

30 October 2020

Working Group
National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment

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Dear Sir/Madam

APS Response to the NPILF Consultation Paper October 2020

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the [Consultation Paper for the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund \(NPILF\)](#). The APS supports the introduction of the Job-Ready Graduation package announced in June 2020 that will provide additional university places and support for students in regional and remote Australia, including the allocation of block grants to universities to support enhanced engagement with industry to produce job-ready graduates.

The APS is the peak professional body for psychology in Australia, representing over 25,000 members nationally. In this role, the APS is responsible for promoting excellence and ethical practice in the science, education, and the practise of psychology.

Please find below the APS response developed by the APS Division of Psychological Research, Education and Training, to the questions raised by the consultation.

If the Working Group requires further APS input, I may be contacted through my office on (03) 8662 3300 or by email at z.burgess@psychology.org.au.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Executive Officer

APS Response to National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund Consultation Paper

Responses are mapped to questions for discussion on pages 22 and 23 of the consultation paper

Principles

1. Generally, the principles seem adequate.

Tiered Indicators

2. The number of indicators seems to have been chosen to provide a basis for funding rather than on the basis of need, or ultimately, performance. It does not seem clear that any specific number of indicators is always sensible or required.
3. Possibly, but without knowing which businesses will be involved in work integrated learning program, it is difficult to be definitive.
4. The draft list of metrics in Table 1, seem to be reasonable but are not always clearly justified. For example, under STEM+ it lists: *Increase/proportion of women in 'core' STEM courses (excluding health/architecture)*, yet does not mention trying to increase the proportion of men in Health/Architecture – surely the same rule with regard to participation applies? There also does not seem to be a specific effort to increase Indigenous or non-traditional participation. The Society believes that there should be a higher emphasis on students with low/marginalised demographics. There is also an implied assumption that the existing efforts comfortably meet the needs of students, universities and partners – we believe there should be an ongoing process of critical review of these assumptions to ensure goodness of fit.
5. A new system of data collection sounds like an expensive impost in these days of drastically limited budgets pertaining to the main business (teaching and research) of the universities, is this step really necessary? Perhaps the scheme could adequately function with the existing, or a collateral data collection.

Allocation methodology

6. The 12-month window is too short a time to initiate, establish and evaluate a new program. This timeline ensures, at least initially, that only current the programmes will be listed, and the initiative to start novel programmes would have to come from somewhere else. A three-year window would allow more orderly development. We are also of the view that student voices are missing from the equation. It should be 360 evaluation not primarily or exclusively driven by either the industry partners or the universities.

Distribution options

7. The APS believe that the distribution methods employed depends upon the university and the partner organisation, and different options might be better suited to different entities.

Priorities – WIL, STEM-skills and Industry partnerships

8. The APS supports the extension of stem to the more appropriate category of STEM+ which adds in the fields of Allied Health. From our perspective, we consider that psychology, as a science fits comfortably in the stem stable, and we are pleased to see it appropriately located there by your working definition. The Industry Linkage definition seems to prioritise knowledge and technology exchange over the comprehensive preparation of students. The latter appears to be the primary focus of much of the rest of the document, which we believe tempts the balance away from the growing portable skill set of the student.
9. The APS cannot speak to the sector but for many of our psychology programs, there does not seem to be much emphasis on this at the moment. Some of our member schools and departments have undertaken WIL with a number of partners and students who have gone through different versions of WIL including the capstone placement course in the final semester, but this data is not collected at university level except for Education, Nursing schools and in our externally accredited programs. Innovative programs/degree such as these are not yet reported on, hopefully this will be redressed by the program.
10. Certainly in psychology, one of the marked disincentives to work integrated learning for our masters and doctoral students undertaking their AHPRA registered training pathways (i.e., independently practising psychologists), is that the funding attached to the extensive industry placement programs (1500 hours over a two-year program) as well as the intensive supervision

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requirements for appropriate qualification to practice, is not being funded adequately. For example, in Victoria, our industry placement requirements have to be funded at a per student per day fee, an arrangement that does not apply in any other state of Australia. This problem is exacerbated by the change in policy with regard to cross subsidisation of these otherwise costly programs. This policy change has had a significant and detrimental impact on program viability and particularly so in the context of the COVID recession commenting in closure of a number of our clinical training programs in our endorsed areas of practice including clinical neuropsychology and organisational psychology.

11. There needs to be a will to devote the necessary time to building relationships with potential partners. This is not something that can happen instantly. In developing the WIL projects described above, the academic spent an entire year in semi-regular meetings and email conversations with the relevant partners brainstorming ideas and designing the process and the outcomes as well and then designing the educational components, the pedagogy that underpinned the process and the partner and student outcomes. The project ran for three consecutive years and was evaluated each time and adjusted where needed.
12. This needs to be embedded into every course from day one – making links between theory and practice (PRAXIS) a regular element of class activities and discussion; using practical and contemporary examples of how the discipline can contribute to solving social issues (e.g. climate change will not be addressed via science and technology alone – it is a human made disaster and human led responses must be factored into the solutions) . WIL in all of its variations must be visible to students throughout their entire degree and they have to understand how each class and each assessment builds on to a body of knowledge and a suite of skills that they can apply in any given context.
13. Intellectual property issues are often a problem when students are still in training and have to produce written reports of their activities. The costs associated with having a specific person designated as the driver – in SME's this places a huge burden on personnel and resources, but this aspect is essential for the project's success.
14. IP issues will be the difficult to deal with in relation to knowledge sharing.

Existing practice

15. Certainly, universities providing psychology education and training have been working with WIL in our clinical training programs for more than 50 years and have a lot of accumulated experience about how placement agencies, university academics and students can work together to achieve the best synthesis of practical skill development in situ.

General

16. No, it omits a substantial cohort of students (non-STEM+)
17. No, 12 months is too short a time to create, implement and evaluate a new programme; three years would be much more reasonable.
18. The document refers to many more tables than exist in the document – some of the missing ones were critical but eventually our members worked out that the Table count in the text includes the Figures, causing a numbering mismatch. There is a lot of administrative overhead that seems quite arbitrary, for instance:
 - a. Why 12 indicators rather than some other number?
 - b. Why restrict to STEM+ courses at all – wouldn't WIL be beneficial for all students?
 - c. Why doesn't funding have to be spent on NPILF activities (p.18)? what else could it be validly spent on?
 - d. There is no mention of non-STEM disciplines in this model and yet the entire front end of the discussion paper emphasised the essential skills derived from non-STEM disciplines and how the interface between non-STEM & STEM disciplines is essential for future employment opportunities to be realised. This is a major omission in the paper and in government thinking about the relevant benefits to society of the non-STEM disciplines.