

Rationale

The University of Newcastle (University) is proud to be recognised for its distinctive commitment to equity and excellence. This commitment is embedded within institutional strategies, practice, research, evaluation and pedagogy. It is ongoing as we continue to work toward our goal of parity of participation and to strengthen our impact for local and international communities. The Student Equity and Social Justice Plan supports and deepens the University's lived values of equity, excellence, engagement and sustainability.

Looking Ahead 2020-2025, the University's Strategic Plan affirms our commitment to widening participation, promoting diversity and fairness, overcoming injustice, and increasing success for all through the delivery of an outstanding and inspiring student experience, as well as research that engages locally and globally. The University is committed to supporting the access and success of all students, especially those from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Our planning instruments provide a roadmap for ensuring that our forty-year commitment to equity and social justice continues within a higher education landscape that is adapting to rapidly changing technological and learning environments.

The Student Equity and Social Justice Plan complements *Looking Ahead*, through guiding decisions as to where and how we allocate resources to address the ongoing and systematic inequities that exist in access, participation, success and graduate outcomes for students.

The Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE) plays a critical role in the University's equity and social justice agenda by researching, aligning, implementing, coordinating and evaluating our strategies to create cultural change and generate high quality, inclusive and equitable practice across the University.

Through the CEEHE, the University brings equity practice and research together (praxis), generating innovative, robust multidisciplinary research, practice and evaluation. CEEHE's analytical capability empowers the University to address its strategic priorities and commitments to building excellence in equity. This informs the leadership, policy and practice of equity institutionally, nationally and internationally.

Scope

The Student Equity and Social Justice Framework directs a principled, research-informed, whole-of-institution approach for the allocation of resources (specifically HEPPP) and the recognition of the diversity and difference in our communities. It enables ways of addressing the inter-relationship across, within and between research and practice to generate equity praxis. Drawing together collaborative networks across global, national, regional, local and institutional contexts, the University of Newcastle provides transformational, praxis-based programs.

Strategies, projects and initiatives directly related to equity of access, participation and success in higher education work best when equity is embedded in all our teaching, learning, research, engagement and governance practices.

This Plan and its framework demonstrate how our commitments and goals are applied and embedded. Underpinning strategies and initiatives support the framework and further translate the goal and the three key principles for application.

Student Equity and Social Justice Framework

Goal:

PARITY OF PARTICIPATION	<p>Achieving Equity through Parity of Participation is a multi-dimensional goal.</p> <p>The University is committed to achieving parity between the proportion of students from diverse backgrounds who enter and graduate from all disciplines with the proportion of people who are from those backgrounds in our regions.</p> <p>Beyond this, parity of participation is about who is included in the design of initiatives, who the University is accountable to, and how backgrounds and cultures are recognised as important to the future of the University.</p>
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Principles:

RESOURCE ACCOUNTABILITY	<p>Resources are ethically allocated on the basis of our commitment to equity and are guided by high quality research that is sensitive to the complexities of social inequalities.</p> <p>Ongoing processes of ethical, contextualised and rigorous evaluation of the short and long term impact of initiatives are undertaken across the University to directly inform allocation of resources related to equity and social justice expenditure and evaluation of resources is guided by an evidence-based approach.</p>
CO-DEVELOPMENT	<p>Students and our communities are at the centre of all equity endeavours.</p> <p>Frameworks and initiatives are co-developed with students, staff and our communities through ethical consultation and engagement.</p> <p>Initiatives are research-informed, rigorously evaluated, and have a clear link with the goal of parity of participation.</p>
VALUING DIVERSITY & DIFFERENCE	<p>The diversity of our student body and communities are celebrated, recognised and valued.</p> <p>The University thrives on the richness of its diverse communities but also recognises the significance of developing empathy across our differences.</p> <p>Going beyond a superficial understanding to ensure that systems, frameworks and initiatives respond to student/ community contexts. This will support the development of an environment that nurtures student aspirations, capabilities, and sense of belonging.</p>

These principles intersect and help to strengthen, advance and reinforce the others. Within each principle, key strategies have been prioritised to provide a starting point for implementation.

APPENDIX: Student Equity and Social Justice Plan: 2021 HEPPP Funded Initiatives

- All the initiatives outlined below have been developed in line with the Student Equity & Social Justice Framework Principles.
- Underpinning all the strategies and initiatives is the continual development of the university Equity & Social Justice Evaluation Framework.
- The framework is co-developed between CEEHE and project teams, to produce a context specific approach to evaluation that is fit for purpose and is aligned to equity and social justice principles. This requires a stable layer of expertise combining research, policy, evaluation and practice.
- Each initiative below supports students who come from regional, Indigenous and Low-SES backgrounds.

STRATEGIES

1	<i>Provision of accessible and inclusive life-long learning pathways for individuals and communities who have had a disrupted educational journey</i>
2	<i>Develop and nurture engagement with university and build an appreciation of life-long learning amongst our communities.</i>
3	<i>Increase the retention, success and career readiness of students by embedding a range of research-informed strategies throughout our courses, programs and student support offerings.</i>
4	<i>Design and implement a supportive and research-informed framework to grow the capability of the sector to address complex equity issues and to work inclusively with diverse student cohorts across a range of contexts</i>

Parity of Participation							
Resource Accountability		Co-Development		Valuing Diversity & Difference			
Initiative / Activity		Description		Shaded areas below indicate how each initiative relates to one or more of the strategies			
	STRATEGIES			1	2	3	4
PRE-ACCESS	Widening Participation Pathway	The Widening Participation Pathway program provides access to a diversity of high-quality educational opportunities in educationally-disadvantaged communities.					
	Live Learn Grow	Live, Learn, Grow (LLG) is a praxis-based framework that seeks to overcome the known barriers preventing care leavers engaging with higher education while building new sectoral support structures and knowledge.					

	Reclaiming My Place	'Reclaiming My Place' (RMP) is a praxis-based framework using visual art-methods to create inclusive points of entry to lifelong learning for women outside of formal learning pathways in community settings and on campus.				
	SUPERBE (Strategy Underpinning Empowerment for Refugee Backgrounds in Education)	SUPERBE is a praxis-based framework to engage and support community members and current students from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds in education across the Hunter region.				
	Deadly Streaming	The Deadly Streaming Project is focused on building positive self-regard amongst Aboriginal students, leading to an increased awareness that they belong in educational settings.				
PATHWAYS	STEM Drop-ins for Enabling students	STEM Drop-ins support student learning and success in enabling mathematics and science courses, building student knowledge and confidence in courses with high attrition and failure rates and overcoming barriers to entry into undergraduate STEM programs.				
	Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) for Enabling students	PASS sessions for Enabling students utilise former successful enabling students to become Peer Leaders facilitating weekly study sessions, modelling study skills and reviewing lecture material for courses with high attrition and failure rates.				
	Student Liaison for Support and Success	Student Liaison Officers provide personalised advice and targeted support for enabling students by providing assistance and referrals to improve success and transition rates of students along with enhancing their sense of wellbeing, confidence and belonging.				
	Enabling student engagement	This initiative adopts timely and targeted communication strategies to support student progress, overcoming the persistent challenge of engaging and retaining enabling cohorts due to their diverse backgrounds and low barriers to exit from pathways programs.				
	Learning support and development for Online students	This project responds to increased demand for flexible and well-designed online courses and activities to improve engagement and retention of students.				

TRANSITION & PROGRESSION	NUPrep	A suite of preparation and bridging courses designed to support students entering undergraduate or enabling programs at a critical transitional point in the student journey, improving retention and success rates.				
	Loans and Welfare Support	The provision of equity scholarships, and grants that encourage and support the participation of IRLS students in higher education. These include ESSUN equity scholarships, hardship grants, grants that allow students to participate in clinical/WIL placements and support for the Country Education Foundation to provide regional student scholarships.				
ATTAINMENT & TRANSITION OUT	Mental Health Support	Embedded mental health support for students from pathways through to post-graduate providing a holistic approach ranging from self-access resources and wellbeing activities to individual counselling appointments.				
	Early Intervention Transition and Retention	Pilot programs developed using learning impacts data that are designed to increase the supports available to increase retention rates and improve the student experience, leading to increased educational outcomes.				
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION	Writing Program for Equity & Widening Participation Practitioners	A praxis-based response to the need for higher education institutions to reveal the significant impact of equity and widening participation initiatives, including strategies to support access, transition and retention of students from historically under-represented backgrounds.				
	Excellence through Equity Pathways	By drawing on expertise across the University, this praxis-based program of work creates pathways into otherwise inaccessible degrees, for example Medicine. This offers entry pathways <i>into</i> and participation pathways <i>through</i> these degrees.				
	Longitudinal Program of Evaluative Research Praxis	Drawing from a robust international research foundation, the design generates ethical, rigorous data and analysis for institutional strategy, policy-making and practice. This program makes student experience a primary focus but builds into this an understanding of the relationship between staff and student equity.				

	Developing communities of praxis	This program operates locally, regionally, nationally and internationally with representatives of disadvantaged communities to build shared knowledge and expertise. Projects include collaborative workshops to refine equity practice, a community-led lifelong learning network that brings together themes of safety, education and community services based in Port Stephens, Writing Programs and institutional exchanges/collaborations such as the Newcastle/Bath network established via a Global Chair of Social Innovation.				
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Partnerships and collaboration:

The University continues to collaborate with community partners to enhance the effectiveness of its programs and initiatives. Partners include:

- Primary and high schools in our geographical footprint, moving further into remote areas in NSW in 2021.
- TAFE NSW
- Hunter and Central Coast community and social services organisations e.g., Allambi Care, Wesley Mission, Samaritans, Central Coast Family Support Service, Foster & Kinship Care Picnic Interagency, Newcastle Youth Interagency, STARTTS (Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Trauma and Torture Survivors), Catholic Care Refugee Hub and DARA (Development and Relief Agency), Newcastle Police Multicultural Liaison Officer, Northern Settlement Services, MAX Solutions (AMEP - Australian Migrant English Program), Mentor Support Network, Mental Health Community Living Support for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Singleton Family Support Services, Cessnock Family Support Service, Maryland Neighbourhood Centre, The Canopy.
- Various layers and representatives of government e.g., Department of Education, Skills and Employment; NSW Department of Communities & Justice; NSW Department of Education; Department of Human Services (DHS); local councils.
- Community educational partners e.g., Koe Nara' School as Community Centre.
- Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA)
- National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE)
- Communities of Praxis collaborators (e.g., Port Stephens Community network, University of Bath, Ghana Gender Equity network, Emerging Global Widening Participation in Medicine network, International Gender, Social Justice and Praxis network)
- University Admissions Centre