represented in higher education at the same proportions they exist in the Australian community.

The Accord adds a fourth equity group: students with disability.

Representation of equity groups in population versus higher education



### Accord developments – what's new?

- Parity representation for target cohorts by 2050
- Equal effort – relative contribution to parity targets according to state demographics and institution starting place
- Funding for equity – dedicated needs-based funding for equity groups and dedicated outreach
- Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) – new administrative body to oversee tertiary sector
- Proposed national oversight of at-school offers
- Replacement of Job-ready Graduates (JRG) package
- Modernisation of HELP to suit potential earning capacity
- Financial support for placements

### State and territory targets

Because the populations of each state and territory look different, their parity targets by 2050 are different:

	Low-SES background	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Regional, Rural and Remote	Disability
New South Wales	19.7	3.0	22.5	-
Victoria	15.4	0.9	20.7	-
Queensland	29.1	4.4	33.9	-
Western Australia	25.0	4.0	21.0	-
South Australia	30.3	2.6	23.1	-
Tasmania	42.5	5.5	100.0	-
Northern Territory	23.18	31.3	100.0	-
Australian Capital Territory	0.2	1.9	0.1	-
National	25.0	3.7	26.1	8.4

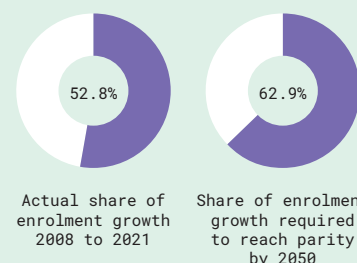


### EQUAL EFFORT

Institutions will not each be aiming for the state or territory target.

Instead, each will be required to increase its proportion of students from these groups at the same rate.

So institution targets will be relative to their starting place.



## Building aspiration and tertiary preparedness and providing career advice

Structural barriers affect target groups' aspiration, preparedness and capacity to participate in higher education:

- Economic
- Socio-cultural
- Geographical
- Institutional

### Funding for outreach

Dedicated outreach funding for institutions to deliver more targeted, place-based and community-focused outreach.



#### STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

Many students from underrepresented backgrounds aspire to access and succeed in higher education.

Approaches to reducing barriers must build on the strengths of students.

## Fee-free preparatory courses

The Accord recommends:

- Continued legislation of requirement for preparatory courses to be fee-free
- Number of Commonwealth Supported Places expanded to meet demand
- Funding reflects the cost of delivery
- Systematic approach to recognising preparatory programs across the sector through the National Skills Passport



#### PREPARATORY PROGRAMS (PREVIOUSLY ENABLING PROGRAMS) ARE:

Non-award fee-free courses designed to lead to entry into a full higher education qualification.

Most likely to assist students from target groups whose preparation for higher education may have been affected by educational disadvantage.

## Support to participate and succeed in learning

Institutions will need to prioritise improvements to teaching and learning practices to ensure student success.

### A needs-based funding model:

- Institutions will receive a per-student funding amount in line with their expansion in enrolments from target cohorts
- Regional institutions will receive extra funding in recognition of their already high enrolments of students from target cohorts
- All providers will receive bonuses upon meeting completion targets



#### STUDENT ACCESS TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Setting ambitious equity targets will mean many more students coming into higher education with varying levels of preparedness.

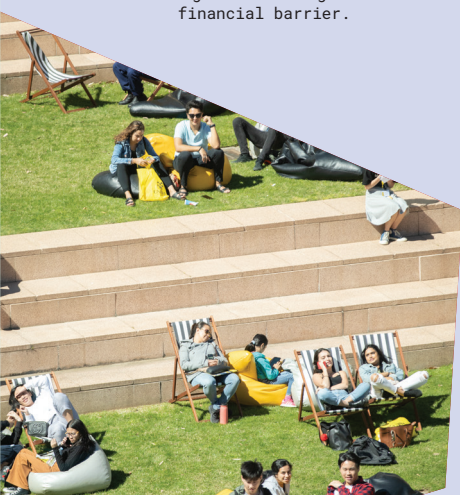
Supporting students to succeed, and setting performance metrics around success, retention and graduation will be critical.

## Financial support for placements

The Australian Government must collaborate with states and territories, business and industry to introduce financial support for mandatory work placements.



Unpaid work placements in fields such as nursing and teaching can be a significant financial barrier.



## Student income support and HELP reform

### Rates of discontinuation of study due to financial barriers



Financial barriers present significant roadblocks to participation among underrepresented cohorts. The Accord recommends simplifications that include:

- Providing students with adequate income support
- Raising the Parental Income Free Area to \$68,857

- Indexation of HELP set to the lower of either Consumer Price Index (CPI) or Wage Price Index (WPI), after student involuntary contributions have been accounted for each financial year
- Moving towards a student contribution system based on potential lifetime earnings



Students from low-SES backgrounds are

**13%**  
more likely

to consider discontinuing their studies because of financial barriers.