

# Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper submission analysis

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12/05/2023

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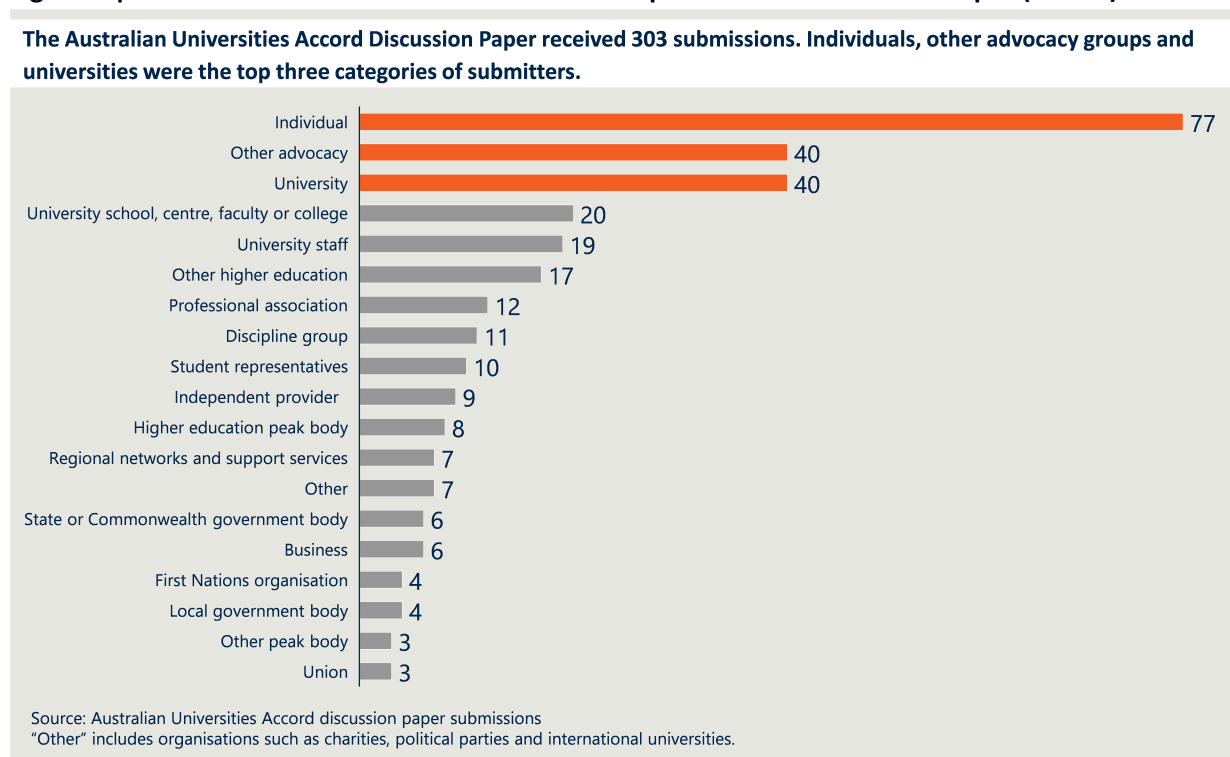
## Executive Summary

### About this report

The Australian Universities Accord is an initiative by the Australian Government to increase alignment between Australia's national goals and the higher education sector. In February 2023, the Australian Universities Accord Panel invited stakeholders to make a submission to a [Discussion Paper](#) outlining the fundamental challenges and opportunities facing the Australian higher education sector. This document summarises responses to the Discussion Paper. Nous Group (Nous) the author, has identified and summarised common themes and recommendations provided in the submissions (a full methodology of how the themes were identified can be read in the Methodology section in the body of the report).

This report includes analysis of the 303 submissions received by May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Submissions were received from a wide range of stakeholders. The graph below outlines the distribution of submissions received.

**Figure 1 | Distribution of submissions received in response to the Discussion Paper (N=303)**



This document objectively reports the themes in the submissions. It does not provide comment about the validity of statements nor does it provide subjective opinion or inference about statements.

### The future of the sector

Submissions provided recommendations for the future of the higher education sector. The table below provides a summary of these recommendations.

Key Theme	Recommendations
<p><b>Meeting Australia’s Knowledge and Skills Needs</b></p> <p>The discussion paper asked for views on what Australia’s long-term targets for higher education attainment should be to help the sector fulfil this role.</p>	<p><b>Increase the demand for higher education:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access through better pathways and supports</li> <li>• Reduce the cost burden of higher education</li> <li>• Increase outreach to secondary schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>Create a culture of lifelong learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcome practical barriers that inhibit lifelong learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ensure an adequate supply of Commonwealth Supported Places.</b></p> <p><b>Ensure enough students study courses aligned with the changing needs of the economy and society:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the skills needed and plan the required workforce</li> <li>• Financial incentives, including subsidising costs of courses</li> <li>• Partnerships with schools and targeted information shared to secondary students</li> <li>• Embedding industry engagement within courses</li> <li>• Improving accessibility for underrepresented cohorts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Quality teaching to deliver Quality Learning</b></p> <p>The Discussion Paper asked for reforms needed to deliver a quality learning environment and to ensure graduates enter the labour market with the skills and knowledge they require</p>	<p><b>Reforms needed to promote a quality learning environment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning methods</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate staffing is available to support and engage students</li> <li>• Embed First Nations knowledge and teaching methods in higher education</li> <li>• Promote the teaching of transdisciplinary skills</li> <li>• Support student participation in extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Support cooperation between industry and higher education providers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the role of accreditation bodies</li> <li>• provide more placement opportunities for postgraduate students</li> <li>• improve cooperation in work-integrated learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Changes to placements and work-integrated learning to increase access and learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase financial support for students and industry</li> <li>• incorporate WIL in all higher education qualifications</li> <li>• improve accessibility of placements and WIL.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Equitable access and a quality experience for all students</b></p> <p>The Discussion Paper emphasised the importance of creating opportunities for all Australians and called for responses to make recommendations for better access and equity.</p>	<p><b>Implement system-wide approaches to increase equitable access to Higher Education:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set targets for higher education attainment among underrepresented groups</li> <li>• better use of data to measure equity participation and inform decision-making</li> <li>• reintroduce demand driven funding</li> <li>• expand support for the transition to university.</li> </ul> <p><b>Address barriers to successful participation in Higher Education for all students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase financial support for students</li> <li>• increased support and utilisation of services in regional and remote Australia</li> <li>• introduce greater flexibility and support for students at universities</li> <li>• improve remote learning opportunities at university</li> <li>• provide more flexible learning paths and courses</li> <li>• create a centralised institute or resource to support students.</li> </ul> <p><b>Improve student wellbeing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure safety from sexual, domestic and gender-based violence</li> <li>• provide support for victims</li> <li>• provide mental health support</li> <li>• ensure cultural safety.</li> </ul>
<p><b>New knowledge, innovation and capability</b></p> <p>The Discussion Paper posed the question of how Australian research capacity can be best ensured, enhanced and used most effectively to develop new capabilities and focus on missions of national importance.</p>	<p><b>Increase collaboration between industry, government and universities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop better incentives for industry to collaborate with universities</li> <li>• establish research and learning precincts</li> <li>• reform, consolidate and expand existing schemes</li> <li>• establish an R&amp;D ecosystem</li> <li>• develop better incentives for researchers to collaborate with industry.</li> </ul> <p><b>Stimulate greater industry investment in research and effective collaboration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden the definition of industry and translation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Leverage Australia’s research strengths to address global challenges:</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strengthen multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research</li> <li>reduce competition and enhance collaboration</li> <li>support regional research</li> <li>research funding for strategic priorities</li> <li>put greater focus on basic research.</li> </ul> <p><b>Maintain and improve Australia’s research quality.</b></p>
<p><b>Connection to local, regional and international communities</b></p> <p>The Discussion Paper notes the contribution of higher education providers to developing “diverse and multi-layered communities” and called for recommendations to continue to support these communities.</p>	<p><b>The role of universities in regional communities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nurturing regional higher education</li> </ul> <p><b>The role of international education:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve the international student experience</li> <li>strengthen Australia’s international education offer</li> <li>share the benefits of international education across the sector.</li> </ul>

## Enablers of the sector

Submissions provided ideas about the enablers that are important for the future of the higher education sector:

- coherence and integration between the VET and higher education systems
- secure, affordable funding arrangements and incentives
- strong governance and accountability
- investment in capability and recognition of the higher education workforce

### Coherence and integration between the VET and higher education systems

The Discussion Paper identified that “While the two systems have different approaches to learning, as well as different funding and regulation settings, they are becoming increasingly intertwined. In consultations the Panel has heard that there is increasing overlap in relation to diplomas and advanced diplomas”. Ninety-eight submissions discussed recommendations for improving the coherence between the sectors, as follows:

#### 1. Strengthen the tertiary system by creating greater alignment between higher education and the VET sector:

- establish a single, integrated tertiary education system

- raise the status of vocation education and training (VET)
- pursue a dual-sector study model
- promote cross-institutional collaboration
- reform of the AQF
- create a national framework for the recognition of prior learning.

## **2. Pathways for students between VET and higher education:**

- consider a single national admissions framework
- improve information dissemination to students about available pathways
- recognise and promote alternate entry pathways for equity students
- improve data collection of student movement across the VET and higher education sectors
- standardise student subsidies and funding agreements for VET courses.

## **Secure, affordable funding arrangements and incentives**

The Discussion Paper notes that the funding system needs to “meet the parallel needs across teaching, student support, research, research training, engagement, administration and infrastructure, and capital investment”. Submissions were asked to propose changes to funding arrangements in the sector.

Key recommendations were made as follows:

1. introduce a more simple and stable funding model
2. increase the total funding for research
3. revise the level of student contributions
4. increase infrastructure funding.

## **Strong governance and accountability**

The Discussion Paper noted that “the regulatory and reporting landscape for higher education is crowded and complicated”.

Governance and accountability was a prominent topic in the submissions. Key recommendations were:

1. develop a coordinated national approach to regulating the sector
2. review the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)
3. introduce improved academic integrity approaches.

## **Investment in capability and recognition of the higher education workforce**

The Discussion Paper discusses the important role of the academic workforce, and the need for sustainable employment practices to support staff in higher education.

*“Australia needs a capable and highly skilled academic workforce to deliver future skills needs through teaching and learning and to boost innovation through the research system.”*

Stakeholders were asked for recommendations on how the Accord can best support higher education providers to adopt sector-leading employment practices. The key recommendations were:

1. ensure greater certainty for staff
2. support greater career mobility
3. increase employment of underrepresented staff
4. reduce administrative burden for academics and researchers
5. support initiatives that develop the skills of academic and professional staff
6. recognise and provide support for psychological stress on staff.



# The Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper

## Purpose of this document

This document has been developed to capture responses to the Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper (February 2023). Nous Group (Nous), the author, has identified and summarised common themes and recommendations provided in the submissions (a full methodology of how the themes were identified is in the Methodology section below). The focus of this document is on the future of the sector, rather than the challenges. The previous report developed included analysis of the priorities for the Australian Universities Accord suggested in submissions, provides a summary of the challenges in the sector [Submissions on priorities for the Australian Universities Accord](#) (February 2023).

## Important caveats to this report

Nous has made every effort to clearly and objectively communicate the recommendations made by submissions to the Discussion Paper. In doing this, all submissions have been treated equally, with no submission given greater weight than any other. The result is that some arguments, statements and recommendations may be from a single submission. Where possible, the number of submissions that make a significant point is noted.

It is important to note that this report does not explicitly note all recommendations made in the submissions. However, best efforts have been made to accurately communicate sentiments and recommendations.

## Methodology

Nous conducted a hybrid analysis approach. An automated analysis of the submissions was applied utilising Nous' bespoke Natural Language Processing tool to identify key themes across the submissions. Alongside the automated analysis, the Nous team conducted a manual review of the submissions, 'coding' portions of submissions against a common framework.

## Sector preferences for the Accord

The Australian Universities Accord is an initiative by the Australian Government to increase alignment between Australia's national goals and the higher education sector.

*"The Accord is a way to develop a shared, long-term commitment among the stakeholders in Australian higher education, and improve the way they work together to address major challenges and opportunities, thus strengthening the system over time."* Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, February 2023, p. 5

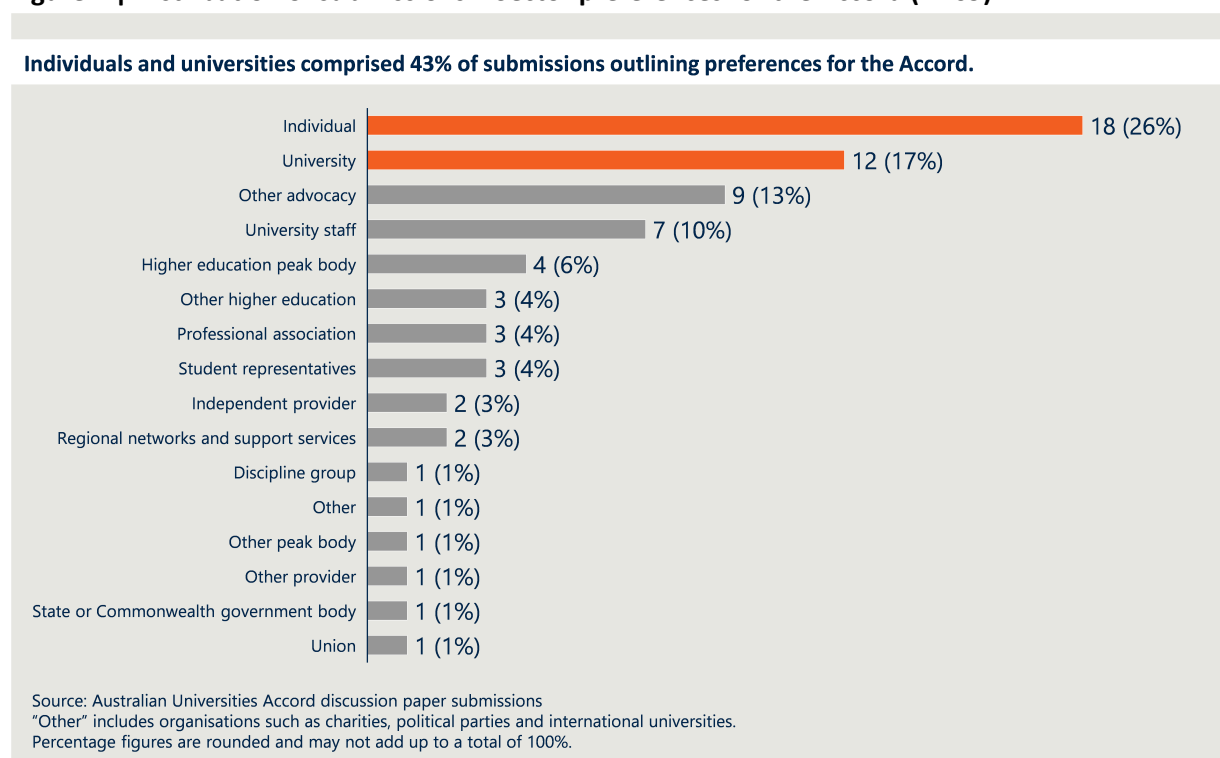
The Discussion Paper asked stakeholders how a higher education accord should be best structured and focussed to meet challenges facing Australia's higher education system, as well as what is needed to overcome current limitations in Australian higher education.

Twenty-two per cent of submissions (68 submissions) responded to this question. Five key recommendations for the structure and focus of the Accord were identified:

- reframe the role and purpose of Australian universities (6 submissions)
- define the role of government in supporting the higher education sector (5 submissions)
- create an individual accord for each university (7 submissions)
- establish an independent authority with responsibility for university accords (2 submissions)
- ensure all stakeholders are consulted in Accord processes (18 submissions).

These points are discussed in detail below and other recommendations about governance of the sector can be found in the section *Strong governance and accountability*.

**Figure 2 | Distribution of submissions – Sector preferences for the Accord (N=69)**



## The role of Higher Education for Australia

### The national challenges that higher education can help solve

The Discussion Paper notes that *“Preparing the workforce to meet the changing needs of industry and contribute to a more innovative, productive economy is a major challenge for higher education.”* 73 submissions provided commentary on the major national challenges and opportunities higher education should focus on meeting.

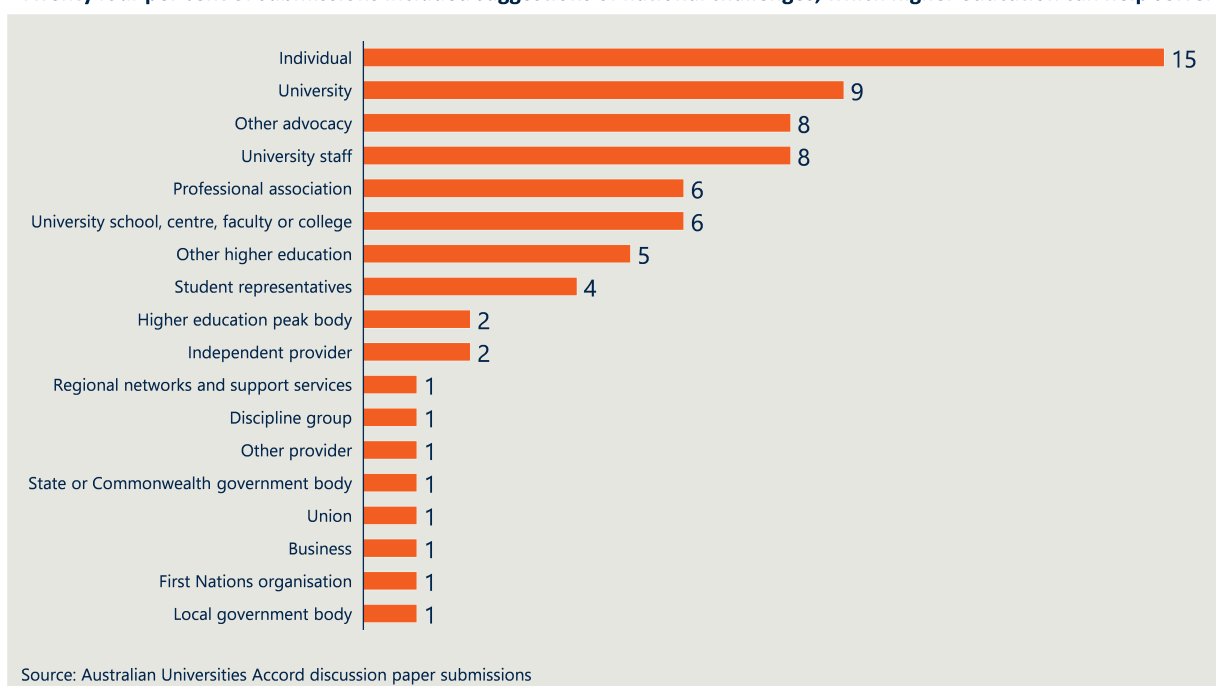
The challenges and opportunities identified by submissions included:

- the need to grow Australia’s health workforce to manage Australia’s aging population and manage future pandemics (20 submissions)
- management and mitigation of the impacts of climate change (18 submissions)

- support for geo-political challenges and security (11 submissions)
- the need to identify and manage the skills shortage (9 submissions)
- mitigating challenges to economic prosperity (8 submissions)
- overcoming social challenges, including First Nations participation (7 submissions)
- managing the impacts of technological changes, in particular the rise of artificial intelligence (7 submissions)
- local challenges (3 submissions)

**Figure 3 | Distribution of submissions – National challenges, which higher education can help solve (N=73)**

Twenty four per cent of submissions included suggestions of national challenges, which higher education can help solve.



## Reframe the role and purpose of Australian universities

Six submissions recommended that the Accord include a statement on the purpose and role of universities in Australia's higher education sector and their contributions to Australia, ranging from community level support to initiatives that further national interests.

*"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." – Western Sydney University*

Each of these six submissions emphasised the wide-ranging functions of universities and the importance of recognising that universities exist to serve society.

*“Universities have a social contract with the community to improve the lives of all Australians – directly and indirectly. As the Go8 has constantly set out, ‘you don’t have to attend university to benefit, everyone in the community benefits’. Universities defend our national economic, social and environmental, well-being. They also enable Australia to make a constructive contribution to global well-being.” – The Group of Eight*

One submission noted that the role and purpose of universities is an ongoing conversation and depends on changes in national and international social, economic and political developments.

### Define the role of government in supporting the higher education sector

Five submissions discussed the need for a clear and lasting commitment by the Australian Government to the higher education sector. This commitment would outline the government’s role in supporting and funding the sector to achieve its goals, as well as ensuring a consistent, long-term approach that transcends changes of government.

*“The Accord should establish a framework and mechanisms for long-term cooperation and collaboration between the Australian Government, the higher education sector, industry, and related stakeholders that will positively shape post-school education in Australia for the next generation – not just a series of short-term policy initiatives.” – The University of New England*

### Create an individual accord for each university

In addition to a national Accord, seven submissions suggested creating individual accords for each university. These accords would replace existing compacts and funding agreements with the federal government:

*“Currently a university has a funding agreement and a compact with the Australian Government. The Accord process should enable development of local accord agreements with aligned funding. This would bring the articulate of mission, objectives and performance indicators together with the resource conversation required for their delivery [sic].” – University of South Australia*

The individual accord would present a simplified and focussed multiannual agreement that details a university’s expected contribution to national, state and local needs and outlines its relationship to the national Accord. The accord would agree on funding or revenue sources to deliver that contribution, while also describing key performance indicators to ensure accountability.

### Establish an independent authority with responsibility for university accords

In addition to creating an individual accord for each university, two submissions suggested establishing a permanent and dedicated authority that would be responsible for these accords. This authority would:

- negotiate individual university accords and ensure alignment of deliverables and resources within the context of university missions
- monitor university performance against individual accords
- coordinate and plan with relevant government agencies
- consult with the higher education sector on delivering national needs.

## Ensure all stakeholders are consulted in Accord processes

Finally, 18 submissions noted the importance of continued or greater involvement of stakeholders in the Accord process. Stakeholders identified include:

- industry (10 submissions)
- students (5 submissions)
- academic staff (2 submissions)
- First Nations peoples (2 submissions)
- regional providers (1 submission),

It was suggested that the Accord should engage with organisations and bodies representing these stakeholder groups to ensure that the most appropriate and efficient options to meet challenges in the higher education sector are found.

## The future of the sector

This section of the report focusses on the suggested future core elements of the higher education sector. This section includes five subsections:

- meeting Australia's knowledge and skills needs
- quality teaching to deliver quality learning
- equitable access and a quality experience for all students
- delivering new knowledge innovation and capability
- connection to local regional and international communities.

### Meeting Australia's knowledge and skills needs

A core role of the tertiary education sector is to help build a workforce with the right skills to meet the challenges Australia faces over the next 30 years.

*"Jobs and Skills Australia projects that, from 2021 to 2026, more than 90% of new jobs will require post-school qualifications. This includes over 50% requiring bachelor degree or higher qualifications. A big shift is needed in Australia's approach to developing workforce skills and capabilities, and both higher education and vocational education must contribute."* –

Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, February 2023, p. 12

The Discussion Paper asked for views on what Australia's long-term targets for higher education attainment should be, to help the sector fulfil this role.

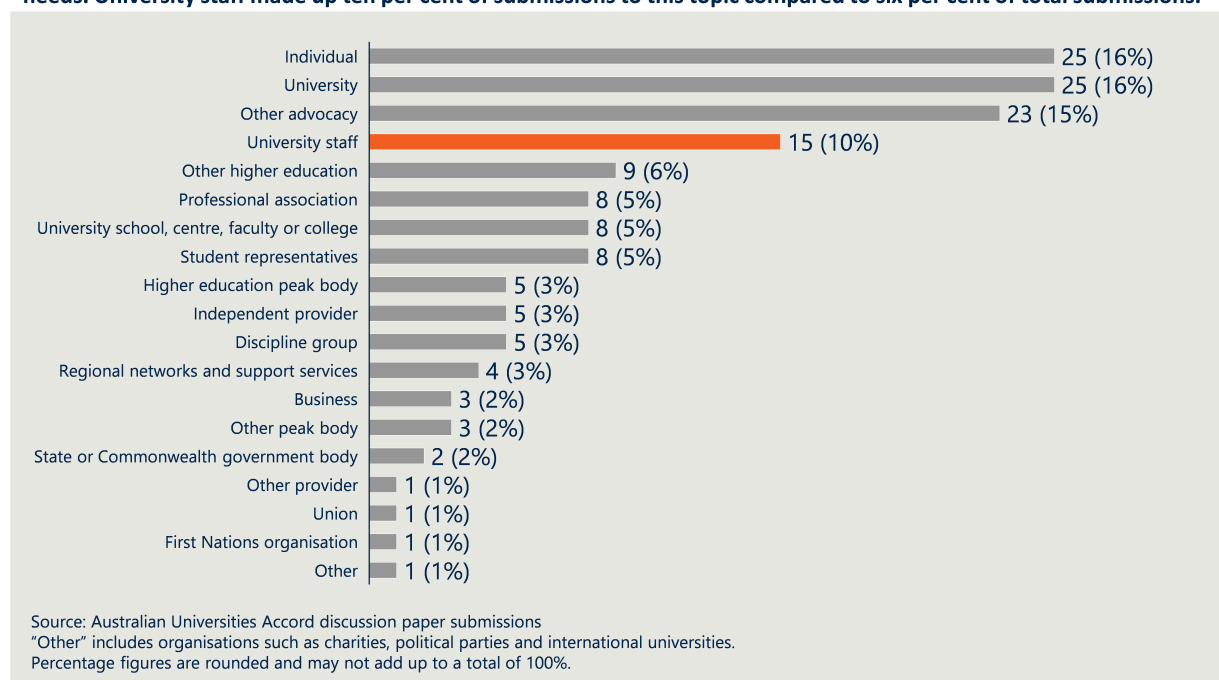
Ninety-three submissions included responses on how Australia can meet its knowledge and skills needs. Key recommendations were identified as follows:

- increase the demand for higher education (36 submissions)
- create a culture of lifelong learning (83 submissions)

- ensure an adequate supply of Commonwealth supported places (28 submissions)
- ensure enough students study courses aligned with the changing needs of the economy and society (55 submissions)

**Figure 4 | Distribution of submissions – Meeting Australia’s knowledge and skills needs (N=152)**

**University staff were more likely to include recommendations about how to meet Australia’s knowledge and skills needs. University staff made up ten per cent of submissions to this topic compared to six per cent of total submissions.**



Two submissions suggested that a target of 75% of Australians aged 25 to 39 years should have attained (or be in the process of attaining) a post-Year 12 or equivalent qualification by 2040). Two submissions argued that Australia’s post-secondary education attainment should lead the OECD.

On the other hand, three submissions recommended that Australia should not set long-term targets for higher education attainment. They argued that there are inherent difficulties in predicting Australia’s skill needs; that promoting arbitrary targets risks creating an oversupply of graduates or graduates who are overqualified for the careers they ultimately pursue; and that it risks encouraging participation by people for whom higher education is not suitable.

### Increase the demand for higher education

If Australia is to build a workforce with the right skills for the future, it will need to increase demand for higher education. The Discussion Paper asked, “how should Australia boost demand from people to study in the higher education sector?”

Submissions referred to the need to remove barriers to access and participation. Suggestions included:

- Increase access through better pathways and supports (12 submissions)
- Reduce the cost burden of higher education (13 submissions)
- Increase outreach to secondary schools (3 submissions)

These points are discussed further below.

### **Increase access through better pathways and supports**

Twelve respondents noted that underrepresented cohorts create the largest opportunity to increase post-secondary demand and to increase Australia's pool of skilled resources. These cohorts include:

- people with disability
- people in regional, rural and remote communities
- people from backgrounds of low socioeconomic status (low SES)
- First Nations people.

These cohorts have the least engagement with the higher education sector, despite effort and some progress to the contrary. Participation levels in these cohorts still lag the targets set by the 2008 Bradley review.

Ten submissions identified that traditional pathways into higher education can act as a barrier for some students. Expanding the pathways into higher education by means such as enabling programs, VET courses and more holistic assessment schemes can provide more opportunity for prospective students. Changes to the pathways are likely to have a large positive impact for underrepresented cohorts.

The University of Sydney Students' Representative Council outlined this point in their submission:

*"To boost demand from people to study in the higher education system, Australia must take active steps to make the process of applying for and completing study more accessible. This must be systemic, and well-advertised, so that any person who wants to access higher education in Australia does not face barriers in deciding to do so."* – University of Sydney Students' Representative Council

A more in-depth exploration of submitters' suggestions to address barriers to higher education access is in the section *Equitable access and a quality experience for all students*. Additional discussion about proposed changes to tertiary pathways is in the section *Coherence and integration between the VET and higher education systems*.

### **Reduce the cost burden of higher education**

Submissions identified the cost of attending higher education as suppressing demand. The most common idea to address this challenge was to expand the number of Commonwealth supported places (CSPs). Two submissions also recommended expanding access to CSPs to include vocational education.

The cost of living faced by students was also outlined as a disincentive to participate in higher education.

A more in-depth discussion about approaches to alleviating the cost barriers to higher education is in the section *Equitable access and a quality experience for all students*.

### Increase outreach to secondary schools

Submissions that referred to outreach to secondary schools noted that clearer and more accessible information about the potential options can enable more students (primarily in secondary school) to choose higher education. For example, the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre discussed better promotion of the benefits of tertiary education:

*“Government and tertiary admissions centres have a role to play in promoting the benefits of tertiary and higher education more specifically, and assisting prospective learners in identifying the most suitable courses and pathways for their aspirations and abilities.”* – Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

Additional recommendations in submissions to boost demand for higher education included:

- increase the number and flexibility of study options (for example by expanding microcredentials)
- improve career pathways to create a ‘pull’ factor for higher education
- provide universal, free access to higher education.

### Create a culture of lifelong learning

The Discussion Paper identified that lifelong learning is an important tool for ensuring that Australia has the skills it needs.

*“Lifelong learning can help to ensure that workforce skills are up to date and that jobs in high demand can be filled, as well as enabling people to create new job opportunities through innovation.”* Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, February 2023, p. 17

Historically most formal tertiary education in Australia has been undertaken by people under the age of 35. Submissions noted that we need to create a culture of lifelong learning, as well as practical solutions, to increase participation in lifelong learning.

### Overcome practical barriers that inhibit lifelong learning

The lack of flexibility in education options was identified as a potential barrier to lifelong learning. Course structures of three-year undergraduate degrees and two-year masters degrees can be prohibitive for students who need to balance learning and a career.

One submission cited the growth of alternative credentials in the United States of America:

*“Recent research identifies 967,734 unique education credentials in the United States, including not only associate, bachelor’s and doctoral degrees but also more than half a million different badges, certificates, licenses, apprenticeships and industry certifications”* – Claire Field

The most often proposed solution to address this issue is to increase the offering of stackable microcredentials. For example, the Australian Technology Network of Universities noted:

*“We will need to offer more flexible, adaptive and innovative education options. The need for recognised and creditable pathways for upskilling and reskilling has been reinforced by*



*numerous short-term challenges such as disruptions to skilled migration, remote and flexible working arrangements, disruption to face-to-face service industries, increased and unpredictable demand for workers and supply chain and freight restrictions. Such pathways have the potential to minimise critical skills shortages and prepare Australia for long-term challenges such as industrial transformation, regional development and the changing demographics of the workforce.” – Australian Technology Network of Universities*

Stackable microcredentials reportedly offer students pathways to develop specific skills while they work towards a more traditional qualification. Four submissions noted that successful implementation of microcredentials will require:

- a revised regulatory approach
- targeted efforts to inform employers of the value of microcredentials
- a reformed recognition of prior learning framework.

On the other hand, two submissions argued that the approach to lifelong learning needs to go beyond microcredentials as the only solution. The TD School, University of Sydney stated:

*“We need to shift away from badging and stop seeing micro-credentials (and their potential to generate income for universities) as the one solution to lifelong learning. Higher learning should not be seen as a transactional, packaged, commercial engagement. It can genuinely be about developing qualities of being as well as skills and professional capabilities across a lifetime.” – TD School, University of Sydney*

The direct and indirect costs of lifelong learning are an additional barrier to participation. The direct costs include the cost of courses and materials. The indirect costs include the cost of income forgone as a result of working less, or not at all, while studying.

The cost barrier was captured by La Trobe University:

*“Currently there is no incentive for mature age persons in full-time work to access education and reduce their income. Most mature age persons remain outside of the higher education system or do not take the opportunity to reskill because they have no other means of financial support outside of paid work.” – La Trobe University*

Submissions suggested that to overcome cost barriers to lifelong learning, qualifications should be included in existing government support programs, including Commonwealth supported places and scholarship schemes.

A broader discussion of cost barriers in higher education is in the section [Equitable access and a quality experience for all students](#).

### Ensure an adequate supply of Commonwealth Supported Places

The Discussion Paper asked for suggestions on “how should an adequate supply of Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) be sustained and funded, as population and demand increase?”

Twenty-eight submissions identified this as a significant challenge for the sector, but few submissions provided suggestions about how to fund and sustain CSPs moving forward. Many submissions noted that an individual's higher education has benefits for the community as a whole as well as for the individual. They argued that this justifies government support through Commonwealth supported places.

### Ensure enough students study courses aligned with the changing needs of the economy and society

To meet Australia's future skills needs will require enough people with the necessary skill sets. The Discussion Paper asked for responses to the question of "how to ensure enough students are studying courses that align with the changing needs of the economy and society?"

#### Identify the skills needed and plan the required workforce

Nine submissions identified the importance of tracking national and international trends to identify the appropriate skill need and distribution. Three submissions suggested that a government body like Jobs and Skills Australia, should do this. La Trobe University said:

*"... Jobs and Skills Australia is responsible for examining the entire pipeline leading to skills/workforce shortages and identifying faults in the system which are resulting in a lack of demand from students in areas of workforce need."*

Submissions also recommended measures to encourage students to pursue desired courses, including:

- financial incentives, including subsidising costs of courses (6 submissions)
- partnerships with schools and targeted information shared to secondary students (2 submissions)
- embedding industry engagement within courses (2 submissions)
- improving accessibility for equity cohorts. (4 submission)

These points are considered in more detail below.

#### Financial incentives, including subsidising costs of courses

The most common recommendation in submissions was to provide financial incentives for students to study a particular course. Most of these submissions recommended generic financial support. Suggestions for specific incentives included:

- more CSPs for particular courses, including postgraduate qualifications
- more scholarships
- reduction of course fees.

On the other hand, two submissions also pointed out the limitations of financial incentives to encourage students to take particular courses. The Job-ready Graduates Package (JRG) was identified as an example where financial incentives have not been effective.

*“The Jobs Ready package as a price signalling mechanism has failed to manipulate student course selection, yet it has led to increased contribution payments for many students, increased administration requirements and reduced Government funding which according to the NTEU has resulted in a 15% cut in real public funding per student.” – Curtin Student Guild*

This is explored further in the section Secure, affordable funding arrangements and incentives.

#### **Partnerships with schools and targeted information shared to secondary students**

Secondary school students are often uncertain about which direction they should take after high school. Targeted interventions at this stage can result in more students pursuing courses that are aligned to their interests and to Australia’s future skills needs. The Australian Institute for Machine Learning described the benefit of engagement at secondary schools:

*“Outreach at the secondary school level through teachers, career advisors and students plays an important role showcasing careers, demonstrating the relevance of STEM subjects, and inspiring young people to dream big about the impact their career could have for society. Increased visibility and awareness of impactful careers in STEM needs to be a focus, you cannot be what you cannot see.” – Australian Institute for Machine Learning*

#### **Embedding industry engagement within courses**

Submissions suggested integrating industry engagement within courses. Engagement with industry to build in opportunities to apply the learning from their course can be appealing to some students. This is discussed further in the section Quality teaching to deliver quality learning.

#### **Improving accessibility for underrepresented cohorts**

Submissions noted that increasing the number of students from underrepresented cohorts is an opportunity to fulfil Australia’s skill needs.

The section Equitable access and a quality experience for all students discusses this further.

### **Quality teaching to deliver quality learning**

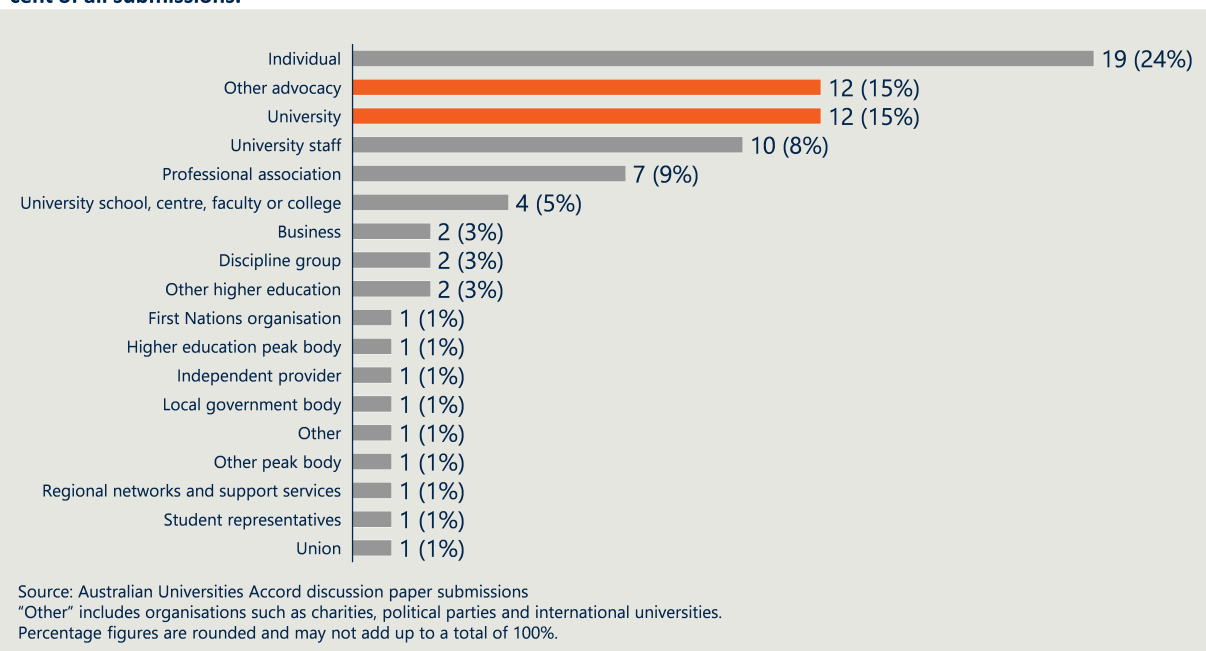
The Australian Universities Discussion Paper recognised the numerous factors that contribute to a quality learning environment, including the importance of quality teaching.

*“A quality learning environment should provide students with the knowledge they need for interesting and satisfying careers; a consistent and certifiable skillset; and a supportive and formative experience. This requires institutions to have knowledge and skills in planning and implementing authentic teaching and learning experiences, supporting students, and assessing and monitoring outcomes with a focus on student success.” Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 3.*

The Discussion Paper asked for reforms needed to deliver a quality learning environment and to ensure graduates enter the labour market with the skills and knowledge they need. Seventy-nine submissions discussed ‘Quality teaching to deliver quality learning’.

#### **Figure 5 | Distribution of submissions – Quality teaching to deliver quality learning (N=79)**

**Other advocacy groups and universities were more likely to comment on ‘quality teaching and delivering quality learning’ than other groups. Both groups made up 15 per cent of submissions aligned to this topic, compared to 13 per cent of all submissions.**



## Reforms needed to promote a quality learning environment

The Discussion Paper recognised the numerous factors that contribute to a quality learning environment, including the importance of quality teaching.

*“A quality learning environment should provide students with the knowledge they need for interesting and satisfying careers; a consistent and certifiable skillset; and a supportive and formative experience. This requires institutions to have knowledge and skills in planning and implementing authentic teaching and learning experiences, supporting students, and assessing and monitoring outcomes with a focus on student success.”* Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 12.

The Discussion Paper asked for reforms needed to deliver a quality learning environment and to ensure graduates enter the labour market with the skills and knowledge they need.

26% of submissions (79 submissions) responded to this question. Submissions focussed on four main areas for reform:

- promote innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning methods (10 submissions)
- ensure appropriate staffing to support students from all backgrounds (9 submissions)
- embed First Nations knowledge and teaching methods in higher education (8 submissions)
- promote the teaching of transdisciplinary skills (11 submissions)
- support student participation in extra-curricular activities (2 submissions)

These points are explored in more detail below.

### **Promote innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning methods**

Ten submissions recommended actions to improve current approaches to teaching and learning.

Methods suggested to improve innovation and collaboration include:

- support research about quality teaching and learning, for example through increased funding
- leverage the experience of alumni to contribute to improvement of the learning environment
- promote collaboration and information-sharing across higher education providers to increase awareness of new and successful teaching and learning approaches and technologies
- establish a national body to: coordinate national approaches, and address quality assurance and enhancement in teaching, learning and the student experience.

### **Ensure appropriate staffing to support students from all backgrounds**

Four submissions noted that increased teacher numbers and lower staff-to-student ratios are critical to a quality learning environment, as lower ratios allow more resources to be allocated to student support and engagement.

Three submissions noted that employment conditions for staff in higher education should be improved. Increased remuneration, reduction in casualisation of the workforce and investment in training and professional development for educators were listed as key areas that promote a positive work environment for teachers. The suggestion was that the flow on effect of a quality teaching environment drives quality learning. Two submissions discussed incentives to reward quality teaching. This is discussed in the section *Investment in capability and recognition of the higher education workforce.*

The submissions contained limited discussion about the appropriate institutional governance structures (3 submissions). These submissions proposed regulations that restructure university boards to include greater representation from students, staff, alumni and underrepresented cohorts.

Seven submissions argued for the creation of individual university accords to replace the existing compacts and funding arrangements with federal government. A more in-depth discussion about individual university accords is in the section *The role of Higher Education for Australia.*

Investment in capability and recognition of the higher education workforce

### **Embed First Nations knowledge and teaching methods in higher education**

Eight submissions called for First Nations knowledge and teaching methods to be embedded in higher education. The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives noted that “quality learning environments must include innovation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching; for example, consideration of yarning circles as an approach to teaching.” Two submissions also noted the limited number of First Nations mentors and senior colleagues in higher education and the challenge this presents when seeking to provide adequate support to First Nations students and staff.

Embedding First Nations knowledge and teaching methods was suggested by these eight submissions, not only to increase support for First Nations students but also to ensure First Nations knowledge is recognised and incorporated across all disciplines in Australia's higher education sector.

*"We do everyone a disservice when First Nations initiatives are constructed solely through a deficit lens and focused exclusively on raising participation metrics. In an inclusive and modern Australia, all graduates ought to confidently engage with and understand First Nations people, culture, knowledge systems and ways of working."* Australian Technology Network of Universities.

To achieve this, four submissions recommended increasing the funding and delivery of First Nations teaching, research and student support services and three submissions recommended undertaking coordinated and systemic action at a national level to incorporate First Nations people, culture, knowledge systems and ways of working in the sector. Two submissions called for the establishment of a National Indigenous Teaching and Learning Institute to coordinate these efforts and advise providers on how First Nations knowledges can inform transformations in higher education curriculum.

#### **Promote the teaching of transdisciplinary skills**

Eleven submissions discussed the importance of teaching transferable skills in addition to sector- and job-specific knowledge. These skills relate to problem solving, structural thinking and the current technological transformation. They allow students to become flexible and reasoned thinkers. Skills mentioned include:

- critical thinking and reasoning
- teamwork
- cross-disciplinary collaboration
- communication, both written and verbal
- information analysis
- digital literacy
- bias recognition
- the ability to effectively learn and develop new skills
- foreign languages.

While the importance of these skills was recognised, submissions did not identify mechanisms to promote their teaching.

Foreign language skills were given particular emphasis (3 submissions). Submissions noted that Australia's growing role in the Asia-Pacific, coupled with globalisation more broadly, will require graduates with strong language skills to help maintain and promote Australia's economic, social and political relations with other nations. Submissions called for greater recognition and funding for Languages Other Than English (LOTE) to align Australia with global standards and prepare students for a globalised industry and workforce.

### Support student participation in extra-curricular activities

As noted by UniSport, an international growing body of work has identified an association between activity levels in students and personal and mental wellbeing. Drawing on this, UniSport recommended that higher education providers place a greater focus on extra-curricular activities for students. These activities were noted as not exclusive to sports and physical activity but extend to participation in university clubs and other campus engagements.

*“There is a growing body of work internationally that demonstrates that mental well-being, physical activity and student engagement point directly to better academic outcomes... The challenge is to advocate to all Universities the importance of sport and campus engagement for all students as a responsibility to produce well rounded, and socially engaged graduates. There is clearly an opportunity for the university sector to contribute to the social and emotional wellbeing of the 18–24-year-old age group, but also for this work to have a double benefit of producing better academic outcomes for these students. This virtuous cycle demonstrates a significant advantage in understanding the factors behind student engagement.”* UniSport

Bond University’s *Beyond Bond* program, mentioned by UniSport and Bond University, is an example of an initiative that supports student participation in extra-curricular activities to develop skills out of the classroom.

### Support cooperation between industry and higher education providers

The Discussion Paper notes that Australia has room to improve links between higher education and industry compared to international standards.

*“There is scope to enhance engagement with industry to improve the quality of the curriculum, enhance the student experience, increase opportunities for work placements and improve employment outcomes. This should be viewed in the context of supporting continued lifelong learning.”* Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 17.

To understand what reforms would allow graduates to be best prepared for the labour market, the Discussion Paper asked stakeholders “how an Accord could support cooperation between providers, accreditation bodies, government and industry to ensure graduates have relevant skills for the workforce,” (p. 17).

18 per cent of submissions (57 submissions) responded to this question. Three key themes were identified:

- review the role of accreditation bodies (13 submissions).
- provide more placement opportunities for postgraduate students (2 submissions).
- improve cooperation in work-integrated learning (17 submissions).

These points are discussed in detail below.

### **Review the role of accreditation bodies**

Thirteen submissions discussed the role of accreditation bodies and eight suggested a review or reform of the role of accreditation bodies. Submissions claimed that accreditation bodies are inefficient, rigid and sometimes unregulated, and this impacts the ability of providers to meet skills needs through curriculum changes. Two submissions also noted that membership of such bodies can be skewed to industry providers and called for academics and educators to play a greater role in the standard setting of curricula. Three submissions called for a national approach to accreditation to increase efficiency and ensure all providers are held to the same standards. Additional detail about regulation and governance is discussed in the section *Strong governance and accountability*.

### **Provide more placement opportunities for postgraduate students**

Two submissions recommended providing more placement opportunities for postgraduate students, for example psychology students. One submission noted that, as postgraduate placements generally occur in the final year of study, students would be workforce-ready within a year of conducting placement. One submission suggested greater support for these placements as a potential solution to workforce shortages, as business could benefit from placements leading to employment opportunities.

### **Improve cooperation in work-integrated learning**

A third key topic of discussion for submissions concerned cooperation in work-integrated learning (WIL). Three key recommendations were identified:

- co-design WIL structure and required skills with industry (5 submissions)
- provide greater incentives for businesses to collaborate with higher education providers (8 submissions)
- target non-traditional businesses to support WIL (4 submissions).

Five submissions recommended the co-design of the WIL structure and learning outcomes with industry to ensure graduates are fit for the workforce and can be exposed to relevant skills while on placement. A co-design approach would further strengthen relations between providers and may expose students to novel employment pathways, while reducing the need for employers to upskill graduates.

Eight submissions also suggested incentives for businesses to collaborate with higher education providers to provide placements for WIL. Suggested incentives include tax incentives and direct subsidies per placement.

Non-traditional businesses (including public and not-for-profit organisations) and small and medium enterprises were suggested as solutions to the insufficient number of placements for students in some sectors (4 submissions). However, resource constraints were recognised as a limiting factor for the involvement of these businesses.

### **Changes to placements and work-integrated learning to increase access and learning**

The Discussion Paper notes the benefit of work-integrated learning (WIL) for students and industry, but also acknowledges the challenges faced in expanding WIL to meet student demand.



*“Work-integrated learning enables students to apply knowledge they gain in the classroom to practical settings, thereby growing industry-relevant experience and giving employers access to highly skilled, career-ready graduates.*

*While there are opportunities to expand the current scale and form of WIL placements, engaging a wider range of employers and creating high quality experiences that provide better-aligned skills is a challenge.” Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 17.*

The Discussion Paper asked stakeholders how placement and WIL arrangements should change in the coming years.

72 submissions responded to this topic. Nine key recommendations were identified across three themes:

- increase financial support for students and industry (18 submissions)
- incorporate WIL in all higher education qualifications (9 submissions)
- improve accessibility of placements and WIL (8 submissions)

#### **Increase financial support for students and industry**

The most common recommendation (10 submissions) called for greater financial support for students, such as paid placements or support through stipends added to Youth Allowance. The financial burden on students undertaking placements, particularly low SES students, is explored here by Charles Darwin University:

*“One of the major hurdles to student completions in critical areas such as nursing, allied health and teaching is the successful completion of student placements. Too often this represents a key attrition trigger for students, particularly low SES students, who need to pause or give up paid work and sometimes relocate in order to complete the required hours... An urgent revision to the current student funding model is needed to support placement activity.” Charles Darwin University*

In addition to more student funding, five submissions called for more financial support for businesses to accommodate placements. Placements cost business in terms of resources and time spent on supervision. One submission cited strict supervision requirements in the veterinary profession (in place to ensure professional integrity) as a barrier to supporting more placements. These submissions suggested that incentives such as tax incentives or direct subsidies would facilitate student placements in businesses.

To provide an example of funding models, the University of New South Wales and the Australian Council of Engineering Deans referred to the Canadian WIL system. WIL is funded by the Canadian Government, and organisations such as Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada facilitate opportunities between industry and universities through government assistance. Both submissions noted the potential of this system to support Australian WIL initiatives.

Finally, three submissions suggested a review of the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF), focussing on what impact the fund has had on the quality and volume of placements and the

support available to facilitate new placements. A fourth submission recognised the importance of the NPILF in providing WIL funding in addition to base funding.

### **Incorporate WIL in all higher education qualifications**

Seven submissions recommended including WIL in all higher education degrees, to allow students to gain industry experience and develop skills to make them workforce ready. This recommendation was consistent across disciplines and universities. Two examples were noted as successful models for consideration: the University of Canberra's 'Professional Practice Core' and Curtin University's 'Bring Your Own Internship'.

*"As our experience shows, there is opportunity for WIL to be a core element of any degree, so long as there is industry engagement, strong mentoring support for students, and a clearly and simply articulated mechanism to make it happen. Curtin University's 'Bring Your Own Internship' program is one such example."* CareerTrackers

Degree apprenticeships were also suggested as a mechanism to increase practical learning for students (2 submissions). This would combine the theoretical and analytical knowledge of a university degree with the practical skills taught in VET. It would open opportunities for career mobility, lifelong learning and industry engagement, while reducing the financial burden on students as they undertake paid work in the program.

### **Improve accessibility of placements and WIL**

Increased flexibility of placements and WIL was raised as a way of reducing barriers for students (4 submissions). Suggestions included:

- reduced placement hours
- outcomes-based placement models, as opposed to models based on inputs such as number of hours
- flexible working arrangements (for example remote work, part-time arrangements, WIL outside of traditional semester cycles)
- self-paced, modular design
- completing skills-based WIL in non-traditional occupations, recognising the transferrable nature of skills.

The importance of providing accessible WIL opportunities for students with disability was raised by two submissions:

*"In the same way that specific supports are funded to assist people with disability gain employment, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) for students also requires consideration."* A group of National Disability Coordination Officers.

The submissions suggest that higher education providers and industry partner with relevant organisations such as Disability Employment Services and the National Disability Coordination Office to

ensure positive outcomes for students with disability, as well as building capacity within the higher education sector to improve graduate outcomes for students with disability.

Finally, two submissions suggested greater working rights for students undertaking WIL and placements to provide clear and accountable support to students.

## Equitable access and a quality experience for all students

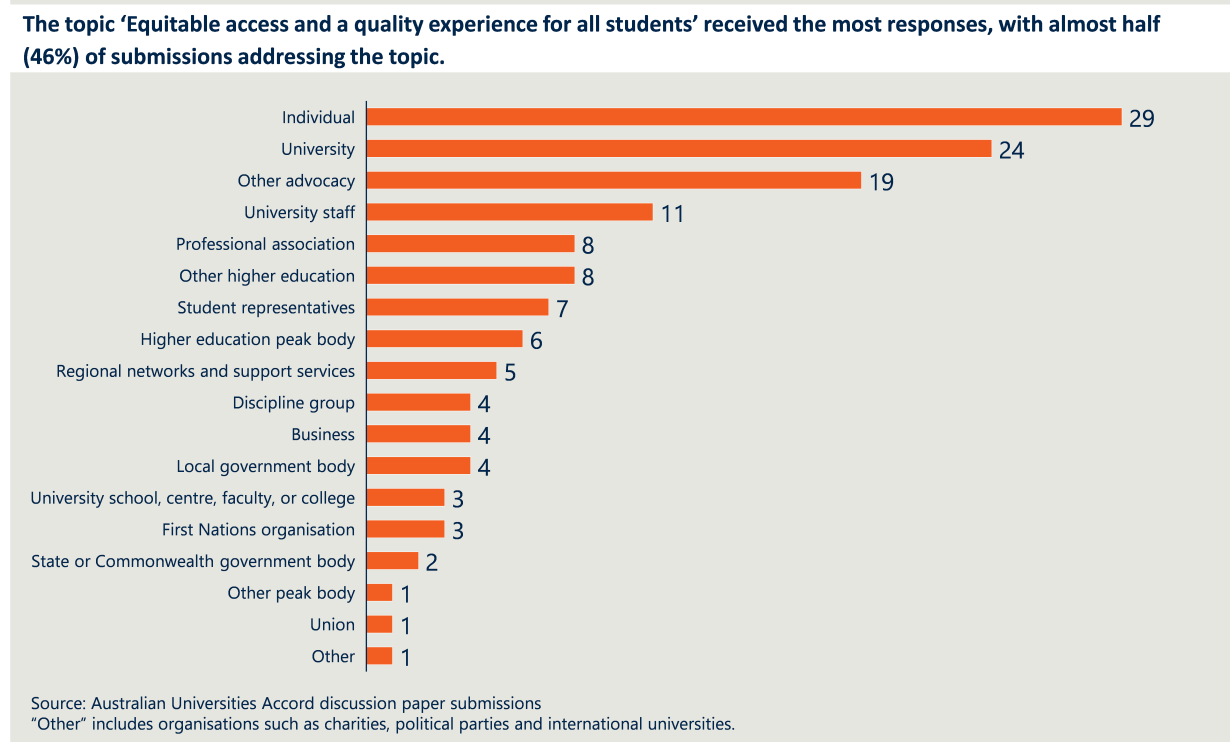
The Discussion Paper emphasised the importance of creating opportunities for all Australians.

*“Australia needs a system that delivers equal access to higher education for all, irrespective of location, financial circumstance, cultural background, gender or other factors, if it is to meet future skills needs and ensure prosperity is equally shared among all members of society.*

*Participation in learning and research by people from every facet of Australia’s diverse population enriches the outcomes of higher education and the life of its institutions. Making sure the opportunities and benefits of higher education are open to everyone is a priority for reform.”* Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 24.

Equitable access and a quality experience for all students was a common topic, discussed in 47% of submissions (140 submissions). This section of the report includes recommendations for improving student experience and the opportunities to improve access and opportunity, including for underrepresented cohorts in higher education. The submissions identified that underrepresented cohorts were more likely to be impacted by the common student experience and wellbeing challenges.

**Figure 6 | Distribution of submissions – Equitable access and a quality experience for all students (N=140)**



The key underrepresented groups identified by submissions include:

- regional students
- first Nations students
- students with disability

Thirty submissions also noted that there should be greater recognition of other underrepresented groups, including:

- students with carer responsibilities
- students in out-of-home care (OOHC)
- students from low SES backgrounds
- first in family to participate in tertiary education
- refugees and asylum seekers
- students who speak English as a second language
- mature age students
- women, especially women who identify with other under-represented cohorts

### Implement system-wide approaches to increase equitable access to Higher Education

The Discussion Paper noted the need to ensure students have access to higher education and are academically prepared upon entry, especially underrepresented students.

*“The decision to undertake further study is an individual one, taken outside of higher education institutions. Prospective students assess their eligibility based on their own understanding of their potential and may be deterred from applying for a variety of reasons. Students from under-represented groups need supportive pathway programs and effective academic support.”* Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 25.

The Discussion Paper asked stakeholders for recommendations to increase the number of students from under-represented cohorts applying to and prepared for tertiary education. This included entry from school and other pathways. The Discussion Paper also asked stakeholders how changes in provider practices and offerings, as well as funding and regulatory support, could ensure students receive appropriate support and are able to succeed in their chosen area of study.

29 percent of submissions (87 submissions) responded to these questions. Four key recommendations emerged from these submissions:

- set targets for higher education attainment among underrepresented groups (11 submissions)
- better use of data to measure equity participation and inform decision-making (9 submissions)
- reintroduce demand driven funding (7 submissions)
- expand support for the transition to university (15 submissions)

These points are discussed in detail below.

### **Set targets for higher education attainment among underrepresented groups**

Eleven submissions stated the need to set higher education attainment targets to increase equity participation and attainment by equity cohorts. Three of these submissions recommended that these targets be set to reflect population parity.

*“Develop a series of appropriate targets to ensure equity participation and attainment are being measured and met across the sector, including considering metrics relating to student outcomes and student satisfaction.” – Regional Universities Network.*

Universities Australia called for the higher education attainment target for Indigenous students to be in line with non-Indigenous students and for new targets to be aligned with targets in Closing the Gap.

La Trobe University recommended that when considering success rates for targets, retention in the tertiary education system as a whole should be prioritised rather than at a particular institution or only within university systems.

### **Better use of data to measure equity participation and inform decision-making**

Five submissions stated the need to have suitable means of measuring equity participation more effectively. They suggested the use of equity metrics to promote institutional accountability and commitment.

*“National metrics of institutional outreach and recruitment across key equity cohorts: providing incentive for institutions to engage with equity cohorts actively, and publicly accessible indication of institutional commitment to equity.” – Deakin University.*

A further four submissions commented on the role of data to inform policy advice and program development, especially for under-represented students.

In their submission, the Group of Eight recommended the creation of a new national agency to drive a data driven approach to equity and excellence in the tertiary sector.

*“This agency would bring together, in a single or federated structure, the research and evidence remits of the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research (NCVER) and the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE). A core part of the Agency’s research agenda could be enabled by developing an advanced data capability (a National Education Evidence Database) built from integrated public sector data assets, including provider data. It is data and data systems that will help the sector know what success looks like, track progress and measure it. A National Equity Data/Evidence Institute would enable tertiary education providers to understand where and how they can have the most impact, and, in collaboration with Government, industry, communities and other sectors create mission relevant targets.” – Group of Eight.*

Other equity group advocates also stated the need for better use of data and evidence.

*“Make better use of data to inform disability inclusion and to better understand the diverse needs of all people with disability.” – Spinal Cord Injuries Australia.*

*“Access to reliable and current data ensures policy advice and program development can be better targeted to: support institutional operation and sustainability and improve student participation, completion and attainment rates. Currently there are data lags of up to 20 months, which impact on the provision of current and responsive policy. Access to current and consistent data will assist in informing the development of policies and programs which will underpin the Accord.”* – National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Innovative Research Universities suggested that the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education at Curtin University could also lead work across the system in partnership with other universities to improve data and evidence on equity.

### **Reintroduce demand driven funding**

Seven submissions called for demand driven funding to be reintroduced as it had the effect of improving participation of students from underrepresented cohorts.

*“Reinstatement of Demand Driven Funding: There is no opportunity for third partner shared funding arrangements possible if the student place does not receive guaranteed funding by the Commonwealth. There is simply nothing to be shared! Demand driven funding saw the biggest rise in equity student enrolments and would be GUC’s preferred position for the Australian Higher Education system.”* – Geraldton Universities Centre.

Science and Technology Australia and the University of Southern Queensland both echoed the same sentiment in particular the need for demand driven funding for Indigenous students and students in regional areas respectively.

*“The Accord should extend demand-driven funding to all Indigenous students (expanding the current access for regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to include Indigenous students living in major cities).”* – Science and Technology Australia.

*“Broader equity considerations notwithstanding, it is widely acknowledged that demand-driven student funding had the effect of improving participation of students in regional areas.”* – University of Southern Queensland.

### **Expand support for the transition to university**

Nine submissions noted the importance of outreach and engagement programs in raising awareness and aspirations about higher education offerings. These submissions outlined different suggestions to best support outreach programs.

Seven submissions noted the importance of maintaining and establishing new enabling and pathway programs to facilitate entry into the higher education sector for underrepresented students.

Five submissions mentioned the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program’s (HEPPP) role in successfully supporting underrepresented students. Four of these submissions also argued for the expansion of HEPPP, although different approaches were suggested:

- increase funding for HEPPP (1 submission)
- review the ‘partnerships’ component to better include community-based organisations (2 submissions)

- establish HEPPP as a legislated equity block grant to promote a shift towards long-term funding (1 submission)
- expand eligibility for HEPPP to include Regional University Centres, due to their role in facilitating student preparedness (1 submission)

Seven submissions noted the need for targeted support for students during the transition period between secondary and tertiary education. This included a need for targeted support for under-represented students during their transition to university, including the period between enrolment and commencement, to better prepare them (3 submissions).

Four submissions noted that access to a mentor or peer support during the transition period is crucial to help students adapt to the demands of study. This was noted particularly in reference to underrepresented groups:

*"[A]ccess to a mentor or some form of peer support is very important. Women from [under-represented] groups are less likely to be familiar with the norms and standards and expectations of tertiary study, and have less experience in matching their own efforts and achievements against those of students from other backgrounds. The transition period is particularly crucial in helping students to adapt to the demands of study."* Graduate Women NSW

*"Regional students must be supported to aspire for higher education. Research on the attitudes of regional students towards higher education reveals that these students need assistance to 'believe' that they can make the transition to university and city life. Peer mentoring has been found to be an extremely effective method of raising students' aspirations for education after high school. University student mentoring of regional and low SES high school students is strongly correlated with a higher likelihood of aspirations to attend university and TAFE."* Regional Education Support Network

### Address barriers to successful participation in Higher Education for all students

The Discussion Paper states the numerous challenges faced by students when participating in tertiary education, and notes that these challenges are often compounded for students from under-represented backgrounds:

*"Many stakeholders have highlighted the costs of undertaking higher education, including the increased cost of living and the need to supplement income support, as a significant barrier to successful participation. This is particularly challenging for students who have dependents, are relocating to take up the opportunity to study, or come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.... Providers, governments, students and their families and communities, as well as employers, need to work effectively together for the overall system to work better."*

Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 25.

To address these barriers to success, the Discussion Paper asked stakeholders how governments, institutions and employers can best assist students to widen opportunities. It also asked how the costs of participation can be alleviated, and how best practice learning and teaching for students from under-represented groups can be embedded across the higher education system.

35 per cent of submissions (105 submissions) responded to these questions. Seven key recommendations were identified:

- increase financial support for students (56 submissions)
- increased support and utilisation of services in regional and remote Australia (9 submissions)
- introduce greater flexibility and support for students at universities (7 submissions)
- improve remote learning opportunities at university (8 submissions)
- provide more flexible learning paths and courses (4 submissions)
- create a centralised institute or resource to support students (3 submissions)

These points are discussed in detail below.

#### **Increase financial support for students**

56 submissions argued that addressing the financial burden on students is critical to addressing barriers to success. Most predominant was the call for a comprehensive review of student income support systems, as highlighted by 38 submissions.

70 per cent of these submissions (27 submissions) argued that support provided through Centrelink, including AUSTUDY, ABSTUDY, Youth Allowance, Rent Assistance and the Tertiary Access Scheme, should be reviewed with a view to increase financial support to students and increase the number of students eligible for support, particularly those from under-represented groups. In addition to increasing payments, submissions identified a number of unfair eligibility requirements that limited student access to Centrelink, including:

- The restrictive definition of independence
- The need to maintain a full-time study load, regardless of student circumstances
- Parental income thresholds that do not accurately judge parental support or incomes that change year to year (e.g., farming income)

Other recommendations to review student income support systems include:

- reassess indexation associated with HECS-HELP loans, with a view to halting indexation (3 submissions)
- cap course prices upon enrolment to safeguard students from rate increases during their study program (1 submission)
- create a National Participation Fund to provide funds to underrepresented students to address living costs and improve access (3 submissions)
- address the cost and availability of housing, through increased support and greater availability of appropriate student accommodation (6 submissions)
- supplement other student costs, such as field studies and textbooks, to facilitate student engagement and success (2 submissions)



- increase accessibility to the Disability Support Pension to improve access to higher education for students with disability (1 submission)
- make education expenses tax deductible (1 submission)

Seven submissions argued for an increase in the number of scholarships, especially for underrepresented cohorts. However, two of these submissions noted that scholarships alone were not sufficient to address the needs of students, and that they should be considered together with other supports for students:

*“Despite the value of such scholarship funds, The Smith Family’s experience working with young people experiencing disadvantage is that they are not, in isolation, sufficient to support significant numbers of young people to complete tertiary education. While scholarships assist students in financial need enough to stay at university, they can only do so much to overcome the effects of complex personal lives... for optimal outcomes, scholarships need to be embedded in comprehensive support systems that support students to navigate systems, overcome personal barriers to participation and provide access to networks and career supportive opportunities.”* The Smith Family

Five submissions recommended the PhD stipend be increased to better support and recognise the role of the students in higher degrees by research (HDRs). Four of these submissions explicitly argued the stipend be at least equivalent to minimum wage.

The scope of loan programs for students was addressed by six submissions. Recommendations to improve Australia’s current loan system include:

- extend available loans such as HECS-HELP to cover living expenses, with controls to limit excessive borrowing (3 submissions)
- consolidate existing loan programs into a national flexible loan program (1 submission)
- remove the student loan tax for students taking out a VET Student Loan (1 submission)

Five submissions argued that Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) should be extended. Three of these submissions argued CSPs should be guaranteed to students from underrepresented cohorts, and one submission argued that there should be greater provision for postgraduate students to be allocated CSPs.

*“The recently implemented guarantee of a Commonwealth supported place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional and remote communities is a welcome initiative, but it does not go far enough. In order to see a sizable and sustained increase in participation from underrepresented groups, this initiative should not only be extended to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (regardless of location), but to other underrepresented cohorts, including regional and remote students, students with disability, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.”* South Australian Department for Industry, Innovation and Science

Finally, seven submissions argued for student friendly employment options to improve completion rates and reduce attrition. This included four submissions recommending paid internships or WIL, or the provision of greater financial support for students undertaking such placements.

*“The extensive hours of expected study hours and the demand of compulsory placement leaves many medical students time-poor and with an unpredictable time-table. This means many students aren’t able to secure or maintain employment and thus a steady income. Compiled with the costs of studying, fuel, equipment and everyday costs, many students are financially stressed.”*

Australian Medical Students Association

#### **Increase support and utilisation of services in regional and remote Australia**

Nine submissions noted the importance of adequate services for students in regional and remote Australia. Challenges identified by submissions for regional and remote students include relocation and the cost of accommodation (two submissions) and concerns about leaving the local area (one submission). Five submissions noted that tertiary education attainment rates of regional Australia continue to lag the national average.

Four submissions noted the important role of Regional University Centres (RUCs) and Country University Centres (CUCs) in the delivery of remote learning for students from regional, rural and remote locations. These submissions recommended ongoing baseline funding be provided for RUCs and CUCs to cement their role in Australian tertiary education, and to explore the use and establishment of RUCs and CUCs in a greater number of locations across Australia to better support regional and remote students.

*“Ongoing funding and expansion of the Regional University Centre program in its current form, and exploration of low population models that incorporate vocational training within smaller RUCs. Incentivise libraries, regional university campuses and vocational education providers to provide study support and communities of practice for online students in their own communities, regardless of their home institution (in communities where there is not access to an RUC).”* – Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia.

*“Support the RUCs through baseline funding to ensure continuity instead of as a program that could be abolished in the future. Utilise RUCs in rural and remote locations to improve access to VET participation in low population models to create pathways into higher education. Utilise the RUCs in locations where there are underrepresented groups to help provide targeted services that increase equitable access to, and success in, education. Explore utilisation of RUCs in remote and very remote locations to support Distance Education to create better education outcomes and pipeline of students into tertiary education.”* – Country Universities Centre Balonne.

This is explored further in the section [Connection to local, regional and international communities.](#)

#### **Introduce greater flexibility and support for students at universities**

Seven submissions noted the need for greater flexibility and support for students at university, especially for students with disability. Deakin University noted that although there had been a substantial increase in enrolments from students with disability, these students had lower overall employment rates compared to students without disability. The need for more flexible university support structures (three submissions), more accessible campuses (two submissions) and legislative reform (one submission) was highlighted as a pathway to bring about equality in the higher education landscape.

*“As persons with more complex disabilities and different vulnerabilities seek access to higher education, it is vitally important to ensure that education systems are reformed and made inclusive, and that there is increased focus on ensuring students can transition from education to work, and then through the different stages of their careers. The Universities Accord process can and should play a transformational role in this process.”* Associate Professor Paul Harpur, affiliated with the Harvard Law School Project on Disability.

### **Improving remote learning options at universities**

Eight submissions identified that online and remote learning is one of the most valued and accessible means of increasing participation from underrepresented students.

*“The delivery of online learning has an important place in university, widening participation outreach programs. This includes being able to deliver outreach programs at a distance and reaching more students in regional and low socio-economic areas.”* – Australian Association of Social Workers.

The submissions noted this online learning was essential to maintain and expand access especially to indigenous and rural and remote students.

*“Utilise best practice remote learning to deliver all or parts of courses ‘On Country’ allowing First Nations students to remain close to their family, cultural responsibilities, and decrease costs of living in major centres.”* – University of Technology Sydney.

The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) also cautioned that new online learning models should consider and include the social interactions and professional engagement that is often missing in the delivery and online learning to ensure best practice.

*“The removal of opportunities for students to interact in person via the delivery of online learning has the potential to undermine humanistic approaches to learning and teaching and practice.*

*The curriculum must prioritise learning opportunities for students to interact, use functional English and professional language, demonstrate professional behaviours, and practise relational skills. These are essential not optional or serendipitous learning experiences and must be integrated across the curriculum.”* – Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand).

### **Provide more flexible learning paths and courses**

Four submissions identified that underrepresented students require more support due to other commitments to work, families and their communities. They suggested flexible learning paths, shorter courses and microcredentials would allow such students to better access higher education.

Ernst & Young also proposed the current model of two semesters annually could be replaced by a tri-semester model, which would reduce the degree length and reduce participation costs.

*“The current model for the majority of universities is delivery over two semesters annually, for a bachelors degree over three to four years. Some universities have implemented a trimester model, so that a bachelors degree could be complete over a shorter time period, and*

*infrastructure and resourcing is optimised. The operating cost base is therefore reduced and participation cost reductions can be passed onto students.” – Ernst & Young.*

### **Create a centralised institute or resource to support students**

Three submissions put forward the need for a central resource to provide coordinated support for students from underrepresented groups. Such a resource could help students obtain resources and provide sector wide training and best practices that can be disseminated across institutions.

*“Maybe we need to consider Australian wide support, research, best practice, etc. that can coordinate centralised support for students from traditionally underrepresented students no matter how or where they are studying. This could include ensuring that there are scholarships or grants to support those students obtain the resources (computers, internet, etc.) they need to undertake remote study. This could be similar to the Office for Students in the UK, which advocates and supports students without being affiliated or biased towards one particular institution.” – Sarah Walker, professional staff at ANU.*

One submission from the Universities Australia DVC-A network suggested this could be achieved through the creation of a National Centre for Student Success, which would provide thought leadership, manage awards to recognise excellence in teaching and learning and provide a framework for innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning.

It should be noted that two submissions provided counterarguments to the case for a centralised resource, arguing that best practices are not homogenous and helping students from underrepresented groups is a matter of time and effort for teachers and staff rather than a singular approach.

*“There is no such thing as ‘best practice’ in teaching and learning situations. There is always a variety of approaches because students differ in what may suit them, and some approaches may be better than others, but that’s all.... Helping students from under-represented groups, those with language and/or writing difficulties, and/or those who are disadvantaged is primarily a question of time and effort for many academic and teaching support staff who have marked individual student contact, responsibility and involvement, whether it’s face-to-face or online. Again, it’s a question of available resources and recognition of the extra work created for individual staff. Universities have a very important role to play, but they cannot in all cases make up for the inequality that pervades school education.” – Independent Scholars Association*

### **Improve student wellbeing**

The Discussion Paper notes that factors beyond a quality teaching and learning environment impact student wellbeing.

*“A range of factors affects a student’s experiences including how well they can balance their studies against competing demands of family and cultural responsibilities and paid employment. The Panel heard that many students experience challenges with their wellbeing and safety, including navigating mental health concerns. The 2021 National Student Safety Survey found that one in 20 students had experienced sexual assault since starting university.” Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 31.*

These factors can impact all students in higher education, however, students from underrepresented groups are more likely to face these challenges.

The Discussion Paper asked stakeholders what reforms are needed to ensure that all students have a quality student experience, and what changes could be made to ensure all students are physically and culturally safe while studying.

52 submissions responded to these questions. The four main enablers to improve student wellbeing are:

- ensure safety from sexual, domestic and gender-based violence (6 submissions)
- provide support for victims (5 submissions)
- provide mental health support (5 submissions)
- ensure cultural safety (11 submissions)

These points are discussed in more detail below.

#### **Ensure safety from sexual, domestic and gender-based violence**

Five submissions noted the prevalence of sexual violence and sexual assault on university campuses, and one submission noted the prevalence of domestic and gender-based violence. They argued for greater support for students to ensure safety from sexual and domestic violence, including consideration of how this can adversely affect other aspects of life.

*“Students cannot have a quality experience if their university environment puts them at risk of sexual violence. They cannot have a quality university experience if they are prevented from: achieving academic success; completing their studies; or attending lectures, tutorials, or campus resources like libraries - because their institution does not appropriately respond to a report of sexual assault by another student or staff member.”* End Rape on Campus Australia and Fair Agenda

Recommendations provided by submissions to prevent and address sexual, domestic and gender-based violence include:

- create an independent expert-led accountability and oversight mechanism, such as a Taskforce on University Sexual Violence, to oversee the university response to sexual violence (2 submissions)
- endorse student voices in designing solutions - for example, include student representation on the afore-mentioned Taskforce (1 submission)
- improve standards of sexual violence prevention education (1 submission)
- reform the current self-regulatory approach to campus sexual violence as it is inadequate and lacks accountability and transparency (1 submission)

### **Provide support for victims**

Five submissions argued for greater support for victims of abuse, violence, bullying and harassment. One submission recommended universities provide designated case workers to support victims and provide third-party intervention where incidents are intertwined with supervisors or staff. The submission argued that the involvement of a third party would reduce the victim's burden and stress as such complaints are typically addressed at a school level.

A second submission argued for more resources to be made available to victims such as counselling, legal support and other forms of advocacy.

Finally, one submission recommended that the mechanisms available to workers to ensure they safe at their place of employment should be extended to students while studying, using the example of veterinary students. The submission argued that this would ensure students have access to the worker's compensation system if injured during placements and WIL.

### **Provide mental health support**

Five submissions noted the growing mental health crisis in students and recommended greater support for students be made available to help address this. The University of Melbourne Student Union raised that the underlying causes of mental health problems in students need to be addressed:

*"It was noted that students are increasingly facing mental health problems due to the cost of living crisis, including issues with housing and transportation costs. The mood of students is generally one of stress and disillusionment, which is not conducive to learning. The government needs to take these issues seriously and tackle the big challenges raised through these conversations to ensure that students are not left behind."* University of Melbourne Student Union

One submission suggested providers explore policies to incentivise the development of accessible mental health support. The submission notes that turning up in person or making a phone call is not always an option for students struggling with their mental health, and alternative methods of support could help address this.

One submission argued for free access to mental health first aid for students at a higher risk of mental illness and suicide, such as medical students. The Australian Medical Students Association noted that medical students would benefit from this access to prevent personal mental health problems but also to identify and respond to mental health problems in others.

Finally, one submission echoed a recommendation from the Higher Education Standards Panel and Productivity Commission that argued for every university to have a mental health strategy.

### **Ensure cultural safety**

11 submissions called for greater awareness, training and support in higher education providers to ensure cultural safety, especially for First Nations and international students.

*"To thrive in higher education, First Nations students and staff need to feel culturally safe in the higher education system. Cultural safety means that First Nations people are in an inherently safe and respectful environment. In order to provide cultural safety an organisation must be culturally*

*competent. First Nations peoples' beliefs and way of life differ according to geographical location, language, culture and history. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to every community or every situation. It is the responsibility of institutions to make efforts to understand First Nations communities and valuing their knowledge [sic]."* National Indigenous Australians Agency

To ensure cultural safety for students, five submissions recommended training supervisors and teachers in cultural sensitivity and awareness to accommodate their students in cultural aspects, especially with regard to First Nations students. As part of this training, staff should be trained to look for signs of cultural conflicts and struggles in their students.

Two submissions also noted the role of mentoring and private tutoring for First Nations students to create a peer support network, as well as the role of embedding First Nations approaches to teaching and learning in university learning. This idea is explored further in the section [Quality teaching to deliver quality learning](#).

## New knowledge, innovation and capability

The Discussion Paper recognises the high quality of Australian research and highlights the key role higher education plays in its delivery. It also acknowledges shortcomings in innovation and industry collaboration to apply new knowledge to achieve outcomes.

*"While universities are good at collaborating with other research organisations, an ongoing, multi-decadal question in Australia is why the links and collaboration between industry and universities are not stronger and more productive. There are several examples of excellent collaboration, especially where formal research brokering bodies (AMIRA Global, research and development corporations, etc) are active. But the synergies between industry and universities are not extensive, despite long-running grant programs such as the ARC Linkage grants and programs which incentivise collaboration such as the Cooperative Research Centres program, and the growing focus on universities as anchor tenants of innovation precincts around Australia with the intended role of fostering entrepreneurship, job creation and innovation ecosystems."* – Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, February 2023, p. 20

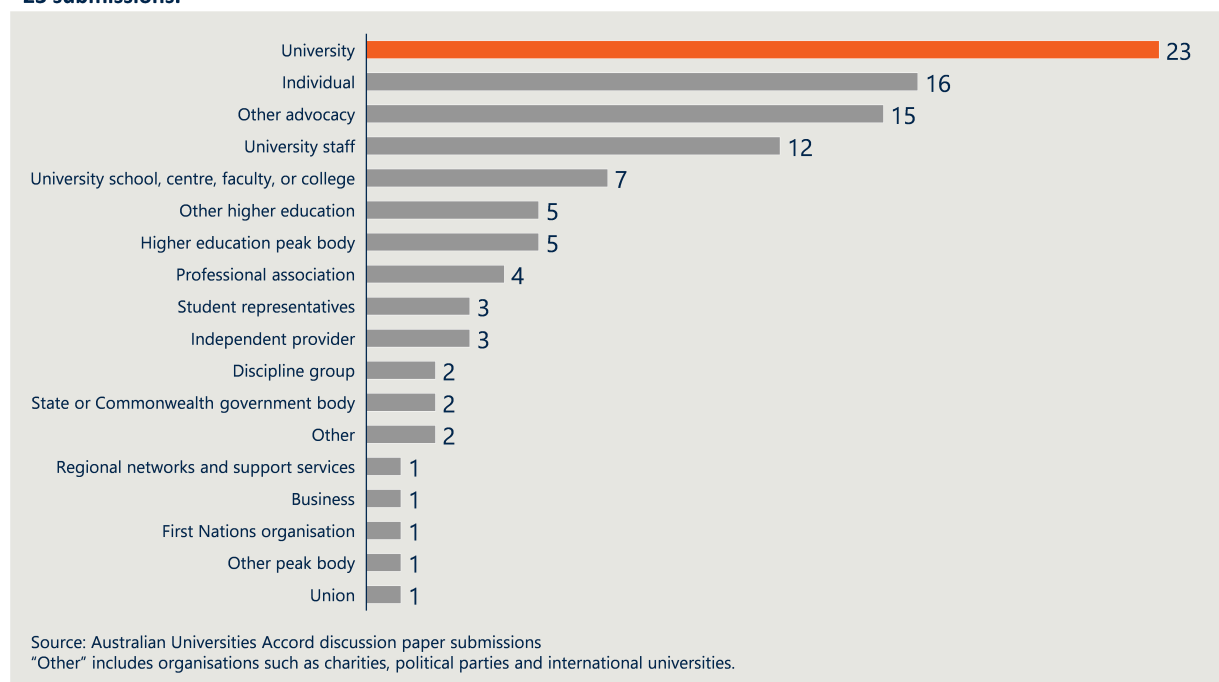
One hundred and four submissions included responses about Australia's knowledge, innovation and capability. Key topics included:

- Increase collaboration between industry, government and universities (76 submissions)
- Stimulate greater industry investment in research and effective collaboration (32 submissions)
- Leverage Australia's research strengths to address global challenges (39 submissions)
- Maintain and improve Australia's research quality (33 submissions)



**Figure 7 | Distribution of submissions – Delivering new knowledge, innovation and capability (N=104)**

**Universities were the largest cohort to respond to the topic ‘delivering new knowledge innovation and capability’ with 23 submissions.**



### Increase collaboration between industry, government and universities

The Discussion Paper asked respondents how the Accord could help increase collaboration between universities and industry for better research translation and innovation to solve big challenges.

Twenty-five percent of submissions (76 submissions) responded to this question with the following key recommendations:

- develop better incentives for industry to collaborate with universities (12 submissions)
- establish research and learning precincts (5 submissions)
- reform, consolidate and expand existing schemes (5 submissions)
- establish an R&D ecosystem (5 submissions)
- develop better incentives for researchers to collaborate with industry (4 submissions)

### Develop better incentives for industry to collaborate with universities

Six submissions that addressed this issue claimed that although the Research and Development Tax Incentive (R&D tax incentive) constitutes a significant expenditure for the government it has not had the intended effect of generating new knowledge or research partnerships.

*“At present, a major criticism of the R&D tax incentive is that it is predominantly used to support reducing the tax burden of participants, rather than stimulating R&D as was intended.” - University of New South Wales.*

Western Sydney University also noted that the R&D tax incentive is not targeted to national priorities and specifically excludes research in humanities and social sciences, despite this being central to the successful adoption of many scientific discoveries.



Eleven submissions called for the introduction of a collaboration premium to incentivise collaborations between industry and universities. Four submissions directly referenced the recommendation from the 2016 review of the R&D tax incentive by Ferris, Finkel and Fraser, which called for a collaboration premium of up to 20 per cent on non-refundable tax offsets to support expenditures undertaken with publicly funded research organisations and universities.

Five submissions also identified the need for greater support and incentives for small to medium enterprises (SMEs) to collaborate with universities given their predominance in the Australian economy, especially in rural, regional and remote Australia. Submissions suggested this could be provided through higher tax credits, vouchers or dedicated programs such as a small business innovation research program to remove the barriers to access for SMEs.

*“SMEs in particular need greater support to participate in university R&D. The 2008 Cutler Review of the National Innovation System proposed making a tax credit of 50 percent available to SMEs (compared to 40 percent for large firms) and, also, recommended vouchers for collaboration between SMEs and public research organisations.”* – University of New South Wales

### **Establish research and learning precincts**

Five submissions called for government support to enable universities to host or co-locate industry to develop partnerships and promote collaboration. All five submissions that raised this topic proposed the development of research and learning precincts as the best way forward.

*“Create learning precincts, whereby industry partners with higher education institutions to participate in research, to improve industry innovation.”* – Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

### **Reform, consolidate and expand existing schemes**

Five submissions noted that government schemes such as the ARC Linkage grants, Industry Fellowships and the Trailblazer Universities Program incentivise industry investment and collaboration. These submissions suggested reforms and expansion of such programs to improve industry-university collaboration.

*“Reviewing the suite of ARC Linkage Schemes, Industry Fellowships, and Industry Laureates to make sure they work in the context of an economy dominated by SMEs.”* – University of Technology Sydney

*“Consolidation and alignment of research, innovation and commercialisation schemes offered by government and others and making them more visible and accessible through a concierge and brokerage service.”* – Deakin University

One submission also called for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) and ARC’s Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (LIEF) scheme to be reformed and expanded to include research and innovation development platforms to enable industry to advance their commercialisation pipelines on the road to market.

Another submission recommended a greater emphasis on long-term, program-based collaborations and research networks, rather than project-based, transactional relationships between university researchers and industry.

### **Establish an R&D ecosystem and mechanisms for collaboration**

Five submissions stressed the importance of supporting industry-university R&D collaboration initiatives and the development of a comprehensive ecosystem.

*“This should extend to a national integrated research ecosystem, which would reflect a living network of diverse Australian universities, research institutes and industry partners working together ethically and sustainably across disciplines to develop new sovereign capabilities and solve intersectional problems. This would build on collaboration between existing institutions, and also incorporate research and industry hubs that are either physical or network based.” – RMIT University*

Another submission suggested supporting programs to nurture early-stage research and providing access to seed funding to support commercialisation pathways. Three submissions suggested that industry is often not aware of the mechanisms currently available to support business-research collaboration and there is a need to increase this awareness:

- Cooperative Research Australia proposed the formation of a coordinating body to ensure the interaction between different programs and policies is well understood.
- The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry suggested establishing sectoral-based R&D brokers to connect researchers with appropriate industry partners to transform innovations to viable products and services for market.
- The Australian Publishers Association identified that researchers may require support such as training programs and mentorship schemes to effectively communicate their research outcomes to industry partners.

### **Develop better incentives for researchers to collaborate with industry**

In addition to providing better incentives for industry to form collaborations, four submissions also identified the need to provide better incentives and pathways for researchers to be more engaged with industry.

Three submissions proposed the use of PhD students and their research projects to increase engagement between universities and industry.

*“Adapt PhD courses to ensure that more research projects are demand-led, meaning businesses put forward research problems that PhD researchers solve through working full time in industry, to increase innovation and solve industry problems.” – Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry*

Cruxes Innovation noted the need to create more ‘slack’ in the current research and teaching system to allow researchers to take more risk, especially where collaborations might not immediately result in highly cited papers:

*“Continue long-term investment in the establishment of compelling, prestigious alternative promotion systems that give academics confidence to pursue a career pathway that isn’t*

*determined by publications. For example, offer highly prestigious government-funded positions for researchers focused on industry collaboration and entrepreneurship - equivalents of the ARC's DECRA, Future and Laureate Fellowships - to incentivise changes in university promotion criteria.” – Cruxes Innovation.*

### Stimulate greater industry investment in research and effective collaboration

The Discussion Paper asked respondents how Australia could stimulate greater industry investment in research and more effective collaboration). Eleven percent of submissions (32 submissions) responded to this question and recommended:

- Broaden the definition of industry and translation (6 submissions)
- Revision of the R&D tax incentive (5 submissions)
- Improved mechanisms for collaboration (3 submissions)

Two of these themes, ‘Revision of the R&D tax incentive’ and ‘Improved mechanisms for collaboration’ have been explored in the previous section *Develop better incentives for industry to collaborate with universities.*

### Broaden the definition of industry and translation

Six submissions noted it was important that the Accord recognises that translation from knowledge into outcomes does not only equate to commercialisation. Commercialisation is only one pathway to translation, and translation into policy and practice is also common and effective, as noted by the University of Canberra:

*“The University of Canberra is keen that commercialisation of research is part of a balanced approach to research in Australia, across the cycle of basic, applied and translational research, and across disciplines. Too strong a focus on commercialisation is not a sound long-term strategy, given the need for renewal of ideas. It is important that non-commercial ideas are also translated for the benefit of society, for example into Government policy, health care practices, or teaching methods.” – University of Canberra*

The International Australian Studies Association put forward that for humanities and social science research, the most obvious industry partners are often galleries, libraries, archives and museums (the GLAM sector). This sector has limited financial and staffing resources compared to the private sector to support translation efforts, and therefore government support, such as through Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage grants, is important to enable collaboration.

### Leverage Australia’s research strengths to address global challenges

The Discussion Paper asked how Australian research capacity can be best ensured, enhanced and used most effectively to develop new capabilities and focus on missions of national importance.

Thirteen percent of submissions (39 submissions) responded to this topic and provided the following recommendations:

- strengthen multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research (7 submissions)
- reduce competition and enhance collaboration (5 submissions)
- support for regional research (5 submissions)

- research funding for strategic priorities (5 submissions)
- put greater focus on basic research (4 submissions)

### **Strengthen multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research**

Seven submissions identified that breaking down research silos and bringing together researchers from different fields to collaborate is essential to effectively use Australia's research capability to solve wicked problems. They also provided insight on the barriers to transdisciplinary research and recommendations to address them.

*"If Australia is to address the major changes underway in our society, economy, and environment—and the wicked problems they present—then universities need an interdisciplinary approach, one that leads to high quality and impactful results. However, incentive structures don't support this approach."* – Macquarie University.

Three submissions identified current research funding schemes and incentives as a barrier to transdisciplinary research as they focus on disciplinary depth and track record rather than innovative ideas with unrealised potential for impact. Submissions instead called for dedicated funding and support to enable the organisational and systematic changes necessary to nurture and grow transdisciplinary research.

*"Current research funding schemes systematically screen out transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary research due to the structure of disciplinary assessment panels such as in ARC funding schemes. Transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary research tends to be innovative at its heart and have real-world relevance, however, it does not have the support of the disciplinary hierarchies and structures due to the existing prestige structures"* – TD School, University of Technology Sydney.

Two submissions noted the important role of humanities, arts and social sciences in addressing wicked problems and translating research into practical impact.

*"More critically, for breakthrough science and research to be commercialised, translated and adopted, humanities, arts, and social science research disciplines, with their focus on human behaviour, social structures and policy, will play a vital role."* – Cruxes Innovation.

### **Reduce competition and enhance collaboration**

Five submissions noted that the research funding system promotes competition between researchers and organisations, rather than collaboration. This approach can stifle innovation and waste time and resources. Submissions recommended that instead, there should be greater emphasis on removing barriers between universities and encouraging cross-institution collaboration.

*"Our current research system relies entirely on researchers putting in grant proposals, in competition with others. Some proposals are funded and teams may gradually build critical mass in certain areas. Although this organic system creates great research, there is limited strategic alignment with Australia's needs."* – Swinburne University of Technology.

*"We have a system in which the public makes a substantial investment, and the public is owed collaboration between governments, sectors, institutions and individuals to deliver the best*

*outcomes in the most cost-effective way. In contrast, competition, particularly over small amounts, can be wasteful in time and resources. A collaborative education system within a framework of cooperative federalism is a goal that we urge the Accord Panel to pursue in a bi-partisan way.” – University Chancellors Council.*

The University of Newcastle recommended creating a national research pilot using the principles of the NCRIS program. They noted that the NCRIS strategy has been successful at creating partnerships, sharing resources and creating impact on national problems, using a limited pool of funds.

### **Support regional research**

Five submissions stressed the importance of recognising regional research and expertise as valuable contributors.

*“Acknowledge that regional universities provide valuable applied research to industry in their communities and that there is scope for greater collaboration between institutions in the national interest” – Federation University.*

Three submissions raised the issue of research funding becoming concentrated. They advocated for a more equitable distribution to ensure regional and smaller universities continue to be supported in their research efforts.

James Cook University noted that smaller and regional universities need greater support as they have less capability to respond to short-notice, ad-hoc government research funding calls.

*“For smaller and regional universities there is simply less latent capability that can be deployed to respond to short-notice, ad-hoc, government research funding calls. Whilst smaller institutions can be flexible and agile and can have particularly strong abilities to bring together multi-disciplinary teams, there needs to be sufficient lead times and timeframes established if we are to be given a fair chance at establishing our case.” – James Cook University.*

### **Research funding for strategic priorities**

Five submissions suggested the government should adopt a ‘top-down’ approach to research funding to support national strategic priorities, identified by the government, that are necessary to drive national prosperity and address grand challenges.

*“Australia also needs a “top down” method for allocating strategic research priority funding, where priority areas are identified as driving national prosperity in the next decade (e.g., quantum technology, manufacturing expertise, space and defence capabilities, biotechnology, cyber and AI). These priorities should be driven via direct financial support for the formation of a national network of complementary (rather than competing) expertise with specific national goals reflecting national needs. Strategic research priority funding should be long term (e.g. a decade) and cover researcher salaries, PhD stipends and key research infrastructure.” – Swinburne University of Technology.*

CSIRO suggested that such an approach would help underpin stability of funding and provide a long-term strategy. CSIRO noted that a similar approach was taken in the University Research Commercialisation Action Plan.

The University of Newcastle put forward the risks of not supporting strategic priority funding by using the example of Australia's response to COVID-19.

*"It was notable that during COVID-19 our nation did not pull its scientific capabilities together across institutions to focus on major technical solutions e.g. a vaccine, instead we worked in existing local groupings on a competitive basis, thus limiting the possible scope of solutions."* – the University of Newcastle.

#### **Put greater focus on basic research**

Four submissions recommended that the government should increase its focus on basic and fundamental research and recognise the vital role this type of research plays in innovation and generating big ideas.

*"Basic research expands knowledge and underpins the breakthrough technologies, skills development and innovations that support long-term productivity growth and wellbeing at an individual and societal level. Yet the OECD has recently raised concerns about the trend in many countries favouring applied over basic research."* - the University of Sydney.

*"Research for discovery or fundamental research as opposed to applied research is crucial to the development of new technologies and capabilities. Research with no practical use in mind has historically led to significant discoveries of many innovations we now take for granted. Discoveries made from fundamental research become the bedrock of future discoveries in applied research."* – Curtin Student Guild.

#### **Maintain and improve Australia's research quality**

The Discussion Paper outlined the importance of assessing the quality and value of research and benchmarking performance across institutions and disciplines.

*"Providing assurance of the quality and value of research impact is an important component of building social licence for the continuing level of investment in both the system and institutions."* – Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, p. 31.

The Discussion Paper asked for submissions about how Australia's research quality should be prioritised and supported over the next decade.

Eleven percent of submissions (33 submissions) responded to this question. The most common suggestion was to increase research funding with emphasis on funding the full cost of research.

Seven submissions called for greater funding to ensure universities and researchers are best supported to continue delivering high quality research. Submissions noted that competitive research grants only cover the direct costs of research (not always in full) and block grant funding has not kept up with the rising costs of research.

*"Competitive research grants and block grant funding do not meet the full cost of research, and universities are increasingly relying on external funders, mostly industry partners, and internal cross-subsidisation from student revenue, to fund their research."* – Edith Cowan University.

Murdoch University recommended full cost recovery for all Category 1 research grants.

Aside from research funding, six submissions commented on the assessment of research quality, metrics and Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA). Most submissions recognised the important role ERA has played in the past in lifting national research performance in terms of outputs and quality but they also acknowledged its methodology has created problems for the sector.

*“Research quality has also increasingly been evaluated via the pursuit of citations and international rankings, both which are increasingly viewed as unreliable and inaccurate measures of either research or teaching quality and where it is well known that gaming has occurred globally.”* – Alison Downham Moore, Associate Professor at Western Sydney University.

Three submissions noted that ERA had fostered systemic disadvantage against fields of research such as humanities, arts and social science research due to the over-reliance on citations. In addition, Graeme Turner, Emeritus Professor at the University of Queensland, noted that the focus on research disciplines allowed for exploitation and gaming of the system as outputs could be moved around the discipline codes to seek advantage.

Two submissions proposed the adoption of an automated assessment system with data driven insights.

*“Replacing the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) process with an automated assessment system would allow access to a continuously available set of performance data, while reducing the administrative burden on the ARC and universities. Increasing transparency in the assessment methodology, and improving consistency between disciplines, will promote trust in the process and better reflect Australian universities’ research excellence.”* – Edith Cowan University.

The Australian Academy of the Humanities proposed the adoption of a less frequent State of Research Report model where the government has line of sight over performance, capability and priorities.

## Connection to local, regional and international communities

The Discussion Paper notes the contribution of higher education providers to developing “diverse and multi-layered communities” (p.26). Submissions argued that there is still work to be done to ensure that “institutions are supported to continue to develop and contribute to the communities they serve.”

Seventy-two submissions responded to these sections of the discussion paper. Key points were:

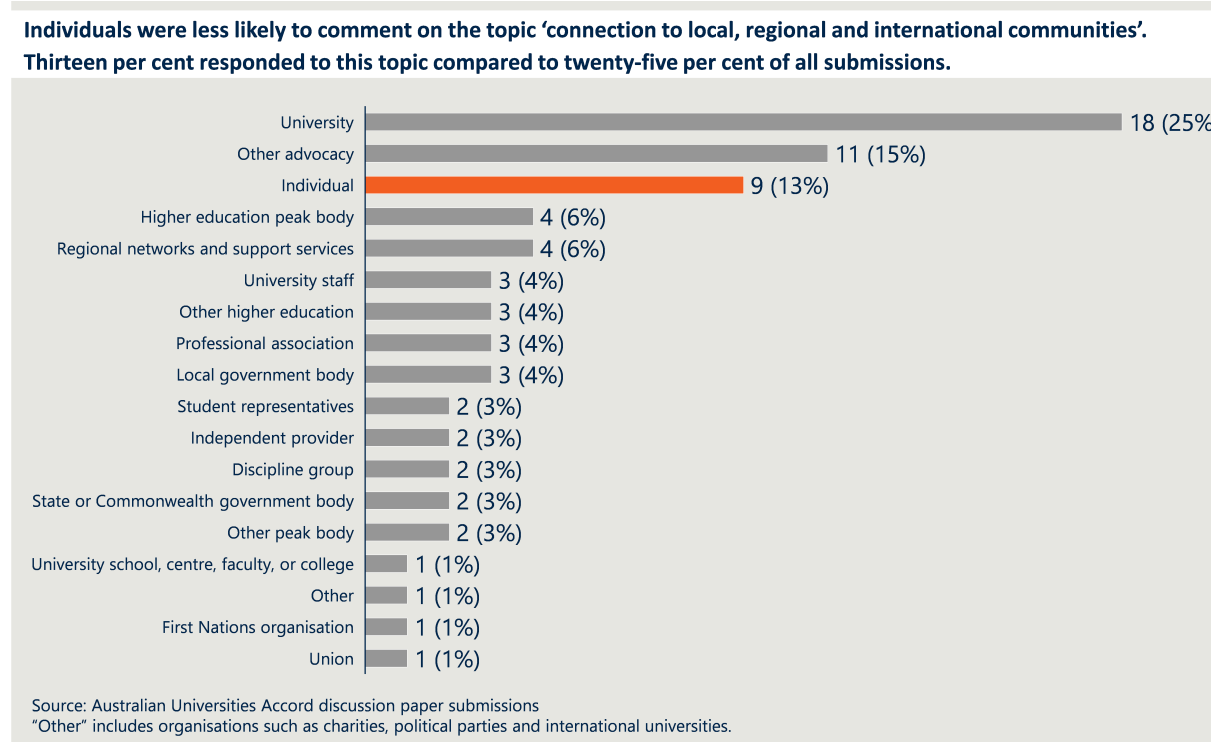
- higher costs of educating in the regions (11 submissions)
- mission-based funding model (21 submissions)
- regional delivery loading to compensate regional universities’ higher costs of delivery (four submissions)
- introduce funding programs linked to performance criteria (three submissions)
- the role of Regional University Centres and place-based hubs (six submissions)



- models tailored for regional delivery (four submissions)
- effective community engagement (four submissions)
- improving Australia visa policy to improve international student experience (17 submissions)
- strengthening Australia’s international education offering (three submissions)
- sharing the benefits of higher education (11 submissions)

These points are discussed in detail below.

**Figure 8 | Distribution of submissions – Connection to local, regional and international communities (N=72)**



## The role of universities in regional communities

Regional universities contribute to the communities they operate in. They play an important role by supporting local students’ access higher education (6 submissions), retaining skills in local regions (5 submissions) and acting as anchors in the community (2 submissions).

Eleven submissions argued that regional higher education providers face higher operating costs. Regional Development Australia Moreton Bay stated:

*“Recognition and provision for the unique funding needs of regional universities e.g. student types / higher cost of delivery, diseconomies of scale, greater reliance on Commonwealth Supported Places revenue i.e. less revenue from international students, research, philanthropy and investments” – Regional Development Australia Moreton Bay*

Other submissions included recommendations about how to meet the additional costs faced by regional universities by:



- introducing mission-based funding (21 submissions)
- including a regional delivery adjustment/loading (3 submissions)
- tying funding to performance criteria (3 submissions)
- introducing the regional futures fund (1 submission).

Mission-based funding was identified as beneficial for regional communities as it could allow a more diverse range of regional universities to focus on their distinct mission. Brian Schmidt argued this point.

*“University Mission Funding: Each university has a distinct mission, but one-size fits all funding arrangements do not always support these missions. For example, Universities whose mission is to serve rural and regional areas have more expensive cost structures than large metropolitan universities. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds require extra support for success, and these students are not evenly distributed across universities, and their support could be funded via this mechanism, where accountability for outcomes could be incorporated. Universities specialise in specific areas of study/research of national interest which do not fit the global cost structures. If universities are expected to undertake research, and this is not funded through students or another mechanism, it could be included as part of Universities’ missions funding to help create the sovereign research capability.”* – Professor Brian P. Schmidt as Distinguished Professor, The Australian National University.

Four submissions argued for including a regional delivery loading to compensate regional universities that face higher costs of delivery. As noted by Geraldton Universities Centre:

*“Regional loading is critical to address the imbalance in the costs of providing higher education in thin regional markets. This loading should more adequately reflect the very real costs incurred by regional universities and indeed RUCs.”* – Geraldton Universities Centre.

Three submissions argued for the introduction of funding linked to performance criteria. The performance criteria should encourage a stronger focus on teaching quality, student satisfaction and outcomes and effective community engagement. For example, the Moreton Bay Regional Council said:

*“Reviewing measures of success tied to performance funding, with a stronger focus on teaching quality, student satisfaction, graduate outcomes, employer satisfaction and nuanced for regional and peri-urban universities (e.g. allow for longer study durations and higher attrition rates due to student types/choices)”* – Moreton Bay Regional Council.

One submission from the University of Wollongong argued for the establishment of a Regional Futures Fund.

*“...UOW proposes the establishment of a Regional Futures Fund to provide targeted funding to more formally reflect the role regionally-based universities play as anchor institutions within the respective communities and regions they serve.”* – University of Wollongong.

### Nurturing regional higher education

Nineteen submissions discussed the importance of nurturing higher education in regional Australia. Four key themes appeared in the submissions.

- the role of Regional University Centres and place-based hubs (6 submissions)
- models tailored for regional delivery (4 submissions)
- effective community engagement (4 submissions)

These points are discussed in detail below.

Five submissions argued that the Regional University Centres (RUCs) should have their funding increased and methods applied more broadly, as they play an important role in supporting local communities and facilitating engagement across local communities. For example, Paroo Shire Council noted the benefits the RUC model as a cost-effective way to broaden the reach of higher education:

*“Working with community organisations or local government, the RUC model is a cost effective way to broaden the reach of higher education, making it a viable option for many more students. It’s designed to equip students with a supportive environment, study facilities, access to high-speed internet, modern technology and general academic support.” – Paroo Shire Council*

One submission from James Cook University argued that the RUC model can increase the burden of community engagement if not carefully considered.

*“If Regional University Centres act as discount shopfronts for metro universities, then the burden of engagement for the local business and community sector, for example through work-integrated learning, can be increased. Without careful partnership-making, the Regional University Centres program design has the potential to further erode the student load of anchor institutions and weaken the social contract with our communities. With careful partnership making between the anchor local University and VET/TAFEs, the Regional University Centre program could support increased service provision and choice, and better success for online and multi-modal students. Again, taking a place-based approach to design and deliver programs such as the Regional University Centre program would lead to solutions that are more locally appropriate but also nationally consistent with the principles of proportionality, accountability and fairness. – James Cook University*

Four submissions identified the value of local campuses in regional locations and encouraged the Accord to seek opportunities to increase the number of regional campuses. One submission provided a specific model of a distributed (networked) university proposed by Stephen Leeder and Richard Heller.

*“The distributed (networked) university would ensure that education is provided close to where it is needed, reducing local and global inequalities in access. It would avoid the limitations of a highly centralised university in which capital investment and operations are concentrated on a central campus. It would emphasise local relevance and foster the distribution of knowledge creation.*

*Virtual or physical hubs distributed over long distances would improve opportunities for regional and international access. It would allow for changes in learning needs over the life that are locally relevant. It would have a low impact on the environment.” – Stephen Leeder and Richard Heller*

Four submissions also commented on the importance of effective community engagement in regional communities, particularly with First Nations communities. The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives posed this argument.

*“Authentic community engagement and consultation needs to be a key part of retention and completion strategies in higher education. Community consultation should also include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student voices in curriculum development, and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics to nurture community relationships as part of their roles.” - The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives.*

## The role of international education

The role of international education was discussed in 15% of submissions (45 submissions). The discussions focussed on three main recommendations:

- improve the international student experience
- strengthen Australia’s international education offer
- share the benefits of international education across the sector.

### Improve the experience of international students

Improving the experience of international students was identified as an important step to progress Australia’s access to skilled workforces and to keep Australia’s international higher education offer strong.

Seventeen submissions argued that improving Australia’s visa policy and processes was an important step. The recommendations included:

- establish clearer pathways to permanent residency (9 submissions)
- extend the time granted under the temporary graduate visa (2 submissions)
- introduce a salary threshold for the permanent graduate visa as a replacement to the occupation list (2 submissions)
- improve visa processing times (2 submissions)

Two submissions also argued for greater government assistance for international students in Australia, including access to Medicare and student support payments.

### Strengthen Australia’s international education offer

In addition to improving the visa system, three suggestions to strengthen Australia’s international education offer were posed:

- target a more diverse range of countries (3 submissions)
- improve Australia's teaching offer, for example through online learning (3 submissions)
- strengthen relationships with international partner institutions (2 submissions)

#### Share the benefits of international education

Eleven submissions discussed how the benefits of international education can be shared more broadly in the higher education sector. Suggestions included:

- distribute the revenue from international student fees (3 submissions)
- increase the incentives for international students to study in the regions (2 submissions)
- establish a unit within Jobs and Skills Australia to provide advice on migration related issues, including how to fill skills in regions (1 submission)

### Important enablers for the higher education sector

This section of the report focusses on the enablers that are important for the future of the higher education sector. This section includes four subsections:

- coherence and integration between the VET and higher education systems
- secure, affordable funding arrangements and incentives
- strong governance and accountability
- investment in capability and recognition of the higher education workforce

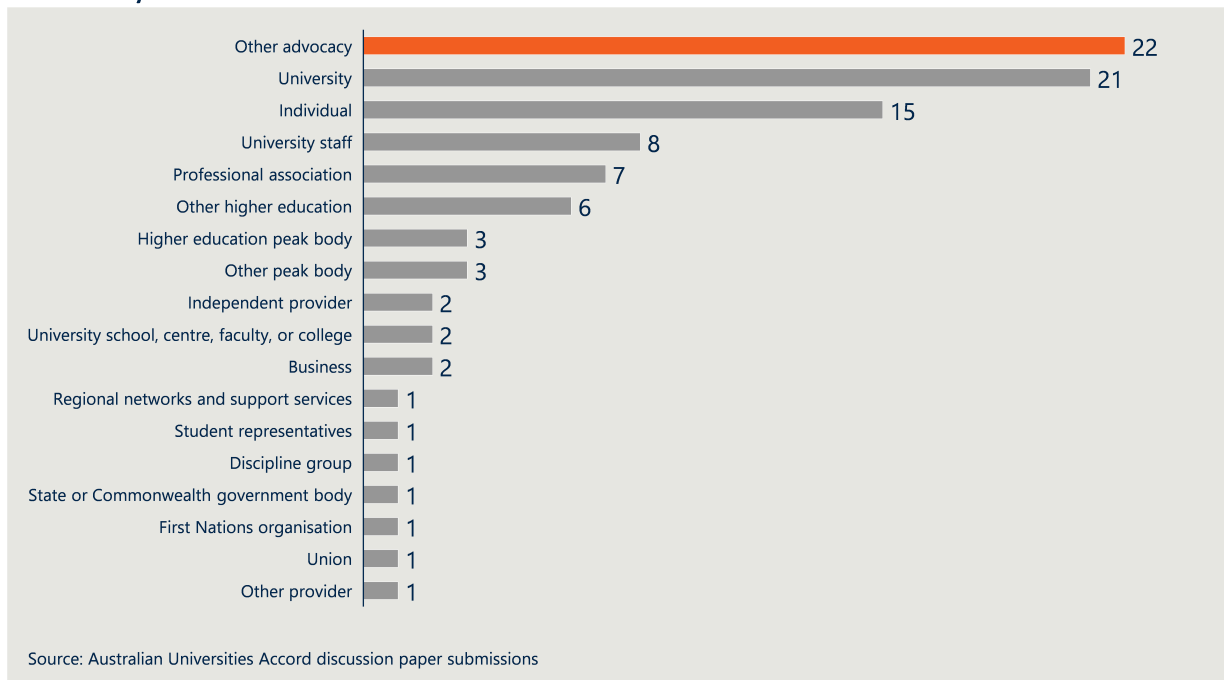
#### Coherence and integration between the VET and higher education systems

The Discussion Paper identified that *"While the two systems have different approaches to learning, as well as different funding and regulation settings, they are becoming increasingly intertwined. In consultations the Panel has heard that there is increasing overlap in relation to diplomas and advanced diplomas"*. Ninety-eight submissions discussed recommendations for improving the coherence between the sectors. Key topics included:

- strengthen the tertiary system by creating greater alignment between higher education and the VET sector
- pathways for students between VET and higher education

**Figure 9 | Distribution of submissions – Coherence and integration between the VET and higher education systems (N=98)**

**Other advocacy groups were the largest cohort to the topic ‘coherence and integration between the VET and higher education systems’ with 22 submissions.**



## Strengthen the tertiary system through greater alignment between higher education and the VET sector

The Discussion Paper notes that the historical divide between the vocational education and training (VET) and higher education systems is being replaced by increasing integration between the two systems. However, challenges remain in building a “stronger, more coherent relationship between the two systems,” (p. 18).

*“Both systems are vital to meeting Australia’s skills needs, and both offer students a pathway to meaningful careers and strong employment outcomes. How to enable them to work more effectively together, with parity of esteem and collaboration across governments, providers and industry partners, remains a complex challenge.” Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, February 2023, p. 18.*

The Discussion Paper asked stakeholders for suggestions to support better alignment and connection across the tertiary education system as a whole and to provide input on what a more effective and collaborative national governance approach would look like. Stakeholders were also asked to consider the role of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), and whether reform of the AQF could support this alignment.

Fourteen per cent of submissions (42 submissions) responded to these questions. Six key recommendations were outlined:

- establish a single, integrated tertiary education system (18 submissions)
- raise the status of vocation education and training (VET) (3 submissions)
- pursue a dual-sector study model (5 submissions)

- promote cross-institutional collaboration (2 submissions)
- reform of the AQF (16 submissions)
- create a national framework for the recognition of prior learning (6 submissions)

These points are discussed in detail below.

### **Establish a single, integrated tertiary system**

Eighteen submissions made suggestions supporting a transition to an integrated national tertiary education system. Submissions noted that a unified approach to funding, regulation and credit recognition would better enable pathways for students and would reduce funding imbalances between VET and higher education. Integration would also ensure that vocational education and higher education are equally valued and have an equal role to play in preparing Australia for the challenges of the next 30 years.

Four of these submissions noted that an integrated tertiary education system would better place Australia to pursue a culture of lifelong learning.

*“The higher education and vocational training systems should be redesigned to form an integrated tertiary education sector oriented to lifelong learning. This sector should incorporate flexible pathways between vocational training and higher education in both directions and at various qualification levels – including research training.”* The Group of Eight

### **Raise the status of vocational education and training (VET)**

Four submissions mentioned the need to raise the status of vocational education and training. As noted by Victoria University, “VET is a declining pathway for young people to take from school to the workplace and VET continues to struggle for parity of esteem with the higher education sector.”

These four submissions called for greater communication and education for students about the purpose and potential of the VET sector. They noted the opportunity to streamline the VET sector’s policy, funding and governance structures with structures in the higher education sector to promote parity between the two.

### **Pursue a dual-sector study model**

Five submissions recommended consideration of dual-sector study models as a future pathway for Australia’s tertiary education sector. As stated by Swinburne University, dual sector institutions offer both vocational and higher education programs, allowing students to gain a variety of knowledge and experiences to prepare them for the changing needs of the workforce. Certain dual study models, such as that of the German International University of Applied Sciences, also incorporate practical work experience into the qualification to allow students to apply their learning in a work setting.

The six Australian dual-sector universities, as well as the German International University of Applied Sciences, are suggested as examples of successful integration. Two submissions also call for dual-sector universities to be able to self-accredit their courses to allow greater flexibility in their offerings.

### **Promote cross-institutional collaboration**

Two submissions note that limitations in the availability of offerings in some regions indicates a need for cross-institutional collaboration.

*“The multiplicity of higher educational offerings across Australia is a strength, and diversity has value. Nonetheless, there are circumstances where course content is limited by locally available expertise. It would be helpful if a framework were established that supported cross-institutional collaboration in course development and delivery.”* Public Universities Australia

This form of collaboration would ensure students and academics have access to resources and current best practices in delivery from across Australia to promote inter-disciplinary collaboration and the use of diverse learning methods.

### **Reform the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)**

Sixteen submissions responded with suggestions for the future role of the AQF. These were split into two major themes:

- implement the recommendations from the 2019 Australian Qualifications Review (7 submissions)
- revise the AQF to include frameworks for VET and other higher education qualifications, micro-credentials and short courses (9 submissions)

Seven submissions called for full implementation of all 21 recommendations made in the 2019 Australian Qualifications Review. Three submissions explicitly mentioned the recommendation to establish a governing body for the AQF with stakeholder representation.

A further nine submissions recommended that the AQF should be revised to include frameworks for micro-credentials, short courses, VET and other higher education qualifications. The University of Newcastle suggested this would address a need to harmonise micro-credentials and other short course offerings, which would further promote their uptake and increase employer recognition of such credentials.

### **Create a national framework for the recognition of prior learning**

Five submissions noted the need for a national framework for the recognition of prior learning. Such a framework would streamline the process of awarding credit to students, improve the portability of credit between institutions and increase student uptake of credit towards qualifications.

*“At present, institutions are conflicted when awarding credit. A national register would: a) encourage providers to produce curriculum that will be recognised as ‘portable’ on the register; and b) increase the portability of credit attained by students. At present, credit goes unused, sometimes needlessly.”* - Australian Catholic University

The Heads of Student Administration (Australia and New Zealand) (HoSA) made a further recommendation to establish a National Credentials Platform, building off the current My eEquals platform. While steps were taken by the Australian Government to establish such a platform in 2019,

HoSA advocates for a review of the design process to better address the challenges faced by learners “when attempting to access or resume further education at various points in their lives”.

### Pathways for students between VET and higher education

The Discussion Paper notes that pathways between the VET and higher education systems need improvement.

*“In consultations to date, the Panel has heard concerns from industry and students that navigating the pathway between the two systems is complicated. Getting this pathway right is a crucial element of our review.”* Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, February 2023, p. 19.

The Discussion Paper asked stakeholders how pathways between VET and higher education could be improved and how students could be helped to navigate these pathways. The Discussion Paper asked for examples of successful linkages between VET and higher education and for recommendations on the role of tertiary entrance and admissions systems in matching learners to pathways and supporting an increase in tertiary participation and success.

Sixty-four submissions responded to these questions, and five key recommendations were identified:

- consider a single national admissions framework (5 submissions).
- improve information dissemination to students about available pathways (9 submissions).
- recognise and promote alternate entry pathways for equity students (4 submissions).
- improve data collection of student movement across the VET and higher education sectors (2 submissions).
- standardise student subsidies and funding agreements for VET courses (3 submissions).

These points are discussed in detail below.

#### **Consider a single, national admissions framework**

Five submissions made a recommendation to move Australia from several state and territory-based admissions centres to a single national body.

*“The accord process offers a unique opportunity to genuinely explore the establishment of a national tertiary admissions body and system to consolidate and focus sector investment to deliver long-term national priority outcomes. The scale of a national body could enable greater admissions efficiencies, capabilities and innovation, as well as the potential for reduced/removal of applicant fees and improved applicant outcomes.”* South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre

The aim of this would be to reduce applicant fees and improve outcomes through greater access to pathways and courses. A national body would also facilitate the capture of sector-wide data sets that could highlight local needs, inform provider offerings and provide insights to government for forward planning and policy making.



### **Improve information dissemination to students about available pathways**

Seven submissions noted the need for more comprehensive and accessible information about available pathways between VET and higher education. This included two submissions that directly referenced enabling programs and their role in providing pathways to higher education for underrepresented groups.

The opportunity for tertiary admissions centres (TACs) to play a role in information dissemination was highlighted by two additional submissions. One submission noted that the expertise of TACs in relaying information could be harnessed to support access and opportunity initiatives. The second submission noted that TACs could play a greater role as a resource in secondary schools to inform students about the diversity of pathways available in the tertiary education sector.

### **Recognise and promote alternative entry pathways for underrepresented students**

Four submissions recommended greater support for alternative entry programs for underrepresented students into VET and university. Methods recommended include:

- introduce uniform entry schemes for equity students (1 submission)
- increase funding for enabling programs (3 submissions)
- add enabling program student contributions to HECS-HELP (1 submission)
- ensure enabling programs are recognised in the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) to support transitions between courses (1 submission)

### **Improve data collection of student movement across the VET and higher education sectors**

Two submissions highlighted a need for improved data collection on student movements in the tertiary education sector. These submissions noted the benefit of data to better track success and enable higher education providers to tailor their offerings, support students and focus efforts on areas of need.

The South Australia Tertiary Admissions Centre is currently transforming their approach to data with this goal in mind:

*“This initiative... will provide a better understanding of applicant behaviour and potential barriers to application and acceptance, such that we can proactively engage with applicants to encourage and support them through the process. Working with key stakeholders and relevant datasets, we intend to develop predictive data models to understand the likelihood of tertiary participation and success for different learners and pathways such that learner engagement and admissions pathways can be designed to deliver improved outcomes in priority areas such as proportionate participation and success for students from under-represented groups.”* South Australia Tertiary Admissions Centre

### **Standardise student subsidies and funding agreements for VET courses**

Three submissions recommended that funding discrepancies between the VET and higher education sectors be addressed, including extending HECS-HELP loans to VET, to ensure equitable access to VET qualifications. This is explored further in the section [Secure, affordable funding arrangements and incentives](#).

## Secure, affordable funding arrangements and incentives

The Discussion Paper notes that the funding system needs to “meet the parallel needs across teaching, student support, research, research training, engagement, administration and infrastructure, and capital investment.” It notes the risks of the current funding arrangements “The pandemic exposed the current complex funding arrangements and vulnerabilities within the international student market and demonstrated the challenges of managing various and precarious revenue streams.” (Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, February 2023, p. 33).

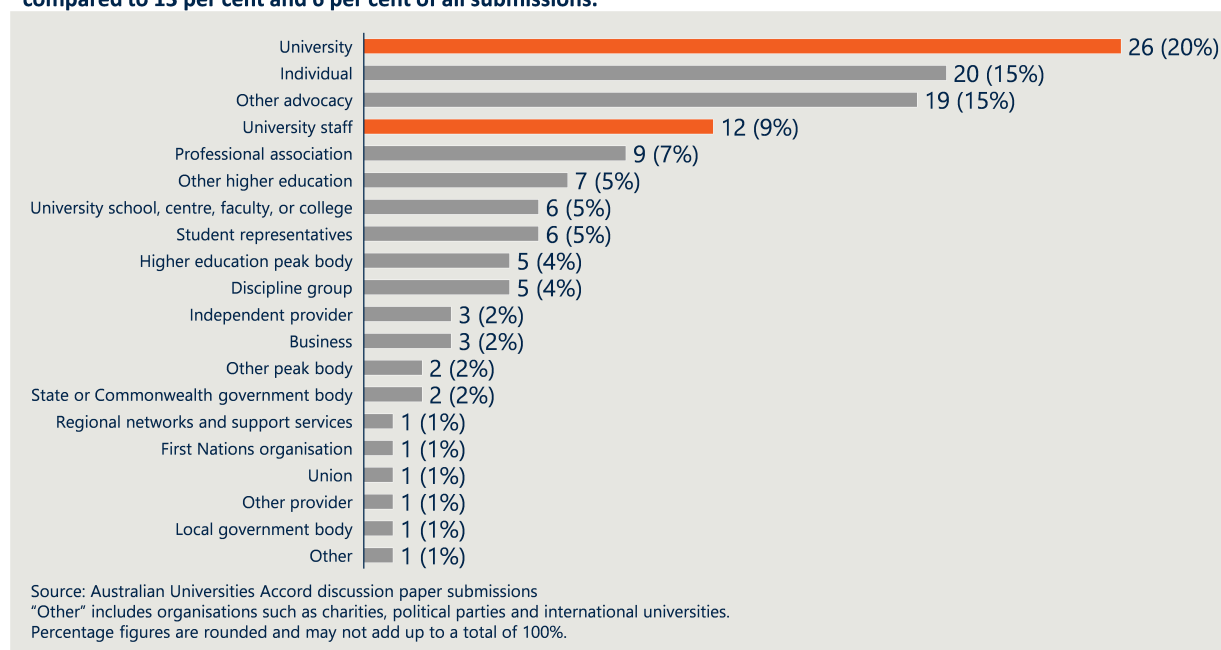
The level, distribution and source of funding for the tertiary sector was a frequently discussed topic across the submissions, being included in 40% of submissions (131 submissions). Most of these submissions called for increases in the total funding pool allocated to the sector or increases in funding for particular initiatives.

Key recommendations were made as follows:

- introduce a more simple and stable funding model (22 submissions)
- increase the total funding for research (27 submissions)
- revise the level of student contributions (35 submissions)
- increase infrastructure funding (18 submissions)

**Figure 10 | Distribution of submissions – Secure, affordable funding arrangements and incentives (N=131)**

**Universities and university staff were more likely to comment on ‘secure, affordable funding arrangements and incentives’ than other groups. They respectively made up 20 per cent and 9 per cent of submissions aligned to this topic, compared to 13 per cent and 6 per cent of all submissions.**



## Introduce a more simple and stable funding

Twenty-two submissions argued for simplicity and stability in any funding model proposed. Seven of these submissions argued that a stable funding model will support universities' long-term planning. This point was emphasised by the University of New South Wales:

*"Recognising that government's ability to fund the sector is finite, the key feature of any funding model underpinning both infrastructure and recurrent spending in the university sector should be its reliability, giving providers certainty to allocate their resources and plan for the future."* – University of New South Wales

Fifteen submissions argued for a simpler funding model. These submissions focussed on a reduction in the number of funding sources and the bureaucracy involved, particularly in research funding. The fragmented funding ecosystem was observed by the University Chancellors Council:

*"Chancellors observe enormous amounts of time and resources devoted by academic staff to applying for relatively small sums of money from schemes that are so competitive that the success rate is low. There has also been a proliferation of agencies and schemes distributing research funds, all of which must be administered and paid for by someone somewhere. The UCC would support moves towards consolidating funding bodies as part of streamlining the whole tertiary education and research ecosystem."* – University Chancellors Council

In addition to a more simple and stable funding model, 17 submissions argued for a more flexible funding model, tailored to university missions. It was argued that the current funding model does not support diversification. This point was emphasised by Western Sydney University.

*"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."* – Western Sydney University

Nine submissions proposed variations of a revised funding approach, such as to consolidate the funding pools received by universities into batch funding which universities have the freedom to allocate however best serves their mission. Within this 'batch' funding, buckets were recommended to differentiate the funding for teaching and learning and research funding. Specific examples included:

- funding distributed for different time horizons; long term (20 to 30 + years), innovative horizon (two to five years), and short term (less than two years),
- funding for core teaching and a block grant for particular circumstances and outcomes,
- two funding buckets, teaching and learning and research.

## Increase total funding for research

The amount of funding allocated to research by government and how this funding is distributed was explicitly discussed in ~9% of submissions (27 submissions). Of these submissions, 15 called for an increase in research funding, including six submissions that argued for Australia's spending as a percentage of GDP to be increased to either the OECD average, the OECD top quartile, the OECD top quintile or 3% of GDP.

Among the reasons to increase the amount of funding allocated to research, ten submissions argued to fully fund research. Two arguments were posed to support fully funding research. The first, was that fully funded research is valuable for strengthening Australia's sovereign capability. This perspective was argued by University of South Australia.

*"Research in national priority areas to establish sovereign capability should be fully funded – with a target of 3% of GDP – and provided on a block grant basis over an extended period."* – University of South Australia

The second argument was, that fully funding research will stop or make explicit the cross subsidisation of research with teaching and learning funding, in particular international student revenue (eight submissions). The cross subsidisation of research was identified by The Australian Historical Association.

*"The under-funding of research (such as through inadequate payment to universities for overheads) has meant that fees derived from teaching, and especially from international students, have been used to cross-subsidise research."* – The Australian Historical Association

The Group of Eight noted that cross-subsidies can create perverse incentives and sub-optimal outcomes:

*"Despite cross-subsidisation helping fund potentially vital activities such as research and teaching in fields of importance that would not otherwise be financially viable, there are valid concerns regarding the influence of cross-subsidies on students, education providers, and on the overall system.*

*... These include the creation of perverse incentives. Moreover, the composition of student places offered may be tilted towards courses able to deliver a surplus (even as cross-subsidies allow for low demand courses to be maintained). In turn, this may translate to oversupply of graduates in some fields, and undersupply in other fields. Hence these perverse incentives can potentially lead to sub-optimal educational quality and student outcomes.*

*Allocation of resources may also be less than optimal because of cross subsidies. Cross-subsidies may not necessarily be allocated based on criteria such as the quality and importance of research or teaching fields. Hence apart from being a less transparent use of resources, inefficient outcomes can result from misallocation.*

*To have a tertiary education sector that is diverse in its offerings requires a diversity of providers. This is currently not supported by the Australian system. To enable a differentiation of the system, reliance on cross-subsidies must be minimised."* – The Group of Eight

Other submissions (seven submissions) argued for an increase in funding for the indirect and overhead costs of research. The Committee for Sydney stated.

*“Research Block Grant funding does not go far enough for universities to be able to cover the overhead costs of research – including the cost of library services, laboratories and support staff. For example, to cover the full costs of its research, the University of Sydney estimates it spends around \$1.50 for every \$1 of research income it earns from governments, industry or philanthropy to deliver research projects – equivalent to around \$750 million each year. Inadequate Research Block Grant funding has led universities to cross-subsidise research from other revenue sources – such as international student fees and teaching income. The pandemic has shown these revenue streams can be volatile and should not be relied upon.”* – Committee for Sydney

Six submissions affiliated with specific sectors or with experience supporting specific sectors argued for increases in funding for certain sectors. These included climate change, paramedicine, nursing, veterinary science, and social work.

The funding system must ensure access and support enough students for future skill needs

Twelve per cent of submissions (35 submissions) discussed the level of student contribution and the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP). A majority focussed their discussion on the need to reduce the financial burden on students and methods for doing this.

#### **New or amended student contribution frameworks**

Suggestions about the best model for student contributions were diverse across the submissions, with little coalescence. However, three themes were identified: introducing a ‘flat fee’ model for student contributions, a tiered system of fees linked to the cost of delivering courses, and providing free education for some or all students. These points are considered further below.

Five submissions argued for the introduction of a flat-fee model, where students contribute the same amount for government funded university places irrespective of the course. The full cost of their education would be covered by a variable contribution from government. The Group of Eight argued for a flat-fee model on the basis that higher-earning graduates would be taxed progressively by the income tax system later:

*“Staged implementation of a flat-fee model for student contributions to government funded places in higher education... The funding model involves having a single student contribution irrespective of qualification and a Commonwealth contribution to reflect the variability of the given qualification cost. A limited number of exceptions could continue under this proposed funding model, for example, medicine, where the number of Commonwealth supported places is currently capped. Under this proposed funding model, graduates from courses that lead to higher private financial benefit will be progressively taxed by the income tax system as they enter the workforce. Other graduates may accrue private benefits that might not be financial – that is where Australia’s income contingent loan (ICL) system is important.”* – The Group of Eight

On the other hand, the Australian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities proposed that fees should reflect the cost of delivering the course:

*“University fees should reflect the cost of university education which includes research...The variance between student and Commonwealth contributions must be consistent across all disciplines.”* – The Australian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities

Both the University of Queensland and Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand argued for student contribution rates to be linked in a tiered system to employment outcomes and potential earnings.

Other submissions (three submissions) argued for the complete or partial re-introduction of fee free education. Suggested variations on fee free tertiary education included all initial degrees to be free and diploma level qualifications to be free.

#### Increase funding available for new and upgraded infrastructure

Six per cent of submissions (18 submissions) noted that increased funding to support the ongoing costs of maintaining and upgrading infrastructure was a priority in. Overall, the submissions provided limited detail about how to finance an increase in infrastructure funding.

Six submissions recommended the introduction of an infrastructure fund, including five that recommended a national fund which coordinates efforts with the states. It was recommended that this fund target regional and research infrastructure:

*“Increase funding and infrastructure that grows the research capacity, infrastructure and workforces of regional Australia and their universities... Re-establish a dedicated, significant education infrastructure fund”* – Regional Universities Network

#### Change the Job-ready Graduates Package

Nineteen per cent of submissions (58 submissions) discussed the Job-ready Graduates Package (JRG). All of these submissions called for changes to the JRG, including submissions that called for its partial or complete replacement.

#### Elements of Job-ready Graduates Package to be removed or replaced

Sixteen submissions discussed the JRG’s course completion and 50% pass requirements. This was the element of JRG that was most subject to suggestions that it should be removed. The most common reasoning for removing this element was that it has an unequal impact on cohorts that are underrepresented in higher education. For example, the Arts, Education and Law Group, Griffith University argued for discontinuation of the low completion rate measures:

*“These measures withdraw Commonwealth support for students who have failed more than 50 percent of their units after they have studied eight or more units. Low SES student cohorts are generally more adversely impacted than others through these measures. An increase in proactive student learning support and guidance intervention mechanisms would be more effective in enabling these student cohorts.”* – Arts, Education and Law Group, Griffith University

Seven submissions suggested removing the price differences between courses, arguing that the change in prices has had limited impact on students' decisions and does not consider the broader role higher education has in developing core work and career skills. This point was argued by Universities Australia:

*“Price signalling and student contribution amounts. JRG has vastly widened the range of student contribution amounts (SCAs). The restructured SCAs were intended to influence student choices when picking courses. By providing incentives to study some courses over others, more students were expected to take up courses which the government viewed as national priorities. Price signalling as a driver of student choice in degrees does not work. Students' interests and career aspirations have a far greater impact on their choice of degree. Policy should, therefore, be focused on promoting the value and quality of degrees, rather than relying on pricing strategies to attract students into certain areas of study. Focusing on price signalling also ignores the role of higher education in providing students with a solid foundation for lifelong learning. One of the goals of higher education should be to provide students with the knowledge, skills and experiences they need to thrive in their career and contribute positively to the advancement of our nation, regardless of the course they choose to study.” – Universities Australia*

Three submissions called for a reversal of the decrease in funding available for enabling programs. They reasoned that these programs have an important role in supporting underrepresented cohorts to access higher education.

Finally, four submissions argued for a reversal of the JRG's change to the funding arrangements which reduced the per-student funding received by universities.

#### **Elements of Job-ready Graduates Package to be retained**

Submissions identified some elements of the Job-ready Graduates Package as successful. These include:

- linking funding to inflation (3 submissions),
- the increase in demand-driven places for regional First Nations students (2 submissions) and,
- The transitional funding arrangements introduced to support the change (2 submissions). It was argued that any future changes should be accompanied with transitional funding arrangements.

#### **Strong governance and accountability**

The Discussion Paper noted that “the regulatory and reporting landscape for higher education is crowded and complicated”.

Governance and accountability was a prominent topic in the submissions, included in 17% of submissions (53 submissions). Key recommendations were:

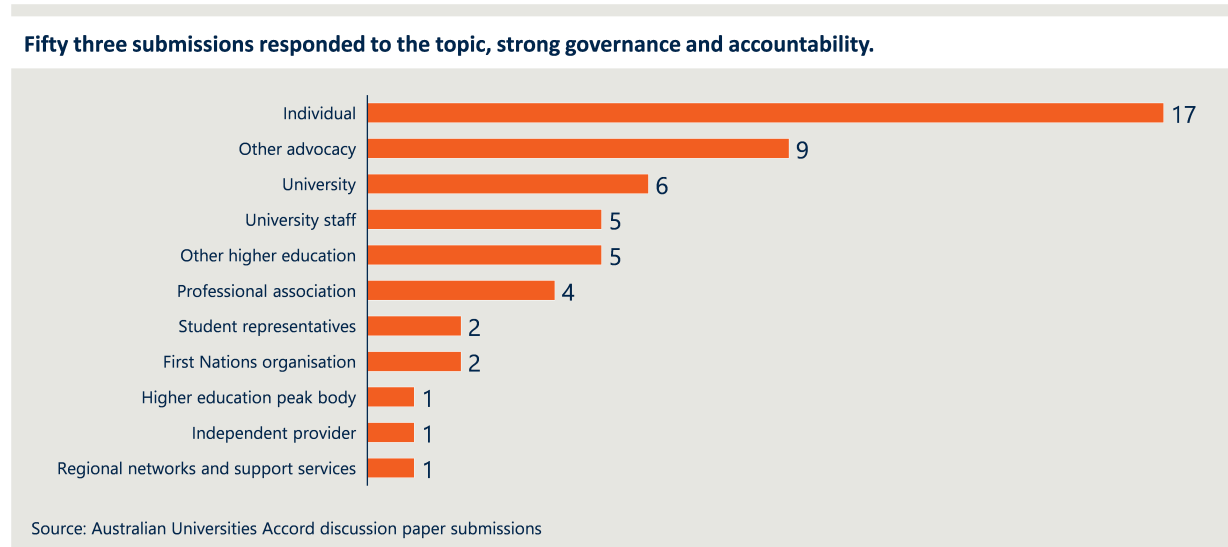
- develop a coordinated national approach to regulating the sector (13 submissions)
- review the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (9 submissions)



- introduce improved academic integrity approaches (16 submissions)

These points are discussed in detail below.

**Figure 11 | Distribution of submissions – Strong governance and accountability (N=53)**



## Reform the sector's regulatory and governance environment

The discussion paper posed two questions about regulation and governance to unpack: what reforms would enable the higher education sector to meet contemporary demands; and how a more coherent national governance system for higher education could be achieved.

### Reducing the burden of regulation

Submissions made a variety of suggestions, with little commonality among them, for reducing the burden of regulation in the higher education sector. The submissions did, however, largely agree on a set of common principles for higher education regulation:

- The Accord should not increase regulatory compliance obligations.
- The need for accountability is balanced with streamlining obligations for institutions.
- The regulatory environment should encourage collaboration between stakeholders in the sector.

Thirteen submissions argued for a more coordinated national approach to regulating the sector. However, there was limited alignment over the best approach and which elements of the regulatory environment to focus on.

Five submissions argued for a national body to coordinate and lead regulation across the sector. This included two submissions that encouraged the re-establishment of the Tertiary Education Commission as a body which would sit between government and the tertiary education sector. The Group of Eight described the potential role of the Tertiary Education Commission.

*“The role of the Commission, in general terms, would be to provide long term, coordinated, and expert advice to government on higher education policy matters. This would ensure that*



*the tertiary education sector is established and maintained as a seamless sector, responsive to the changing needs of the Australian community and economy and with a continuity of approach across electoral cycles.” – The Group of Eight*

Short of establishing a new oversight body, five submissions suggested alternative approaches to creating a more coordinated national approach to regulation. These included establishing a national regulation governance framework which encourages collaboration between universities. In addition, three submissions argued that the Australian Government should work to coordinate effort with state governments. This was recommended by the University of New South Wales:

*“Recommendation 24: Work should be undertaken between the Commonwealth and state governments to better harmonise regulations and funding models covering the different types of education.” – University of New South Wales*

On the other hand, two submissions challenged the perspective that the sector should adopt a more national approach, arguing that an approach that values the specific needs of each state, local region or university would have better outcomes.

Nine submissions called for a review of TEQSA to focus on different topics to investigate:

- the potential for TEQSA to regulate both the higher education and VET sectors (5 submissions)
- TEQSA’s role in tackling sexual assault and harassment on university campuses (2 submissions)
- increased flexibility to allow TEQSA to engage with businesses (1 submission)
- expanding TEQSA’s role in reviewing social work programs (1 submission).

### Reinforce academic integrity in higher education

Sixteen submissions commented on academic integrity and encouraged greater efforts to promote academic integrity in higher education. The primary challenge to academic integrity identified across the submissions is managing the risks associated with new technologies, in particular the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI). Potential solutions were proposed:

- educate students on the effective use of AI and incorporate AI usage into curriculum (4 submissions)
- incentivise high quality teaching and learning practices that incorporate technology into curriculum and increase opportunities for feedback (4 submissions)
- emphasise the importance of peer review and the role of publishers in monitoring plagiarism (2 submissions)
- increase the use of work-integrated learning to ensure students can apply theoretical skill sets. Using industry-based assessment to replace written assessment reduces the incentive for students to undertake academic misconduct (2 submissions)
- increase the use of technology to detect integrity malpractice (1 submission).

## Redesign institutional governance structures

The submissions contained limited discussion about the appropriate institutional governance structures (3 submissions). These submissions proposed regulations that restructure university boards to include greater representation from students, staff, alumni and underrepresented cohorts.

Seven submissions argued for the creation of individual university accords to replace the existing compacts and funding arrangements with federal government. A more in-depth discussion about individual university accords is in the section *The role of Higher Education for Australia*.

## Investment in capability and recognition of the higher education workforce

The Discussion Paper discusses the important role of the academic workforce, and the need for sustainable employment practices to support staff in higher education.

*“Australia needs a capable and highly skilled academic workforce to deliver future skills needs through teaching and learning and to boost innovation through the research system.”*

Australian Universities Accord Discussion Paper, February 2023, p. 27.

The Discussion Paper also notes several areas of concern previously identified by stakeholders about insecure work and underpayment in the higher education sector:

*“Several stakeholders indicated that financial uncertainty, including government funding changes, can influence the employment decisions of providers.... [and] many stakeholders raised concerns about insecure work and underpayment in the higher education sector, particularly for casual or sessional staff.”* Australian Universities Accord Discussion paper, February 2023, p. 28-29.

Stakeholders were asked for recommendations on how the Accord can best support higher education providers to adopt sector-leading employment practices.

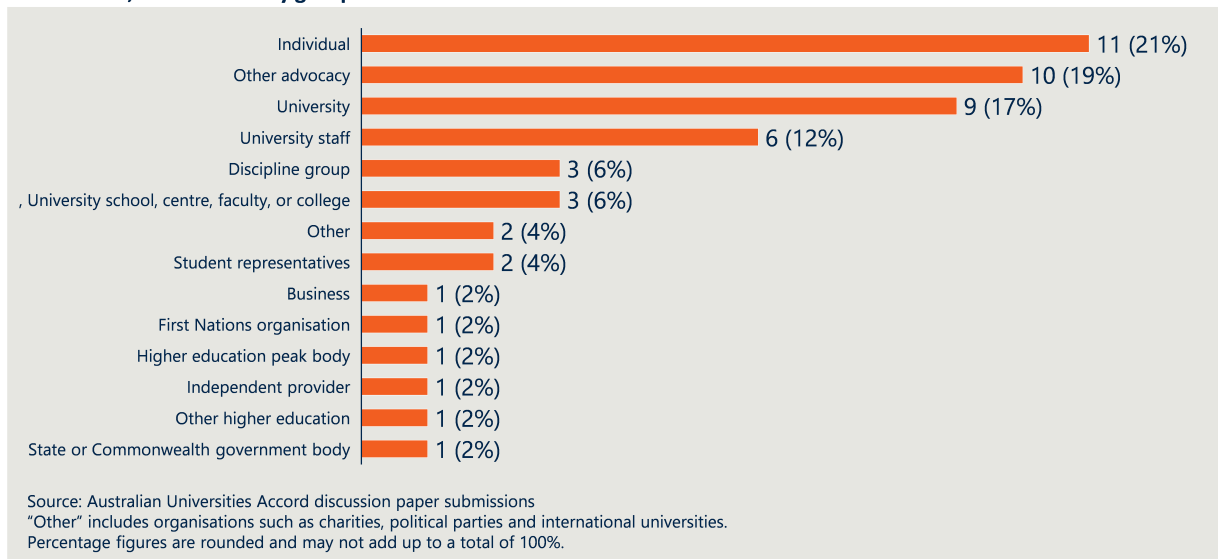
Sixteen per cent of submissions (49 submissions) responded to this question. Key themes were:

- ensure greater certainty for staff (16 submissions)
- support greater career mobility (5 submissions)
- increase employment of underrepresented staff (10 submissions)
- reduce administrative burden for academics and researchers (4 submissions)
- support initiatives that develop the skills of academic and professional staff (7 submissions)
- recognise and provide support for psychological stress on staff (3 submissions)

These points are discussed in detail below.

**Figure 12 | Distribution of submissions – Investment in capability and recognition of the higher education workforce (N=52)**

**Fifty eight per cent submissions to Investment in capability and recognition of the higher education workforce were from individuals, other advocacy groups or universities.**



### Ensure greater certainty for staff

Of the 49 submissions that responded to the question on employment practices, 33% (16 submissions) suggested the Accord should ensure greater certainty through reduced casualisation (10 submissions) and reduced job insecurity (9 submissions).

### Reduce casualisation of the higher education workforce

Eleven submissions argued that steps should be taken to address the over-casualisation of the higher education workforce. One submission suggested government should develop incentives for employers to adopt competitive employment practices.

*"Reassessment and formalisation of the roles of sessional (such as staff engaged to support a tutorial group for a term) and casual staff would also assist in creating a more equitable, secure and supported academic workforce. This would include proper assistance built into teaching roles, sessional staff being afforded the security – yet flexibility – they deserve, long-term casuals shifting to more secure fixed-term contracts, and casual contracts being used only for truly casual roles."* Science & Technology Australia

Two of these submissions noted cases of exploitation of casual staff and recommended reducing casualisation and awarding security to workers to alleviate this issue.

*"The casualisation of educators and precarious employment has become dangerously widespread and problematic in teaching and research roles combined with a lack of tenured opportunities. Higher education employment needs to be secure and attractive in order to provide the quality of teaching and research students deserve whilst flexibilities for workers to enter and exit the sector and their flexibility within the system need to be revisited."* Education and Youth Affairs Policy Committee, Victorian Branch, ALP

### Reduce job insecurity

In line with calls to reduce casualisation, nine submissions noted the need for greater job security for all higher education staff. Three submissions called for staff with sessional, part-time and short-term contracts to be engaged on longer fixed term or continuing contracts. A further three submissions noted the pressures short-term contracts place on employees, including insecure pay and uncertainty over future employment. Two submissions noted the importance of long-term employment to achieve quality learning and pursue medium and long-term research objectives.

However, two submissions also noted that the higher education sector currently acts as an enabler for insecure employment. The desire of researchers and postgraduate students to remain in academia allows short-term research grants and casual or short-term tenures to remain prominent and common forms of employment in the higher education sector.

*“The challenge for the higher education sector is that research funding is not ongoing and many researchers are left to move from one contract to the next, sometimes for many years. Such contracts are usually several years in duration at a time, but this can lead to a prolonged period of uncertainty for researchers who play a significant role in Australia’s research success.”* Australian Higher Education Industrial Association

*“Some of this can be attributed to inappropriate funding for teaching and research, causing institutions to look for cost savings, but some of it must be attributed to institutions putting other objectives ahead of the reasonable treatment of staff. At present, Higher Education is able to behave in a way that other sectors cannot, because so many of our PhD graduates wish to stay in academia, and are prepared to do what it takes to maximise their chances.”* Brian Schmidt, Vice Chancellor of the Australian National University.

### Support greater career mobility

Five submissions noted there was an opportunity to provide greater support for career mobility. Three submissions noted that mobility between the higher education sector, industry and government would benefit staff and universities by providing an opportunity to develop new experiences, knowledge and skills. Western Sydney University stated it would also serve to “enhance program relevance and stimulate innovation in key sectors.”

Additionally, two submissions highlighted the need for greater flexibility and mobility for careers within the higher education sector. Deakin University noted it was important to “ensure that we have career paths for academics who specialise in education, research, or industry engagement, that can sit alongside the more traditional portfolios.” It was argued that diversification of career pathways within academia beyond the traditional roles of teaching and research would enable universities to meet the changing needs of society, as well as allowing the higher education workforce to pursue roles that align with their strengths and interests.

### Increase employment of underrepresented staff

Ten submissions noted that, to adopt sector-leading employment practices, the higher education sector should increase the representation of, and available support for, groups that are underrepresented in staff cohorts. This includes:

- First Nations staff (6 submissions)
- Staff with disability (3 submissions)
- Staff in regional areas (1 submission)

#### **Increase representation of First Nations staff**

Six submissions noted the importance of increasing the representation of, and support for, First Nations staff in the higher education sector. Of these, three submissions noted the importance of recognising and providing additional support for the cultural load of First Nations staff. This included suggestions to provide cultural safety training to all staff to create a safer working environment.

Two submissions recommended that universities should be required to have First Nations employment strategies to build First Nations representation in the workforce and monitor outcomes. Four submissions specified that pathways to leadership for First Nations staff were also required, to increase representation of First Nations peoples at all levels of employment. Suggested methods to support these pathways included increased funding and the provision of leadership and development courses.

#### **Increase representation of staff with disability**

Three submissions emphasised the need for the higher education sector to employ more staff with disability. This could improve the experience for students with disability (1 submission) and reduce bias in research about disability (1 submission). However, one submission noted that an employment policy alone is not enough: the whole work environment needs to be improved to support staff with disability:

*“There is little point employing more researchers with disability in the Australian academy if many of these people are ultimately forced out by unwelcoming, unaccommodating and ableist environments. Negative attitudes towards researchers with disability in the academy are persisting... Researchers should be able to proudly and openly disclose their disability in the Australian academy without the fear of negative repercussions.”* Damian Mellifont, a neurodivergent researcher.

#### **Increase the recruitment of staff in regional areas**

One submission noted the need to increase the recruitment of staff to regional areas, and the potential role incentives could play in achieving this, especially in regions suitable housing is in short supply.

#### **Reduce administrative burden on academics and researchers**

Four submissions noted the increasing pressures on academics and researchers, including increased administrative burdens (4 submissions), reduced capacity to undertake research (2 submissions), and loss of support from decreasing numbers of non-academic support staff (1 submission). One submission noted the relationship between these increased requirements and staff burnout.

These four submissions recommended reducing administrative and bureaucratic pressures on higher education staff. Methods to address this include regulatory intervention to ensure workplace conditions remain within legislated standards (1 submission) and reducing unnecessary bureaucratic

hurdles at a provider level, with Curtin University's "Battling Bureaucracy" project given as an example (1 submission).

### Support initiatives which develop the skills of academic and professional staff

Seven submissions noted the need to support the skills development of academic and professional staff. Methods suggested to achieve this included:

- develop a sector-wide academic career development framework that outlines examples of excellence (1 submission)
- consider a national graduate recruitment program for professional staff (1 submission)
- review current processes and structures for the recruitment and development of staff, including identifying current structural inequalities, to ensure the sector is best placed to meet changing needs (1 submission)
- review data points collected nationally for professional staff to assist university planning (1 submission)
- build capacity and understanding in all staff to ensure inclusive teaching methods, for example, disability awareness (2 submissions)

### Recognise and provide support for psychological stress on staff

Finally, three submissions emphasised the growing mental health crisis in higher education staff.

*"We are appealing to the members of the Australian University Accord Review to take seriously the mental health crisis in our universities. If this Accord is serious about advancing the sector, prioritising our people should be a key consideration of any change. The teaching of our next generations and our research capabilities will be fundamentally hamstrung if we remain mired in a workplace climate which entrenches burnout and distress."* UniSA Psychosocial Safety Climate Global Observatory

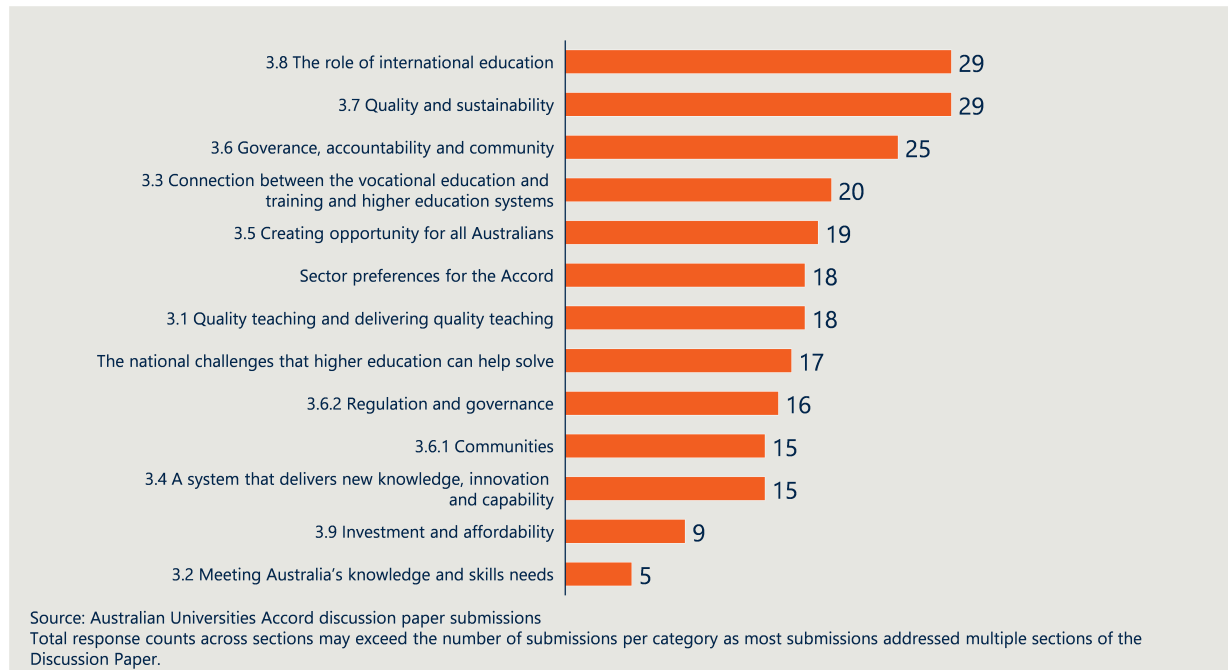
Submissions noted as causes of psychological stress poor workplace conditions (for example, job insecurity) (2 submissions), recent policy changes (including but not exclusive to those announced during the COVID-19 pandemic) (1 submission) and a history of inefficiency in the sector (1 submission).

To address this issue, two submissions noted the role and responsibility of universities in helping address, and mitigate, mental health issues in the workforce. One submission recommended the development of a sector-wide mental health strategy.

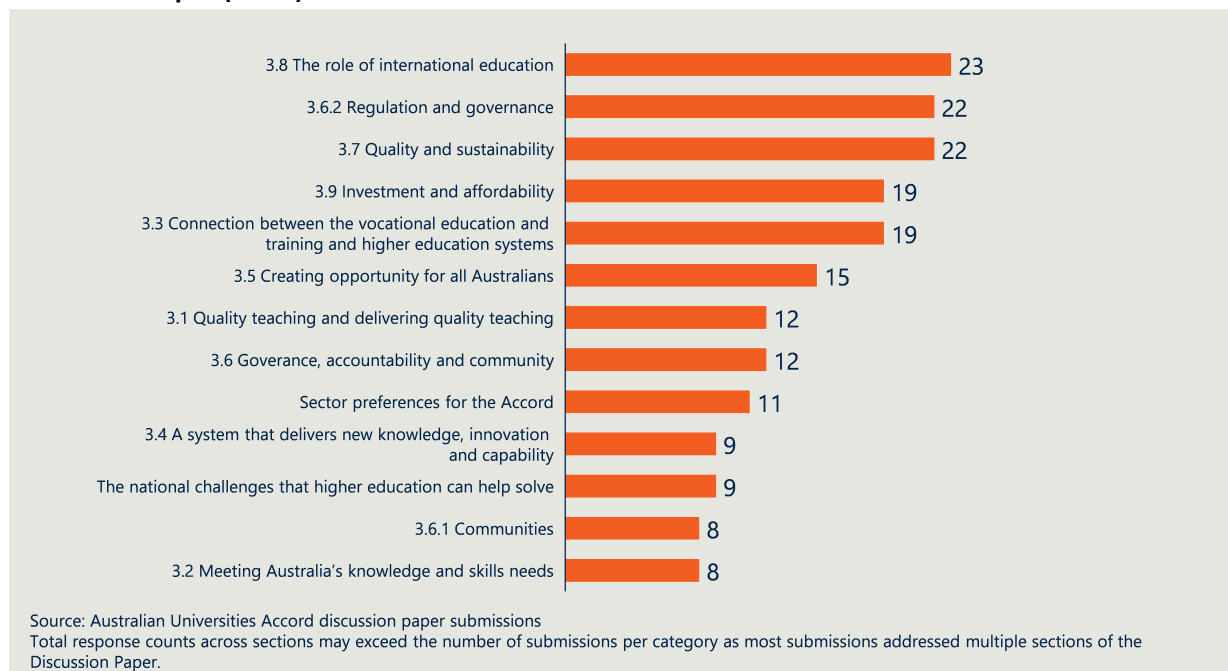
## Appendix

### Responses to the discussion paper

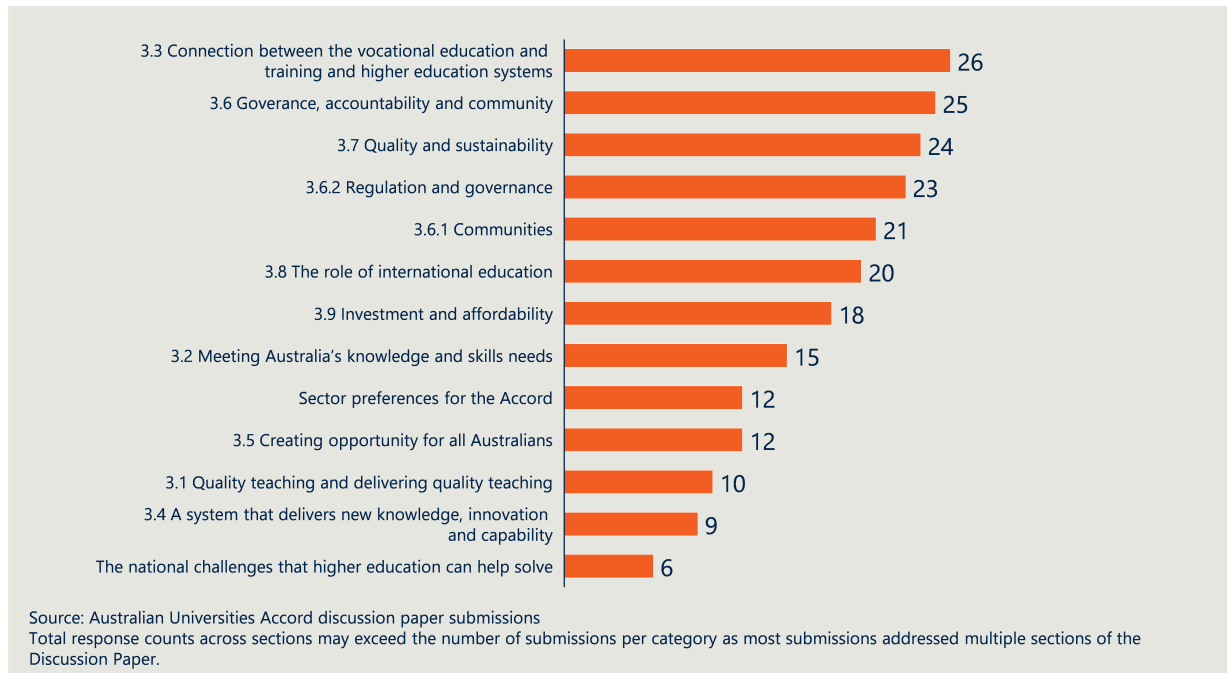
**Figure 13 | Distribution of responses received from individuals in response to the Discussion Paper (N=77)**



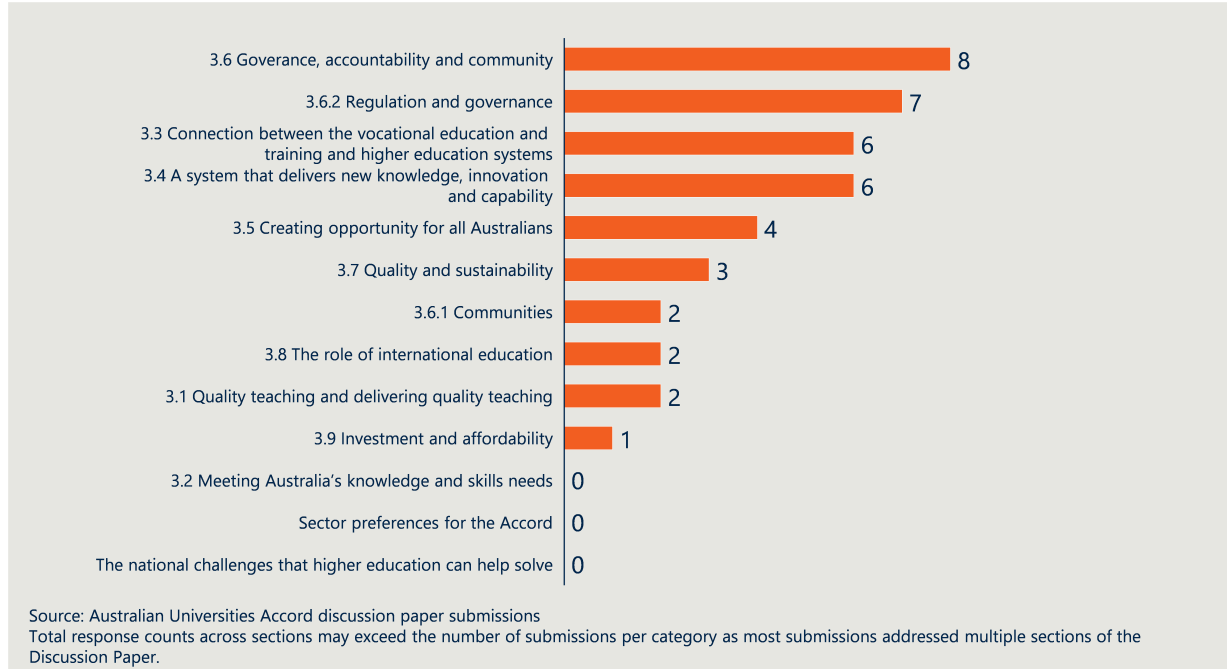
**Figure 14 | Distribution of responses received from other advocacy groups in response to the Discussion Paper (N=40)**



**Figure 15 | Distribution of responses received from universities in response to the Discussion Paper (N=40)**

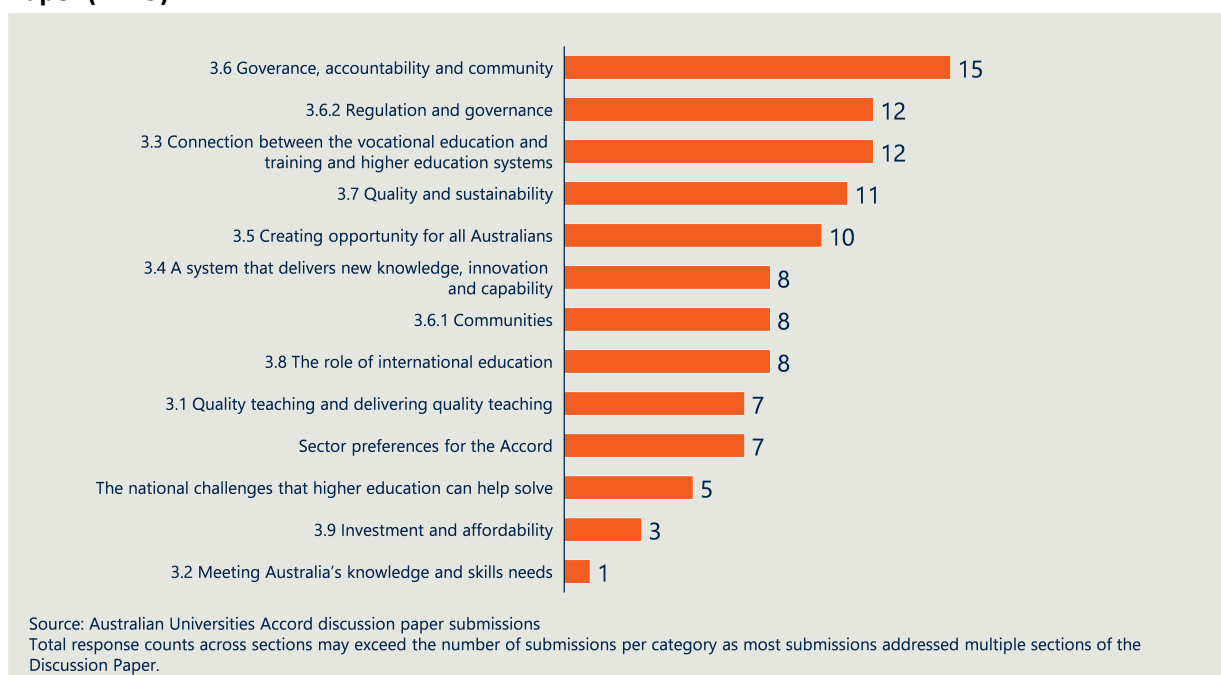


**Figure 16 | Distribution of responses received from university schools, centres, faculties or colleges in response to the Discussion Paper (N=20)**

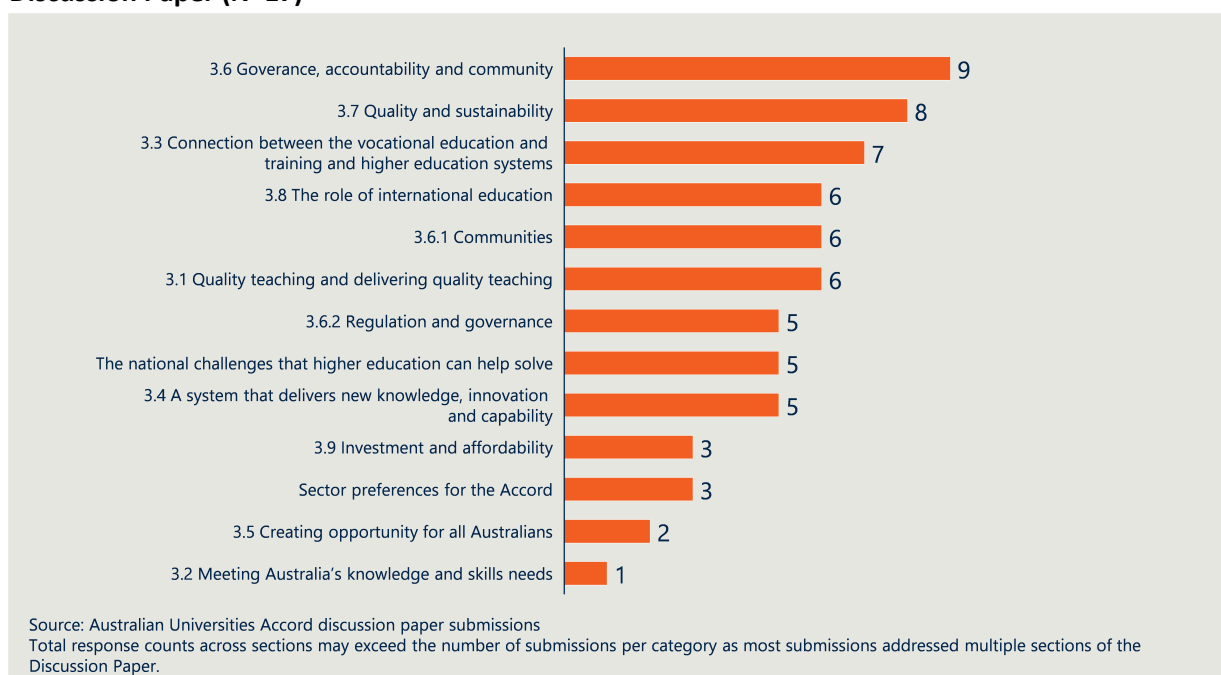




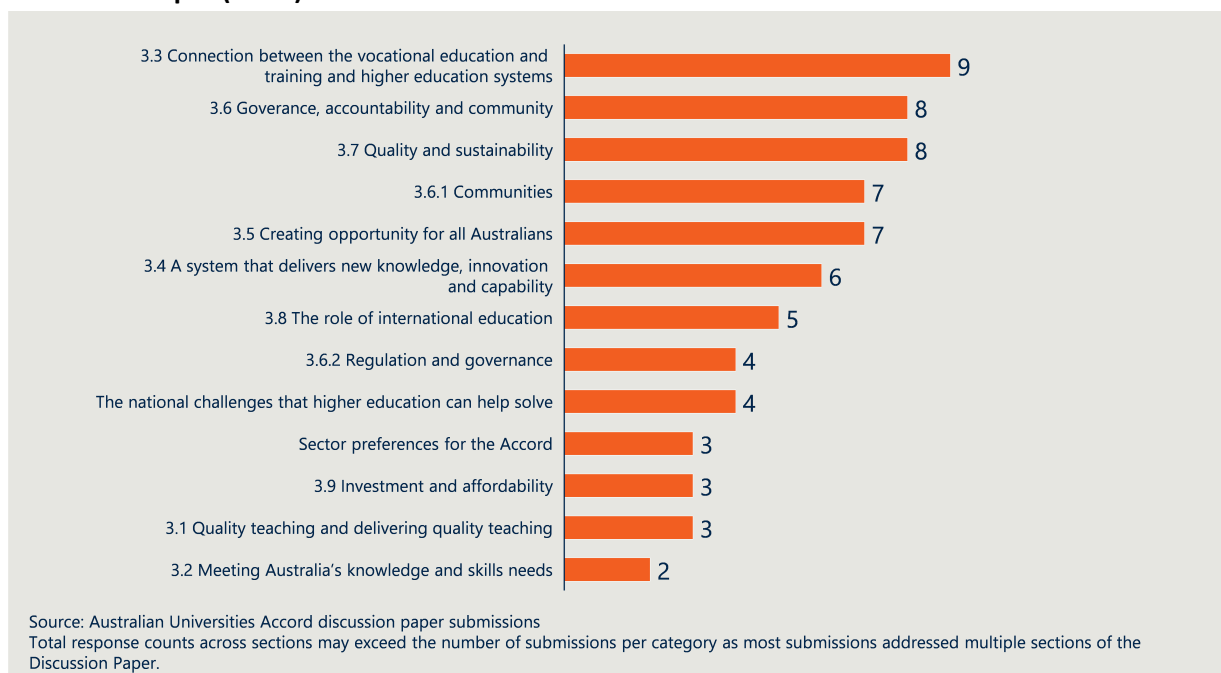
**Figure 17 | Distribution of responses received from university staff in response to the Discussion Paper (N=19)**



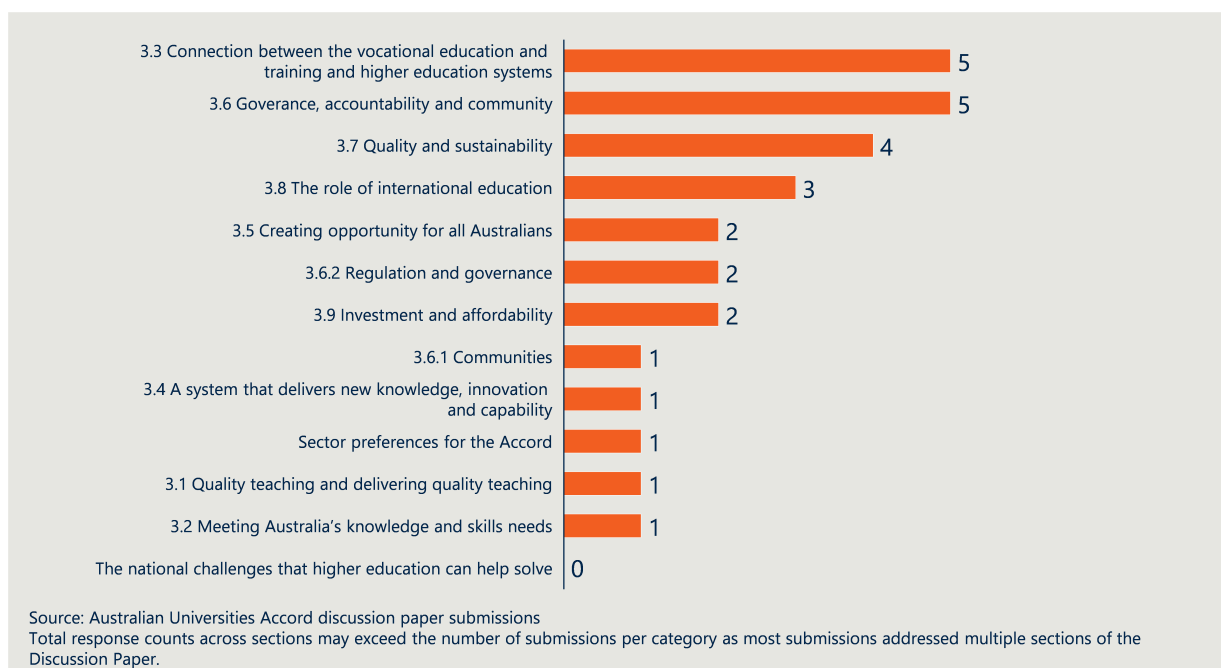
**Figure 18 | Distribution of responses received from other higher education groups in response to the Discussion Paper (N=17)**



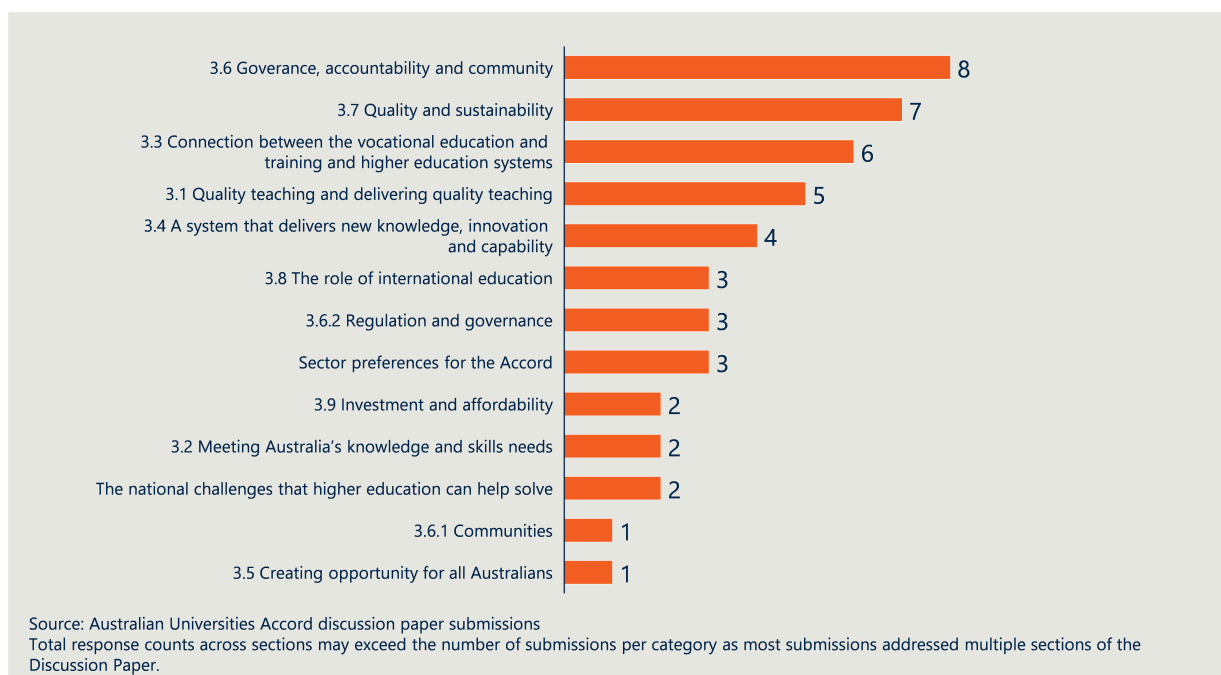
**Figure 19 | Distribution of responses received from professional associations in response to the Discussion Paper (N=12)**



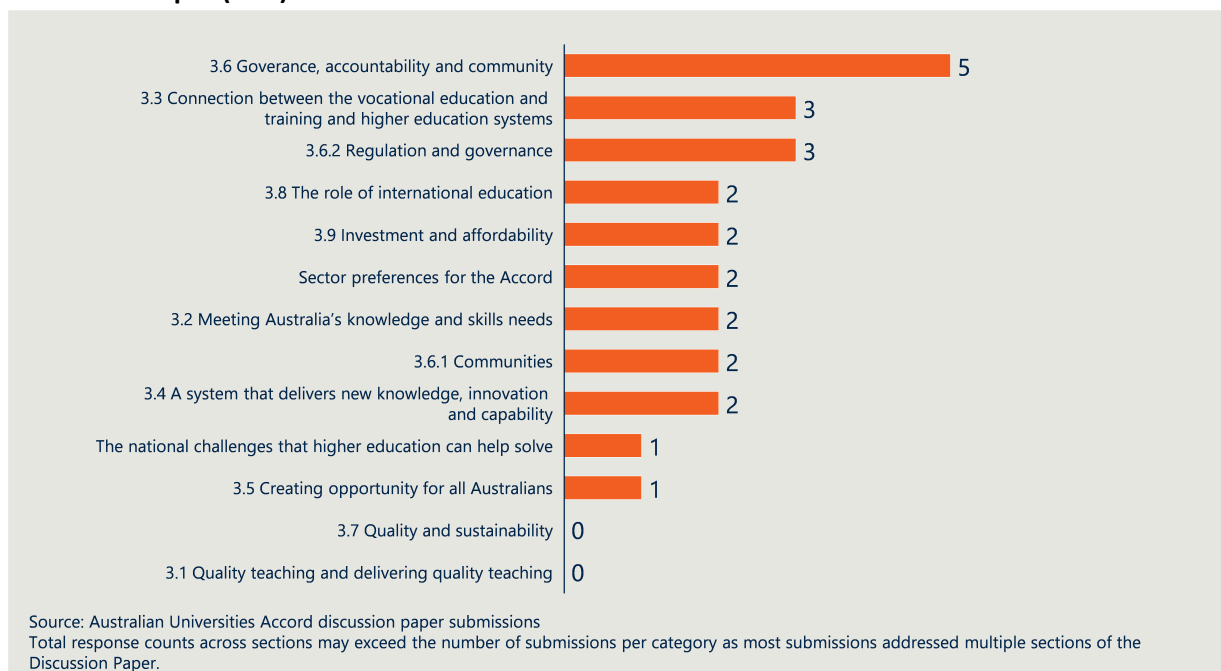
**Figure 20 | Distribution of responses received from discipline groups in response to the Discussion Paper (N=11)**



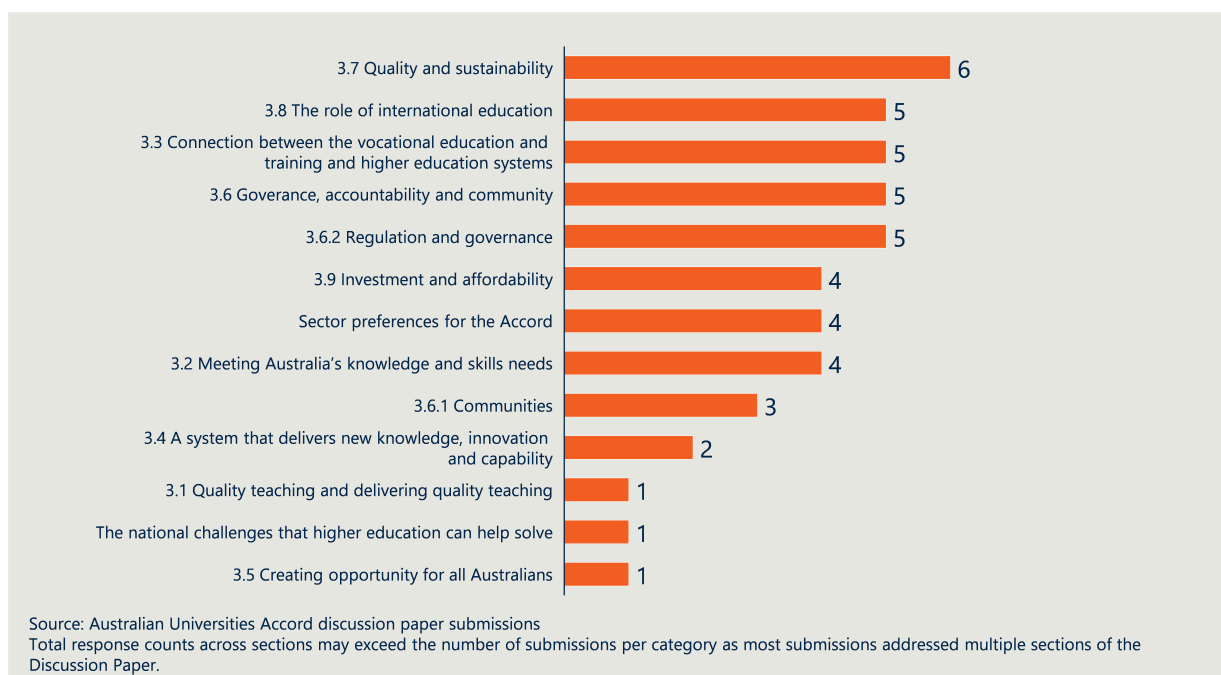
**Figure 21 | Distribution of responses received from student representatives in response to the Discussion Paper (N=10)**



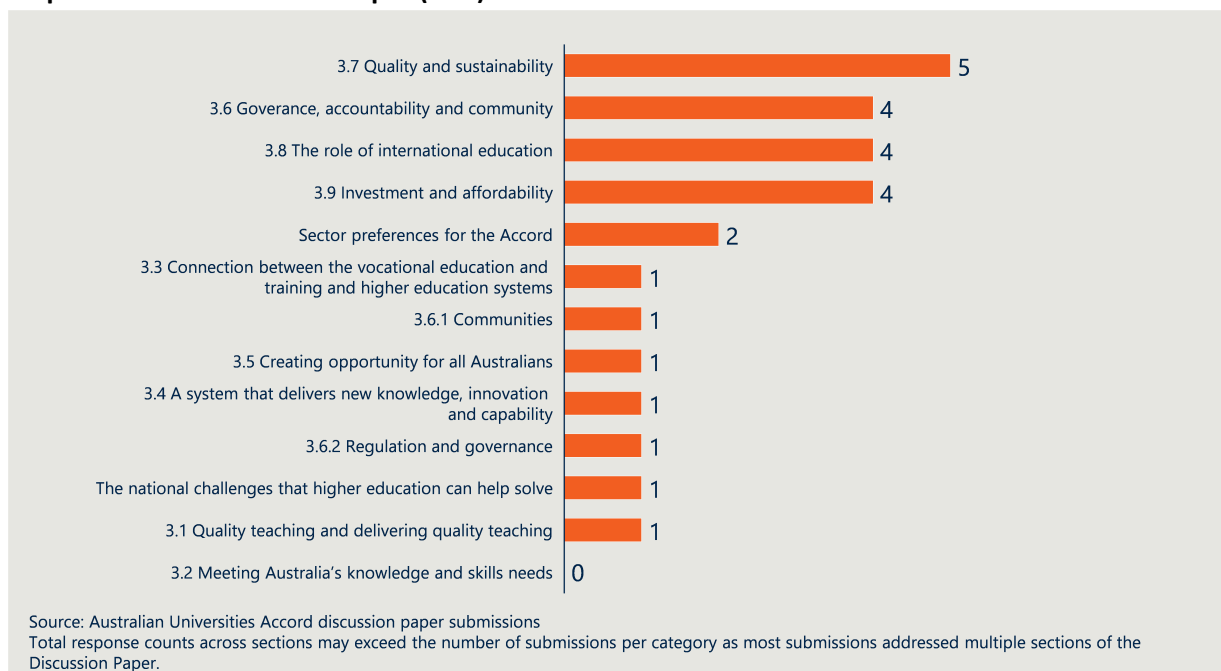
**Figure 22 | Distribution of responses received from independent providers in response to the Discussion Paper (N=9)**



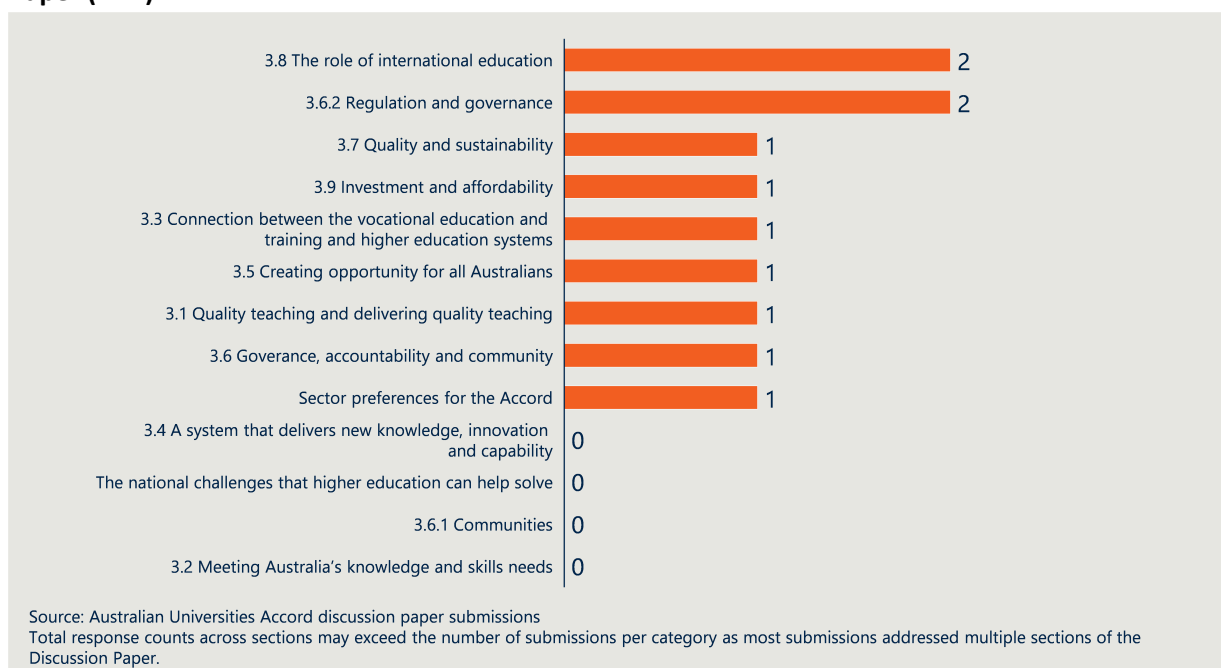
**Figure 23 | Distribution of responses received from higher education peak bodies in response to the Discussion Paper (N=8)**



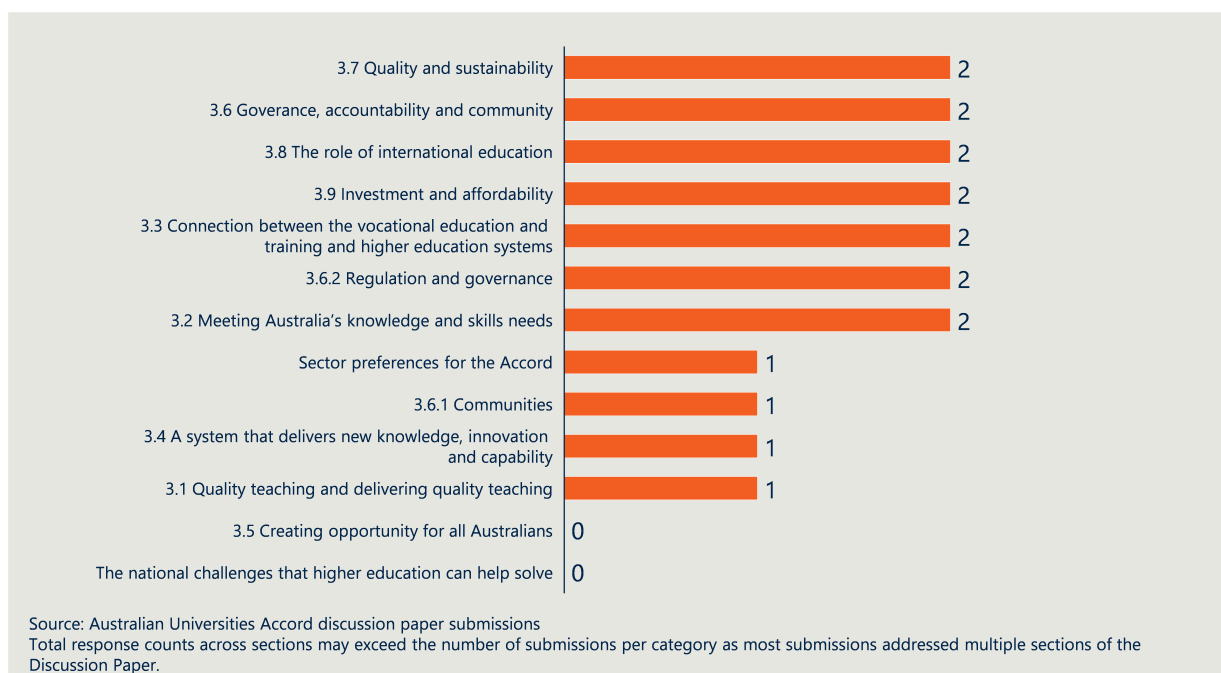
**Figure 24 | Distribution of responses received from regional networks and support services in response to the Discussion Paper (N=7)**



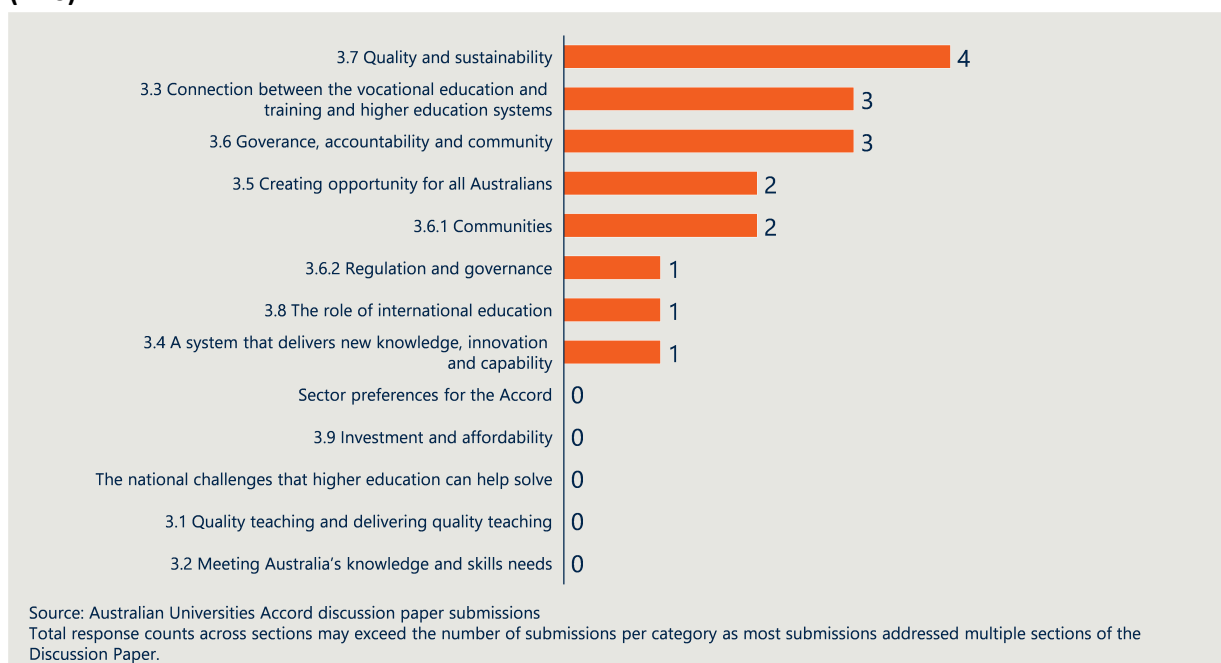
**Figure 25 | Distribution of responses received from other respondents in response to the Discussion Paper (N=7)**



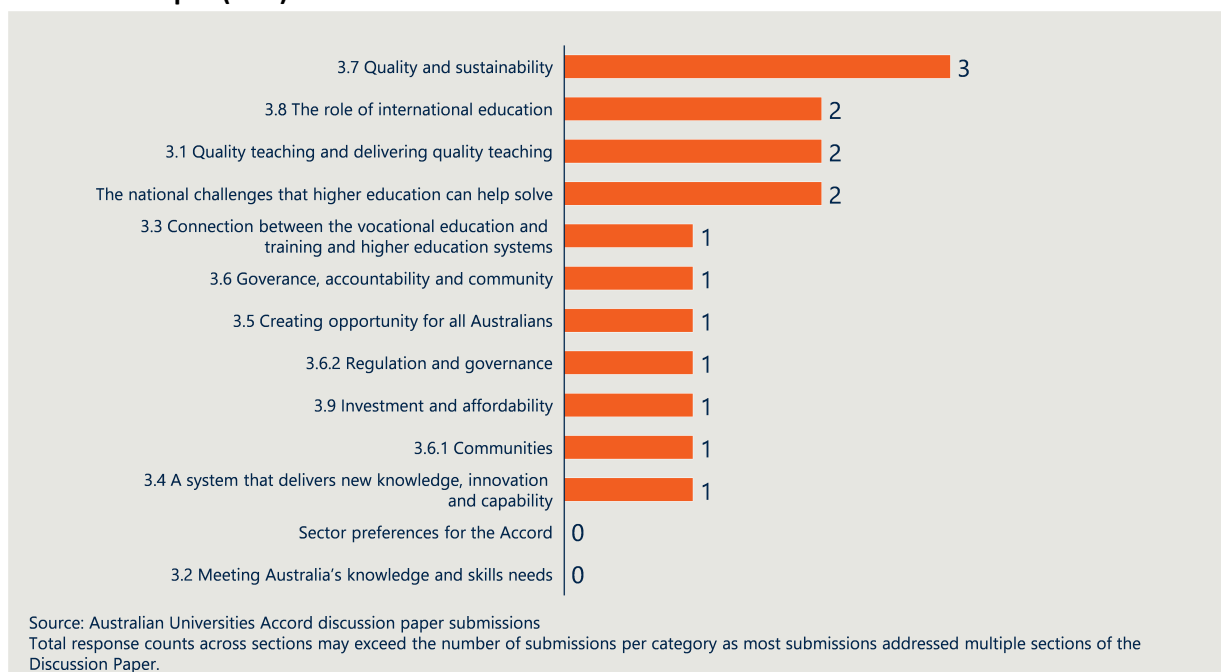
**Figure 26 | Distribution of responses received from State or Commonwealth government bodies in response to the Discussion Paper (N=6)**



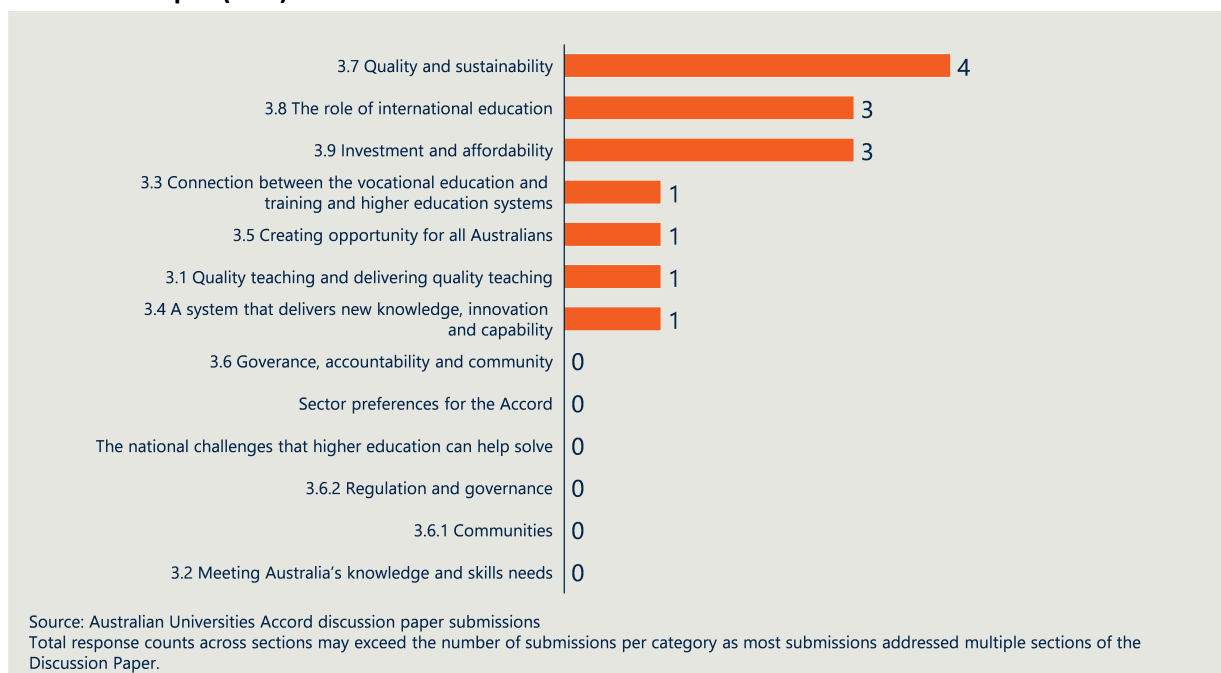
**Figure 27 | Distribution of responses received from businesses in response to the Discussion Paper (N=6)**



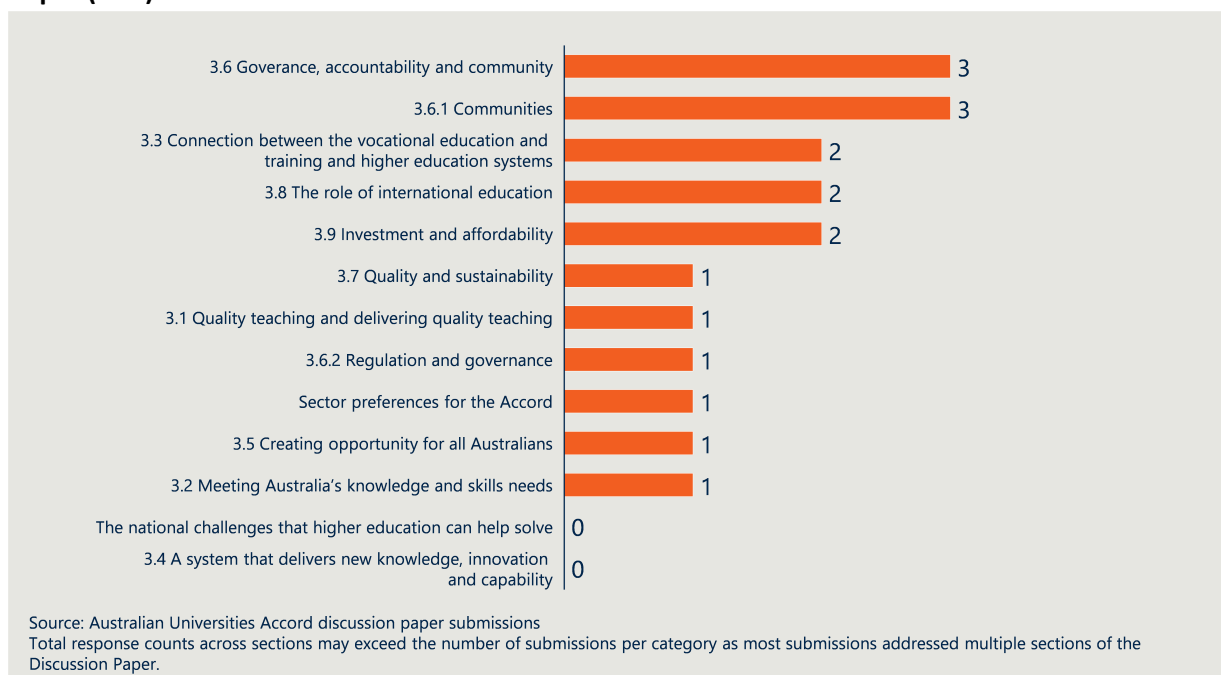
**Figure 28 | Distribution of responses received from First Nations organisations in response to the Discussion Paper (N=4)**



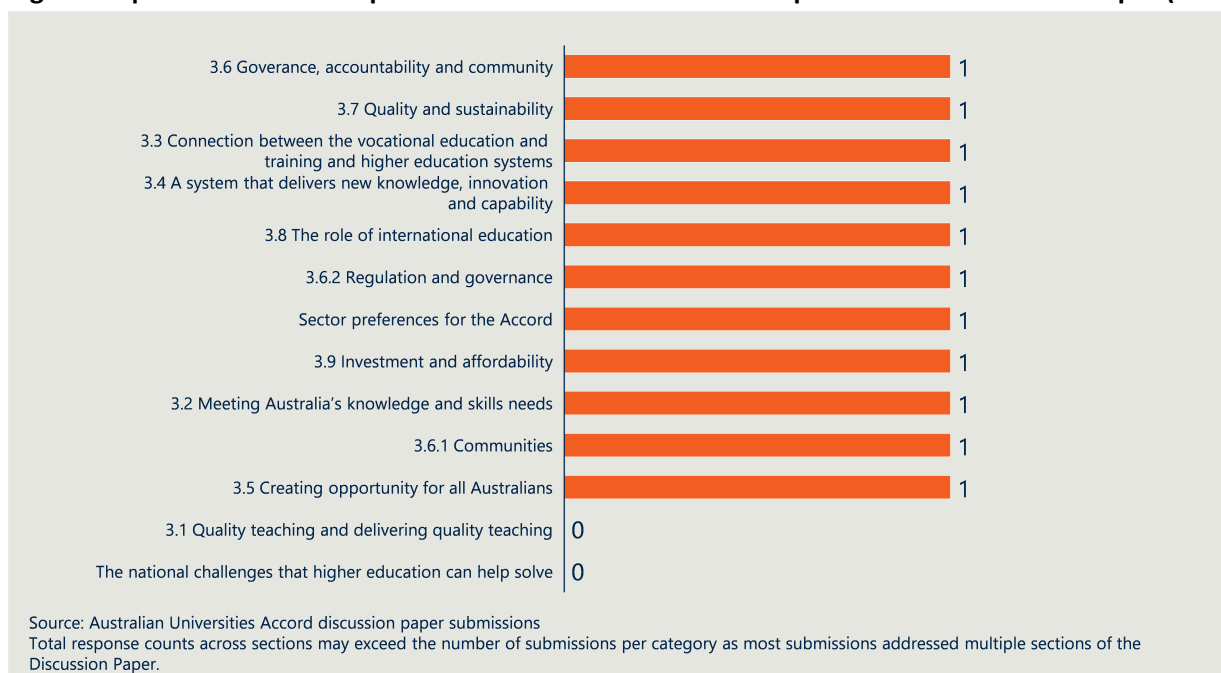
**Figure 29 | Distribution of responses received from local government bodies in response to the Discussion Paper (N=4)**



**Figure 30 | Distribution of responses received from other peak bodies in response to the Discussion Paper (N=3)**



**Figure 31 | Distribution of responses received from unions in response to the Discussion Paper (N=3)**



## Glossary

**ABSTUDY** - a group of Commonwealth payments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and apprentices

**AI** - Artificial intelligence

**AQF** - Australian Qualifications Framework

**ARC** - Australian Research Council

**ARC LIEF** - Australian Research Council's Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities scheme

**AUSTUDY** - A Commonwealth payment for mature age students (25 years or older) who are studying or doing an apprenticeship

**CGS** - Commonwealth Grant Scheme

**CSP** - Commonwealth Supported Place

**CUC** - Country University Centre

**ERA** - Excellence in Research for Australia

**GDP** - Gross Domestic Product

**GLAM** - Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums

**HASS** - Humanities and social sciences

**HDR** - Higher degree by research



**HE** - Higher education

**HECS** - Higher Education Contribution Scheme

**HELP** - Higher Education Loan Program

**HEPPP** - Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program

**JRG** – Job-ready Graduates package

**JSA** - Jobs and Skills Australia

**LOTE** - Languages other than English

**Microcredential** - a short certification course provided by TAFE or university to learn new skills in a short period of time

**NCRIS** - National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy

**NPILF** - National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund

**OECD** - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**OOHC** - Out-of-home care

**R&D** - Research and development

**RUC** - Regional University Centre

**SCA** - Student contribution amount

**SES** - Socioeconomic status

**SME** - Small and medium enterprise

**STEM** - Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

**TAC** - Tertiary Admissions Centre

**TAFE** - Technical and Further Education

**TEQSA** - Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

**VET** - Vocational Education and Training

**WIL** - Work-integrated learning