

Background

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

Looking Ahead 2020-2025, the University's new Strategic Plan affirms our commitment to widening participation, promoting diversity and fairness, overcoming injustice, and increasing success for all through the delivery of an outstanding and inspiring student experience, as well as research that engages locally and globally.

The strategic plan is supported by the NeW Education Framework, which provides an integrated and transformative strategy for responding to the changing higher education landscape and is aimed at supporting the access and success of all students, especially those from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

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

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

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

Through the CEEHE, the University is committed to developing an agenda that brings equity practice and research together and, in doing so, generates a robust suite of multidisciplinary research, evaluation and practice to offer equity leaders, both nationally and internationally.

Scope

The Student Equity and Social Justice Plan directs a principled, whole-of-institution approach for the allocation of resources (specifically HEPPP); inclusive design of frameworks, projects and initiatives; and the recognition of the diversity and difference in our communities.

Strategies, projects and initiatives directly related to equity of access, participation and success in higher education work best when aligned with broader institutional commitments and strategies; that is, when equity is embedded in all of our teaching, learning, research, engagement and governance practices.

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

Student Equity and Social Justice Framework

Goal:

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

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

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

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Sub-Strategies

- Develop and embed social justice principles guiding evaluation of UON equity focused initiatives.
- Embed a strong and sustainable governance framework for effective oversight of UON HEPPP resources.
- Maintain mechanisms whereby knowledge from other higher education contexts (nationally and internationally) becomes useful to the University's frameworks for policy making, governance and initiative development.

CO-DEVELOPMENT

- Students and our communities are at the centre of all equity endeavours.
- Frameworks and initiatives are co-developed with students, staff and community through ethical consultation and engagement.
- Initiatives are research-informed, rigorously evaluated, and have a clear link with the goal of parity of participation.

Sub-Strategies

- Draw on the Equity & Social Justice Evaluation Framework to better understand the ways that different initiatives can be valuable and are valued.
- Continue engagement with University data to inform frameworks, initiatives and resource allocation more broadly.
- Embed a strength-based, participatory approach for engagement and consultation that builds on University-to-community connections.

VALUING DIVERSITY & DIFFERENCE

- The diversity of our student body and communities are celebrated, recognised and valued.
- The University thrives on the richness of its diverse communities but also recognises the significance of developing empathy across our differences.
- Going beyond a superficial understanding to ensure that systems, frameworks and initiatives respond to student/ community contexts. This will support the development of an environment that nurtures student aspirations, capabilities, and sense of belonging.

Sub-Strategies

- Maintain an active Student Equity and Social Justice Expert panel to support dialogue between equity research and practice and to ensure student and staff voices are captured in university decision-making about equity funding and initiatives.

- Draw on the Equity & Social Justice Evaluation Framework to better understand the ways that different initiatives can address the needs of students and communities and respond to changes in policy, environments or the institution that may impact on student experiences of higher education (and school or graduate pathways).
- Build and maintain communities of practice locally and internationally to facilitate the development of nurturing environments for students through the sharing of practice and research.

**APPENDIX: Student Equity and Social Justice Plan
2020 HEPPP Funded Initiatives**

All of the initiatives outlined below have been developed in line with the Student Equity & Social Justice Framework Principles:

| Parity of Participation | | |
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| Resource Accountability | Co-Development | Valuing Diversity & Difference |

- Underpinning all of the strategies and initiatives is the continual development of an Equity & Social Justice Evaluation Framework.
- The framework is being co-developed between CEEHE and project teams, in order to produce a context specific approach to evaluation that is fit for purpose and is aligned to equity and social justice principles.

| Strategies | | Provision of accessible and inclusive life-long learning pathways for individuals and communities who have had a disrupted educational journey | Develop and nurture engagement with university and build an appreciation of life-long learning amongst our communities. | Increase the retention, success and career readiness of students by embedding a range of research-informed strategies throughout our courses, programs and student support offerings. | Design and implement a supportive and research-informed framework to grow the capability of the sector to address complex equity issues and to work inclusively with diverse student cohorts across a range of contexts |
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| Initiative | Description | <i>Shaded areas below indicate how each initiative relates to one or more of the strategies</i> | | | |
| Uni4You | Uni4You supports students from historically under-represented backgrounds to access and complete | | | | |

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| | <p>an enabling program. Uni4You provides a supportive pathway to university via enabling programs and includes preparation workshops, individual case management and learning support groups.</p> | | | | |
| Live Learn Grow | <p>The Live, Learn, Grow (LLG) program seeks to overcome the known barriers preventing care leavers engaging with higher education. The program has a dual focus of providing dynamic, student-centered support to young people with an out of home care (OOHC) background as they transition to their first year at university and progress through their degree, along with increasing awareness and understanding of educational pathways amongst case workers in the sector.</p> | | | | |
| Reclaiming My Place | <p>'Reclaiming My Place' (RMP) is an art-based program that creates inclusive and non-formal points of entry to lifelong learning for women outside of formal learning pathways. Community learning partners included representatives from TAFE Career Pathways, Vocational & Community Engagement, TAFE Student services, University of Newcastle's Uni4You program and caseworkers from The Canopy and Singleton Family Support Service</p> | | | | |

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| SUPERBE (Strategy Underpinning Empowerment for Refugee Backgrounds in Education) | SUPERBE is a praxis-based strategy developed by CEEHE to engage and support community members and current students from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds in education across the Hunter region. SUPERBE consists of student gatherings, drop-in spaces for dialog, support for on-campus events and a fabric of community partnerships and networks. | | | | |
| Children’s University Newcastle | The Children’s University – Newcastle (CU Newcastle) provides extra-curricular learning opportunities to children aged between 7 and 14 years; the aim being to engage children in learning in its broadest sense and in the context of their wider families and communities; to provide the scaffolding for children to develop self-efficacy; and to nurture a sense of confidence, capability and aspiration as lifelong learners. | | | | |
| Deadly Streaming | The Deadly Streaming Project is focussed on building positive self-regard amongst Aboriginal, low SES students, leading to an increased awareness that they belong in educational settings. | | | | |
| Enabling/Pathways Support | A range of embedded initiatives that provides timely and tailored support to | | | | |

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| | build the foundational tools needed to succeed in higher education. | | | | |
| Transition and Progression | A range of activities that are designed to increase the retention, success and career readiness of domestic undergraduate students by embedding a range of evidence-based support strategies throughout the curriculum. Including; early intervention programs designed to identify students who commence studies with a range of learning impacts, are disengaging before they fail courses or drop out of university studies, and ensuring courses and programs are designed and assessed in ways that actively engage a diverse community of students with their learning | | | | |
| Equity Scholarships (ESSUN) | ESSUN is focused on encouraging participation in higher education through the provision of equity scholarship opportunities. Hardship grants are awarded to students to meet urgent needs which if unable to meet, would place continued study in jeopardy. This program provides support to low SES students who have been impacted by bushfires in 2020. | | | | |
| Writing Program for Equity & Widening | In recognition of the need for higher education institutions to reveal the significant impact of equity and | | | | |

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| Participation Practitioners | <p>widening participation initiatives, including strategies to support access, transition and retention of students from historically under-represented background, the aim of the Writing Program is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance the relationship between widening participation practitioners and equity researchers • raise the profile of robust research and evaluation of widening participation activity nationally and internationally • support widening participation practitioners to present research and evaluation of their practice in refereed academic journals, enabling practitioners and academics to share their work with broader audiences. | | | | |
| Widening Participation; Equity Praxis Framework and Global Network | <p>Building on the CEEHE praxis-based approach, UON is developing innovation in the range of equity and participation initiatives. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginalized Communities & Innovative Praxis to ensure community-oriented, co-designed, evaluative and social justice approaches are embedded into the ongoing development of our widening participation programs; | | | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The UON Equity Praxis Framework drawn from to support and extend the equity and social justice expertise across research and practice, providing academic and peer mentorship and support in communities of praxis through sustained exchange.• Global Equity Praxis Network to bring together international scholars and experts across disciplines, methodologies and contexts through strategies and resources for co-exchange. | | | | |
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