

Australian National University

University Community Student Equity Scheme

1. Background to the Scheme

The Department of Education Science and Training administers the Higher Education Equity Support Program. It contributes annual funding to ANU to undertake activities that assist in removing barriers to access for disadvantaged students and promote equality of opportunity in higher education.

In particular, it aims to increase the access and participation in higher education of students from low socio-economic/low income backgrounds, students from rural and isolated areas, students with disabilities and students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The Higher Education Equity Support Program also aims to assist in overcoming educational disadvantage associated with gender. (From DEST HEESP 1.40 Program Description)

The grant funds are allocated annually to ANU and must be spent on equity initiatives that target disadvantaged students and encourage sustainable improvements in *access, participation, retention* and *success* of higher education for those students. The initiatives target equity groups consistent with the aims of the Higher Education Equity Support Program and ANU's equity objectives. ANU can tailor their equity programs to address specific disadvantage, as appropriate to the demographics of their student population and catchment area. (From DEST HEESP 1.60 Program Description)

ANU provides a statement annually to DEST on the activities they are undertaking which assist disadvantaged students and meet the following criteria:

- (a) run outreach programs to attract disadvantaged students to higher education;
- (b) offer specialised support for disadvantaged students to assist their progression through higher education;
- (c) administer application and selection processes for the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships Program; and
- (d) establish an institutional equity scholarship program to complement the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships Program. (From DEST HEESP 1.45 Program Description)

ANU must also include in its annual reporting the key initiatives undertaken with the equity support program funds.

2. Student equity profile - ANU

In 2005 ANU's student profile as published on the DEST reports was:

From Appendix 3.3. All Domestic Students by State, Institution and Equity Group (a) (c), 2005

Institution	Students from a Non-English speaking background	Students with a disability	Women in Non-Traditional Area	Indigenous	Rural	Isolated	Low Socio-Economic Status (b)	Total Domestic Students
ANU	399	741	1999	90	1262	30	388	11,005
Percentage	3.6%	6.7%	18%	.8%	11.5%	.2%	3.5%	100%
Total								
Universities	26,314	27,661	135,012	8,337	118,021	8,520	102,394	705,762
Percentage	3.7%	3.9%	19%	1.1%	16.7%	.1%	14.5%	100%

A review for 2006 student equity data compared similarly to the 2005 ANU outcomes with ANU's strengths and areas for improvement consistent. ANU has strength in the area of participation for students with a disability and is performing on average for participation for students from a non-English speaking background. Rural students and indigenous students are below the national average for participation. Women in non-traditional areas are comparable to the national average, except when considering women in engineering and computer science where women EFTSL comprise 14.84% of all domestic students. However it is the low participation rate of students from low socio-economic backgrounds where the greatest need for attention is required. Within each college the student equity profile can vary considerably. College data is available to benchmark both within ANU and nationally.

3. University Community Student Equity Scheme aim and objective

The Australian National University has an express commitment to equal opportunity in education for students and prospective students. This commitment is consistent with ANU's pursuit of excellence as an education-intensive research institute of international distinction, and is underpinned by values of integrity in activities, respect in relationships and collegiality in the building of a community of scholarship and learning.

ANU has established the University Community Student Equity Scheme that will commence in 2007. It is a scheme to encourage ANU staff to pilot new and innovative projects in key student equity priority areas.

Aim

The aim is to increase the number of undergraduate applicants of excellence from equity groups and enable undergraduates from these groups to achieve their best.

Objective

The objective of University Community Student Equity Scheme is to improve access, participation, retention and success of students from student equity groups at ANU. Key student equity groups are:

- Students with disabilities
- Students from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Students with low socio-economic status
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students¹
- Students from rural and isolated areas
- Women students in non-traditional courses

The priorities for the use of the Equity Support Priority (ESP) funding from DEST for 2007-2008 are:

- Students with low socio-economic status; and
- Students from rural and isolated areas

4. Strategy in achieving the aim and objective:

Stage One

Each Dean of a College is requested to review their student profile of students with low socio-economic status and students from rural and isolated areas. From the analysis the College will make recommendations for strategies to improve access to University for students from these groups. This report would be limited to 4 pages and would include:

- An assessment of the needs of the student equity group via the ANU Statistical Services and any other relevant qualitative or quantitative information.
- The benefits to the specific equity group/s.
- The program proposal with the activities to be undertaken including the time lines and costs. Funding will be limited to no more than \$8,000 per project.
- The duration of the project. It must be completed by December 2008.

The Report will be forwarded to the Chair, University Community Equity Committee via the Senior Adviser, Equity by **October 12, 2007**.

Funding to assist the College would be provided from the ESP funds, of between \$1,000 and \$2,000, dependant on College requirements and need.

The Colleges can seek advice from the Senior Adviser Equity in their review and development of their student equity program proposal.

¹ Initiatives targeted specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are funded from a different DEST Equity source. Initiatives under this scheme can include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, but are not specific to this group.

Stage Two

The University Community Equity Committee will select a Student Equity Committee to review the College Reports. Committee members will have experience in advancing equity for students. There will be gender balance of at least 30% and between 3 to 5 members on the committee.

The Student Equity Committee will:

- a) Allocate funding to the College for implementation of the College student equity strategy, up to \$8,000, ensuring that only the available ESP funding is allocated;
- b) Report to the University Community Equity Committee on the outcomes; and
- c) Attend an annual student equity function.

The committee will favourably consider projects that:

- involve collaboration with other areas within ANU or
- can be applied, where appropriate, to other areas at ANU, or
- involve more than one equity groups.

5. Obligations of Colleges

1. Funds provided under this scheme are reconciled within the relevant College in accordance with ANU requirements, with a statement forwarded to University Community Equity Committee.
2. Any unspent funds to be returned to the Scheme.
3. A report of the program and its outcome presented to the University Community Equity Committee.
4. Agreement that a brief outline of the program and contact details can be placed on the Equity@ANU web site.
5. Attend a University student equity function to outline the program and outcomes.