

# DDCA

## The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts

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25th August 2023

Gerry McNally

Committee Secretary

The Senate

Education and Employment Legislation Committee

[eec.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:eec.sen@aph.gov.au)

**Subject: Response to the Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023 [Provisions]**

Dear Gerry,

We, the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA) and the Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS), appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Universities Accord Interim Proposal.

The DDCA is a representative body for the creative arts in Australian universities. Our discipline base includes visual arts, design, theatre, dance, music, screen production, digital arts, and creative and professional writing.

The DDCA exists to inform, connect and amplify the voices of people and organisations responsible for scholarly and research leadership of the creative arts in higher education. Our role is to champion the effective leadership of teaching and research in our disciplines, enhancing understanding; promoting diversity, inclusion, excellence, collegiality and sustainability; and contributing to the challenges of our age.

The DDCA publishes 'NiTRO: Creative Matters - perspectives on creative arts in higher education'. This is an online platform for the discussion of matters relating to practice, research, teaching, policy and reporting relevant to the creative arts in the university sector. (<https://creativematters.edu.au/>)

The DDCA represents 32 member institutions, as well as 5 peak bodies. These are:

Adelaide Central School of Art  
Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS)  
Australian National University  
Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education  
Bond University  
Curtin University  
Central Queensland University  
Deakin University  
Edith Cowan University  
Federation University  
Flinders University  
Griffith University  
Macquarie University  
Monash University  
University of Melbourne  
National Art School  
University of New South Wales  
National Institute of Dramatic Arts  
Photography Studies College  
The University of Queensland  
Queensland University of Technology  
RMIT University  
University of South Australia Creative  
Southern Cross University  
Swinburne University of Technology  
University of Southern Queensland  
The University of Sydney  
University of Tasmania  
University of Technology Sydney  
University of Wollongong  
Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts  
Western Sydney University  
IDEA - Interior Design and Interior Architecture Educators Association  
ACUADS - Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools  
ASPERA - Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association  
AAWP - The Australasian Association of Writing Programs

The Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS) is the leading body for the university visual arts, crafts and design disciplines. We play an active role in shaping quality education for artists and designers. ACUADS represents over 30 Australian university art and design faculties, schools and departments and other academic units offering university degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The organisation addresses social, economic and cultural policies and discourses affecting the sector.

ACUADS represents 23 member institutions. These are:

Australian National University  
National Art School  
Torrens University  
University of New South Wales  
University of Sydney  
University of Technology Sydney  
University of Western Sydney  
Griffith University  
Queensland University of Technology  
University of Southern Queensland  
Adelaide Central School of Art  
University of South Australia  
University of Tasmania  
Deakin University  
Federation University  
Monash University  
RMIT University  
Swinburne University of Technology  
University of Melbourne  
La Trobe University  
Curtin University  
Edith Cowan University  
University of Western Australia

**Included in this submission is a summary of recurrent themes and concerns as expressed by our membership. We do urge you to read the full submission that includes further and specific feedback from ASPERA, ACUADS, IDEA and AAWP.**

In general, we support the five Priority Actions as proposed in the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report, notwithstanding some reservations and prompts for more nuanced considerations as they relate to these actions.

Giving consideration to the future of Australia's higher education system, and as this relates specifically to the HASS disciplines which we represent, we must also give credence to the new National Cultural Policy (*Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, on 30 January 2023), which affirms that the arts have a crucial role to play in the prosperity and cohesion of Australia's society, and this includes economic, social and cultural prosperity.

The University is a critical part of this growth and development. How we support our undergraduate and postgraduate students, how we support and enable research, the working environments we cultivate to ensure health and wellbeing as well as innovation, creativity and meaningful contribution to society. We detail here items that may have been overlooked which are specific to the HASS disciplines in relation to the University Accord Interim Report.

### **Priority Action 3 is strongly supported**

This priority action needs to be First Nations led. Additional, culturally appropriate support for First Nations students needs to be reflected in funding provisions. We would like to see First Nations undergraduate and postgraduate students included as well as First Nations educators and researchers. We would also welcome First Nations people to be included in management and governance positions. The best support for First Nations being First Nations educators, researchers and leaders. This inclusion needs to be meaningful where First Nations knowledges and approaches are embedded within the learning, teaching and research cultures.

### **Financial support for students including postgraduates**

Access and success are dependent on financial support for students who are also under the strain of the cost of living and are either working full time whilst trying to study, or withdrawing from courses because maintaining work and study commitments becomes untenable and detrimental to health and wellbeing. Stipend amounts need to be reconsidered.

### **Support and inclusion for low SES students is strongly supported**

Even greater financial support needs to be made available to students from low SES backgrounds, who we strongly support should be included in the Higher Education System. To enable their success there needs to be careful planning around how these students transition into the higher education environment, and how they are enabled to succeed. There needs to be considered thought put into how we enable students from low SES for success. This needs to include flexible and generous Austudy allowances to enable students to study and make the most of their higher education experience.

### **Implementing Support Providers for currently underrepresented students is strongly supported**

It is important to acknowledge how much our educators already do in this regard, and the services already in place in terms of student support. Further support, to account for changes in the cohort make-up and abolition of the 50% pass rule, needs to be reflected in further Federal funding.

### **Ceasing the 50% pass rule is strongly supported**

#### **The Job-Ready Graduates initiative needs to be reversed immediately**

This has been a disservice at multiple levels, and for \*all\* disciplines and sectors, not only to HASS but also to STEM.

#### **'Scientists, engineers, qualified carers and others will be needed in large numbers' (p.1)**

The emphasis of such groups tends to continue to affirm/echo the much-debated STEM focus in education (as opposed STEAM approach). For example, in terms of qualified carers, there has much been much research and study around the arts (and higher arts education) and its role in enhancing wellbeing in aged care facilities including the wellbeing of carers as well as aged care residents. A more well-rounded approach and greater emphasis of interdisciplinary interconnectivity would enhance this perspective. This will be more aligned with section 2.2.1. 'Getting the balance of skills right' on page 45.

### **Skills and knowledge**

There seems to be an overemphasis on 'skills' in the report which assumes a narrowly utilitarian function. This needs to be expanded to include the large scope of universities and their role in society. Whilst skill-attainment and a thriving 'workforce' is critical, that the workforce is ethically-minded, culturally-sensitive, creative, flexible, resilient, and healthy, is just as important. These are only some of the 'skills' and capacities cultivated in the HASS disciplines, and we would like to see this reflected in the Accord more explicitly.

## **RESEARCH**

### **Ten possible 'system shifts' to improve Australia's higher education system as part of an integrated tertiary system (p. 20)**

This Could include greater recognition for research-led teaching approach as part of an integrated tertiary system. There is a need for more explicit articulation of research within higher education learning and teaching.

### **Evaluation**

We would like to emphasise our concern in regard to research reporting, and measurement of quality and impact. While the enhancement of research metric data and data systems are important and valuable forms of evaluating research and research impact, some acknowledgement of not all forms of research are quantifiable or can be represented via metric approach. Acknowledgement of qualitative approaches need to be included as part of a more holistic approach towards national evaluation of research outputs and impacts.

We caution against a solely automated, data-driven approach, which is not always a suitable form for evaluating the creative arts. Alternatives to the model that works in STEM is required for some HASS disciplines that engage in Creative Practice Research. Metric-based systems do a disservice to the creative arts. Further acknowledgement and representation of necessary diverse forms of qualitative evaluation would be a useful inclusion in the report to ensure a recognition of the wide range of research practices and ways in which these practices are evaluated within the national sector. Support in the form of properly qualified and professionally trained administrators and assessors who are adequately/appropriately recompensed for their work is needed in this space in order to provide an equitable playing field.

### **National Funding**

Competitive Funding – to acknowledge that regional universities are in a sense ‘competing’ with G08 Universities, yet the level of resources and training differ significantly. Acknowledgement of smaller funding attributed to the creative arts in comparison to other disciplines continue to provide a disservice to overall research impact (and perception of) in comparison to other fields of research.

In closing, university governance needs serious attention and revision. Work needs to be undertaken to ensure universities are good employers, and that the well-documented exploitative and precarious working environment needs to be addressed, especially if we are to fulfil our remits and aspirations of ‘innovation’, ‘excellence’ and ‘creativity’.

Thank you for your consideration.

Professor Craig Batty

President, The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts

## **ACUADS Response to Higher Education Support Amendment**

### **Statement from QUT School of Creative Practice**

#### **August 2023**

We support the five policy measures announced by Education Minister Jason Clare on 19 July 2023 as well as those proposed under the Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023.

We believe that the 50% pass condition for Commonwealth support for first-year students introduced by the former coalition government has had an unnecessarily punitive impact on students, especially those from lower SES backgrounds. While we welcome the proposal to require higher education providers to develop student support policies to assist at-risk students, we feel that it overlooks the fact that many universities already employ a range of methods to identify and support at-risk students. In most instances, this process is performed informally by tutors and lecturers who refer students to central teams for follow-up. At risk students are identified prior to Census date and at the end of each semester as part of the quality assurance process. Due to the significant workload involved in these processes we feel that the introduction of any additional support requirements needs to be reflected by Federal funding provisions – there are simply no resources available in a sector whose human and financial resources are already overstretched.

We note that in the creative arts disciplines, attrition and withdrawal remain stubbornly high despite the high level of peer and staff contact that is central to creative pedagogies. For this reason, we recommend that any policy seeking to provide meaningful support to students needs to focus on improving student access to income support. The impact of cost-of-living pressures in all capital cities, combined with the lack of affordable accommodation, means that many students must now work full-time to support their studies. This impacts both their academic performance and their mental health and is an aggravating factor for student attrition. We believe that if the Federal Government is genuine in its goal of ensuring all students have access to Higher Education, then it must immediately expand the financial support it provides to students, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This should involve a relaxation of the existing eligibility criteria that excludes most students, and an increase to the amount of financial support to ensure students pursuing full time study are not required to live below the poverty line.

We welcome the proposal to expand the demand-driven funding to include all Indigenous students, not just those from regional and remote areas. We believe that this is an important step in increasing the participation of Indigenous people in Higher Education – especially in the Creative Arts disciplines - however, we would note that this intention should also be backed up by the provision of additional, culturally support for these students. Support for Indigenous students, if done properly, requires high levels of engagement between specialist support staff, university support services and the student, and this needs to be reflected by funding provisions. The broad strategy of First Nations engagement pursued by most Australian Universities is welcome, but imposes large workload

demands on Indigenous staff in both academic and professional roles. We believe that to best support Indigenous students and ensure the success of this policy, additional roles will need to form part of future funding provisions.

In the Creative Arts discipline areas, the increased HECS-HELP tuition fees, introduced by the Job Ready Graduates policy for bands such as humanities, arts and social science studies has a significant impact on attracting and retaining First Nations students. We recommend that the indefensible fee hikes that were introduced in 2021 need to be immediately reversed due to the dissuasive effect that these are having on First Nations students' pursuit of tertiary studies in the creative fields.

**Institutional Members**

The Interior  
Design/Interior  
Architecture Programs of:

Massey University NZ  
Monash University VIC  
University of New South  
Wales NSW  
Queensland University of  
Technology QLD  
RMIT University VIC  
University of South  
Australia SA  
University of Technology  
Sydney NSW  
Victoria University of  
Wellington NZ  
Auckland University of  
Technology, NZ

Craig Batty  
President  
The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Art

Dear Craig,

**Re: Feedback to the draft Universities Accord interim proposal.**

Thankyou for the opportunity to provide feedback on this important Proposal.

The Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educator's Association represents the majority of 4-year undergraduate interiors programs in Australia and New Zealand.

There is considerable diversity across these programs but all of them are committed to providing relevant and forward-thinking interiors education to a diverse cohort of students. In fact, all programs look to increase the participation of students from equity groups in their local communities to both their educational offerings and into the diverse practice of interiors generally. This we feel will not only benefit the development of the profession/discipline but also the quality of the built environment as a whole.

To that end we support the Australian Federal Government's proposed amendment to the Higher Education Support Act 2003 to expand the participation by First Nations students into our programs.

Similarly, we support the removal of the current requirement that students must pass 50 per cent of the units they study to remain eligible for a Commonwealth supported place and FEE-HEP Assistance. This current requirement we feel is at odds with the need to increase the participation in higher education by a more diverse cohort who seek a future in our discipline.

Again, many thanks for opportunity to offer the DDCA feedback for your submission to this inquiry, we look forward to what transpires as a result.

Yours sincerely

**Andrew Wallace**  
acting chair  
Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association.



Australian Screen Production  
Education & Research Association

## AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES ACCORD INTERIM REPORT ON IMMEDIATE ACTIONS SUBMISSION

### Australian Screen Production Education and Research Association (ASPERA)

[ASPERA](#) membership is made up of Australian Tertiary and Vocational institutions offering qualifications at certificates, diplomas, undergraduate, postgraduate and research higher degrees in film, television, media, and screen production disciplines. ASPERA's 19 member institutions deliver quality education in regional and metropolitan locations for the Australian and global Screen and Media Industries. ASPERA is a leader in the disciplines research agenda with international standing. ASPERA members are committed to lifting the profile of the screen-based industries within the wider creative, economic, social, and cultural development of Australia.

ASPERA is making this submission through the DDCA's invitation.

We are addressing the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report and the Review of the Priority Actions as laid out in the Version 3 of the report.

**Priority Action 1:** Extend visible, local access to tertiary education by creating further Regional University Centres (RUCs) and establish a similar concept for suburban/metropolitan locations.

In principle this is a visionary idea to increase enrolments and support for students studying in regional and remote areas. However, it should be noted that at this stage there is little support for universities to collaborate and given that many universities compete for students within disciplines/professions, more incentives are required to ensure greater distinctions between University Course offerings so that the proposed RUC's will be viable, sustainable, and successful.

ASPERA supports the in-principal requirement to provide opportunities so that more Australians can complete a university qualification and we wholeheartedly support any policy that will encourage Australians to enter formal educational pathways from the regions and the outer suburbs of our major cities.

**Priority Action 2:** Cease the 50% pass rule, given its poor equity impacts, and require increased reporting on student progress.

ASPERA fully supports this priority to remove the 'unnecessarily harsh' requirements —introduced as part of the Job-ready Graduates Package—that students successfully complete at least 50% of

their first 8 units of study of a bachelor's degree to continue as a Commonwealth supported student and to be eligible for FEE- HELP assistance.

**Priority Action 3:** Ensure that all First Nations students are eligible for a funded place at university, by extending demand driven funding to metropolitan First Nations students.

ASPERA supports this criterion in general but feel compelled to defer to further First Nations consultation on this point.

We feel that the uncapped number of First Nations students who can enrol in a Commonwealth Supported Place by extending eligibility of demand-driven funding to all First Nations students, rather than only First Nations students living in regional and remote areas is a good idea and hope this provides incentives for further Indigenous student enrolments in our discipline.

**Priority Action 4:** Provide funding certainty, through the extension of the Higher Education Continuity Guarantee into 2024 and 2025, to minimise the risk of unnecessary structural adjustment to the sector. Interim funding arrangements must prioritise the delivery of supports for equity students to accelerate reform towards a high equity, high participation system.

ASPERA supports the proposal to extend current funding arrangements of Commonwealth Grant Schemes (CGS) into 2024, as an interim measure, to avoid the risk of unnecessary structural adjustments to the sector.

We note that the Job-ready Graduates (JRG) changes to funding and finance arrangements risk damaging the sector if left unaddressed, and we support measures to ensure that the issues with JRG will be addressed.

**Priority Action 5:** Through National Cabinet, immediately engage with state and territory governments and universities to improve university governance, particularly focusing on:

- universities being good employers
- student and staff safety
- membership of governing bodies, including ensuring additional involvement of people with expertise in the business of universities.

ASPERA supports improvements to university governance such as mandated academic and professional staff representation on university boards which will enable stronger a focus on employment conditions for Academic staff. It is well documented that university work has become precarious and exploitative, and in its current form significantly restricts the future teaching and knowledge creation for our disciplines that are 'innovative and creative'.

In Part 2: Areas for Further Consideration, of the Interim Report we would like to give feedback on 'Evolving the Mission for higher education', specifically:

- a. More students enrolled in higher education, a fair system that ensures access and attainment, and a larger system that better meets national jobs and skills needs**
- b. Meeting Australia's future skills needs**

### **c. Research, innovation, and research training**

ASPERA is cautious about creating a fully demand driven/learning entitlement system that is proposing to initiate new institutions.

ASPERA does not support a system where university places are decided by bureaucratic determinations, the one size fits all approach will not work for all industries, particularly in industries like Screen and Media, where there are no professionally accredited bodies that services all components of the entire workforce and its labour requirements.

The Screen and Media Industries are facing significant workforce and labour issues, some key points were outlined in an AUSFILM 2023 report identifying urgent skills gaps, and better pathways for the emerging workforce, high workforce attrition levels caused by long working hours, burnout, and an ageing workforce (Ausfilm, 2023 p. 10).

In terms of 'Serving the Professions' ASPERA supports the following points:

- secure greater levels of co-design of the curriculum between industry and higher education
- recognise that professional bodies will be an important part of the ongoing Universities Accord process
- recognise that the funders of professional skills development are also major industry stakeholders, particularly state and territory governments as employers of teachers and healthcare professionals and state, territory and local governments through urban and regional planning professions
- recognise that changing technologies, including artificial intelligence, will impact on both the nature of professional skills and the delivery of education for these occupations
- enhance the dialogue between higher education providers and the professional bodies to ensure graduates are being produced with the right skills for a commencing practitioner but accreditation requirements are not unduly onerous financially on institutions and do not inhibit students from studying broader subjects that also benefit their education
- Support professional development for academics working in education for the professions to maintain more active contact with the professions to ensure they are equipping students with up-to-date skills and knowledge
- ensure education for the professions includes education in generic skills to a high level of attainment.

#### Reference:

Ausfilm. (2023, March). *Ausfilm's Research Report to the Workforce Capacity Working Group*. Retrieved from Ausfilm: [https://www.ausfilm.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Ausfilm-Research-Report-to-the-Workforce-Working-Group\\_28Apr23.pdf?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Ausfilm%20Delivers%20the%20Workforce%20Capacity%20Research&utm\\_content=Ausfilm%20Delivers%20the%20Workfo](https://www.ausfilm.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Ausfilm-Research-Report-to-the-Workforce-Working-Group_28Apr23.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Ausfilm%20Delivers%20the%20Workforce%20Capacity%20Research&utm_content=Ausfilm%20Delivers%20the%20Workfo)

This submission has been prepared by  
Professor Susan Kerrigan (Swinburne University) and  
Dr Rachel Wilson (RMIT University)  
on behalf of the ASPERA executive.

## **AAWP Feedback for DDCA regarding the draft Universities Accord interim proposal**

**August 2023**

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Recognising the important of publicly funded research and creative practice as an investment in the public good, the AAWP strong supports the proposal for “significantly increasing immediate investment in the ARC” (p.115)

Recognising the importance of attracting and keeping high calibre graduate researchers, the AAWP strongly supports the proposal to increase PhD stipend rates (p.115). This is an urgent issue given current cost of living pressures facing all Australians and the fact that the stipend rates have been kept unreasonably low for almost two decades.

While the AAWP acknowledges that measuring the quality and impact of research may be an important factor for governments in terms of evaluating the efficacy of public investment in research, we caution against the measurement culture that has descended on the higher education sector in recent decades. Quality and impact measurement should not be a constant burden and should not, in our view, be added to the labour of academics or taken from the operating budgets of our struggling public sector universities. However, the solution is not automation. We would warn, in particular, against the proposal, in the Accord’s Interim Report, for “deploying advances in data science to develop a ‘light touch’ automated metrics-based quality assessment system” as a blanket approach to the evaluation of Australian research quality and impact (p.114). Value dimensions vary enormously from discipline to discipline, and there is much evidence that the humanities and creative arts tend to perform poorly in metrics-based quality assessment systems. We argue strongly for the need to maintain peer-assessment as the key mechanism for assessing quality and impact in the creative arts where such measurement is deemed necessary. In the event that peer-assessment is required to assess research quality and impact, however, assessors need to be both properly qualified and adequately recompensed for their labour.

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Increasing investment and increasing the stipend should be strongly supported. And the need for more nuance in measuring impact is vital: anything automated will be run by the assumptions driving what research is in the interim report, and there is really only one version of research being described in its conversations.

Universities should be made more accessible to First Nations and equity communities. ‘Valuing and embedding [of] First Nations knowledges in Australia’s university research

sector' (107) is important. As opposed to just taking First Nation communities into the system, any functioning system needs to be able to benefit from what those communities bring. A First Nations-led review will help with this. HASS can be strong in this area too, given non-traditional research outputs. This seems to fit with the need for experimentation in educational development too (17), and in a way that would not just focus on turning classrooms into more flexible digital spaces.

The points which we support include: universal learning entitlement (15) and financial support for students in WIL programs (16)—this would allow arts organisations to maybe even pay interns (pie in the sky). Any program that helps students find work should take the arts seriously (17); more support is needed for 'tutors, research trainees and others on the boundary between student and staff status, and enhancing career stability for early career academic staff' (22); and, in order to redesign the funding system changed through the JRG package, centralising/recognising the importance of HASS will allow the university system to be more equitable for FN and equity communities (22).

If there were ways to measure the cultural impact of university research/ways to attach this report to the wellbeing budget, then the mechanism of measurement would be more supple and suitable. Obviously, the arts industry is undergoing some restructures of its own, and bringing those restructures into this conversation while recognising that universities are cultural hubs could allow for more nuance around impact.

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The AU annual stipend for postgrads is just under \$30k per annum, which is below the poverty line. On average, the rate at which PhDs complete is:

First: internationals with a stipend

Next: internationals without a stipend

Then: Domestic without a stipend

And last: Domestic with a stipend.

For domestic candidates, then, the low stipend rate has a perverse effect on their capacity to achieve on-time completion. Bring the level up, and fund it so that we do not simply award the same amount of money to far fewer candidates, and we are likely to see people move more rapidly through their candidature and begin offering real value to society for the knowledge they have developed.

The Job-Ready Graduates initiative also has perverse outcomes; students tend to study what absorbs them and meets their life aspirations, which means that the intake of students may not particularly decline, but those entering the creative arts and many of the humanities disciplines emerge from university with a substantial debt they may never be able to repay,

and meantime universities are penalised financially for enrolling them (because of the lower CSP provided).

On getting the balance of skills right (2.2): The heavy focus across the sector on STEM is clearly of value in ensuring Australia has highly skilled people in science, technology, engineering and maths; but without an equivalent focus on humanities, arts and social sciences, STEM knowledge is less likely to be built on a sound understanding of its contexts, and less likely to be translated to society as a whole (as seen in the rejection of expert knowledge during the COVID pandemic). We need a full suite of disciplinary knowledge and expertise, rather than just one half of the possibilities.

On 3.2: university governance is extremely complex and costly. How about a review of processes and systems, staffing balances (by level and role), reporting requirements overhaul?

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Items for further consideration in various policy areas (p.16), in particular: 'improving Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and placements by providing participating students with better incentives and financial support'. Consider policy around the management of WIL priorities that equitably recognises the workload of academic staff who are responsible for implementing university priorities, while also facilitating equitable remuneration for Arts industry professionals who provide training | opportunities for Creative Arts graduates.

## **UNSW School of Art & Design Response to ACUADS regarding the Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report)**

17<sup>th</sup> August 2023

- UNSW acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their knowledges and traditions as the oldest continuing cultures on earth. We pay our respect to Elders both present and present. UNSW is located on the unceded Country of the Bidjigal (Kensington campus), Gadigal (Sydney City and Paddington campuses) and Ngunnawai peoples (UNSW Canberra) who are the Traditional Custodians of the lands where each campus of UNSW is situated.
- Generational financial hardships are a significant barrier to the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and design students. Costs for education, accommodation and living costs would be eased by students having the security of Commonwealth supported places and FEE-HELP assistance for the entirety of their degrees without the requirement to pass 50% of subjects to secure these financial supports.
- UNSW School of Art and Design strongly supports the Higher Education Support Amendment. Systemic injustice, exclusion and erasure over generations continue to restrict Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from accessing university education. Financial hardship is a significant barrier to the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students. The Act proposing significant structural reform that mitigates barriers for First Nations students accessing university education and research is overdue.
- UNSW has acknowledged the need to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through a range of programs in addition to Commonwealth financial support and believes it is incumbent on all universities to have programs of this type in place.
- Nura Gili at UNSW has led improvements to recruitment, education and research opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and researchers and developed a ‘whole-of-university’ approach. The UNSW Indigenous Strategy, established in 2018 and led by Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous and Professor of Law Megan Davis of the Barrungam Nation, was the first of its kind in developing the overarching framework of Truth and Justice for improving the cultural environment so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and researchers thrive. Driven by the three pillars of Culture and Country, Give Back and Grow our Own, and underpinned by an Education and Workforce Plan, Nura Gili provides resources and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to realise their potential and purpose through student-facing services, programs and study facilities in all faculties and programs across UNSW.
- The Indigenous Strategy, Education and Research team at Nura Gili directs and administers university Indigenous Pre-programs offering holistic pre-entry university experiences, alternative entry pathways, scholarships, and tailored academic assistance through the Indigenous Tuition Program (ITP).
- The Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture introduced the faculty Indigenous Strategy in 2021. The Co-Associate Deans Indigenous Nucoorilma/Ngarabal/Biripi artist and historian Associate Professor Dr Fabri Blacklock and Biripi and Worrimi theatre maker and academic Dr Liza Mare Syron are committed to making the faculty a culturally safe and genuinely inclusive place where ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students can flourish personally, culturally, and intellectually, secure in knowing that this history is recognised, and that their diverse experiences, knowledges and cultures are understood and valued’ (FADA Indigenous Strategy 2021, 7).
- To meet the objective of developing a ‘whole-of-university’ approach to fostering equity the Faculty completed the upskilling of all non-indigenous staff in cultural reflexivity in 2021 and 2022.

- The UNSW School of Art and Design’s commitment to building a welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people includes an exhibition program at UNSW Galleries that centres, celebrates and amplifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, practices and communities through public exhibitions of the cultural practices of First Nations artists and designers. For example ‘Barangga: First Nations Design’ curated by UNSW Art & Design Professor of Practice Nicole Monks of Yamaji and Wajarri heritage; the reviving of culture on Country and Kaurna language in the solo exhibition ‘Turrangka...in the shadows’ by James Taylor; and the first survey of Waanyi artist Gordon Hookey in ‘A Murriality’.
- UNSW School of Art and Design sets high expectations and guidance for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, researchers, communities and organisations through research, education and collaborative community engagement. In concert with Nura Gili and the Faculty of Art and Design’s Indigenous Strategy the School has this year rolled-out up-to-date teaching resources for respectful discussions with students and staff about knowledge systems, research methods and cultural intellectual property. With these resources in place the School is committed to elevating the voices of Indigenous perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists and designers and taking up the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to walk together to a better future in a place long dedicated to learning, teaching and cultural practices.