



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

**A NEW
SCHOOL OF
THOUGHT®**

SOCIAL INCLUSION & EQUITY PLAN 2010-2013

**Aspiration, Achievement,
Accessibility, Attainment**

We are all responsible for, and committed to, advancing equity, diversity and inclusivity.
Professor Elizabeth Harman 'The Future of Equity and Diversity at VU', 2008

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Elders, families and forebears of the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri tribe of the Kulin Nation who were the custodians of University land for many centuries. We acknowledge that the land on which we meet was the place of age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal and that the Kulin nation people's living culture had and has a unique role in the life of this region.

1.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Victoria University has a proud history of dedication to social inclusion and equity – both in Australia, and internationally. We are now in the position to build on this history, and develop our social inclusion agenda with governments and other stakeholders. This document sets out the ways in which VU will do this.

Our Social Inclusion and Equity Plan builds on previous foundational work which has embedded principles of equity and diversity in our charter, and in our wider policy framework including:

- The Equity and Diversity (for Staff and Students) Interim Policy
- The Equity and Diversity Strategy for Students, Staff and Community
- The Equity and Diversity Strategy for Staff 2009-2012
- The Student Experience Strategy
- The Education Strategy 2010-2016

The Education Strategy sets out VU's overarching educational positioning and includes the following statements which are closely aligned with our Social Inclusion and Equity Plan:

1.1 VU's education achieves both equity and excellence. Achieving excellence together with an on-going commitment to equity and diversity in the rapidly growing outer West is key to VU's future

1.2 VU will continue to be the key post-secondary education provider for diverse student communities from the west and north of Melbourne and in select locations internationally

1.3 VU recognises and responds to student diversity, and offers students from low SES and linguistically diverse backgrounds the support they need to excel

1.4 The Community Gateways project offers pre-course advice to hard-to-reach communities which assists students in career choice

1.5 VU has a university-wide student transition program

1.6 VU has an expanded and embedded Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) program to improve the achievement of all VU students

1.7 VU has a Student Leadership Strategy through which leadership skills are enhanced and which underpins a program which employs students as VU staff

1.8 VU will increase its proportion of low SES students from 24% to 25% by 2016 and nominate low SES/NESB as a social inclusion target group. Indigenous targets are also in place for VE and HE students.

1.9 VU is supporting government priorities for young people both in schools and not-in-school and will work with schools in the west to set targets for access and achievement of the under 18 years and COAG-defined youth cohorts and for improved Year 12 completions.

1.10 VU has a strong commitment to providing pathways to Year 12 or equivalent for young people, and to assisting them into further study or into the workforce.

1.11 VU has set enrolment and completion targets for workers skills and workforce development

1.12 Werribee campus will be developed in collaboration with State government planning for the Werribee Employment Zone

1.13 VU will work collaboratively with schools, LLENs other tertiary, ACFE and ACE providers in other parts of the outer west and north of Melbourne to ensure that the local population is reached and offered the opportunity for tertiary education.

1.14 VU provides pathways with multiple entry and exit points from AQF level 1 through to 10.

VU MISSION

Victoria University seeks to positively transform lives through the power of further education, vocational and higher education, and research.

We work collaboratively to develop the capabilities of individuals, enterprises and communities within the Western Melbourne region and beyond to build sustainable futures for ourselves and our stakeholders.

VU VALUES

We value:

- *Knowledge and skills, and critical and imaginative enquiry for their capacity to transform individuals and the community;*
- *Equality of opportunity for students and staff;*
- *Diversity for its contribution to creativity and the enrichment of our lives;*
- *Cooperation as the basis of engagement with local and international communities;*
- *Integrity, respect and transparency in personal, collaborative and institutional action;*
- *Sound environmental stewardship for future generations; and*
- *The pursuit of excellence in everything that we do.*

VU STAKEHOLDERS

We deliver engaged learning and teaching, and engaged research to the stakeholder groups with whom we work:

- *Students;*
- *Staff;*
- *Local and global enterprises and communities; and*
- *Governments and the public*

VU AIMS

By 2016, VU will:

- *Be a university leader in responding to the changing nature of work and the workplace in Australia and in our major international markets;*
- *Show strong community values, underpinned by a commitment to social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability;*
- *Blend vocational and professional, conceptual and creative pursuits;*
- *Be characterised by meaningful engagement with enterprises and communities;*
- *Be an effective partner with Indigenous Australia; and*
- *Be a distinctive international university.*

The Social Inclusion and Equity Plan addresses these initiatives, and places them within the context of the new funding arrangements arising from the social inclusion agenda of local, state and federal governments. They have developed a number of goals for Higher Education and the VET sector to support this vision. This paper explores the ways in which VU will engage with these targets, and with our broader social inclusion agenda.

The reporting of progress in relation to the required actions contained in the Social Inclusion and Equity Plan occurs through the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee. Information on activities and performance data against targets will be documented annually in the Equity, Diversity and Social Inclusion Annual Report.

2.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION

There has been a growing recognition both nationally and internationally that there is a widening gap between those who enjoy stable economic prosperity and all that flows from that (a sense of social cohesion, access to high-quality education, technologies and healthcare, a high sense of civic and community engagement) and those who have a more fragile connection with the workplace, with social networks and services, with good health and wellbeing and with the educational opportunities which might generate economic prosperity through secure and productive employment. North and Ferrier (2009), using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics demonstrate that groups that are socially excluded in the above ways have concrete results in their lives. These include:

- Being dependent on government support as their main income source
- Having multiple children
- Having a lack of access to a car and
- Being unable to access the internet at home¹.

Social inclusion focuses on improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups in our society, increasing their participation in education and employment and assisting them to have a voice in building a richer, stronger and more inclusive community. The aspirations of the government's broad social inclusion agenda include reducing disadvantage and increasing social, civic, and economic participation.

Education is a key means of providing the opportunity for social inclusion through improving social and cultural capital, community connections, social integration and employment opportunities. Victoria University has a proud tradition - and growing international reputation - for the provision of progressive, multi-sectoral education designed to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. This is a key priority for the University because of the community we serve, our history and the fact that we recognise the transformative powers of education for the community, industry and individuals.

¹ North, S & Ferrier, F, 2009, *Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Research in Australia 2008-2009*, Report prepared for DEEWR by the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Monash.

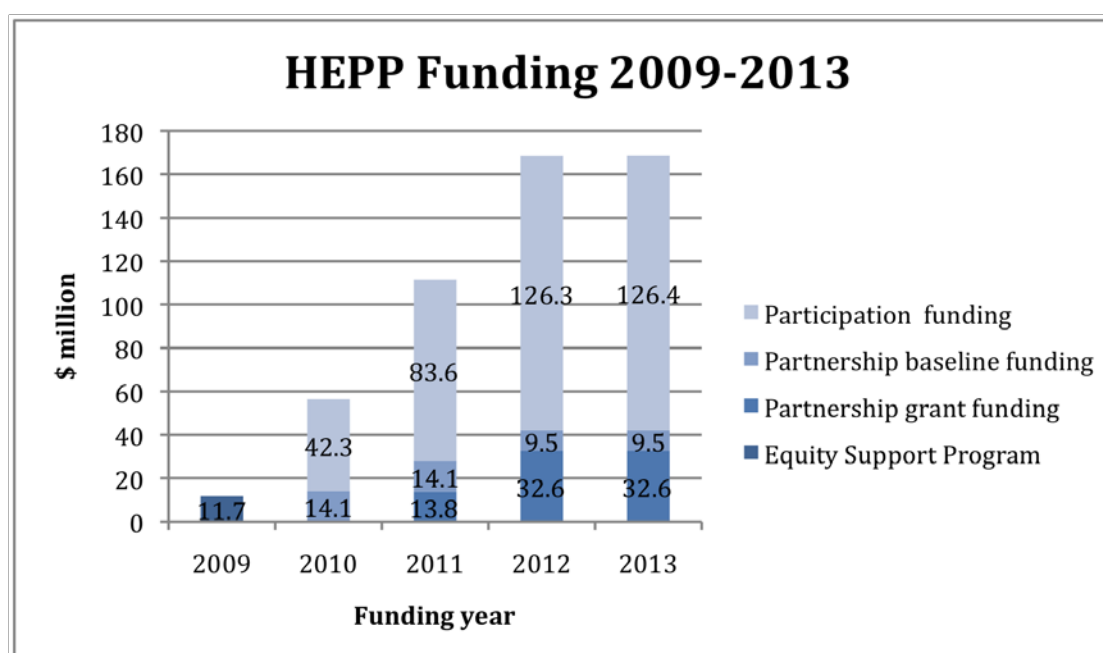
3.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION FUNDING

HEPPP (Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program)

This funding is structured in such a way as to reward universities who make significant changes to their structures and processes with the aim of promoting aspiration, achievement, accessibility and attainment for students from the above cohorts. Similarly, COAG's Compact with Young Australians funding is dedicated to decreasing the number of young people aged 15-24 without qualifications and increasing their engagement with education.

For VU, this means building on the work we have historically undertaken with key stakeholders in schools, in the community and with industry to enable unqualified and underqualified members of the community to access the university, and to use VU's resources to gain the accreditation they seek. But it also means providing the support and assistance they need to succeed (and excel) whilst they are with us.

The following graph shows the total HEPPP funding across the sector until 2013:



HEPPP funding has two component parts – **Participation** and **Partnership**.

Participation

\$325m is available over four years to universities based on their number of low SES students (this is shown as 'participation funding' in the above graph). Eligible providers receive funds based on their share of undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds who are resident in Australia. These funds will be given to universities pro-rata and may be only used for:

- Support services and programs (including academic support)
- Partnership activities
- Admission, selection and monitoring processes and
- Equity scholarships

Partnerships

\$108m is being made available to assist universities forge partnerships with other education providers such as schools, VE and FE providers (this is shown as 'partnership funding' in the above graph). The purpose of this funding is to enable universities to raise the aspirations of low SES individuals and communities through outreach activities with VET providers, schools, adult education providers, community groups and other stakeholders. In undertaking this outreach and liaison work, the aim is to assist people to view tertiary education as a viable aspiration and to enable them to work out an educational pathway which meets their needs.

From 2011, most of the available funds will be distributed using a method of competitive grants, shown as Partnership Grant Funding above.

Compact with Young Australians

Through COAG's Compact with Young Australians (part of the Youth Attainment and Transitions initiative), VET funding has also been shaped to address the issue of social inclusion – with a specific focus on young people who are currently disengaged. This funding is organized to train students aged between 15 and 19 in any qualification and students aged between 20 and 24 if they are upgrading the qualifications they have (if any) skill and enrolling into a higher qualification.

This funding is guaranteed for these student cohorts, but we also receive a weighting on our funding for students aged 15 to 19 who have not completed year 12 to support them to complete their qualification. In 2010, the value of this additional money will be approximately \$2m. The money is not guaranteed, but is dependent upon the age and education levels of the students. These funds are designed for use to provide additional student support in order to increase retention and their success in attaining their qualification. They will be used for a range of new initiatives including the employment of youth retention and support staff and to provide professional development programs.

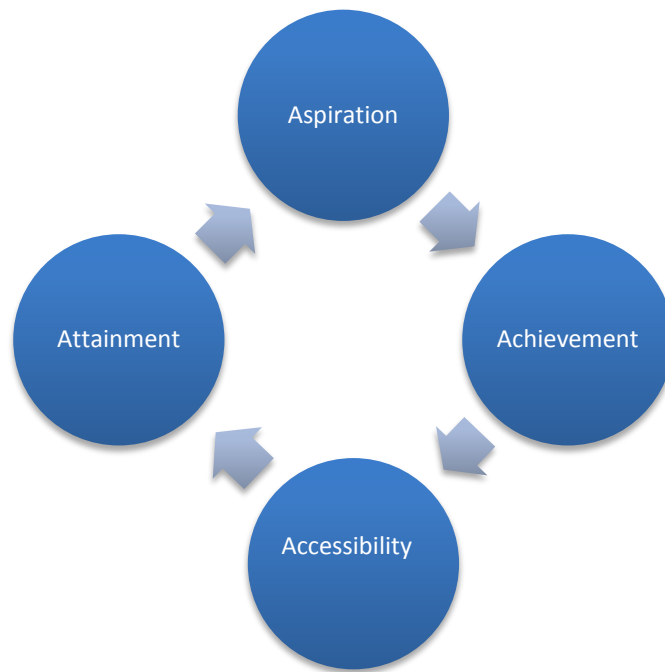
4.0 TARGET GROUPS

Victoria University seeks to positively transform lives through the power of further education, vocational and higher education, and research.

We work collaboratively to develop the capabilities of individuals, enterprises and communities within the western Melbourne region and beyond to build sustainable futures for ourselves and our stakeholders (VU's mission, Making VU 2016: A Statement of Purpose).

Equity and diversity are already embedded throughout the University's policies and practices, and we are now in a position to extend the commitment to social inclusion using a more strategic approach which is framed by the Australian government's undertaking to support universities to become more inclusive. We see this as a scaffolded, strategic process which involves close cooperation between VU and its partner schools. The following table offers an overview of the ways in which VU will approach the interface between secondary and tertiary education for our target groups:

VU has had, and continues to have, an avowed commitment to giving our stakeholders – students, communities, industry and government – an ongoing continuous improvement cycle where individuals can aspire to greater educational success, can access the university's programs, are given support to achieve and then attain their qualification. This is an ongoing cycle and our aspiration is that we will serve our stakeholders through enabling them to easily move through this cycle a number of times, if they wish.



It is from this background that VU approaches the federal government's social inclusion agenda. As part of this agenda, a number of educational targets for 2020 have been set:

VET
Halve the proportion of 20 to 64 year olds without a Certificate 3 or above
Double the number of Diploma and Associate Diploma completions
Increase the proportion of young people with a Year 12 certificate or equivalent
Double the number of Indigenous students with a Year 12 certificate or equivalent

Higher Education
Forty per cent of all 25-34 year olds will have a Bachelor level degree by 2025
Twenty per cent of all domestic undergraduate enrolments will be students from low Socio-Economic Status (SES) backgrounds – by 2020
Indigenous students should be comprehensively supported.
Each university is to select a currently educationally disadvantaged group which best fits with the university's mission, and generate achievable access, participation and success targets to meet their needs.

Victoria University will focus on five specific groups of students whose aspiration, access and achievement rates are currently less robust than they might be. These are:

- students from low socioeconomic backgrounds,
- students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent
- domestic students from low SES and Non English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB)
- young people aged 15 to 24 in VET
- people with a disability

4.1 STUDENTS FROM LOW SES BACKGROUNDS

Currently, 12% of VET students and 16% of Australian domestic undergraduate enrolments are from low SES backgrounds (measured by postcodes) – these figures have now remained steady for twenty years. VU was above the national average in 2009 with 39.7% of our VET students and 25.4% of our undergraduates coming from low SES backgrounds, but we must be clear that these figures are unlikely to remain stable when competitor institutions seek to increase their own low SES enrolments, and as the demographic profile of the communities we serve becomes more gentrified, and the ways in which SES status is measured by the government is changed². The Bradley Report argues that, nationally, low SES students have a similar achievement rate to other students – if they are given the support they need to fulfil their aspirations.

4.2 STUDENTS OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DESCENT

VU has a well-established Indigenous Education unit (Moondani Balluk) housed in the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development. We also host the Toorrong Marnong Project which is a collaborative venture with eight other Victoria Universities designed to assist Indigenous students to access and succeed in tertiary education. VU College has initiated the Mumgu-Dhal Tyama-Tiyt suite of certificates designed to provide a culturally safe introduction to VU and tertiary education more generally. Despite these initiatives, in 2009 only 0.4% of our students came from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and many of these students face the additional challenges of those from low SES backgrounds. Our aspiration is that a greater proportion of students from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds choose VU as a university which is welcoming, culturally safe, celebrates their culture and supports them to participate in both community and education, and assists their transition into the workplace.

4.3 STUDENTS FROM LOW SES AND NON ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUNDS (NESB)

The University has identified low SES/NESB students as our third target equity group – the educationally disadvantaged group which best fits our mission. We aim to support students from non-English speaking backgrounds who may be at risk of specific educational disadvantage arising from both their language and socio-economic backgrounds. Many of these students are refugees and recent migrants interested in articulation, and in developing their academic literacies. Currently, the university's numbers of low SES/NESB backgrounds students varies across sectors but in 2009 was 3.2% for VE, 17.6% for FE, 2.5% for undergraduates and 3.5% for postgraduates, and we aspire to increase this figure. In providing appropriate support, we aim to become the university of choice for students from these emerging communities.

4.4 YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15 TO 24 IN VET

VU has a developing profile in meeting the needs of this key group. Like the cohorts above, the young people who are disengaging, or who are already disengaged with the education system will face significant challenges in their future lives – both personally and professionally. They commonly also come from low SES backgrounds. We have identified three cohort groups of young people with this age group with whom VU can work closely to increase their aspirations (which are frequently low), their access to an education tailored to their needs, and consequently their educational achievements. These groups are 15-19 year olds with no Year 12 or equivalent, 15-19 year olds with Year 12 or equivalent who are seeking effective pathways and 20-24 year olds who are not currently in education,

² It is expected that by 2011 there will be an enhanced SES measure announced which incorporates parental education and occupation, income levels and community or area of residence. An interim low SES measure uses Centrelink data on income support, and data from enrolling students about their parents' occupation and income level.

training or employment and are therefore effectively disengaged. We seek to offer these potential students targeted programs of excellence which will re-engage their interest in education and all it has to offer.

4.5 STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

Our Disability Action Plan is designed to remove the barriers to access and participation for disabled students, and develop new strategies for further improving resources which provide a supportive and inclusive educational experience for students with a disability. This plan aims to ensure that potential students with a disability are able to gain access to Victoria University on the same basis as prospective students without a disability and that once with us, that they are easily able to participate in courses and community activities at Victoria University, and that they are supported to attain their goals.

Within this framework, VU will continue to work to attract and retain students with a disability, and to provide them with timely and appropriate support. In so doing, we will ensure that students with a disability are able to access support services on the same basis as other students and are provided with appropriate specialised services and equipment, including fair, valid and reliable alternative assessment arrangements where required.

5.0 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Social Inclusion and Equity Plan (SIEP) is supported by the following initiatives for improving the access, participation, retention and success of students from these identified target groups:

- The Education Strategy
- The Institute for Diversity in Education for Access and Success (IDEAS)
- The 'Flag and Follow' project
- The Youth Compact Plan
- The Transitions Strategy
- The Student Experience Strategy
- The Language Learning, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
- Disability Action Plan
- The Moondani Balluck Indigenous Education Statement and the Wurreker Plan

5.1 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

The University will focus on the strategic priorities of raising aspiration, assisting students to achieve a place at VU, supporting them through their course and attaining their qualification. At the beginning of each year the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee will endorse strategic actions as identified by Principal Officers, to be undertaken during that year.

Faculty Social Inclusion and Equity Plans (with incorporated targets, strategies and actions) will be presented to VCAC each year. The outcomes of strategic actions and targets will be reported through the Quality Improvement Review process, as well as in reports to VCAC at the commencement of the following year. Each of the Faculties will receive data on the access, participation, retention and success of target groups, segmented by course and/or AQF level which will assist them to develop appropriate strategies to support the specific faculty and school targets. These strategies and targets will support the implementation of University goals. Other University corporate areas will also be required to develop a Social Inclusion and Equity Plan in line with university goals.

The University's Strategic priorities and actions endorsed for 2010 are set out below. Appropriate targets will be negotiated in close consultation with each faculty.

5.2.1 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ASPIRATION AND ACHIEVEMENT

This focuses on the aspirations of our potential students and their access to the university.

The following table offers an indication of our recent and current access rate of students across these groups - with the exception of youth since this data is not yet reliable.

Within this context, the access rate refers to the number of commencing students in the target group as a percentage.

University Equity Group Access Rate by HE Faculty (Undergraduate) 2005 – 2009³

Equity Group	Faculty	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	HE UG	27.11	25.41	26.50	26.69	25.12
	FAEHD	22.34	20.27	24.18	23.05	22.40
	FBL	25.63	30.61	27.30	29.15	27.65
	FHES	27.87	26.05	28.50	28.64	26.40
Low SES NESB	HE UG	2.90	2.61	3.01	3.44	3.16
	FAEHD	1.53	1.40	1.54	1.29	1.14
	FBL	2.24	2.92	2.77	4.29	3.76
	FHES	4.72	3.83	5.08	5.32	5.32
Indigenous	HE UG	0.24	0.17	0.45	0.37	0.38
	FAEHD	0.28	0.13	0.90	0.65	0.57
	FBL	0.09	-	0.26	0.16	0.14
	FHES	0.28	0.44	0.15	0.25	0.35
Disability	HE UG	2.57	2.53	2.33	2.45	2.37
	AEHD	2.78	2.73	2.56	3.29	2.55
	BL	1.79	1.95	2.00	1.99	1.88
	HES	2.31	2.87	2.47	1.88	2.63

³ The above table includes only Domestic Onshore students that have a permanent home residence in Australia. The HE figures exclude students that are enrolled in cross-institutional programmes and includes students' major course of study only (if a student is enrolled in more than one course, the course with the highest EFTSL attached will be included). Participation Rate has been calculated using Number of Reportable Students. Some double counting may occur as students may be enrolled in more than one course.

University Equity Group Access Rate by HE Faculty (Postgraduates) (2005 – 2009)

Equity Group	Faculty	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	HE PG	16.41	18.90	18.56	20.26	20.31
	FAEHD	14.98	19.14	16.99	19.42	19.19
	FBL	17.56	17.36	18.75	21.21	21.85
	FHES	19.08	21.43	22.58	20.74	18.92
Low SES NESB	HE PG	1.14	3.47	4.17	2.95	4.02
	FAEHD	0.46	1.62	0.87	0.41	2.03
	FBL	2.44	5.79	7.03	6.34	6.18
	FHES	1.32	3.25	4.52	2.96	3.38
Indigenous	HE PG	0.38	0.24	0.62	0.20	0.10
	FAEHD	0.69	-	0.65	0.21	0.23
	FBL	-	0.32	0.59	0.28	-
	FHES	-	0.65	0.65	-	-
Disability	HE PG	1.89	2.63	2.31	2.14	1.72
	FAEHD	2.30	4.85	2.83	3.10	2.26
	FBL	1.46	1.29	1.95	1.10	1.55
	FHES	1.32	-	1.94	1.48	0.68

University Equity Group Access Rate by VE/FE Faculty (2005 – 2009)

Equity Group	Faculty	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	FE	46.1	52.6	49.3	48.7	51.1
	VE	28.7	28.8	30.1	30.1	30.2
	TTI	29.3	29.6	31.1	30.6	31.9
	VUC	46.3	49.5	47.5	45.6	46.4
	WD	27.5	28.1	28.8	29.5	28.3
Low SES NESB	FE	12.2	17.0	18.8	18.7	21.1
	VE	3.0	3.0	3.7	2.9	3.6
	TTI	2.5	2.4	3.5	2.9	4.0
	VUC	12.6	15.4	17.2	16.3	16.9
	WD	2.9	3.4	3.6	2.9	3.2
Indigenous	FE	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.7	0.2
	VE	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.2	0.8
	TTI	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.9	0.7
	VUC	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.8	0.3
	WD	0.3	0.4	0.8	1.6	0.9
Disability	FE	9.5	10.2	8.8	8.2	7.7
	VE	3.0	3.5	3.6	5.1	3.9
	TTI	3.7	3.5	3.6	5.3	4.2
	VUC	8.7	9.6	8.0	8.1	6.8
	WD	2.6	3.3	3.6	4.9	3.5

It is clear that there is some variation across the university, and that we will need to undertake foundational work with schools, community and industry to elevate aspiration and the achievement of a place in their course of choice – whether that is initially at FE, VE or HE. There will be ongoing support for the VU Gateways project which takes VU into the community and offers course and career information targeting potential students who are currently disengaged.

5.2.2 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ACCESSABILITY AND ATTAINMENT

This priority is focussed on the ways in which VU works with our students to help them attain their qualification. In doing so, we will analyse, track and, where appropriate, set targets at a sector wide and faculty level for improvements in the retention and success rates for our target groups (see Appendix 1 for definitions).

Working within the current policy framework of the federal government, we are now in the position of being funded to work more strategically with our students, and to facilitate an improvement in their retention and success rates. In this context, the retention rate refers to the ratio of the number of students who re-enrol as a proportion of all students enrolled in a previous year - less those who have completed their qualification. This indicates how successful we have been in retaining our students, and providing them with the support they need to succeed.

The following tables indicate the recent retention rates across the HE faculties for both undergraduates and postgraduates in our target cohorts:

University Equity Group Retention Rate by HE Faculty (2005 – 2009)

Equity Group	Faculty	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Aggregate	HE Sector UG	0.78	0.77	0.80	0.80	0.81
	FAEHD	0.81	0.77	0.80	0.81	0.82
	FBL	0.77	0.77	0.79	0.81	0.81
	FHES	0.76	0.78	0.81	0.76	0.80
Low SES	HE UG	0.78	0.78	0.82	0.80	0.82
	FAEHD	0.82	0.76	0.83	0.79	0.82
	FBL	0.78	0.79	0.80	0.82	0.83
	FHES	0.74	0.79	0.84	0.77	0.80
Low SES NESB	HE Sector	0.77	0.77	0.79	0.80	0.77
	FAEHD	0.77	0.82	0.72	0.78	0.86
	FBL	0.81	0.83	0.82	0.84	0.74
	FHES	0.75	0.74	0.80	0.76	0.78
Indigenous	HE Sector	0.67	0.55	0.82	0.69	0.76
	FAEHD	0.58	0.55	1.00	0.67	0.75
	FBL	0.80	0.40	1.00	0.43	1.00
	FHES	0.75	0.67	0.60	1.00	0.67
Disability	HE Sector	0.70	0.75	0.71	0.77	0.75
	FAEHD	0.74	0.70	0.67	0.71	0.75
	FBL	0.67	0.86	0.75	0.86	0.76
	FHES	0.68	0.75	0.73	0.76	0.76

RETENTION RATE – VU Postgraduate Students

University Equity Group Retention Rate by HE Faculty (2005 – 2009)

Equity Group	Faculty	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Aggregate	HE Sector PG	0.65	0.65	0.64	0.64	0.66
	FAEHD	0.66	0.61	0.63	0.67	0.66
	FBL	0.67	0.71	0.66	0.60	0.65
	FHES	0.58	0.66	0.63	0.66	0.71
Low SES	HE UG	0.62	0.71	0.62	0.63	0.74
	FAEHD	0.64	0.70	0.67	0.66	0.73
	FBL	0.72	0.79	0.64	0.56	0.71
	FHES	0.48	0.63	0.54	0.71	0.83
Low SES NESB	HE Sector	0.65	0.76	0.71	0.58	0.83
	FAEHD	0.29	1.00	1.00	0.83	1.00
	FBL	0.70	0.82	0.82	0.52	0.80
	FHES	0.80	0.56	0.33	0.67	0.83
Indigenous	HE Sector	0.60	0.60	1.00	0.67	0.86
	FAEHD	0.67	0.50	2.00	0.67	0.75
	FBL	0.00	-	-	0.67	1.00
	FHES	1.00	1.00	0.50	0.67	1.00
Disability	HE Sector	0.50	0.85	0.68	0.66	0.69
	FAEHD	0.60	0.71	0.73	0.69	0.59
	FBL	0.56	1.20	0.83	0.62	0.75
	FHES	0.29	0.86	0.33	0.60	1.00

In VE, the success rate is defined as the module load completion rate for each subject. The following tables offer an overview of our achievements across the last five years:

University Equity Group Success and Module Load Completion Rate by Sector (2005 – 2009)⁴

Equity Group		Sector	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	Success Rate	UG	0.98	0.96	0.98	0.98	0.96
		PG	1.02	1.02	0.98	1.00	1.00
	MLCR (%)	FE	55.0	59.0	72.0	80.7	75.4
		VE	79.9	79.1	78.5	80.0	80.1
Low SES NESB	Success Rate	UG	0.90	0.87	0.94	0.90	0.88
		PG	1.05	1.06	1.03	1.07	0.97
	MLCR	FE	52.3	57.0	67.8	80.1	70.8
		VE	75.9	74.6	75.8	77.6	76.4
Indigenous	Success Rate	UG	0.82	0.88	0.88	0.87	0.94
		PG	1.15	1.02	0.45	0.65	0.66
	MLCR	FE	21.1	76.6	100.0	79.1	35.8
		VE	84.4	75.2	77.9	78.5	79.6
Disability	Success Rate	UG	0.96	0.94	0.90	0.99	0.91
		PG	1.03	1.00	0.94	0.82	0.94
	MLCR	FE	49.6	57.3	78.5	87.0	79.2
		VE	75.6	71.3	73.5	73.5	76.4

The above tables indicate that although we have made progress in reducing our attrition rate, we still have a significant challenge to successfully support our students in order that they succeed in their courses.

This strategic priority is closely aligned with the Language, Literacy Numeracy (LLN) strategy developed by VU College which will offer an approach to LLN which is more embedded, comprehensive and strategic than our present approach. It will incorporate:

1. Post enrolment core skills testing for all students
2. Embedded LLN skills development in all courses for those students who require such support
3. Integrated assessment of core skills achievement within all courses to ensure that inputs are producing outcomes
4. LLN Professional development packages for all new and current VU teaching staff and
5. Program evaluations – research and benchmarking based on comprehensive data collection and analysis.

In order to do this, an LLN HUB be placed in VU College with spokes out to all five faculties. A number of specialist staff will be employed progressively over the next three years who are embedded within faculties to assist in the scaling up of our LLN provision to provide students with the language, literacy and numeracy skills they require to successfully complete their qualification. Whilst this is an innovative university-wide strategy, colleagues have already been using pedagogies and curricula designed to offer students LLN support:

⁴ The above table includes only Domestic Onshore students that have a permanent home residence in Australia. The HE figures exclude students that are enrolled in cross-institutional programmes and includes students' major course of study only (if a student is enrolled in more than one course, the course with the highest EFTSL attached will be included). Success is reported for HE and MLCR is reported for the VE/FE sectors.

Embedded LLN Case Study 1: *Knowing and Knowledge*, School of Communication and the Arts, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development.

Knowing and Knowledge A and B are first year foundation units designed for those enrolled in a range of Bachelor of Arts degrees, delivered at St Albans and Footscray Park campuses. Whilst *Knowing and Knowledge A* is a core unit compulsory for all students, *Knowing and Knowledge B* is not, and is often undertaken by students with additional academic needs. Both units are sometimes taken as electives, and are taught each semester to capture mid-year enrollers and others who might need the resources of K&K A in semester two.

K&K A builds cultural capital for new students through a curriculum which explores and interrogates history, identity, values, globalisation, religion and globalisation. It uses an early diagnostic test and carefully scaffolded assessment tasks with transparent criteria to assist students' understanding of the assessment process. K&K B goes on to explore academic literacies and media in both the curriculum and in the associated assessment. Students are asked to explore and discuss censorship, for example, reading behaviours and Web 2.0 tools.

Audio-feedback on their work is sometimes given to students using Echo360 screen capture. Here students can watch tutors edit their writing, and hear their tutors guide them through this process. This is extremely effective in both building relationships between students and staff and in clearly showing students how they might improve their work.

Internal research has shown that pathway students who take K&K are more likely to stay with us, and to achieve more highly than students who have used RPL to exempt themselves.

Knowing and Knowledge A & B have proven to be extremely effective tools for transition, retention, engagement and achievement for Bachelor-level students.

In addition, an LLN pilot study has already been undertaken in the School of Engineering in the Faculty of Health, Engineering and Science which has successfully trialled this approach. An account of the experience can be found below.

Embedded LLN Case Study 1: School of Engineering in the Faculty of Health, Engineering and Science.

VU College worked with colleagues from the School of Engineering to explore the possibilities of using a post-enrolment diagnostic assessment with first year undergraduates which was based on the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). This determines detailed levels of performance in the 5 core skills of:

- Learning
- Reading
- Writing
- Oral Communication and
- Numeracy.

The ACSF can be used at different points in time to determine growth in skill level, and to provide specific information about a student's learning gaps – or more commonly a group's learning gaps – which can then be specifically addressed.

After consulting with staff in the school, the decision was made to use this diagnostic framework on the assessment tasks already in place in the course, rather than administer the test.

On completion, a number of students were found to need additional support in order to successfully complete the early stages of their course and were offered individual assistance which was not fully utilised by the students. This was followed by a class addressing the gaps found in their LLN skills, taken by a member of VU College. This was a successful intervention measured both by attendance and by resulting student interest in using the resources which VU College offer.

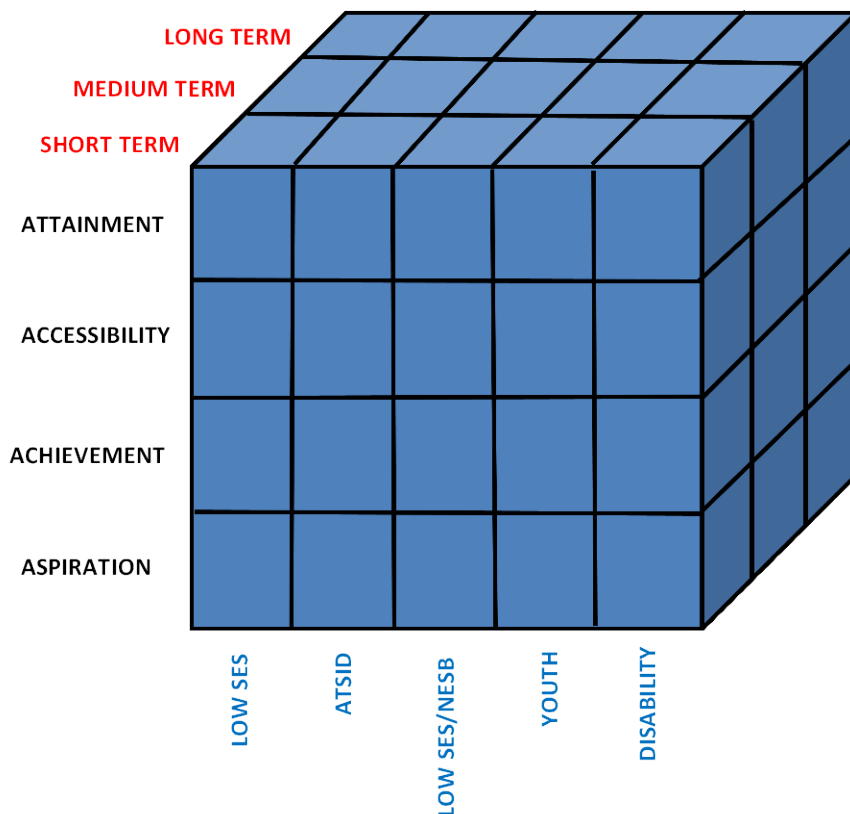
A similar pilot project in the School of Health in the Faculty of Workforce Development found that embedding LLN into the curriculum, clearly mapping the students' twelve month course and the skill levels they would require to succeed, was an effective way of raising both awareness and achievement levels in the course.

In addition to increasing support for language, literacy and numeracy across the faculties, there will be an increasing focus on addressing the specific factors which lead our students to leave. In 2005, Krause⁵ found that typically VU students:

- have a lower academic orientation
- have relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with course and unit choices
- are less ready to choose a university course on leaving school
- are given lower levels of help and advice from both family and friends and support staff (eg at secondary school level)
- have high levels of engagement in full time work
- have little or no financial support or savings
- experience significantly greater problems with daily travel

VU is now in a position to systematically address these issues and will do so using a range of strategies which will be reconciled as follows. We will assess any new initiative in terms of its longevity, and its impact on our stakeholder groups:

⁵ Krause, K., Hartley, R., James, R., & McInnis, C. (2005). *The first year experience in Australian universities: Findings from a decade of national studies*. Canberra: Australian Department of Education, Science and Training.



6.0 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

It is proposed that VU's Social Inclusion and Equity Plan encompass a whole of university approach and that we make use of the new funding arrangements to facilitate this. Our aim is to have a significant impact on the aspirations, achievement, accessibility and attainment of all our future and current students and stakeholders.

This will be achieved through the following:

1. The roll-out of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) strategy by VU College which will embed language, literacy and numeracy specialists in each faculty to assist colleagues in curricula development and provision to better meet the LLN needs of our students.
2. New Youth Compact plan which ensures that all early school leavers have access to a pathway to completion of a qualification at AQF level 3
3. Establishment of a series of annual, competitive learning and teaching projects which aim to generate innovation and flexibility in approaches to program delivery with consequent publication of high-quality research in international journals. These projects will be focussed on the attrition predictors identified by Krause, and the 'Flag and Follow' project.
4. Funding for the Institute for Diversity in Education for Access and Success (IDEAS) which will grow our partnerships with schools in our region and beyond to increase the aspirations, achievement, accessibility and attainment of low SES/NESB students and will generate the research which both tracks our achievements, develops our reputation as the university of choice for our target groups, and establishes VU as an international leader in this field.
5. Ongoing support for students from students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent which includes outreach work, and the establishment of VU as the university of choice for these students.
6. Continued support for students with a disability, including 'best-practice' model development which benchmarks our practices against other, more successful, organisations.
7. Establishment and maintenance of the 'Flag and Follow' project which aims to trace the developmental patterns of our students in order to better understand their educational choices, and the barriers – if any- to their progression.
8. Maintenance of the 'VU Gateways' project to undertake outreach in to hard to reach communities.

9. Funding for 'Week 0' activities where the first week of a teaching period includes rich social activities where students meet both peers and staff and are provided with a comprehensive introduction to their new course and its expectations.
10. Support for the 'Student as Staff' project.

Appendix A

DEFINITIONS

Access Rate	Commencing students in equity group / All Commencing domestic onshore students
Domestic students	Domestic students are Australian citizens, New Zealand citizens (including a diplomatic or consular representative of New Zealand, a member of the staff of such a representative or the spouse or dependent relative of such a representative) or holders of an Australian permanent visa.
Low Socio-economic Status (SES)	The ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Education and Occupation is used to identify postcodes nationally as low (bottom 25 of the population), medium (middle 50%) or high (top 25%) socioeconomic status (SES). An estimate of the number of low SES students is made by counting the number of domestic students whose reported postcode of permanent home location is a low SES postcode.
Low SES/ Non-English Speaking Background (NESB)	A domestic student who arrived in Australia less than 10 years prior to the year in which the data were collected, comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken and lives in a suburb identified by SEIFA as in the bottom 25%.
Participation Rate	Students in equity group / All domestic onshore students
Retention Rate	Continuing Students / All enrolled students minus completed. Retention rate measures the proportion of students who continue their studies from the previous year. This is usually referred to as the "Apparent Retention Rate" or "Crude Retention Rate", because it is only a crude approximation of the actual retention rate. Students may change their Student ID, take a year off study, undertake research (without having a load and enrolment record), undertake cross-institution studies, or transfer to another institution. None of these student circumstances are able to be identified, so that all would be shown as "attrited" rather than "retained". This simply means that the "Retention Rate" is, at best, just a crude approximation of the situation, and the actual retention rate should be slightly higher than that quoted.
Students with Disability	a Students who have indicated that they have a disability, impairment or long term medical condition which may affect their studies.
Success Rate	Success Rate measures academic performance by comparing the effective full-time student load (EFTSL) of units passed to the EFTSL of units attempted.

Appendix B

INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY CLUSTER ACCESS RATE

University Equity Group Access Rate by Industry and Community Cluster (2005 – 2009)

University Equity Group Access Rate for Cultural & Creative Industries (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	28.1	27.3	26.2	27.9	29.4
Low SES NESB	2.0	1.0	1.2	2.2	1.7
Indigenous	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.9	0.5
Disability	5.2	5.3	4.4	4.7	4.7

University Equity Group Access Rate for Education & Transition (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	47.0	41.2	38.4	35.2	36.6
Low SES NESB	11.4	11.3	12.4	14.3	12.3
Indigenous	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.6	0.3
Disability	8.9	8.3	6.7	6.0	5.1

University Equity Group Access Rate for Engineering & Infrastructure (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	32.1	31.5	35.3	33.0	34.9
Low SES NESB	3.4	3.0	4.3	3.7	4.8
Indigenous	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.7
Disability	3.7	3.4	4.2	4.7	3.8

University Equity Group Access Rate for Financial & Economic Services (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	35.1	39.7	35.2	39.2	35.6
Low SES NESB	4.8	7.9	8.1	8.4	9.2
Indigenous	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0
Disability	1.9	1.8	2.4	2.8	2.0

University Equity Group Access Rate for Health (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	21.4	23.5	24.0	28.7	24.2
Low SES NESB	2.2	3.0	3.4	2.3	3.3
Indigenous	0.7	0.5	0.3	1.5	0.4
Disability	2.7	2.3	2.6	6.5	3.7

University Equity Group Access Rate for Human Services (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	28.1	30.1	32.6	31.6	32.5
Low SES NESB	2.8	3.6	4.6	3.7	4.4
Indigenous	0.6	0.2	1.8	2.3	0.9
Disability	4.0	3.6	4.9	4.9	5.2

University Equity Group Access Rate for Law & Legal Services (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	29.2	24.1	24.2	25.2	26.9
Low SES NESB	1.9	2.6	3.6	3.6	4.0
Indigenous	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.2
Disability	1.8	3.9	3.2	2.2	1.5

University Equity Group Access Rate for Management & Marketing Services (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	26.4	29.6	29.2	30.0	28.7
Low SES NESB	4.1	3.7	3.7	4.1	3.0
Indigenous	0.2	0.3	0.5	1.1	0.6
Disability	2.2	2.9	2.8	2.6	3.1

University Equity Group Access Rate for Sports & Recreation (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	16.6	19.2	24.6	21.8	22.8
Low SES NESB	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.5
Indigenous	0.1	0.4	1.7	1.9	2.1
Disability	0.9	2.4	2.0	2.3	2.4

University Equity Group Access Rate for Tourism & Hospitality (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	31.5	32.2	27.5	31.2	28.0
Low SES NESB	2.9	5.1	3.7	2.3	2.5
Indigenous	0.3	0.5	1.0	1.8	0.8
Disability	3.4	2.9	2.9	10.2	7.7

University Equity Group Access Rate for Transport & Logistics (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	23.9	24.6	28.7	26.7	29.0
Low SES NESB	1.5	1.4	3.2	2.7	3.4
Indigenous	0.4	0.8	0.9	0.3	0.6
Disability	1.4	1.8	2.0	1.7	3.1

University Equity Group Access Rate for Unknown ICC (2005 - 2009)

Equity Group	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Low SES	23.4	28.9	25.7	25.7	27.4
Low SES NESB	3.9	10.5	12.9	12.9	7.0
Indigenous	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Disability	2.6	2.6	0.0	1.4	3.5