



NCSEHE

National Centre for Student
Equity in Higher Education



Curtin University

EQUITY SCHOLARSHIP PROVISION IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

Insights and Directions

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Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the various interviewees at the 11 universities contacted for their time and cooperation as well as Gavin Moodie for his valuable review comments and input.

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Executive Summary

The research described in this paper was conducted for the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) at Curtin University whose core purpose is improving student equity in higher education.

The aim of this research was to gain a “snapshot” of current university equity scholarship practice and, inter alia:

- discern the scope of current offerings;
- identify the structural arrangements within which equity scholarships lie institutionally;
- illuminate what constitutes best practice from the perspective of those involved; and
- consider the importance of equity scholarships alongside other supports and the relationships with stakeholders internally and externally that expedite development and delivery.

The research was undertaken against the contextual backdrop of the likely implementation of fee deregulation in 2016 and possible changes to equity scholarship provision.

Based on the findings produced through analysis of data are generated through both desktop audit and interview processes, the seven recommendations are as follows:

Recommendation 1

In Australian universities, equity scholarships are considered within the rubric of the institution’s charter, mission and strategic directions.

Recommendation 2

A diversity of sources are used to fund equity scholarships to enhance the autonomy and longevity of offerings.

Recommendation 3

The institution has clear and appropriate accountabilities for equity scholarships and a champion representing them at an executive level.

Recommendation 4

The cultural and procedural ethos surrounding equity scholarship provision is one that normalises needs, promotes care and minimises administrative burden for students and staff. In this ethos, financial support is viewed as only one dimension of a suite of supports that underpin a positive student learning experience and contribute to retention and completion.

Recommendation 5

Relationships with external stakeholder groups and agencies both inform the development of relevant equity scholarships and expedite the efficient processing of said scholarships.

Recommendation 6

All aspects of institutional equity scholarship processes are fair, equitable and transparent and that these are auditable.

Recommendation 7

Universities report and review their scholarships annually. Evidence is generated through multiple means episodically and longitudinally to inform universities as to the effectiveness and impact of their equity scholarship offerings.

1. Background

Higher Education in Australia has, for the last decade, been subject to a multiplicity of agendas through successive governments. This has had several impacts, many of which are beyond the scope of this paper to discuss, however one important impact has been the requirement of universities to consider their social contract in ways perhaps not undertaken previously. In particular, the framing of the Compacts, first introduced in 2010 required universities to commit to an equity target group – relevant to their specific context and to their aspirational demography – in order to address representation of disadvantaged groups nationally. Consideration of disadvantaged and under-represented groups in turn predicated an analysis of the extent of engagement that existed with such groups and the extent to which it would be perceived by that community as an engaged institution (Boyer 1990).

As members of the community, Higher Education institutions have a vested interest in the wellbeing of their community (Shannon & Wang, 2010), and have a civic responsibility to engage and enrich their community (Bacon, 2002). From a Higher Education equity policy perspective, Ramsay (2004) noted that Australia has consistently committed to systemic approaches to widen university participation, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. While the blueprint for enabling alternative pathways was established by the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission's Higher Education Equity Program and the Aboriginal Participation Initiative (Hodges et al). The Dawkins (1988) report aspired to establish national equity objectives and a template for funding of these proposals. In 1990, A fair chance for all (DEET) placed responsibility for improving student equity largely in the hands of the universities themselves: "higher education institutions . . . have a clear responsibility to . . . [change] the balance of the student population to reflect more closely the composition of society as a whole" (p. 2). This report firmly established the sector and institutional planning and action framework for equity policy imperatives. Given the government's strong emphasis on widening participation in higher education, many universities targeted initiatives to encourage and enable more and diverse students' access and participation in higher education. One of these initiatives has been using scholarships to assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access and participate in higher education.

In July, 2014, the Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, appointed a panel of experts to review higher education funding in Australia and, inter alia, mechanisms for funding equity scholarships. Given the purpose of the research reported in this paper was to identify best practice in equity scholarship provisions now and in the future, the recommendations generated by this panel and the Building A World Class Higher Education System paper released by the Minister's office, have been contextually relevant. This is particularly the case because of the uncertainty the recommendations generated amongst university staff at all levels with regard to

issues including quantum, scope and administration of equity scholarships. Additionally, concerns were expressed specifically on the apparently diminished role of the Commonwealth in a “user pays” orientation that could actually impose greater financial burdens on poorer students (see, for example, *It’s about students, not Institutions* by Mary Kelly, 2014). Numerous related commentaries have also been published in the media that range from discussion of the continued (under) representation of equity groups in higher education (Pitman, 2014) to calls to prevent universities from overpricing by the Business Council of Australia (Mather, 2014) to statements made by a GO8 Vice-Chancellor about how the proposed changes could enable his particular university to double current equity scholarship offerings (Bourke, 2014).

Against this backdrop, and with concern for an issue that potentially affects the lives of thousands of current and potential students, the NCSEHE undertook to deepen understandings and contribute to the national discourse on equity scholarships in a meaningful way.

2. Methodology

2.1 Ethics

The research reported in this paper provides an overview of the current best practice use of equity scholarships at Australian universities. Ethics clearance was obtained through Curtin University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (RD-13-14).

2.2 Methods

The research utilised documentary analysis and qualitative methods. The documentary analysis took the form of a “desktop audit” and the qualitative dimension utilised semi structured interviews to elicit narrative data from key informants in each Australian State and Territory. Key informants included people responsible for delivery of, or strategy setting for, equity scholarships in their respective institutions and representation was from the level of Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor through to service managers. Representation of universities from groupings GO8, Regional, ATN and IRU were included as well as from non-aligned universities were included as indicated in the following table. To preserve confidentiality of informants categories are not indicated below as some States have only one university in any given category.

University Group	Number of Interviews
Australian Technology Network	2
Group of Eight	3
Innovative Research Universities	1
New Generation Universities	1

Regional University Network	3
Unaligned	1
TOTAL	11

2.3 Research Questions

The research question that was fundamental to both the documentary analysis and the interviews was:

“What is perceived as best practice in Australian universities for the development and provision of equity scholarships?”

and, as a corollary:

“How are equity scholarship offerings communicated, processed and evaluated?”

2.4 Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data were analysed. The quantitative data drawn from the desktop audit was analysed in a constant comparative process (Silverman, 2009). The qualitative data were coded and clustered into themes of meaning, or thematised (Rice and Ezzy, 2011). Both data sets and the findings derived from them were synthesised to formulate a ‘decision making grid’ (see Section 5).

A presentation to stakeholders of the research is to be undertaken at a Forum in early 2015.

3. Findings

3.1 Desktop Audit Data

The desktop audit of 37 university websites took place during October 2014 and reflections here represent the data that was available online at that point in time (see Appendix 3). Overall, the approach was to attempt to determine appropriate information from a potential student seeking information on equity scholarships at university.

In summary, the desktop audit indicated a highly variable “data constellations” across websites. Specifically, the following findings are noted:

- Equity scholarship information for Indigenous students is easier to find than scholarships targeting other equity groups and this was the case across all Australian university websites. The second equity group to whom most information is directed are current and future students from rural and remote areas.

- General Financial Hardship scholarships are identifiable on websites but it was difficult to discern eligibility in many instances.
- For prospective students in each state there is no opportunity to undertake a comparative analysis of university scholarship offerings. Accordingly, a student must search each site individually. In states such as Western Australia this is not such an overwhelming task (as there are only four universities) but for States such as NSW this task is much more overwhelming. In response to this as well as a general objective of demystifying tertiary admissions processes, Bridges to Higher Education in conjunction with UAC (the state's tertiary Admission Centre) developed an all-inclusive website to assist students called Make Your Mark (<http://www.makeyourmark.edu.au/>).
- Search engines in different universities filter differently when undertaking equity scholarship searches, for example, some filter by equity groups others only sort via field of study.
- Where information is applied and linked back to the States Central Admissions centres such as UAC and VTAC, it is easier for students to discern if they are eligible for equity scholarships at multiple universities simultaneously.

3.2 Qualitative Data

Based on the thematic analysis of the qualitative data generated from interviews with informants from around Australia, there are five key findings. These are discussed below and supported by the inclusion of salient narrative extracts.

3.2.1 Generating Evidence to Inform Practice: Understanding What Works Best

Informants spoke about the importance of generating - and utilising - evidence to inform their institutional practice with respect to:

- who gets scholarships – target and priority groups;
- how much – the value of the scholarship; and
- over what period of time.

Despite a general consensus on the need for universities to develop data collection and analysis processes to generate evidence around the effectiveness of equity scholarship offerings, the extent to which this had happened around the country was variable. At one level there was a reflection on this being an area that had not been an institutional priority in the past.

“No [we have not generated any evidence of the impact of scholarship offerings] but the ones that come through on Centrelink data via the Tertiary Admissions Centre – we know they have enrolled but they aren’t followed up after that and we don’t really know whether the money has helped them or not – but it’s something we could have a look at...I’d like to see a nuanced evidence base...it worries me that we give an equity bursary for a year and hope that their circumstances change within a year and perhaps some students need to get it for the duration of their degree.”

On the continuum, other universities identified themselves as having embarked upon equity scholarship reviews as a precursor to implementing more comprehensive evidence generating processes.

“The university over the last couple of years has wanted to review scholarships to say ‘if we have a hundred million dollars to give out, how are we doing it, are we getting the best leverage out of it and are we delivering what students really need?’ So we have already started to gather data about what we have, how dispersed responsibility sits and start to think about a more cohesive structure that enables us to make sure we are really targeting the students that need support...so, if changes come through with the legislation we are not blindsided by the complexity of what we already have in our own environment.”

Some universities had data gathering strategies in place but perceived them as being uni-dimensional in focus and identified the need to enact more sophisticated and in depth processes of generating evidence upon which to base institutional practice.

“...to this point what we have done is track students who have received scholarships and looked at their achievement and retention...that’s a fairly limited evaluation process and what we would like to do is first of all have more information in terms of outcomes but also try to get a handle on the comparative value of the scholarships compared with other forms of support – which is the sixty four million dollar question!”

And at the other end of the continuum were those who had been collecting data through multi method means that over time became a strong evidence base for decision making about, among other things, who to target in the provision of equity scholarships.

“...we’ve got truckloads of feedback...apart from the surveys and attrition stats there’s the quotes that have roughly been the same for ten years, so that tells you something about the impact... it’s not just the buying power of the scholarship, it’s who we are giving it to. The best bang for the buck [we have found] is clearly when you give it to the poorest person...it’s not how much you give them, it’s who you give it to that makes a difference.”

And then, there were instances where data had been generated that had been so surprising that it had not yet been integrated into current or future strategy with respect to scholarships.

“The scholarships office has certainly done research around student preferences around scholarships. They did a large survey earlier this year and not just of people holding scholarships but looking at student preferences around scholarships across the board which was quite interesting and gave us a bit of a surprise...quite a high percentage of students are telling us they want fee relief from scholarships, and that was before deregulation. I think that was really quite surprising.”

3.2.2 Putting the Student First: The Need for an Holistic Approach

Whilst the informants were able to speak to the value and importance of scholarships, they were united in the view that scholarships should not be viewed in isolation, rather they need to be considered as just one element of a total package. What was evident in the data were two ways in which scholarships needed to be understood holistically. First, in terms of their delivery, i.e. “bundling” scholarships with other forms of support. Second, to ensure that student – not institutional – predicates the organisation and management of scholarships needs. This respondent reminds universities to retain some perspective on equity scholarships.

“...one of the things is to not let the dialogue around scholarships get out of control in a way that scholarships become this iconic, solve-every-problem thing. And so scholarships are good but they are one small part of a broader attrition strategy...it’s a three-part thing - and has been [here] for twelve years - which is timely support services, inclusive curriculum and a sense of belonging. That’s how you stop people dropping out, whoever they are, and scholarships fit into timely support services but it’s just one of them. So counselling is important too, and other supports...and people being nice to you...it’s a connected part of the whole and the whole is really the FYI retention methodology and this just happens to target people with a characteristic which is that they’re in financial need. But if that’s all you did and people were mean to them, they would disengage and they would still leave.”

The other informant further articulated the need for scholarships to be seen as just one of numerous student focussed supports, or, as they suggest as part of a “caring community”.

“what I think has most impacts on our students is the concept of a caring community of which scholarships are just a part of that but it’s also about an ethos that if your health is not quite right then we will care for you and provide doctors, we have a food bank and when you think about it none of those things by themselves is the single contributing factor but taken together us quite a parcel of activities...things are

endemic particularly around finance but finance is a euphemism around a whole parcel of issues as well. We put a lot of effort into residential accommodation for students and there is a whole scholarship package around that as well.”

Additional supports mentioned by informants in the interviews included for example equipment provision, mentoring and childcare. One informant pointed out another element of support that students coming from very disadvantaged and/or CALD backgrounds may require, that is building social and cultural capital.

“Making sure that those students have the whole package of support, you know...getting the social and cultural capital networks...we have to be careful...and not just think we can resolve everything by giving students a scholarship and think that’s going to solve the problem.”

When it comes to the way that scholarship processes are organised, there was a view that it should be as streamlined as possible, with the ideal being a “one stop shop” in which the individual student’s needs are considered conjointly.

“We are looking at bundling other components at the point of application to the university – do we also take into consideration needs for accommodation, travel scholarships, mentoring, internships, work on campus...we are trying to get a more holistic view of the students’ needs.”

One informant felt very strongly that streamlined processes had other spinoffs from the student perspective, in both combatting application fatigue and mitigating the potentially negative psychological impact of focussing on diminished fiscal resources.

“The other thing for us is in terms of the management of all this is to try and limit as much as possible the students going through a proliferation of applications and writing stuff so we are wanting much easier mechanisms for students...it’s partly application fatigue but it [applying for assistance] also reinforces all the negative stuff.”

Further discussion of what may be considered “negative stuff” – and how this can be addressed institutionally, is included in the findings section on institutional culture. However, by way of indicating what can be achieved in streamlined processes, this informant was very proud of the fact that.

“Students only have to fill in one form...we have about four and a half thousand applicants a year, so it’s quite large scale...[and] behind that one form sits 2000 products in the equity scheme.”

3.2.3 Having the Right People in the Right Places: Collaboration, Administration and Representation

What was evident from the narrative data is that the processing and administration of scholarships is a collaborative endeavour and that time, care and attention has been given to developing the collaborative relationships over time. Whilst universities had to liaise with Centrelink in equity scholarship application processing, informants spoke most positively about the role of the Tertiary Admissions Centres in their respective states. This seemed to be for two main reasons, first because it was more efficient and second, because the preliminary processing by the TACs represent an element of transparency (an issue discussed more fully in the next section). As the majority of informants spoke to the positive collaborative relationships they have with the TACs, the most in depth description of how the relationship works and what it represents to the university is presented here as a case example.

“The bulk of our low SES scholarships are managed through the TAC, so we have come up with them to develop the criteria as part of the offer process...we identify and rank the applicants that are eligible...we then take a file load from the TAC which we feed into our own scholarships management system, we built our own system and we have a series of reports and templates that run automatically through that process to ensure students are eligible at the time of census date and then following that we have automated emails posted to students to confirm bank account details and then we pay it direct into the bank account...we are looking at fairness and transparency for everyone who is in the applicant pool...that’s why we engaged the TAC in this process, so at the application for admission we are gathering the same information at the same time for scholarships and grants.”

Whilst there seemed to exist uniformly positive and institutionally beneficial relationship between universities and TACs, there was a corresponding lack of uniformity in the internal structural arrangements of universities with respect to where equity scholarships sit and who is responsible – at a senior level – for them. Despite the fact that the following two informants described different accountabilities at a senior level, both indicated that internal structural reviews were in place that could impact on where equity scholarships might ultimately sit institutionally. This may speak to the fact that scholarships per se have become increasingly an area of focus nationally, more recently as a response to the discursive environment surrounding proposed legislative changes.

“It’s not the most logical [structural arrangement] – you might expect scholarships to sit in an equity unit or something like that. At present there is a functional review going on, so whether the [current] arrangement will be the same next year, none of us know...so it’s actually the DVC Research who is a member of Executive that the unit reports to, whether it will stay like that I’m not sure in the future.”

“...the scholarships sit with the DVC Academic...but the university is basically in a reform phase at the moment. There are a range of structures that are being revised and one of those is the committee structure and I’m unaware of where it’s going to land at the moment...we are undertaking a stocktake in review of our scholarships so you have got us at a time of transition, but I mean for me the challenge is not only to coordinate scholarships but also to be strategically active in the way we leverage them and in the way scholarships match our strategic plan. I think we could improve that a bit.”

The statements regarding “being unaware” and “not knowing” signal a concerning state of uncertainty in the face of reviews and reforms – and a concomitant lack of opportunity to influence outcomes – for key staff involved in the oversight of scholarships at different levels. To what extent the proposed legislative changes have sparked internal reviews remains a matter of conjecture, but, given the potential impacts on funding and scholarship delivery, seems likely to be a significant contributor.

In contrast, one informant reflected on the fact that the structural arrangements for scholarships had remained constant for ten years and that the responsibility was, as they perceived it, properly held within an Equity unit.

“...restructures are a way to waste two years. We work in partnership, our secret slogan is working in partnership whether you like it or not! ...we have had it [equity scholarships] and it’s our exclusive responsibility... I think it’s crucial that a single department whose mission is social justice owns the scheme because it means it has not lost its way, its original purpose is the same as it has been for ten years.”

Such discussion of ownership, mission and social justice as themes related to equity scholarships provide an appropriate segue into discussion of institutional culture and best practice principles.

3.2.4 Enacting Best Practice Principles: Transparency and Institutional Culture

Despite the fact that equity scholarships to date have received relatively little attention in the higher education discourse in this country to date, there were strong and largely consensual views held by the informants on what constitutes best practice irrespective of external drivers. Transparency was the principle identified and discussed most frequently in the data, an eloquent description of which was given by this informant:

“I believe that best practice for a university is one where the public can see that the funds are being used equitably and fairly to achieve a greater good for the community. We are publically funded generally, and, if students are putting their funds into the university we need to be able to demonstrate that what we are doing is

delivering that promise and that the equity funds need to support that promise. So, best practice would be being transparent, being accessible, being able to convey those messages clearly to your core stakeholders and being able to be mindful of the needs and challenges of the institution and the students themselves are facing and being flexible and responsive to those challenges.”

Of course, in action, absolute transparency may still be aspirational:

“We are also looking at fairness and transparency so that we are trying to remove from many of our scholarships the arbitrary decision making of panels trying to establish criteria in which everyone is treated fairly... the principles we are looking at is the support of those in need and the fairness and transparency for everyone who is in the applicant pool.”

As well as process issues that represent best practice, there is the more complex nexus between institutional values and culture and how this is expressed in the way in which members of the particular institutional community – that is staff and students – understand and respond to equity scholarships. This encompasses messaging and communication around equity scholarships and the framing of them. The following extract is a powerful description of how institutional culture can be influenced:

“Don’t stigmatise. Don’t humiliate. We try to normalise it here, we have endless talk about equity scholarships...we have campaigns like “tell a friend about” ...to tell a friend and get someone else to apply so we make it completely normal and de-stigmatise. And we just say “everyone’s got financial troubles – when you’re a student, we’re just here to stop you dropping out” so we don’t go on about helping poor people. We don’t say disadvantaged. We don’t say charity.”

Paying careful attention to how scholarships are named, framed and communicated within the university was also identified by the next informant as being a real issue for students first in family to attend university.

“If I looked to a model it would be Harvard or Princeton, it would be needs-based. You are assessed on what your circumstances are and if the university wants to offer you a place then all of the things you need should come as part of that place...if you need a certain amount of scholarship support to help you based on your circumstances then that’s what’s available on a sliding scale. Obviously Harvard and those institutions are much wealthier than Australian universities and I think 50 years ago in the states that culture wasn’t there...so, best practice for me would be that every student, regardless of who they are, where they grew up, what circumstances they are in, if they have the ability and that’s the pathway they want to follow, then they are supported to be able to do that.”

Interestingly, having addressed philanthropic culture in Australia, this same informant reflected on the possibility that suggested changes to funding in a deregulated environment could have a negative impact.

“One of the things around the reform policy and media comment currently with scholarships and things like that is that it may discourage philanthropic giving in Australia and that would be really sad if people thought “well, if students are paying higher fees, universities are going to have scholarships across the board, they don’t need donations from Alumni and the general public and industry as much as they did. That would be short sighted for Australia.”

3.2.5 Universities Addressing Contextual Realities: The Need for Autonomy

Each of Australia’s universities has a unique history, tradition, demographic makeup and profile. Indeed, the context in which universities are located in a geopolitical sense influences institutional decisions ranging from course offerings (and by which mode) to capital works programs. Scholarship offerings have, over time, developed quite organically in response to this mix of contextual variables. Targeting a particular group relative to context though, can be more complex than just making a scholarship available, as this informant from a university which is located in an area with a significant Indigenous population relates:

“...we haven’t filled a lot of those scholarships as many of our Indigenous students do not apply as they do not have the academic achievement levels...if they are not supported then there is a risk to getting them to the higher standard needed.”

Such cohort-based challenges notwithstanding, there was a firmly expressed view amongst informants that independence and autonomy were important.

“I think universities should control their own scholarships and I don’t like the idea of scholarships coming from outside.”

And, from two more institutions:

“I think the freedom of each institution to be able to identify the particular student that relates to their target markets or to identify their areas of support is valuable as well because that will differ between different institutions based on whatever strategies they are running with in engagements and so on. I think it’s also about allowing that level of independence for institutions to determine what’s appropriate.”

“...having the policy settings for universities that allow them the autonomy to respond to their own context, which will be very different. I’ve talked about our context with regional/remote but context can change over time – you know refugee groups change due to other policy settings in Canberra. I think that if universities have some

flexibility and autonomy around that and if the reporting [requirements] are advised in advance that would help...things go more smoothly.”

There were different interpretations of what autonomy might actually mean in the equity space for universities nationally. For the next informant, autonomy was discussed in the context of policy reform processes - and how that has changed in recent times – and the perceived pressures brought to bear on institutions to respond within tight time frames.

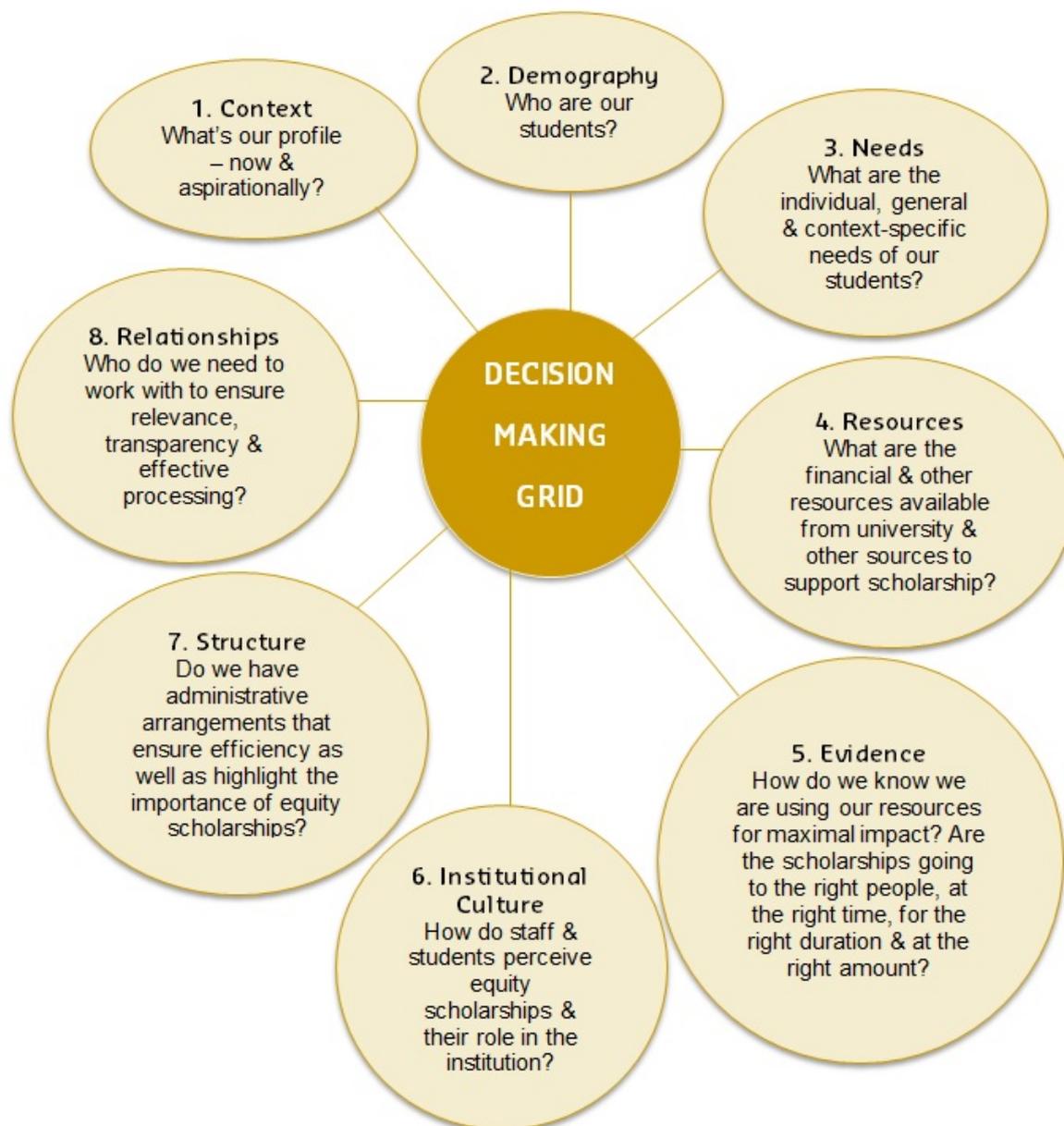
“...I’m one of the critics saying that at the moment it’s very difficult for institutions to plan because public policy is now embedded in federal budgets and not through processes that we have been used to like the Green and White paper or the Bradley Review. We now get a federal budget and that’s where the public policy is delivered and you’ve got six months to implement...so gone are the days where there is any meaningful consultation about any structural change in public policy. At the end of the day, equity arrangements have a long gestational period before full impact and with changing public policy arrangements, the two are almost incompatible. So, short term palliatives in relation to equity don’t do equity a great cause...all we ask for is for more time and more consistency and probably greater autonomy in relation to all of this.”

4. Synthesis of Findings

In considering the combined findings of the desktop audit and the qualitative data generated from interviews with key informants, a decision was taken by the investigator and consultative team to synthesise these into a form that could have some utility to universities now and in the future. The concept of a Decision Making Grid, read as an attempt to address the multidimensional nature of developing and operationalising equity scholarships, was promulgated and subsequently developed.

The Grid is, by nature, a work in progress, especially in what can be characterised as a fairly fluid policy environment. The intention is that feedback generated through a national think tank on the topic of equity scholarships will stimulate its further development, as will utilisation in a range of contexts by different universities over time. A determination of, and agreement upon, what constitutes best practice in this area is an anticipated outcome.

The Grid (attached in full in Appendix 2) is based on eight “elements” - derived from the analysis undertaken in the process described in this paper - that require consideration in the development, implementation, operationalisation and evaluation of equity scholarships. Within each element are a series of self-review type stimulus questions:



5. Recommendations

Based on the findings, a series of seven linked recommendations are presented for consideration. These are as follows:

Recommendation 1

In Australian universities, equity scholarships are considered within the rubric of the institution's charter, mission and strategic directions.

Recommendation 2

A diversity of sources are used to fund equity scholarships to enhance the autonomy and longevity of offerings.

Recommendation 3

The institution has clear and appropriate accountabilities for equity scholarships and a champion representing them at an executive level.

Recommendation 4

The cultural and procedural ethos surrounding equity scholarship provision is one that normalises needs, promotes care and minimises administrative burden for students and staff. In this ethos, financial support is viewed as only one dimension of a suite of supports that underpin a positive student learning experience and contribute to retention and completion.

Recommendation 5

Relationships with external stakeholder groups and agencies both inform the development of relevant equity scholarships and expedite the efficient processing of said scholarships.

Recommendation 6

All aspects of institutional equity scholarship processes are fair, equitable and transparent and that these are auditable.

Recommendation 7

Universities report and review their scholarships annually. Evidence is generated through multiple means episodically and longitudinally to inform universities as to the effectiveness and impact of their equity scholarship offerings.

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UAC - <http://www.uac.edu.au/equity/>

VTAC - <http://www.vtac.edu.au/scholarships.html>

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

- 1) Can you tell me about your current equity scholarship offerings – specific target groups, relationship to broad university strategy, etc.? What sort of evidence as to the effectiveness of your equity scholarships program do you have?
- 2) What are the structural arrangements you currently have in place for the administration of your equity scholarships? Can you comment on the adequacy of current arrangements going into the future?
- 3) What is your perspective on how the funding of equity scholarships might look in the future – are there any groups at risk in a deregulated/more competitive environment?
- 4) What contextual factors will influence the decision as to who will be targeted in the provision of equity scholarships at your university in the future?
- 5) What principles should underpin best practice in the provision of equity scholarships at an institutional level irrespective of external drivers?
- 6) Any further comments that you would like to make?

Appendix 2: Decision Making Grid

	CONSIDERATIONS	BEST PRACTICE	POLICY IMPLICATIONS
CONTEXT What's our profile?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographic Location - Regional or Metro <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SES by postcode Single campus or multi campus University category & history/ development 	University addresses its specific context but enacts an aspirational agenda in its equity scholarship offerings (e.g. A regional university may have scholarships for first in family students from agricultural backgrounds, but has an aspirational agenda to keep more young people in the region)	Autonomy in equity scholarship provision for higher education providers based on context
DEMOGRAPHIC Who are our students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age First in Family Socio-economic Status Diversity 	Reflects the current demographic of the student demographic cohort but has in place scholarship offerings that attempt to create a more representative demographic makeup of the Australian population. (e.g. A metro university in a high SES postcode introduces refugee scholarships)	Autonomy for higher education providers in offering equity scholarships reflective of charter/strategy
NEEDS What are the individual, general and context-specific needs of our students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living Costs Fee Affordability Transport Affordable/ Appropriate Accommodation Childcare Health/ Medical/ Counselling Access to part time work Academic support Social and cultural capital enhancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single point of application in which all needs are identified. Bundling (e.g. Scholarships are offered alongside accommodation and offers of place and other supports as per individual need) Transparency of needs assessment methodology Needs are 'normed' within the university 	TAC's mandated to work cooperatively with universities to expedite communication with prospective students re equity scholarship offerings by State and in first stage processing
RESOURCES What financial and other resources are available from university and other sources to support our students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student fees Independent fees (other than student fees e.g. philanthropic) Non-financial - equipment provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stand-alone fund - independent of policy or fee /independent scholarship fund - interest from corpus allows for scholarship provision Scholarships derived from student fee income are managed in a transparent and accountable manner Students can access non-financial resources such as equipment, computers etc. based on need 	Universities are able to determine appropriate scholarship funding quantum and mechanisms relative to current and predicted future financial status
EVIDENCE How do we know we are using our resources for maximal impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective retention Effective completion Impact of scholarships on specific sub cohorts(e.g. indigenous, low SES, or refugee) Changes to generational disadvantage over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative and quantitative data is collected, i.e. narrative and metric data Analysis strategies include thematic, multivariate and meta-analytic approaches Evidence is generated episodically e.g. post HECS census dates and end of semester, and longitudinally - tracking students through to completion and graduate destination. 	Policy is evidence based
INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE How do students and staff perceive equity scholarships and their role in the institution?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overt commitment to a transformative social contract Internal philanthropy (staff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and students understand the purpose of equity scholarships Staff, students and Alumni support development and funding of Equity Scholarships Needs are seen as a continuum and therefore normed within the culture; disadvantaged students are not singled out for special attention. 	Policy is actively profiled through internal communications strategy
STRUCTURE Do we have administrative arrangements that ensure efficiency as well as highlight the importance of scholarships?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative structure relative to university strategy User interface Delivery, monitoring & problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional structure is one where Equity Scholarships are seen as an important element of institutional strategy and have a senior champion Administrative processes ensure efficiency and effectiveness 	Efficiency guidelines identified
RELATIONSHIPS Who do we need to work with to ensure relevance, transparency and effective processing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With stakeholders (e.g. students, schools, parents & communities) University (TACS) Tertiary Admissions Centre (state based) Centrelink 	The relationship with stakeholders allows for the monitoring of the relevance of equity scholarship offerings and relationships with agencies such as Tertiary Admissions Centres (TACS) & Centrelink, expedites <i>transparent</i> processing of applications.	Policy is actively profiled through external communications strategy Centrelink and TAC's requirement to collaborate with universities

Appendix 3: Desktop Scholarship Review Data

University	State	Regional	Multi campus	GO8	Indigenous %	Low SES%	Links to each university scholarship page	Comments about types of scholarship
NEW SOUTH WALES								
Charles Sturt University	NSW	Yes	Yes	No	Top Quartile 2.11%	High 18.87%	http://www.csu.edu.au/oncampus/help-with-costs/scholarships	Website requires understanding of equity categories 174 PG & UG Scholarships offered which can be searched specifically for - Indigenous Students - Low Income Earners - people from Rural/Remote areas - International Students - students living on campus - students who have come from TAFE or studying via a TAFE partnership 13 Equity Grants available
Macquarie University	NSW	No	Yes	No	0.78%	8.28%	http://www.mq.edu.au/pubstatic/study/undergraduate/scholarships/how_to_apply/	Easy to navigate website Apply via Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) for NSW & ACT. Consists 2 types of scholarships - Institution Equity Scholarships (IES) funded by institutions and awarded to students experiencing financial disadvantage and/or other educational disadvantage IES aim to maximise the participation in higher education of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and also target groups statistically under represented in higher education All IES are available to applicants who receive means-tested payments & considers students experiencing a wide range of educational disadvantages. Including: carer responsibilities English language difficulties Indigenous Australian financial hardship English language difficulties long-term or recurrent medical conditions or illnesses refugee status regional or remote disadvantage sole parent responsibilities. - Commonwealth scholarships funded by government for Indigenous students. The main scholarship types are Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship (Indigenous-CECS) to assist students with general education costs Indigenous Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship (Indigenous CAS) to assist students from regional and remote areas who have to relocate to attend higher education with accommodation costs Indigenous Access Scholarship (IAS) a once-in-a-lifetime scholarship to assist students access higher education
Southern Cross University	NSW	Yes	Yes Regional	No	2.94%	24.06%	http://scu.edu.au/scholarships/index.php/10	Easy to navigate webpage specific to Equity Grants & Scholarships. 7 Equity Scholarships offered with 5 specific to Indigenous students Students who receive Parenting Payment, Disability Payment and Carer Payment are encouraged to apply Scholarships are assessed based on degree of disadvantage and will be prioritised for offer in this way - Indigenous students - are encouraged to apply but students can only receive Commonwealth Scholarships OR Centrelink Scholarships, not both - Non-Indigenous students - who are eligible for ongoing Start-Up and Relocation Scholarship payments via Centrelink (see below) will not be eligible for Equity Scholarship
University of Sydney	NSW	No	Yes	Yes	0.82%	8.64%	http://sydney.edu.au/scholarships http://sydney.edu.au/scholarships/current/equity.shtml http://sydney.edu.au/future-students/domestic/undergraduate/e12/	Easy to navigate website separated by future & current student categories. 7 UG Equity Scholarships for existing/ current students 7 UG Equity Scholarships for new students Apply via Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) for NSW & ACT. e12 program supports students across the board including many programs
University of New England	NSW	Yes	No	No	2.71%	20.14%	http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/my-course/scholarships-and-prizes http://theaspirationinitiative.com.au/indigenous-scholarships?cf30[]=University+of+New+England&option=com_mtree&task=listall&cat_id=0&Itemid=186	Generally easy site to navigate but to access equity scholarships per se (other than Indigenous) is more difficult Separate Indigenous scholarships page (Note: Aspiration Initiative website lists Indigenous scholarships for various universities across the country in one place) 40 scholarships each year to assist school leavers from rural and regional communities
University of New South Wales	NSW	No	Yes	Yes	0.83%	9.88%	https://scholarships.online.unsw.edu.au/scholarship/sc_search.login	One search category is UAC & EAC however no explanation of what the acronyms stand for. On further investigation is for applications through the UAC website and for Educational Access Scheme (EAC) both of which have Equity scholarship - 65 Socio-economic circumstances Scholarships - 35 Indigenous Scholarships - 32 Rural Scholarships - 20 UAC & EAC Scholarships - 9 Female Scholarships - 1 Disability Scholarship
University of Newcastle	NSW	Yes	Yes	No	2.53%	20.98%	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/scholarships	Easy website to navigate 11 Equity Scholarships offered . These scholarships are administered by Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) Equity scholarships support students receiving a Centrelink disability support pension, single parenting payment or carer payment UAC contains Equity Scholarship Booklet
University of Technology, Sydney	NSW	No	Yes	No	0.95%	11.09%	http://www.uts.edu.au/future-students/scholarships http://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/scholarships-ug-2014-15.pdf	Scholarship finder webpage is very unclear with search limited to UG or PG students Local and International student search engines. More detailed information is found in UTS Scholarships booklet which breaks down into Low income but does not seem to list all available scholarships Webpage states it offers over 1000 scholarships yet appears there are only about 200 listed on the website
University of Western Sydney	NSW	No	Yes	No	1.29%	20.89%	http://uws.edu.au/informationabout/scholarships_home/find_a_scholarship http://www.uws.edu.au/informationabout/scholarships_home/equity_criteria	Website enables search to be done by Equity Category. Search prompts tailored to individual student. Has webpage which defines if students are in Equity Category before they start using the scholarship search features. 73 Scholarship Available
University of Wollongong	NSW	Yes	Yes	No	1.55%	15.91%	http://www.uow.edu.au/about/scholarships/index.html	Website well structured allowing for ease of navigation Links given to UAC Equity Scholarships Appears to have about 14 Equity Scholarships available Treats Indigenous Scholarships as a separate classification than Equity scholarships for financial and social hardship Provides links back to UAC for dealing with Equity Scholarships in NSW

University	State	Regional	Multi campus	GO8	Indigenous %	Low SES%	Links to each university scholarship page	Comments about types of scholarship
QUEENSLAND								
CQUniversity	QLD	Yes	Yes	No	Mid Quartile 3.16%	High 26.17%	http://www.cqu.edu.au/study/scholarships	Website is very clear and easy to navigate. Information is well laid out and easy to understand. 7 equity based scholarships for PG & UG students Eligibility based on various needs based including: - low socio-economic groups - rural & remote students - financial hardship
Griffith University	QLD		Yes	No	1.77%	14.68%	http://www.griffith.edu.au/scholarships	Website is easy to navigate 93 Scholarships offered with 12 being Equity Scholarship: Indigenous scholarships categorised under First Peoples
James Cook University	QLD		Yes	No	4.35%	20.28%	http://www.jcu.edu.au/scholarships/ http://www.jcu.edu.au/scholarships/specific/index.htm	Website appears to be clear but when using the various search engines it becomes less clear and a bit confusing to weather your search field has returned all suitable scholarships available. Has web link to Commonwealth Scholarships specific to Indigenous student: JCU Access fund set up for financial hardship UG students Web search for UG scholarship can be broken into Financial Need, 53 scholarships which fit this criteria available 9 specific Indigenous scholarships available 2 specific women only scholarships 2 specific low income & social disadvantage scholarship (1 of these aimed at women only) 1 specific rural & remote scholarship
Queensland University of Technology	QLD		Yes	No	1.39%	11.24%	http://www.ncsehe.edu.au/will-real-commonwealth-scholarships-please-stand/ https://www.qut.edu.au/study/fees-and-scholarships/scholarships-and-prizes/equity-scholarships-scheme https://www.qut.edu.au/study/fees-and-scholarships/scholarships-and-prizes	Website is fairly easy to Navigate and clear to find Equity webpage. IN search engine the scholarships are also broken down into individual equity groups such as from non-English speaking backgrounds More than 3,000 Equity scholarships offered Eligibility criteria must be: - from a low-income background - experiencing financial hardship. Also take personal hardship into consideration when assessing applications. This includes: - personal medical conditions - disabilities - dependants with special needs. 75 UG scholarships offered for domestic students 27 PG Scholarships offered for domestic students
University of Queensland	QLD	No	No	Yes	Mid Quartile 0.86%	Low 10.16%	Do we need to do this one Now doing QUT? http://scholarships.uq.edu.au	Website does not highlight Equity itself however the search engine can be broken into three categories of Equity - Indigenous, Disability & Financial Hardship 26 UG Indigenous Scholarships available & 10 for PG student: 2 UG Disability Scholarships available & 2 for PG student: 54 UG Financial Hardship Scholarships available & 11 for PG student:
University of Southern Queensland	QLD		Yes	No	2.28%	23.88%	http://www.usq.edu.au/scholarships	Website difficult to navigate as relies on students searching for Equity scholarships through the entire scholarship range with the exception of Indigenous students. Applications lodged through Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) 10 Scholarships open to Indigenous students which can easily be searched for in search engine Only Indigenous students Equity group is easy to search for all other Equity student have to search through available scholarships to find the ones which apply to Equity 30 External Scholarships listed separately including Start-up scholarships (requires manual search through list for suitability) 46 Scholarships available to Future students & 45 for Current PG & UG Student:
University of the Sunshine Coast	QLD		Yes	No	1.88%	18.80%	http://www.usc.edu.au/study/scholarships	Clear website to Navigate 6 PG & UG Equity Scholarships offered Offer Headstart scholarships for Yr. 11 & 12 low income family students 5 commonwealth Indigenous scholarships Has a comprehensive page dedicated to Indigenous scholarships offered Internally and External. There are 26 scholarships available on this page with a further 5 additional scholarships available for Australian South Sea Islander Students. Disability Scholarships are listed under External scholarships which could be overlooked. There are
WESTERN AUSTRALIA								
Curtin University	WA		Yes	No	1.45%	11.87%	http://scholarships.curtin.edu.au/search/#?order=&ScholarshipType=Need#result http://scholarships.curtin.edu.au/search/#?order=&CourseType=Undergraduate&ScholarshipType=Need#result	Easy website to navigate. Clearly laid out. Curtin UG needs based scholarships only Curtin currently has 96 Needs based scholarships for PG & UG students
Edith Cowan University	WA		Yes	No	1.14%	13.69%	http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/student/money-matters/scholarships/scholarships-by-pathways/undergraduate/details/ecu-equity-scholarship	Easy website to navigate - Financial Hardship - One or more equity groups - includes but Not limited to - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students - Students from rural, regional or remote areas of Australia - Students with a registered disability or ongoing medical condition/illness - Students with carer responsibilities (in receipt of carers payment through Centrelink) - Single parents
Murdoch University	WA		No	No	1.26%	14.96%	http://our.murdoch.edu.au/Student-life/Finances/	Website is not easy to navigate. Scholarships for Indigenous students & Rural students are the only clearly laid out categories. Other Equity groups such as disability and financial hardship have to sort through the various scholarships individually to find out if they are eligible Scholarships appear to be based more around area of study than an Equity category
University of Western Australia	WA	No	No	Yes	Bottom Quartile 1.06%	Low 6.04%	http://www.scholarships.uwa.edu.au/students/undergrad	Website breaks scholarships into categories such as Educational Disadvantage. New students would not necessarily know if they fit into these categories. 438 Scholarships offered for PG & UG Students Approximately 175 Equity Based including - 19 Disabled - 8 Educational Disadvantaged - 52 Financial Hardship - 23 Women - 32 Rural & Remote Assistance - 41 Indigenous

University	State	Regional	Multi campus	GO8	Indigenous %	Low SES%	Links to each university scholarship page	Comments about types of scholarship
SOUTH AUSTRALIA								
Flinders University	SA		Yes	No	1.15%	18.79%	http://www.flinders.edu.au/scholarships	Easy website to navigate Website contains links to Centrelink Start-up and relocation scholarships along with Government Endeavour and Fellowship Scholarship Has 33 Financial Need Equity Scholarships 11 Scholarships dedicated to Rural and Remote student 41 Scholarships for Indigenous students
University of Adelaide	SA	No	No	Yes	Bottom Quartile 0.99%	Low 13.77%	http://www.adelaide.edu.au/scholarships/	Website is easy to navigate and clearly understand for UG scholarships Applications managed through the South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC) 36 UG scholarships for Students in Financial Need (some relevant to field of study only) 35 UG scholarships for Indigenous Scholarships (some relevant to field of study only) 20 UG scholarships Rural & Remote Scholarships (some relevant to field of study only) 5 UG scholarships for students with disabilities PG scholarships do not seem to be broken down into category or field of study. There are 24 offered
University of South Australia	SA	No	Yes	No	Mid Quartile 1.57%	Mid 20.94%	http://www.unisa.edu.au/study-at-unisa/scholarships/	Website has a link direct to Equity scholarships reasonably easy to navigate site. Offer Start-up scholarships for Equity based students 6 Equity Scholarships offered 32 UG Scholarships & 10 PG scholarships Applications received via myScholarships, through the South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC), for equity and Indigenous Commonwealth scholarship
TASMANIA								
University of Tasmania	TAS	No	Yes	No	Bottom Quartile 1.79%	High 21.02%	http://www.utas.edu.au/scholarships-bursaries	Website confusing. The only Equity search criteria available is for Indigenous & Financial Need. Then each scholarship within category selected needs to be searched for eligibility requirements. 32 Scholarships for Financial Need 7 Indigenous Scholarships
NORTHERN TERRITORY								
Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education* (*Now in partnership with Charles Darwin University)	NT		N/A	No	N/A	N/A	https://www.batchelor.edu.au/students/student-services/scholarships/	Limited website. 1 Scholarship available for VET study for Indigenous students 2 Scholarships through collaboration with Charles Darwin University – Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledge & Education (ACIKE) provides Higher Education Scholarships that are available to High Education students to support them financially whilst undertaking their undergraduate course through ACIKE.
Charles Darwin University*	NT	No	Yes	No	Top Quartile 7.06%	High 17.42%	http://www.cdu.edu.au/student-central/scholarships	Website difficult to navigate Link to Non Charles Darwin University Scholarships available which is then broken into study field or some Equity Groups such as Indigenous & Vision Impair Offer VET Scholarships Does not stipulate all Equity Scholarships in a single area and you have to search through the various Scholarship categories to find out eligibility
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY								
Australian National University	ACT		No	Yes	1.03%	4.96%	http://students.anu.edu.au/scholarships/ea/	Clearly laid out website. Equity scholarships identified distinctly from other scholarships available and links students to external scholarships. Eligible students include: - those with a disability, - from recognised equity groups including Indigenous, women, financially disadvantaged backgrounds and or from a rural or isolated area 48 Equity Scholarships offered dependant upon Equity category
University of Canberra	ACT		No	No	1.39%	4.96%	http://www.canberra.edu.au/scholarships	Website challenging to navigate but does contain a link to UAC Equity Scholarship website. Scholarship search engine is via semester which adds to its complexity Other Scholarships available for: - Indigenous Students - Rural Students - Students with a Disability
MUTI-STATE								
Australian Catholic University	NSW, VIC, QLD	No	Yes, across states	No	Top Quartile 1.78%	High 13.20%	http://www.acu.edu.au/international/costs_and_scholarships http://www.acu.edu.au/study_at_acu/courses/scholarships_and_financial_support	Contains links back to Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) Equity Scholarships site (http://www.uac.edu.au/equity/) 5 Scholarships for Socio Economic Barriers 10 Scholarships for Rural or Regional students 31 Scholarships for Financial Hardship including Indigenous student