



IRU response to Questions on Notice

15 September 2023

Inquiry into the Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023

The following questions on notice were received from the Senate Employment and Education Legislation Committee.

1. Uncapping Indigenous CSP

- For the 2022 calendar year, please provide the number of applications you have received from Indigenous students at each of your member universities; the offers made to Indigenous students at each of your member universities; and the number of acceptances by Indigenous students.
- Please provide the data above broken down by metropolitan, regional, rural and remote students for each university.

The data below is the 2022 undergraduate student data for IRU member universities that was available at the time of compiling. The Department of Education may be able to provide a complete breakdown of this data for all universities.

Across the entire IRU Indigenous student cohort, 35% of students come from regional and rural areas, compared to the sector average of 42%.

	Canberra	Flinders	Griffith	James Cook	La Trobe	Murdoch	Western Sydney
Applications	511	311	1763	604	-	249	-
Offers	405	185	526	597	-	194	538
Acceptances	220	160	469	396	-	179	-
Admissions	154	-	325	399	-	142	-
% Indigenous enrolments who are students from metropolitan areas	76% metro	63% metro	78% metro	Less than 10% metro	-	84% metro	-

2. Commonwealth Supported Places

- For each of your member universities, please advise the number of Commonwealth Supported Places allocated to each university for calendar year 2022.

- For each of your member universities, please advise how many of the allocated Commonwealth Supported Places were filled for the calendar year 2022.

The Maximum Basic Grant Amount (MBGA) agreed between universities and government is expressed as a dollar amount rather than a number of Commonwealth Supported Places. Funding agreements state that the MBGA “provides a flexible funding envelope within which funding can be moved between disciplines... and course levels”.

On average across the IRU, member universities report being slightly under cap for 2022 – for example, the University of Canberra was 2.6% under its cap.

3. Uncapping Indigenous CSP

- Have you received advice from the Department of Education on how funding for each of your member universities will be adjusted for the demand driven Indigenous places? If so, please provide a copy of the advice received.

The IRU has not received advice on this issue from the Department of Education.

4. 50 per cent pass rule

- Please provide, for each of your member universities by university, the data for:
 - The number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule in calendar year 2022.
 - The number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule that applied for an exemption. Please break the data down by category for which exemption was applied.
 - The number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule that were granted an exemption. Please break the data down by category in which the exemption was granted.
 - The number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule that applied for an exemption that was not granted. Please break the data down by category for which the exemption was applied.
 - The number of students impacted by the 50 per cent pass rule that applied for an exemption that was not granted and a description of their equity cohort if applicable (ie. rural/regional, low SES, first in family, Indigenous).
- Do you have data on how many students impacted by the 50 per cent rule left the system or chose to continue with their studies as full fee-paying students? If so, please provide broken down by each university.

The data below is the relevant 2022 student data for IRU member universities that was available at the time of compiling.

	Canberra	Flinders	Griffith	James Cook	La Trobe	Murdoch	Western Sydney
Students affected	83	85	304	-	224	16	-
Applied for exemption	-	12	75	-	-	0	-
Exemption not granted	-	1	37	-	-	0	-
Equity group background of students who did not receive an exemption	67% equity group background	100% equity group background	48% equity group background	-	-	N/A	-
Students impacted who withdrew or continued as full fee-paying	-	7	69 continued as fee-paying	-	-	12	-

Notes/additional information:

- Relevant JCU students were proactively advised to reduce study load so as not to be affected by 50% rule.
- La Trobe applied an exemption to all affected students in diploma and enabling courses and underwrote their fees (88 students had their fees waived). 35% of these students were from regional backgrounds.
- What is the process at each of your member universities for when a student is flagged at potentially at risk of failing 50% of their course? Is this different for each university? Please describe or provide the policy for each university.
- What student support policies are in place to correct a student's performance academically to reduce their risk of failing?

The University of Canberra employs a Student Retention Team which includes Student Retention Officers and a data analytics capability to identify students at risk. Personalised advice and support is then provided. The University provides individual appointments with Student Success Coaches, Student Mentors and peer support, Scholarship and Career Support, and Study Skills sessions (both in-person and online) that include targeted assistance with English language and also maths/stats. The University also employs a Student Wellbeing and Support Team and has specialised programs for students with a disability, students from refugee background and Indigenous students. Policy detail is captured in the University's Academic Progress Policy.

Flinders University undertakes regular monitoring and reporting on low completion throughout the academic year. This includes early intervention notifications for students

at risk of failing and support and academic advice to understand their options. The Flinders Support Network includes a pre-census early engagement campaign to provide advice about the various support services available (academic, financial, wellbeing). The Flinders Student Progress Policy provides the framework for academic progression and support.

Griffith University established working groups and a communication plan to manage the implementation of new rules under the legislation, including necessary changes to business processes and systems. Student Peer Mentors were briefed and a fact sheet was developed for academic staff, to assist with proactive identification and support of affected students. Relevant Griffith policies include its Academic Standing, Progression and Exclusion Policy, its Enrolment Procedure for Students and its Assessment Procedure.

James Cook University has Student Success Officers who work with identified students before the census date to develop study plans and provide advice and support. JCU also has a dedicated Indigenous student success strategy developed by its Indigenous Education and Research Centre. Relevant JCU policies include the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, Student Retention Policy, English Language and Numeracy Policy, Student Special Circumstances Policy and Student Disability, Accessibility Support and Plans Procedure.

La Trobe University employs analytics to inform interventions from its Advising Team. Interventions can include reducing study load, tailored advice and referral to study support programs that include subject support tutors, peer learning advisors and the University's Indigenous Academic Enrichment Program. These interventions have been shown to have a +25% impact on retention for high-risk students. La Trobe's Academic Progress Policy is its principal policy instrument and a new Student Support Policy is also being developed.

Murdoch University monitors student progression and completion in a number of ways including completion rate indicators that students and staff can access. Completion rates are regularly updated and recalculated, which allows the identification of students who may be at risk and their proactive referral to support services. This can include automated notices, academic support and the development of individual Academic Performance Plans. These measures are detailed in Murdoch's Student Progression Policy and Procedure.

Western Sydney University provides a range of student support services including study skills, wellbeing and a dedicated centre for Indigenous students. Detail of Western Sydney University's procedures and student supports are contained in its Progression Policy.

5. Student Support Policy

- The Department of Education has released a consultation paper to develop a student support policy. Did the Department or the Minister's office consult with the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) or any of your member universities in developing the paper? If so, please advise the date the IRU or any of your member universities were consulted.

The IRU was not consulted.

6. Student Support Policy

- In terms of student satisfaction with teaching and course quality, do you support a student ombudsman being put in place as a mechanism for students to escalate complaints if they are unsatisfied with the response provided by university processes?

There are currently processes in place for students to escalate complaints beyond internal university processes, but these vary by university and by State and Territory. This is an issue that would require further consultation and coordination across jurisdictions.

- There has been significant discussion publicly recently about student safety on campus in relation to sexual assault and harassment. How are IRU and your member universities managing this?

The IRU has facilitated meetings among member universities on this issue to improve the sharing of information and best practice. Two workshops were held in 2022 for member universities to learn from each other's approaches to responding to the findings of the 2021 National Student Safety Survey.

All IRU universities have a range of policies, procedures and activities in place to address student safety and in particular sexual assault and harassment, including through Codes of Conduct and misconduct policies for staff and students. Example of recent developments include work by Flinders University in 2023 to update its Safety on Campus Action Plan and Sexual Assault & Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy and Procedure. Flinders has also launched Consent and Respectful Relationship training for all students and staff. Griffith University has a Student Sexual Assault, Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy in place and has developed new resources through its Safe Campuses website. La Trobe University has invested an additional \$2.3 million in ongoing staffing and resources to support student wellbeing, deliver training and prevention programs, raise awareness of reporting channels and undertake specialist investigations of alleged cases of sexual harm, discrimination and bullying. La Trobe has developed an over-arching Sexual Harm and Prevention Plan to guide the university's response. Murdoch University provides support and care for all students and staff affected by sexual harm and offers confidential wellbeing services – Sexual Harm Support Officers help affected students and staff to understand university processes and access specialist services.

- Have you consulted with Fair Agenda and End Rape on Campus on your management strategies?

The IRU has not.

- Is IRU supportive of legislation governing the student support policy being passed before the policy is actually developed?

In its submission on the Bill and appearance before the Committee, the IRU noted that the Minister for Education is currently consulting with the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) on the effectiveness of existing standards. The IRU's position is that advice from HESP should inform the finalisation of the Guidelines and their implementation, including any penalties for non-compliance. There should also be a process to ensure alignment of the Guidelines with broader reforms to university governance, funding and accountability through the Universities Accord.

7. Legislation

- Please provide a copy of any correspondence the IRU, or any of your member universities, have sent to or received from Minister Clare, his office or the Department of Education in relation to the Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023 (the Bill) or any of the individual elements contained within the Bill. This includes informal correspondence such as emails and whatsapp messages.

The IRU has not sent or received any correspondence on the Bill to or from the Minister's office or Department of Education.