

ATN Submission

Review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training

The Education Council Secretariat
PO Box 202, Carlton South Vic 3053 Australia

Dear Professor Shergold and council members,

The Australian Technology Network (ATN) of Universities welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Education Council on the senior secondary pathways consultation as it applies to our member organisations.

By way of background, ATN is the peak body representing Australia's four most innovative and enterprising universities; University of Technology Sydney, Curtin University, RMIT and University of South Australia.

ATN universities are home to over 190,000 university students. Among them are over 1,700 Indigenous students and some 23,000 students from rural or regional areas. ATN also encompasses an additional 15,000 vocational education and training (VET) students.

The review poses questions for respondents to consider – ATN's submission looks at:

- *How can we help students make better decisions about learning pathways within school?*
- *How can we support young people to make better decisions about their post-school pathways?*
- *How can we make sure opportunities are available and support is tailored to the needs of all young people?*

Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)

ATN universities have been active participants in the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) and acknowledge the Government's ongoing contribution to providing young people with a range of pathways through the program. These projects have supported the transition of young people into further study.

Projects have included:

- Higher education careers advice for low-SES students (Curtin)
- Key influencers of low-SES students (Curtin)
- Economies of scale in supporting low SES and other disadvantaged students (RMIT)
- Building regional student awareness, aspiration and engagement using digital technologies (RMIT)
- Promoting academic success and well-being: Enhancing engagement with regional students, success and well-being through the use of innovative early intervention strategies (UniSA)
- Equity scholarships to improve participation and success in higher education by people from low-SES backgrounds (UTS)

Beyond participating in these HEPPP initiatives, ATN universities offer flexible and alternative entry pathways that can assist young people to explore and expand their range of options. For example, the South Australian Institute of Business and Technology (SAIBT) allows young people an alternative pathway into the second year of most University of South Australia bachelor degrees. In addition, UTS Insearch offers articulation arrangements from courses such as the Diploma of Business into a Bachelor of Business.

First in family students

The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) at Curtin University has funded a project to explore the experiences of first in family students in higher education. The report 'Exploring the Experience of Being First in Family at University' (including co-authors Associate Professor Sharron King and Charmaine Graham from University of South Australia) included a number of recommendations for institutions, teaching and professional staff, and first in family students. All ATN universities provide dedicated support and resources for parents and caregivers of university students, including first in family students.

Wellbeing hubs for students

ATN universities host 'wellbeing hubs' providing tailored mentoring and academic support programs for Indigenous students, with the Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Karda at Curtin University, Ngarara Willim at RMIT, Wirringka Student Services at University of South Australia, and the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research at University of Technology Sydney. These hubs aim to improve student engagement and retention.

Scholarships

ATN universities offer incentives and support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to study at their institutions. All have scholarships to support Indigenous students and most provide scholarships for rural/regional students, students with a disability, refugee students and students with a sole parent.

Suggested future activities

Universities could continue to support these efforts by:

- Offering more enabling programs, which offer an alternative pathway into university for students without an ATAR or with a low ATAR. Programs like RMIT's Urban School, UTS Insearch and Curtin's Uniready Enabling Program help students disadvantaged in school to enter university.
 - Founding new networks to support the already sizeable (but still underrepresented) cohorts of low-SES and rural/regional students.
 - Implementing more authentic assessment throughout the course of study and providing greater access to employment networks. Assessment should prepare students for the real world. ATN advocates authentic assessment and industry engaged learning and assessment at universities and recommends its adoption where possible in the school system.
 - Recognition of non-English speaking background as distinct from international students. This will help identify different needs among Australian secondary school students from non-English speaking backgrounds trying to enter the university system, and the high numbers and different circumstances of international students at universities from a non-English speaking background.
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ATN would welcome the opportunity to provide further information on any of the issues raised in our brief submission, if requested.

We look forward to the final report of the Council on this significant work for the sector.

Yours sincerely,



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5 December 2019

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