

Group of Eight

Framework for Evaluation of Equity Initiatives

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1. Context and purpose

The Framework for Evaluation of Equity Initiatives has been prepared to support the Go8 Equity Strategy¹. Its purpose is to assist Group of Eight (Go8) universities to evaluate the effectiveness of their equity initiatives and interventions in the context of federal policies and the distinctive missions and responsibilities of the individual Go8 institutions.

The framework provides an exploration of potential methods for evaluating a range of equity programs, noting some of the methodological complexities involved. There is an emphasis on looking beyond access and participation to ensuring academic achievement and outcomes.

The framework may assist with future benchmarking between Go8 institutions and in developing a clearer understanding across the Australian higher education sector of the equity strategies that are the most effective in improving access and outcomes for under-represented groups.

The framework is broadly inclusive. It considers people from low socio-economic status backgrounds, Indigenous people, people from rural and regional Australia, people from cultural minorities, people from various non-English speaking backgrounds, people with disabilities including mental health issues, and the gender variations in particular fields of study and occupations. The Go8 notes that the patterns of participation in education and the extent and nature of educational disadvantage differ across these groups and not all people who are members of these groups experience educational disadvantage.

The equity initiatives encompassed by the framework are wide-ranging and include: outreach; selection; transition; learning support; social and financial support. The framework recognises that both quantitative and qualitative data must be brought to bear on judgements regarding the effects and effectiveness of equity initiatives and programs.

These initiatives are structured into three conceptually distinct areas within the framework:

- access and participation;
- attainment and achievement; and
- graduate outcomes.

The framework also recognises a fourth dimension, the important role the Go8 plays into research and knowledge transfer on equity and social inclusion.

The Framework for Evaluation of Equity Initiatives is necessarily an evolving document that will be enhanced over time based on experience across the Go8 universities. The present document is a starting point for creating evidence-based approaches to practice.

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2. Principles

An interrelated set of social, cultural and economic factors underlie the persistent under-representation in Australian higher education of certain groups of Australians. These factors are associated with educational disadvantage in schooling and result in lower rates of school completion, lower levels of academic achievement and lower levels of aspirations and expectations.

The Go8 universities aim to create and provide opportunities for people of appropriate academic potential regardless of their backgrounds while maintaining an unwavering commitment to academic achievement leading to graduation from university and access to the professions. To do so requires interventions that confront the causes and consequences of under-achievement in schooling and that address factors that might inhibit access to higher education and effective participation once enrolled.

The Go8 has particular responsibilities:

- to improve access and outcomes in undergraduate education for under-represented groups and individuals who have experienced prior educational disadvantage;
- to improve access and outcomes in graduate coursework education and research training for under-represented groups and individuals who have experienced prior educational disadvantage;
- to undertake research to contribute to the body of knowledge on social inclusion;
- to engage in knowledge transfer to inform and shape policies and practices; and
- to establish and lead initiatives and partnerships that address social inclusion in innovative ways.

The Go8's equity initiatives and interventions are diverse and wide-ranging. They include:

- contributing to broadening horizons and informing aspirations in relation to going to university;
- supporting schools and other education providers in raising levels of educational attainment and achievement prior to undergraduate education;
- providing multiple pathways for access, including through partnerships;
- identifying academic potential not identified using traditional methods of assessment ,to ensure students enrolled have appropriate preparedness for academic success
- ensuring students have appropriate transition support and study support;
- ensuring curricula, teaching, learning and assessment support social inclusion goals;
- ensuring campuses are socially and culturally inclusive;
- addressing financial issues that might establish barriers to access or inhibit effective study once enrolled;
- facilitating the flow of graduates from all sections of the community into the professions; and
- facilitating the flow of graduates from all sections of the community into the academic, research and/or scientific communities.

The complexity of evaluation

A number of confounding factors and complexities make the evaluation of equity programs and interventions a necessarily complex task. Some of the main challenges to program evaluation are outlined below.

Definition and measurement issues

Evaluation of the effectiveness of equity interventions is seldom straightforward. Some of the major complexities are to do with the definitional and measurement issues surrounding the identification of under-represented groups of people and disadvantaged individuals and the imperfect character of most datasets. The definitional and measurement issues are particularly significant for socio-economic status, where there is no single metric or indicator that adequately represents individual socio-economic status. The long-standing method of designating SES used in the DEEWR datasets, primarily based on imputed postcode average measures, is an example of this difficulty.

The issues of definition and measurement affect both the identification and targeting of individuals, and groups and thus the monitoring of the effects and effectiveness of equity strategies. Clearly, good measurement does not in itself resolve the issues of under-representation; however it is essential to understanding the extent and character of the problem and to gauging whether or not progress is being made. The evaluation of equity programs will usually rely on allocating people to broad sub-groups in some fashion. The use of simple classification criteria is expedient and necessary for policy and program purposes; however this approach does not necessarily fully represent the particular circumstances of individuals.

The interdependence of equity initiatives

A second issue for evaluation is the interwoven and interdependent character of equity interventions. One of the difficulties in determining 'what works' is that the effectiveness of individual equity initiatives is likely to depend on the wider policies and programs within which particular programs are nestled: for example, the effectiveness of outreach activities in selected schools will be dependent, perhaps to a major extent, on selection criteria and policies at the point of admission; likewise, the effectiveness of alternative admissions pathways is likely to be highly dependent on the effectiveness of teaching and support strategies in the first year.

The importance of context

Similarly, the complexities associated with both the issue of equity and the educational environment make establishing causal relationships particularly challenging, especially for access and recruitment initiatives. There are numerous variables, too many to control for in any rigorous methodological way. Properly controlled evaluation studies are methodologically impossible or ethically unacceptable. Ultimately, all approaches to evaluation should be designed mindful of the particular initiative and particular context, thus there are limits to the value of generic evaluation guidelines and such guidelines will always require adjustment to particular circumstances.

Cost and intensity

There is a latent 'denominator' for most equity initiatives that is associated with the cost or intensity of the interventions and the opportunity costs associated with the allocation of resources to certain programs in preference to others. An obvious example is the extent of outreach to schools where clearly the intensity can be wide-

ranging—the number of schools involved, the number of students, parents and teachers with which the university is in contact. It follows therefore that effectiveness (or perhaps efficiency) determinations should take into account the resource intensity required to make gains — formal or informal cost-benefit assessments are appropriate at some point.

Evaluation and continuous improvement

Results from evaluations of equity initiatives must serve multiple purposes. Evaluation results play an important role in accountability and quality assurance, and are therefore of interest to institutional management. Of equal importance is ensuring a link between evaluation and the ongoing development of programs. It is the responsibility of program coordinators to ‘close the loop’, drawing upon feedback from evaluations for the review and renewal of equity programs and initiatives.

Academic achievement and standards

Finally, progress in the area of equity requires some reference point in levels of academic achievement and academic standards. Given that the under-represented groups in Australian higher education often have in common lower levels of school achievement and school completion, the Go8 must administer outreach, selection, support and teaching that addresses gaps in educational background and preparedness for studies at university level. The effectiveness of equity initiatives therefore depends on conceptions of academic standards and the capacity of Go8 institutions to develop and implement equity programs that are aligned with and complementary to their commitment to academic excellence.

3. Key indicators of overall equity performance

As research-led, comprehensive and influential universities, the Go8 institutions have distinctive obligations in relation to equity. The social inclusion agenda for the Go8 acknowledges the promotion of equity in relation to: all discipline areas, in particular high-demand courses and fields of study; graduate-level courses, particularly in courses leading to entry to the profession; research training; and placements, internships and other career-building opportunities.

An important goal for the Go8 is to build equity group representation in key graduate destinations. The equity objectives of the Go8 focus on member institutions' strengths in research, professional education, and development of future leaders. To this end, the Group's equity strategies feature pathways for increasing the involvement of graduates from currently under-represented groups in the professions, in leadership roles, and in academic and research careers.

These overarching objectives shared by Go8 institutions form the basis for a suite of key indicators against which each institution, and the Group as a whole, can measure and monitor performance. In time, the Go8 may elect to set targets for some or all of these indicators. In the immediate future, however, the key indicators are designed to assist institutions to collect and collate relevant data and thus to establish a basis for the Go8 institutions to review and compare the effectiveness of their equity initiatives with a view to identifying good and best practice.

Table 1 shows the proportion of students from each equity group studying in Go8 and non-Go8 institutions in 2008, as well as the variation between Go8 institutions, reflecting their differing institutional contexts. The table includes data for the groups that are the principal focus for the Go8 equity strategy:

- people from low socio-economic status backgrounds;
- Indigenous people;
- people from rural and remote areas; and
- students with a disability or persistent medical condition.

The Go8 also recognises the significance of gender imbalances in particular disciplines and at different levels of study, and the need for past and future groups of immigrants to Australia, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds in particular, to be monitored closely for higher education equity purposes.

In designing and implementing equity initiatives, the Go8 recognises that some of the patterns in higher education participation reflect choices people have made. These choices may be highly informed and it cannot be assumed that all individuals within defined subgroups experience barriers to higher education or have experienced educational disadvantage.

While the Go8 have much in common as institutions, and may therefore develop shared overarching objectives, Table 1 demonstrates that different geographical locations and state contexts play a role in the profile of their student cohorts. These differences are an important influence on individual institutions' equity emphases and priorities.

Table 2 presents the overarching objectives for equity in Go8 institutions, as well as key indicators for monitoring performance against these objectives. Key indicators are suggested for three areas: access and participation, attainment and achievement, and graduate outcomes. The common set of objectives and indicators to follow does not imply that all will be equally relevant to each institution. However,

the common framework may enable institutions to identify areas of high performance and to share insights into effective strategies as a result.

TABLE 1. Grouped and individual institutions: Percentage of undergraduates in each equity category. (Domestic students, 2008)

	Low Socio-Economic Status	Indigenous students	Students with a disability	Non English speaking back-ground	Regional	Remote
All universities	16.1	1.2	4.4	3.2	18.9	0.9
Non-Go8	18.5	1.4	4.7	2.9	21.8	1.1
Go8	9.8	0.6	3.6	4.0	11.3	0.5
Monash University	12.2	0.2	3.4	4.4	14.5	0.1
The Australian National University	4.3	0.8	7.0	2.8	13.7	0.2
The University of Adelaide	14.0	0.9	6.3	1.5	11.0	1.1
The University of Melbourne	7.3	0.5	3.7	2.5	12.2	0.1
The University of New South Wales	8.5	0.6	3.1	6.9	8.2	0.1
The University of Queensland	14.8	0.6	2.7	2.8	16.0	1.1
The University of Sydney	7.6	0.8	2.3	5.4	5.9	0.2
The University of Western Australia	6.0	0.8	4.2	2.7	9.4	1.7

Table 2. Key indicators of the overall equity performance of Go8 universities

	Objectives	Key indicators
1. Access and participation	1: Improve access by raising the share of domestic undergraduate and postgraduate student enrolments in Go8 universities for under-represented groups, with reference to each group's national and state population share.	<p>Share of enrolments for designated under-represented groups, with particular reference to low SES students and Indigenous students, in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bachelor degree courses, by year level and by field of study; • courses leading to entry to the professions, including graduate level courses; • honours and graduate level courses; and • research higher degrees. <p>Share of enrolments for school-leavers admitted from under-represented schools.</p> <p>Share of enrolments for non-school leavers from under-represented groups</p>
	2: Improve gender balance among domestic students in identified fields of study.	<p>Gender ratio among domestic students enrolled in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bachelor degrees by field of study, including engineering, information technology, physical sciences, veterinary science, health sciences and education; • graduate coursework programs, including graduate-level professional-entry programs, such as the health sciences of optometry, dentistry and nursing; and • research higher degrees by field of study
	3: Improve financial support for students in financial need.	<p>In bachelor degrees, and where the financial assistance was awarded on the basis of financial need, the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number and proportion of domestic students receiving financial assistance; • total sum on a per capita basis awarded to domestic students. <p>In non-HECS liable courses, including HECS-exempt RTS places, and where the financial assistance was awarded on the basis of demonstrated financial need, the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number and proportion of domestic students awarded fee-remission of at least 50% of course fees; • number and proportion of domestic students awarded a living allowance or stipend; • number and proportion of students provided with subsidised housing; and • total sum on a per capita basis awarded to domestic students.

	<p>4: Effectiveness of diversified and expanded selection criteria for undergraduate programs for particular groups.</p>	<p>Proportion of students admitted to first year undergraduate courses on criteria other than or in addition to ATAR, including through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pathway programs • portfolio assessment • 'bonus ATAR points' • first in class schemes • and other mechanisms
	<p>5: Provide diverse pathways into graduate-level programs for graduates from under-represented groups.</p>	<p>Proportion of students admitted to graduate programs from under-represented groups</p> <p>Proportion of students admitted to graduate programs from non-traditional pathways.</p>
<p>2. Attainment and achievement</p>	<p>6: Ensure comparable rates of academic progress and success for students regardless of background.</p>	<p>Rates of retention, progression and completion for students in designated equity groups compared with other students, with particular attention to first year students.</p> <p>Rates of retention, progression and completion for students according to the criteria on which they were admitted.</p> <p>Grade distributions for students in designated equity groups compared with other students.</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of students identified as being at risk.</p>
	<p>7: Ensure comparable levels of engagement, integration and satisfaction for all students, regardless of background.</p>	<p>Engagement, integration and satisfaction of undergraduate and postgraduate students as measured by student experience surveys, by student background and criteria for admission to course, and with particular attention to first year students.</p>
	<p>8: Ensure comparable participation in work and study placement opportunities and related programs, for all students, regardless of background.</p>	<p>Demographic characteristics of students participating in study abroad, industry placements and related programs.</p>
<p>3. Graduate outcomes</p>	<p>9: Improve the representation of graduates from designated equity groups employed in targeted professional and leadership areas.</p>	<p>Graduate outcomes data, including employment type, rate and salary by student background and criteria for admission to course.</p> <p>Proportion of students from designated equity groups enrolled in graduate programs, overall and by program type, including research higher degrees.</p>

4. Research and knowledge transfer	<p>10. Improve the research and scholarship on equity and social inclusion and assist in the translation of research findings into policy and practice.</p> <p>Number of research grants and commissioned studies into equity and social inclusion.</p> <p>Number of publications on equity and social inclusion, including review reports and policy reports.</p> <p>Extent and range of community engagement and knowledge transfer activities.</p> <p>Leadership and service on boards and expert panels.</p>
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4. Equity initiatives and interventions: guides for evaluating effectiveness

This section provides ten guides for evaluating the effectiveness of various types of equity initiatives. These are grouped under the three broad headings which together reflect students' pathways into and through higher education: access and participation, attainment and achievement, and graduate outcomes.

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

- A: Long-term relationships with target communities through generic outreach and engagement
- B: Long-term relationships with target schools, their students and teachers
- C: Student selection

ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

- D: Orientation and transition
- E: Course structure and curriculum design
- F: Learning experiences
- G: Student services

GRADUATE OUTCOMES

- H: Pathways to further study
- I: Employment

In some cases, evaluation is a relatively simple process of considering readily available or readily collectable quantitative data, such as changes in participation rates and/or attritions and completions. In other cases, evaluation procedures will be qualitative and will rely on perceptions and opinions gathered from interviews and/or questionnaires. Where possible, the guides suggest ways of monitoring the inputs and processes of equity strategies as well as the outcomes. In some cases outcomes measures will have a degree of uncertainty.

Each initiative type set out below includes: a brief overview of typical programs; assumptions underlying the initiative; goals of the initiative; methods for monitoring inputs and processes; outcomes measurements and notes. The notes for each guide are provided to indicate the complexity of evaluation for each initiative type, and any limitations which may be inherent in measurement methods.

4.1 Access and participation

A: Long-term relationships with target communities through generic outreach and engagement

<p><i>Typical programs</i></p> <p>Sponsorship of community events; information stalls at community sites; student placements in local businesses; short courses and workshops for community members.</p>
<p><i>Assumptions</i></p> <p>Low aspiration toward university study among people from low SES backgrounds stems in part from lack of familiarity with universities by both parents and students. Relationships between the university and target communities builds familiarity and allows the university to become part of the community.</p> <p>Outreach helps to counteract negative biases or perceptions of universities as not being welcoming and open.</p>
<p><i>Goals</i></p> <p>To increase applications from target communities to both the host university and other universities.</p>
<p><i>Monitoring of inputs and processes</i></p> <p>Extent of 'reach': frequency and intensity of community engagement 'awareness' raising activities.</p> <p>Attendance at courses, workshops or sponsored events.</p> <p>Qualitative evaluation of influence on awareness and attitudes through questionnaires.</p> <p>Program costs, both direct and indirect.</p>
<p><i>Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes</i></p> <p>A change in the number of applicants from targeted communities to the host university and to other universities.</p>
<p><i>Notes</i></p> <p>Increases in the number of students from a target community applying for university are likely to have complex causes, and outreach initiatives cannot be isolated from these as the main contributing factor.</p> <p>Tracking the number of students applying and enrolling from selected target communities is complex and time-consuming.</p>

B: Long-term relationships with target schools, their students and teachers

Typical programs

Information days and visits by the university to the school; visits to the university by school groups, for information on pathways and supports available to students to access university e.g. scholarships, bursaries and familiarisation or for curriculum-related activities; university students on voluntary placements as peer mentors and 'ambassadors' in schools; partnerships between university staff and school teachers in emerging or changing disciplines.

Assumptions

Low aspiration toward university study among students from under-represented groups and schools stems in part from lack of familiarity with universities, especially if family and friends have not attended university. Interaction between the university, school students and their teachers, especially in the early and middle years when aspirations are formed, builds familiarity and allows for 'myth busting'. Student engagement can be enhanced through exposure to the latest knowledge and approaches within particular disciplines, the 'teaching-research nexus'.

Goals

To increase applications from target schools to both the host institution and other institutions.

To increase applications from target schools to university courses in target discipline areas.

To increase participation rates in senior school studies, overall and in target study areas.

Monitoring of inputs and processes

Extent of 'reach': number of participating schools, and the basis for their inclusion; frequency and intensity of relationships.

Qualitative evaluation of participant (student, teacher, parent) satisfaction through questionnaires.

Program costs, both direct and indirect.

Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes

A change in the number of applications from target schools to: a) university (host or other universities); and b) target university courses.

A change in the proportion of Year 10 students enrolling in and completing senior school studies at the target schools, overall and in target study areas.

Notes

Changes in senior school enrolments and in the number of students applying for university are likely to have complex causes, and the contribution of any particular initiative cannot be readily isolated from the influence of other initiatives and other variables.

Outreach activities, particularly those that are linked to particular study areas, are often faculty or department-based initiatives, presenting challenges to collation and reporting at the institution level.

C: Student selection

Typical programs

Programs targeted specifically at equity group members: quota-based allocation of places; bonus ATAR points schemes; special consideration schemes (Educational Access Scheme (NSW and ACT), Special Entry Access Scheme (VIC), Special Consideration of Educational Disadvantage (QLD), etc).

Pathways programs often used by members of equity groups: recognition of prior learning; VET pathways; preparatory programs.

Other selection procedures which may benefit equity group members: interviews and portfolios; special testing (such as STAT); aptitude assessment (UniTest, etc).

Assumptions

A diverse suite of selection criteria is required due to the diversity of students' prior learning experiences.

Some students may not demonstrate their true potential in their ATAR due to prior educational disadvantage or other factors.

Non-traditional learning pathways can still provide a valuable foundation for university study.

Goals

To ensure that students with the potential to succeed at university are not excluded through institutional selection practices.

To admit suitably prepared students from particular equity group backgrounds who may otherwise not have received an offer.

Monitoring of inputs and processes

The number of students entering through each pathway.

Regular review of the awareness among stakeholder groups of available entry programs.

Regular review of the literature on various selection tools, including tests and aptitude assessment.

Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes

Retention, academic success and completion rates of students admitted through each pathway. Comparison of retention, success and completion rates in cohorts admitted through each pathway.

Notes

While enrolment targets for particular groups are useful, there is a tension between equity and notions of academic merit and student preparedness.

Retention and completion are therefore highly useful quantitative measures of success. However, these measures are also a function of orientation and transition programs, course structure and curriculum design, learning experiences and student services.

All selection criteria that have a 'performance' element, including aptitude assessments, are prone to a degree of bias against prior educational disadvantage.

4.2 Attainment and achievement

D: Orientation and transition

<p><i>Typical programs</i></p> <p>Orientation programs; transition programs; course preparation and bridging programs; cohort grouping; mentoring and peer support.</p>
<p><i>Assumptions</i></p> <p>Students from underrepresented groups, especially students who do not have a family history of university attendance, may need extra support as they make the transition to university.</p> <p>Special programs can support those who are not adequately prepared for university-style learning and teaching.</p> <p>Encouraging students to form peer networks supports successful transition.</p>
<p><i>Goals</i></p> <p>Increased retention of students through the first year of study.</p> <p>Improve students' experience of their first year at university.</p> <p>Establish a sound basis for future academic success.</p>
<p><i>Monitoring of inputs and processes</i></p> <p>Participant evaluation through questionnaires.</p> <p>Level of participation in voluntary programs, including the level of participation over time for extended programs.</p> <p>Level of awareness of programs among staff teaching in first year courses.</p> <p>Tracking via exit surveys of students who leave during first year.</p>
<p><i>Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes</i></p> <p>Changes in rates of attrition, especially in the first year, among student from target equity groups and, if possible, those who have participated in particular orientation/transition programs.</p>
<p><i>Notes</i></p> <p>Evaluation of such programs ideally requires a control group: institutions should be able to compare retention rates for those who took part in a transition program with students of a similar background who did not. This is often not possible, or at least not practicable, due to limited available data. A trend toward the introduction of enterprise-wide, integrated systems for recording student data may address this issue.</p>

E: Course structure and curriculum design

Typical programs

Integrated learning support; mode of delivery (especially for rural and regional students); inclusive curriculum practices.

Assumptions

Course and curriculum designs which integrate generic study skills into core delivery benefit all students, but may particularly benefit those from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

Flexible delivery modes can be beneficial for students with competing commitments and/or who live in a location remote from campus.

Course and curricula can be exclusive if language and teaching practices presuppose cultural and gender norms.

Goals

To equip students with the generic study skills necessary to succeed at university.

To teach in ways which best enable learners from diverse backgrounds to succeed, considering all aspects of course design.

Where appropriate, to offer flexible study options to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

Monitoring of inputs and processes

Review professional development programs for staff to ensure that inclusive teaching practice is included as a theme.

Include learning support as a specific component for consideration in all course approval and review processes.

Student satisfaction, based on the results by the relevant questions in existing student surveys, such as unit-based surveys of teaching quality. Analyse responses by equity group

Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes

Changes in retention and completion rates, including by target equity group (if possible).

Graduate satisfaction as measured by the relevant questions in course experience instruments such as the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) which includes perspectives of diverse groups of students.

Changes in the overall patterns of achievement in units of study following the introduction of equity-based curriculum change.

Notes

There will be significant intersections between support programs, thus it is challenging to attribute successful outcomes to any individual intervention.

F: Learning experiences

<p><i>Typical programs</i></p> <p>Adjunct learning support, such as services provided through language and writing skills units; mentoring; peer-groups; meeting the learning and infrastructure needs of students with a disability.</p>
<p><i>Assumptions</i></p> <p>Academic success is not contingent on classroom practices alone, but includes adjunct support in skills such as good study practices, research skills, academic standards of writing and team and group work.</p> <p>Learning should take place in an environment which provides suitable infrastructure for all students to succeed.</p>
<p><i>Goals</i></p> <p>To alleviate the effects of prior educational disadvantage.</p> <p>To foster peer learning, including by bringing students from diverse backgrounds together in ways that support learning.</p> <p>To assist students to succeed to their full capacity.</p>
<p><i>Monitoring of inputs and processes</i></p> <p>Rang and availability of programs, proportion of students seeking academic support services.</p> <p>Qualitative participant evaluation.</p>
<p><i>Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes</i></p> <p>Changes in retention, success, and completion rates, including by target equity group (if possible).</p> <p>Graduate satisfaction as measured by the relevant questions in instruments such as the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ).</p> <p>Changes in the overall patterns of achievement in units of study following the introduction of equity-based curriculum change.</p>
<p><i>Notes</i></p> <p>There will be significant intersections between support programs, thus it is challenging to attribute successful outcomes to any individual intervention.</p>

G: Student services

<i>Typical programs</i>	<p>University-provided services: financial aid, bursaries and scholarships; housing services; health services; disability support services; counselling; childcare.</p> <p>Student association services: clubs and societies; social events; sport and fitness; student representation and advocacy; academic grievance and advice services.</p>
<i>Assumptions</i>	<p>Students may meet with personal, financial or other difficulties during the course of their study, and these may more severely affect students in equity groups, who may not have strong personal support networks or financial support.</p> <p>Students build rich networks, develop new skills and strengthen social ties by taking part in a broad range of activities at university, including volunteering, mentoring, social clubs, sports, and political and cultural events.</p>
<i>Goals</i>	<p>To reduce attrition due to hardship, to ensure students are not impeded in their studies by financial distress.</p> <p>To improve students' wellbeing, and to provide opportunities for skill-building.</p> <p>To enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds to build social capital, through participation in social, political and sporting activities while at university.</p>
<i>Monitoring of inputs and processes</i>	<p>Capacity of service to meet the level of need, with the length of 'waiting lists' an indication of unmet demand.</p> <p>Awareness of services among staff and students.</p> <p>Qualitative evaluation of student needs, and the efficacy of services in meeting those needs.</p> <p>Exit surveying of students discontinuing a course, regarding reason for discontinuation.</p> <p>Demographic profiling of students using various services.</p>
<i>Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes</i>	<p>Change in rates of attrition due to financial hardship.</p> <p>Minimal waiting times for counselling and other health services.</p> <p>Rates of participation by students from equity groups in social, political and sporting activities.</p>
<i>Notes</i>	<p>Responsibility for the provision of student services is typically widely distributed across institutions, for example: within Faculties; under central administration; led by student associations and cooperatives; based in various service-specific units. Central collation and evaluation of processes and outcomes provides a challenge both to service providers and central administration.</p>

4.3 Graduate outcomes

H: Pathways to further study

<i>Typical programs</i> Open days, graduate recruitment programs and marketing. Graduate study advisory services and programs.
<i>Assumptions</i> Students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely than other students to aspire to graduate education, and particularly to HDR. Students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds who are graduates of non-Go8 universities are less likely to consider graduate study at a Go8 university.
<i>Goals</i> To ensure that Bachelor graduates are not hindered by social class, gender, ethnicity or other equity status, from going on to graduate study, including HDR, whether at the home university or elsewhere. To raise aspiration to graduate study, including HDR, among educationally and socially disadvantaged students. To increase the share of graduate students from equity group backgrounds at Go8 universities, in both coursework and research programs.
<i>Monitoring of inputs and processes</i> Number of participants in open days and recruitment activities, and if possible the demographic background of participants. Qualitative evaluation of participant satisfaction with open days and recruitment activities. Level of familiarity with graduate study options among academic staff, and professional staff in student advisory roles.
<i>Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes</i> Overall, by discipline, and by course type: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proportion of the university's Bachelor degree graduates from equity groups in graduate study in the year following graduation.• A change in the number of enrolments from graduates of non-Go8 universities, from designated equity groups, into graduate programs.
<i>Notes</i> Equity in graduate education, both coursework and HDR, has not traditionally been a strong focus of institutional equity initiatives, so much work is needed. The 'postcode method' of measuring SES status is particularly inapplicable to graduate students, necessitating the collection of other information. It is difficult to ascribe measures of success to university programs for students returning to study at graduate level after more than one year.

I: Employment

<p><i>Typical programs</i></p> <p>Careers events; professional network building; industry placement programs; student participation in professional associations; CV and interview preparation skills programs; institutional relationships with key employers.</p>
<p><i>Assumptions</i></p> <p>The path from study to work can be more difficult for students with limited social capital, that is, students who may not have access to professional networks through family, friends and colleagues, and for whom norms of professional behaviour (networking, attending interviews, structuring a CV, etc) may be unfamiliar.</p> <p>There is a societal benefit arising from ensuring that people from diverse backgrounds are represented across the professions.</p>
<p><i>Goals</i></p> <p>To remove impediments to graduates finding work in their chosen fields of employment.</p> <p>To increase the number of people from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds entering the professions.</p>
<p><i>Monitoring of inputs and processes</i></p> <p>Participation rates in programs and initiatives.</p> <p>Stakeholder (students, employers) satisfaction surveys.</p> <p>Awareness of programs among broader university community, including staff teaching in latter year units of study.</p>
<p><i>Measuring the effect on equity and social inclusion outcomes</i></p> <p>Changes in the diversity of graduates finding work in selected fields four months from graduation (AGS) and/or at later time points (institutional alumni surveys).</p>
<p><i>Notes</i></p> <p>Many factors will contribute to positive employment outcomes, and it is not possible to isolate the effects of individual initiatives.</p> <p>It is notoriously difficult to maintain contact with students after graduation.</p>

5. Research and knowledge transfer role of the Go8

The Go8 universities' contributions to education equity extend beyond the recruitment and support of students by individual institutions. As research-led institutions, Go8 universities play a significant role in the development of effective public policy. As well the Go8 universities are well-placed to directly engage with communities through partnerships and knowledge exchange.

Individual Go8 researchers, and the Go8 peak body, are prominent in the provision of advice to public policy makers. Through their extensive research into issues such as educational participation, student welfare, and matters of pedagogy, researchers in Go8 universities play a significant role in the promotion of evidence-based policy development. Representatives of member universities also sit on various advisory and review boards, and are invited to participate in parliamentary reviews and inquiries.

A positive, and sometimes incidental, outcome from their various community engagement and knowledge transfer activities is the influence Go8 universities have on the educational aspirations of the broader community. This contribution is particularly important in terms of improving attitudes toward university study among people for whom higher education may not have been a family or cultural norm. Unlike the programs described in Section 4, many community engagement initiatives are not primarily focused on addressing equity issues. However, their contribution to the Go8's overall equity strategy should not be overlooked.

Just as measuring the success of specific equity initiatives is challenging, so too is the evaluation of the research and professional contributions of the Go8. For some specific government policy initiatives, it is possible to identify the particular contributors, and contributions, from the Go8. However, most research and professional contributions to educational equity will not deliver outputs that can be readily measured, in fact the impact might only be evident over the long-term. With this in mind it is appropriate to consider these contributions in terms of inputs, with a focus on sustaining or increasing the level of participation in these activities undertaken by members. To facilitate this, it may be useful for institutions to keep a register of staff and student participation in relevant activities under the following four broad themes:

1. Engagement with public policy

- Briefing papers and advice to state and federal governments and agencies.
- Participation in formal government reviews and inquiries (e.g. preparing submissions; giving evidence; serving on panels).
- Service on boards, expert panels and strategy groups.

2. Research

- Research conducted, across the disciplines, that adds to scholarly knowledge of issues affecting educational equity.
- Commercial research conducted through consultancies for outside agencies with equity objectives.

3. Community engagement

- Hosting public lecture series.
- Taking part or giving demonstrations at community events.

- Providing tutoring or learning support to disadvantaged school students.
- Providing professional development support for teachers in disadvantaged schools.

4. Leadership

- Leading the sector in innovative approaches to improving equity of access to higher education, and sharing knowledge of effective approaches to supporting students to achieve successful outcomes.