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**National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund: Consultation
Response from Macquarie University**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond on behalf of Macquarie University to the consultation paper on the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund. We welcome this opportunity and comments are attached.

Should you need any further information on this matter, do please get in touch with the University's Director of Government Relations, Peter McCarthy, who can be contacted at peter.mccarthy@mq.edu.au or on (02) 9850 6841.

Sincerely

S Bruce Dowton

National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund: Consultation Response from Macquarie University

The proposed National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) is a welcome initiative, given the value of engaging with industry and the community to promote graduate employability and collaborative research. The *Consultation Paper* usefully acknowledges the many factors that could influence employment outcomes and the complexity graduates face. And allowing universities to set their own targets should enable innovative and strategic approaches to enhanced engagement with industry, and support job-ready graduates.

Principles

The Principles are clear, though we agree with the proposal from the [Australian Council of Graduate Research](#) (ACGR) that an additional principle, 'inclusivity', be added to the existing five (at p. 11) to include HDR candidates in the scope of the NPILF.

How the Principles align to the three types of 'indicators' is less apparent. This is further complicated because the various terms used (i.e. principles, priorities, indicators, metrics, tiers, etc.) across the 3 priority areas (WIL, STEM+, Industry Partnerships) are at times confusing and not always distinguished sufficiently. The explanations on p. 12 are ambiguous. More guidance and clearer terminology would be appreciated as the Fund is implemented.

To achieve this greater clarity, certain concepts presented in the *Consultation Paper* could be further developed and substantiated by incorporating information (e.g. definitions, evidence, etc.) and reference to peak national bodies focused on work integrated learning (e.g. Australian Collaborative Education Network – ACEN).

Tiered Indicators

The proposal that universities do not need to select the same indicators each year will allow for responsiveness to data and trends. Similarly, the ability to distribute 'indicators' across three priorities makes it possible to align to university mission and strategy.

We consider that the draft list of NPILF metrics at p. 16 should be expanded to measure increases in the number of students undertaking WIL.

We also propose that the WIL metric in that list, 'Increase/proportion of HDR students undertaking internship/placement within first 18 months (of commencing HDR)', should be expanded to include *all* stages of candidature (and degrees, ie. MRes, MPhil, PhD). This will help maximise the impact of graduate researchers as industry linkages are developed.

The inclusion of a STEM+ metric to 'increase/proportion of women in "core" STEM courses' is of course welcome. However, we believe that this list of metrics should be broadened to include candidates from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, candidates with disabilities, and candidates from minorities.

We would like to suggest two more metrics: 'Increase research end-user joint supervision' and 'Increase the number of candidates with an industry mentor'. Both will help support the development and enhancement of industry partnerships across a wide range of sectors.

Priorities

Graduate research students are supported by the Commonwealth Government through the Research Training Program and, given the significant contribution that they make to industry

engagement, any mechanism for funding allocation should draw upon indicators of HDR activity such as RTP funding.

Macquarie sends a Higher Degree Research Student Annual Survey (MUSEQ-R) to HDR candidates to understand their perceptions of their research training experiences. New questions included this year for the first time seek feedback on WIL and research end-user activities and this kind of survey could be used as part of the collection of data.

There is very little reference in the *Consultation Paper* to micro-credentials. As they could be a valuable aspect of industry partnership, it would be helpful to include them in the full scope of levels of study and enrolment.

We propose that the WIL definition should also define the term ‘authentic’ for clarity. The STEM+ definition should be made more explicit by including the skills of ‘problem solving, inquiry, creative and critical thinking’ so that it will be inclusive of HASS disciplines. The university-industry definition should detail the broader components of workplaces and use ‘industry/enterprise’.

Existing Practice

Macquarie University is a leader of WIL in STEM+ disciplines with all undergraduate students completing a WIL experience in the [PACE \(Professional and Community Engagement\) Program](#) as part of their degree. The Program opens up a diverse employment landscape for our students.

PACE has recently completed a multi-year, multi-stakeholder, evaluation to assess its impact and effectiveness with findings providing strong evidence for the value of the Program for students, partners, the community, and the University. This evaluation framework may be useful for other universities seeking to measure and maintain the quality of their WIL activities. (For more information on this, please see Macquarie’s [TEACH webpage](#).) These evaluation methods could also be expanded to HDR activities.

At the postgraduate level, Macquarie University is engaged with the Industry Mentoring Network in STEM (IMNIS) which facilitates mentor relationships for our STEM PhD candidates. We also actively support our candidates and academics who participate in Australian Postgraduate Research (APR) Intern Program.

There are a number of other universities that measure and maintain the quality of WIL activities, promote WIL and its benefits, and engage industry effectively. Although the annual report will feature de-identified case studies, the framework might facilitate more direct collaboration between universities for the purposes of industry engagement. We suggest that more knowledge sharing is needed and this could include drawing on existing networks such as ACEN.

General

Increasing numbers of research graduates are entering industry after they graduate and/or after spending several years in academia, which underlies the need for flexible careers that encourage lifelong learning. We propose, in addition to the metric ‘Increase/proportion of academic workforce actively from industry’, that there could also be incentives for current academic researchers to work in industry.
