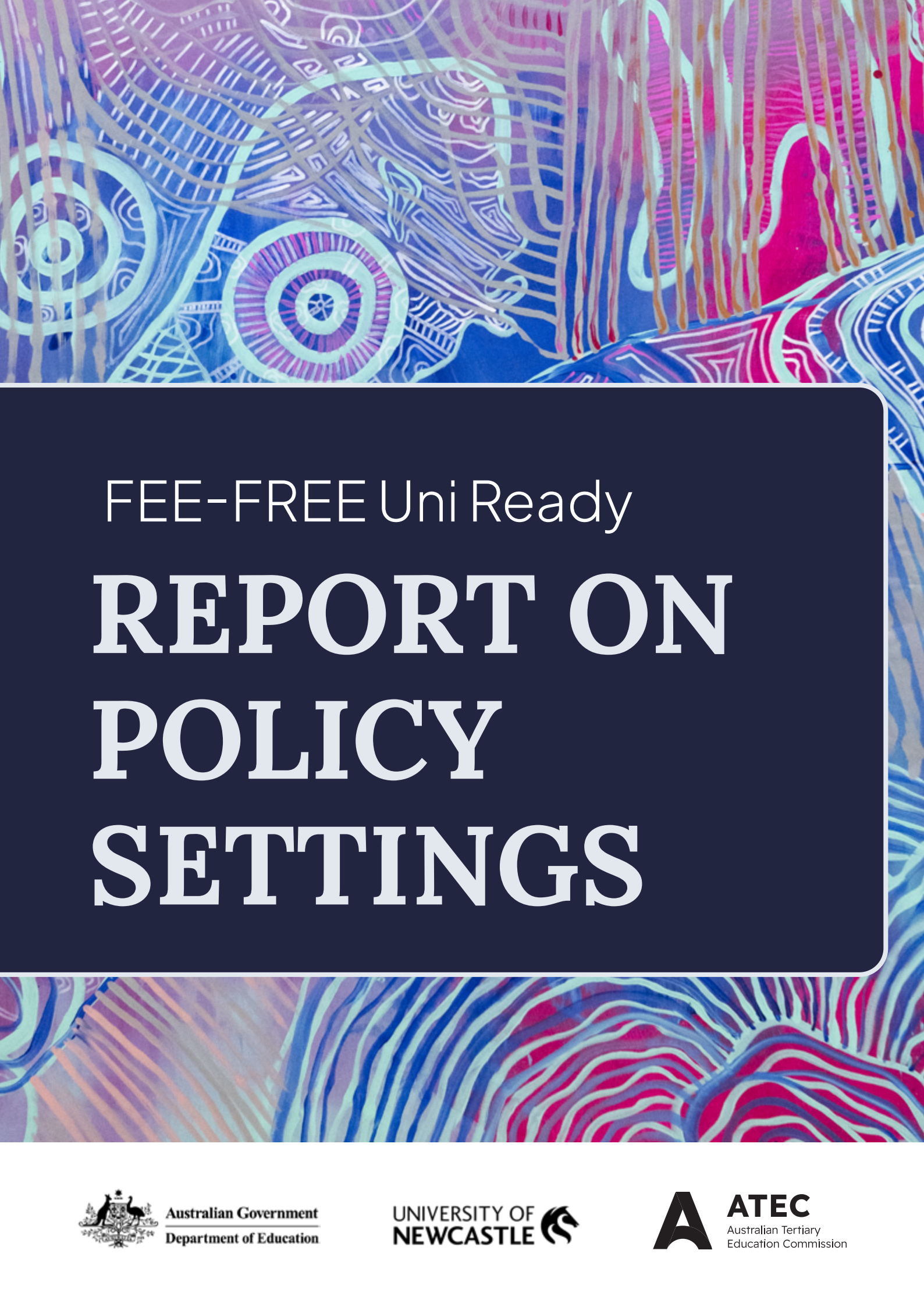




FEE-FREE Uni Ready

REPORT ON POLICY SETTINGS



Australian Government
Department of Education

UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE 



ATEC
Australian Tertiary
Education Commission

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The authors of this *FEE-FREE Uni Ready Report on Policy Settings*, including representatives from the University of Newcastle and the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

We recognise and honour their continuing connection to land, waters and community, and their ongoing commitment to learning and teaching. We pay our respects to their knowledge and culture, and to Elders past and present.

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- Open Universities Australia

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WATCH: Renae Lamb, artist and UON Alum

Project Artwork

A special thank you to Renae Lamb for the beautiful and evocative artwork and design from **'Gilli Watta'**. 'Gilli Watta' is a word from the local Gathang language meaning 'sparking the flame.' Renae explains:

"I am proud to present 'Gilli Watta' as a reflection of my journey as a Wiradjuri, Wongaibon woman, and mother of three proud Worimi, Wiradjuri, and Wongaibon children. It is important for me to showcase the significance of cultural building in our communities, especially for future generations.

In the context of Aboriginal women, 'sparking the flame' symbolises a powerful and sacred practice of lighting the flame within – of igniting the fire in the mind, body, and soul.

In the artwork, the women's symbol represents our Ancestors connecting, and always guiding us upon Country and within our learning journey to Country. The river lines show- through the river ways we learn. Through the stars in the sky- we learn. Through our stars, we understand our stories and connection. As everything in the stars, in the sky, is here on Country and alive. We are always connected, we are always strong, and we are always learning as one."





Executive Summary

In 2025 the Australian Government under the National Priorities Pool Program commissioned the 'National FEE-FREE Uni Ready Project: Report and Best Practice Guide' led by the University of Newcastle to deliver two distinct pieces of work and associated outputs, as follows:

1. Provide a **Report on Policy Settings** with advice on FFUR national policy regarding future implementation, including: information about design and transferability of FFUR offerings; recommendations for what constitutes a FFUR course of learning; how FFUR fits into the broader pathways landscape; and how to achieve optimal outcomes and improved access for students from underrepresented backgrounds; and
2. Guide Higher Education practitioners in the design and delivery of high-quality FFUR courses through a **Best Practice Guide**.

This Report on Policy Settings was produced by a core project team and the development of the accompanying FFUR Best Practice Guide included insights from a wider team of colleagues from across different fields of study and expertise, aiming to assist the sector with achieving best practice as new policy parameters and expansion of funded places are introduced.

- FFUR has a 50 + year history as a critical equity pathway, providing free, non-award preparation for higher education and has evolved over time.
- Significant government investment and policy changes aim to expand FFUR places, improve funding, and strengthen national consistency and portability.
- FFUR cohorts experience diverse, complex and intersecting forms of disadvantage, requiring nuanced recognition beyond limited categories.

- FFUR Providers deliver diverse FFUR pathways, unique to the diversity of their community and individual student needs, their institutional structures and Award offerings.
- FFUR offerings must be supported by strong academic, cultural, and wellbeing structures.
- Community relationships and partnerships are central to public awareness, trust-building, and responsive design for effective pathways.
- A FFUR Framework is proposed in this Report to support national FFUR policy and governance. The Framework is intended to provide consistency and portability while ensuring flexibility, cohort-centredness and place-based contextual learning. It offers tools to understand and cater to the diversity of FFUR cohorts and provides information about the different types of FFUR offerings, and learning outcomes. It also includes proposed minimum standards, and approach to building a flexible national access scheme that enables progression to undergraduate Awards across the country.
- The FFUR Framework draws on new and established approaches and best practices, which were identified as important in the research conducted for this project.
- Evaluation needs to be focused on equity and diversity, and the lived experiences of communities and individual students. This builds understanding about the differential and complex challenges they face and how these change over time, utilising mixed methods and carefully designed measures, so we can address diverse and complex forms of educational disadvantage.



Recommendations

1. Adopt a national approach, such as the FFUR Framework offered here, as the basis for policy, quality, and portability.
2. Apply minimum standards focused on demonstrated capability ('uni readiness') rather than fixed volume-of-learning requirements.
3. Implement a National FFUR Access Scheme for recognised, transferable Type 1 courses.
4. Establish a National FFUR Access Registry with option for a standardised national completion certificate for ease of portability.
5. Enable FFUR 'top-ups' and cross-provider access to expand study options and reduce any inequity.
6. Support universities that invest in high quality FFUR provision and reduce barriers to higher education for these cohorts by incentivising admission of FFUR students to Awards. Suggested approaches are outlined as part of the FFUR Framework, including demand-driven undergraduate places for students who are accessing their degree on the basis of a completed FFUR pathway ([see FFUR Framework for National Access Scheme](#)).
7. Strengthen evaluation and data practices to better capture diversity, change, and intersectional disadvantage, and long-term pathways and outcomes for students.

In this Report and accompanying Best Practice Guide, the Federal policy nomenclature, 'course' of study (often composed of multiple units of subjects), is used, which means a full 'program' of study at many institutions. The Federal policy nomenclature of FFUR is also utilised when referring to the courses, rather than 'Enabling'.

Background to Fee-Free Uni Ready (FFUR)

FEE-FREE Uni Ready (FFUR) courses have been operating for over 50 years in Australia and are key to achieving equity in higher education, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds or non-traditional study pathways, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Department of Education, 2024a). FFUR programs are free, non-Award courses designed to help students meet the entry requirements and academic demands of undergraduate study (Department of Education, 2024a; Higher Education Support Act, 2003) through supporting them to develop essential skills like academic literacy, critical thinking, STEM and study skills (Hodges et al., 2013).

Higher education access schemes aimed at providing a means for students who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to gain entry into undergraduate studies have existed in Australia for over 50 years, with the earliest example being Open Foundation at the University of Newcastle in 1974. Open Foundation, like subsequent examples emerging at other institutions, have developed in unique and contextual ways to serve the needs of local communities. Following



a range of government-commissioned research produced about social groups significantly underrepresented in higher education (Dawkins, 1987; Bradley et al., 2008), further localised community-focused courses developed to bridge gaps and build inclusion in Australian universities. Over time, these courses and programs came to form an important part of the university system and were referred



“Education shouldn’t be something that is separate from the people that you’re working with. If students can see themselves in their content, they’re more likely to engage... with that, we get higher levels of learning at a quicker rate than what students are used to.”

– (FFUR Provider)

to as ‘Enabling’ pathways (Davis et al., 2023). In 2025, these fee-free ‘Enabling’ courses were renamed ‘FEE-FREE Uni Ready’ courses or FFUR.

FFUR pathways are designed to provide free access to, and rigorous preparation for, higher education, contributing to both increased enrolment of students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and their experiences of success in their undergraduate study (Bennett & Stone, 2025). It is important to recognise the wide range of learners who access these pathways, many of whom have experienced educational disadvantage. These learners often come from equity groups, live in remote areas, and/or face complex challenges such as financial stress, disability, caring responsibilities, health or learning difficulties, and past trauma – all of which may have limited their access to higher education (Allen, 2025). FFUR pathways prepare students who are transitioning from the community or other education systems, including Vocational Education and Training (VET), who need to develop

specific academic skills and confidence to achieve success in an Award at university.

The approaches and commitments described in this Report on Policy Settings and the accompanying Best Practice Guide are shown in the research literature to be essential for enabling these large equity cohorts to access, prepare for and succeed in higher education (Bennett & Burke, 2024). The educational design, including the flexibility of modes, teaching and learning principles, pedagogy and curriculum discussed in the following pages are all identified by providers as critical interventions to enable and support students from these cohorts (Bennett et al., 2024; Syme et al., 2022). The approaches identified in this project are important for ensuring strong higher education pathways for students, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others from underrepresented backgrounds, and are aligned to other offerings and support structures within the wider





pathway ecosystem. It is important to understand the wider pathway context when considering the ways that FFUR have, and must continue, to be developed over time, responsive to other increasing forms of access and articulations, for example, between VET and undergraduate study with lower-level credentials, which enables improved flow between pathways and systems. Of particular note is the increasing number of institutions allowing students to commence undergraduate study through relatively new paths. For example, high school portfolios rather than ATARs have emerged, and completing 'single unit study', where people can commence, complete and then progress into an undergraduate award following successful completion of that unit, all without a bridging course

and without entry requirements, are increasingly available. Today, government support of FFUR courses, which comprise approximately 50% of students from underrepresented backgrounds (Lomax-Smith et al., 2011), offer and support more inclusive practices in higher education. Pitman et al. (2016) have shown that students from equity groups who transition via 'Enabling' (FFUR) courses tend to have better first-year retention rates than those using alternative entry pathways.

The following sections of this Report and the accompanying Best Practice Guide were developed with the aim of enhancing long-term sector-wide development of FFUR course outcomes, community engagement to widen participation, and to enable place-based innovation into the future. These are important because despite recommendations and efforts to increase participation of underrepresented students, these cohorts continue to experience challenges in access and completion. For example, commencing undergraduate enrolments of students from equity groups across Australia saw a 3.29% decline from 2018 to 2024 (Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success [ACSES], 2026)¹. Increasing nation-wide availability to high quality FFUR courses and the preparation they provide will help to correct this trend.

² Equity Data from ACSES Interactive tool. Available www.acses.edu.au: Filters=Access;Enrolments;All Equity Students;National Dashboard;States and Territories. [See Appendix A.](#)

NEW DEFINITION OF FFUR

The definition of FFUR and 'Enabling' funding has recently changed, as set out below.

*Current (15 August 2025) wording for FFUR pathways:

"6.7 – FEE-FREE Uni Ready courses and enabling courses

FEE-FREE Uni Ready and enabling courses are courses of instruction provided to enable or prepare a person to be able to undertake a course leading to a higher education award, but does not include a course that:

- leads to a higher education award in and of itself;*
- is accredited as leading to a VET award; or*
- the Minister determines it is not an enabling course [HESA Schedule 1]*

A student can only be considered to be enrolled in a FEE-FREE Uni Ready course if the student is a Commonwealth supported student. Full fee paying students in these courses are considered to be enrolled in an enabling course. While it is possible for students to receive credit towards a higher education award course for units of study undertaken in their FEE-FREE Uni Ready or enabling course, a course that consists primarily of units of study that lead to the higher education award that students are

preparing to undertake, would not be FEE-FREE Uni Ready or an enabling course. This is because it would not be consistent with the intention of the definition in HESA.

Commonwealth supported students undertaking a FEE-FREE Uni Ready course do not pay a student contribution. To assist providers with the cost of providing places in FEE-FREE Uni Ready courses these courses receive a higher Commonwealth contribution amount of \$18,278 in 2025."

(Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021, FEE-FREE Uni Ready courses and enabling courses section).

Of note is the change in nomenclature for 'Enabling', which has often previously been used to encompass all access pathways, except in the HESA funding guidelines about fee-free courses. Full fee-paying students in access pathways courses are now considered to be enrolled in an 'Enabling' not a FFUR course.

In 2025, 39 Table A Universities were provided with 8,664 places at \$18,278 per place totaling \$158.4 million (Clare, 2024). From 2026, FFUR courses will become part of the new Managed Growth System overseen by the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC).

In 2025, 'Enabling' has been redesigned by the Department of Education to be more focused on preparation and portability between institutions. The

Policy and Funding Changes

The introduction of the FFUR national program represents a significant government commitment to higher education pathways. The Australian Government announced the provision of \$350.3 million in additional Commonwealth Grant Scheme FFUR funding over four years, commencing on 1 January 2025, to provide more students with a pathway into higher education (Department of Education, 2024, May 14). The government provided increased funding per FFUR place, replacing the former Commonwealth Support Place (CSP) and enabling loading, or 'mixed funding', approach which was previously provided for 'Enabling' courses. FFUR places are full CSP with no student contribution required.

Funding for additional student places is also intended to significantly expand the availability of FFUR courses across Australia, allowing more students to develop the academic skills they need for university level study (Department of Education, 2024, May 14). Via the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), the government is working with providers, including through this project and the FFUR National Working Group, to ensure quality and consistency, and to increase portability for students. This is intended to result in 30,000 students studying in FFUR courses each year by 2030, an increase of 40% in student numbers, and doubling the number of students by 2040 (Department of Education, 2024, May 14).

renamed FEE-FREE Uni Ready (FFUR) courses, which are focused on readying students for an award, are also being considered for inclusion in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and/or other forms of recognition, such as the National Microcredentials Framework, depending on the type of FFUR unit studied.

The Department is currently exploring options to establish minimum standards for ensuring consistency in the delivery of FFUR courses (Department of Education, 2024a). As FFUR course specifications are at the discretion of the offering institution, courses vary across the sector in form and content, and they vary in duration between weeks and years, depending on the pathway needs of the student and as aligned to the desired undergraduate award.





Project Methodology

RESEARCH DESIGN

The project adopted a mixed-mode approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of sector practice, views, needs, and priorities. This methodology leverages the strengths of various data collection techniques including surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with a range of practitioners working in FFUR enabling programs at universities in Australia.

RECRUITMENT

Project participants were recruited from Australian universities offering FFUR programs and included academic, administrative, and support staff. Initial contact was made via email, which included an invitation to participate in the study and a link to an online survey.

In addition to the survey, a selection of institutions, representing both well-established and newly developed FFUR programs, were invited to participate in follow-up qualitative components. These included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions conducted either in person or via Zoom. These sessions aimed to explore in greater depth institutional practices, contextual and geographical considerations, unique challenges, and innovations in FFUR program delivery.

Participation in all components of the study was voluntary. Prior to providing consent, participants received comprehensive information about the project, including ethical considerations and data confidentiality protocols. Informed consent was obtained in accordance with the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Committee (UON HREC) guidelines.



REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE FOLLOWING THIRTEEN INSTITUTIONS PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY:

- Central Queensland University
- Charles Darwin University
- Edith Cowan University
- Griffith University
- James Cook University
- Murdoch University
- Southern Cross University
- Swinburne University
- University of Newcastle
- University of South Australia
- University of Southern Queensland
- University of Tasmania
- University of Technology Sydney

For survey participants, consent was implied through voluntary completion and submission of the survey. A Participant Information Sheet (PIS), was provided at the beginning of the survey, outlining the purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and data management protocols.

For those invited to interviews or focus groups, the PIS and a formal consent form were distributed in advance of the scheduled session and again on the day of participation. Individuals were given a minimum of one week to review the materials before deciding to participate. Signed consent forms were collected by the research team prior to data collection.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

All participants were invited to complete an online open-ended survey designed to capture their experiences and perspectives on FFUR program delivery. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Following the survey, a subset of participants were invited to participate in follow-up sessions to gather qualitative data, consisting of those who identified as having substantial experience in FFUR program design and delivery, two who had



recently established new programs, and one who was not funded under FFUR but delivers a program that meets FFUR objectives. These sessions involved either a semi-structured interview or a focus group discussion, each lasting from one to two hours.

Where feasible, interviews and focus groups were conducted in person at the participant's home campus. Locations were selected by participants to ensure comfort, convenience, and privacy. For those unable to attend in person, Zoom sessions were held. All sessions were facilitated by members of the research team and scheduled at mutually convenient times.

Project Reference Group Members, representing established institutions with FFUR in diverse locations across the country, were also invited to review research findings and provide feedback. The Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success and the University Admissions Centre were also consulted to provide advice on elements including FFUR evaluation and portability.

ANALYSIS

Survey data (from 18 respondents) and responses from interview and focus group participants (n=48 from 13 institutions) were



analysed utilising qualitative research analysis techniques to develop a comprehensive understanding of FFUR courses across Australian universities.

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. This process involved:

- Familiarisation with the data
- Generation of initial codes
- Searching for themes
- Reviewing themes
- Defining and naming themes
- Producing the final Report on Policy Settings and Best Practice Guide.

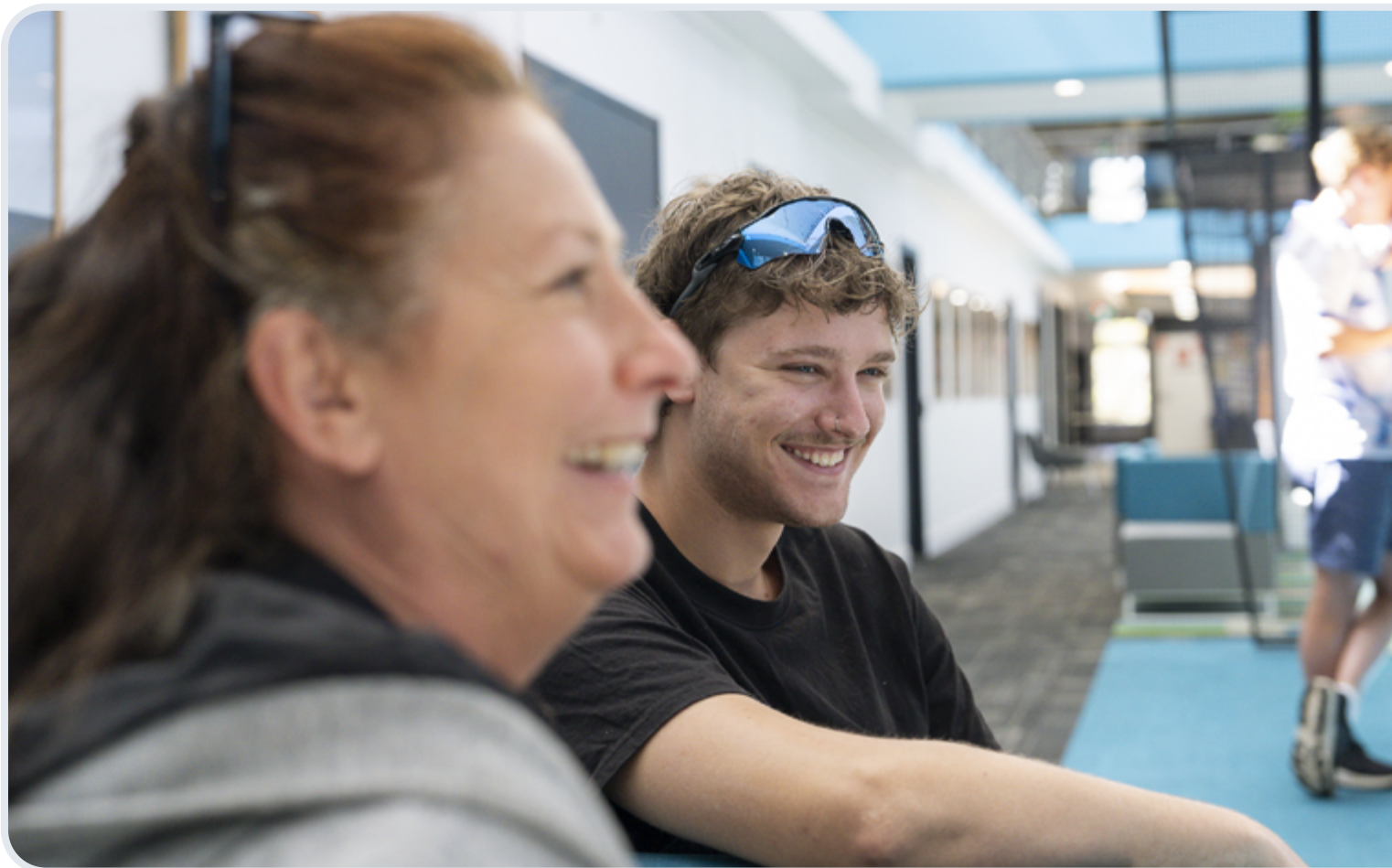
Throughout the analysis, critical reflexivity of the team was maintained, including by documenting analytic assessments and reflecting on the researcher's positionality. Peer debriefing and member checking were employed to further enhance the validity of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The findings from the qualitative analysis have been synthesised and incorporated into this report, offering a comprehensive account of participants' experiences and perspectives. This synthesis also served as the foundation for developing evidence-based recommendations and best practice guidelines to inform the design and delivery of the FFUR program.



“This is about resilient, courageous people with enormous strength, and we’re helping them to navigate their way through.”

– (FFUR Provider)



WATCH: The inclusive philosophy and ethos of Fee Free Uni Ready courses and their impact.

Project Findings

Research findings have been categorised into 10 key areas outlined below. It is important to acknowledge that across the participating institutions there are diverse FFUR structures which are the result of unique population settings and providers tailoring offerings to the needs of specific cohorts (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, 'near-miss' ATAR cohorts), as well as a clear, shared commitment to equity and inclusion in higher education. While there are differences in courses and institutional contexts, there are still many common themes that emerge across most institutions surrounding the types of student cohorts which participate; course/unit design; community partnerships; pedagogical principles; and suggestions about future innovations.



KEY INSIGHTS

a. Student Cohorts: Backgrounds, Access and Key Needs

FFUR courses serve a wide range of students, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Students from low socioeconomic status (LSES) backgrounds
- Students who are unable to gain access through school matriculation
- Mature age learners
- Students from refugee and migrant backgrounds who hold Australian residency
- Students with disabilities
- Students who are first in their family to attend university

Beyond these student groups, providers also recognise other forms of disadvantage prevalent within their cohorts, including students recovering from or experiencing substance abuse, homelessness, or domestic violence. Other characteristics of student cohorts include those were not suited to secondary schooling structures, those seeking work-ready credentials or a career change, and incarcerated students.

FFUR course entry is generally open-access for students aged 17 and older

who hold Australian citizenship or residency status. International students are not eligible for entry into FFUR courses. However, students from refugee or migrant backgrounds can access FFUR courses if they hold Australian residency status.

Some institutions require interviews or diagnostic tools, generally designed to allow facilitators to determine students' literacy levels, undergraduate aspirations, or to identify those who may require additional support once admitted into the course.

From project responses it is clear that many FFUR courses increasingly cater to young people who have recently finished high school, or a 'gap year', who have not received the required ATAR for direct entry into their desired undergraduate course or students who have experienced disrupted education. An increasing number of universities also offer concurrent FFUR study options for students completing Year 12. However, large numbers of older students undertake FFUR offerings, often wishing to change their work options or progress their career with a university qualification.

The key needs of FFUR students were identified to include program flexibility, trauma-informed support, academic scaffolding, cultural responsiveness, and financial assistance. Providers consistently expressed great appreciation of FFUR students' commitment, engagement and various achievements. They also provided



similar descriptions of FFUR student characteristics, which include strong capability, resilience, motivation, and determination. As one respondent describes, the students are “typically highly motivated”, and they “bring rich life and cultural experience, and benefit from a strengths-based, supportive, and culturally responsive learning environment.”

Responses further indicated that FFUR courses benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with culturally responsive environments. Further, students who are first-in-family and students from low SES and other disadvantaged backgrounds gain from FFUR approaches which build familiarity and confidence with higher education learning styles and systems, from the time of applying and enrolment into and throughout their studies.

“This is about resilient, courageous people with enormous strength, and we’re helping them to navigate their way through.” (FFUR Provider)

b. Enrolment Trends and Barriers

Despite drops in FFUR Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSL) nationally during and post-COVID, focus group respondents highlighted evidence of recent enrolment recovery, also noting the growth of in-school and outreach courses, and a shift toward younger cohorts. Although mature age students making up the majority of FFUR course cohorts, many providers noted the

average age of students trending downwards in recent years. Respondents suggested that the increase in senior high school students seeking alternative education models, and the increase in availability of high quality, online degrees and other pathway options capturing much of the mature aged market, may account for this downward trend in age of FFUR cohorts. The new and increasing number of alternative pathways, as well as the raising of historical barriers, such as through lowering the prior level of learning (e.g. Cert IV to Cert III for some awards) and the selection ranks required for specific undergraduate offerings (which are calibrated according to demand and accreditation and placement requirements), are all other factors which influence the number of students enrolling in FFUR pathways over time.

Students who identify as female are consistently the majority across institutions, with one institution reporting approximately 70% of their enrolments are female.

For institutions that offer specialised courses for certain groups, such as incarcerated students, e.g. the University of Southern Queensland, enrolment numbers are rising for these cohorts. Suggested drivers for growth include the availability of high-quality flexible delivery modes and strong support systems.

Identified barriers to enrolment include time-consuming enrolment processes,



funding constraints, cultural concern or mistrust among some communities, and geographical isolation, particularly for rural students. Given the diversity in student backgrounds and abilities, different institutions are also flexible regarding the volume of learning required relational to participant's skills, experience, prior knowledge and desired destination of study, in order to remove barriers.

c. Program Structures and Delivery

When considering FFUR program structures and delivery across the sector, units and courses are offered in a variety of formats, depending on cohort need. Some institutions offer short, targeted units involving 2 to 4 weeks of focused study, depending on the students' proposed degree destination, pace of study and timing of academic terms. These 'micro' units are designed for

students who wish to focus on specific topics they did not gain from prior study for success in subsequent undergraduate units. Some institutions offer different options for different cohorts, depending on student need. For example, longer courses of study for those with greater need to develop academic skills and confidence. Courses can range from 10–18 weeks in duration with some institutions offering extended courses of up to 12 months.

Many of the FFUR courses that offer access into undergraduate courses require completion of four units of study over 10–12 weeks. Most of the courses contain core (or mandatory) units consisting of academic literacy, digital skills, and numeracy. Others offer student choice across a variety of disciplinary units, including health, science, technology, engineering, mathematics



and humanities, to align with their future study goals. Typically, four units average approximately 400+ hours of associated learning.

However, some well-established providers map students to varying amounts of required FFUR units (between two to eight, depending on prior study and undergraduate destination). In these cases, the institutions use in-depth diagnostics and admission criteria, to set the parameters of required FFUR units of learning. In such cases where students require fewer than four units to progress, they have typically undertaken a diagnostic item and/or the institution has systems that recognise their prior learning/experience, as aligned with their degrees. It is worth noting that at many universities there are no prerequisites for degrees and for institutions with

very large FFUR cohorts, personalised admissions for each FFUR student is not a viable option.

As other pathway contexts and undergraduate admissions change over time, FFUR courses have increasingly been integrated as a 'bridge' within new types of pathways, such as undergraduate certificates and microcredentials, as well as diplomas. In these instances, to ensure pathways courses suit the level of knowledge and skills required, students are admitted through selection ranks or other forms of competency assessment. However, most students seeking a FFUR pathway, require full courses of FFUR study before entering an award program of study.

Block models, intensive or compressed learning, and dual enrolment options (with FFUR units completed alongside undergraduate studies) have developed at certain institutions over time. This has occurred as sub-degree awards have increased, as well as other alternative access schemes from schooling have been introduced, and more VET award types have been accepted for entry direct into undergraduate study.

Delivery models include face-to-face and blended learning, as well as fully online options. Many providers noted that the majority of their students opt to study partially or fully online. For institutions that provide specific courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, face-to-face study allows for place-based learning on Country, and focuses



on building relationships to strengthen academic development and confidence in higher education.

All project respondents indicated that assessment is a core component of FFUR units and course completion for a range of reasons including to ensure that students have met the requirements of the course of study and that they are prepared for undergraduate style learning. Importantly, assessments allow institutions to gauge student 'uni readiness' and suitability for progression into different degree programs.

The innovations shared by colleagues participating in this study reflect significant changes occurring in higher and further study settings, as well as in high schools, particularly over the past decade and especially during and since COVID. Project participants highlighted the importance of ensuring ongoing responsiveness to their students and communities, and the value of embracing new approaches to education and learning to provide pathways for all.

d. Community Partnerships

In the context of widening participation in higher education, the role of community partnerships is to support awareness of FFUR pathways and university more generally, build community trust (especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, low SES students and those from rural populations) and develop ongoing relationships, communication and insightful

discussions surrounding the barriers, needs, and course development for future student cohorts.

Six participating institutions highlighted the courses they offer that are embedded in community relationships and networks. These institutions reported partnering with high schools, community centres, regional hubs, migrant resource groups, prisons, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Many institutions also offer in-school FFUR units that are mapped to ATAR equivalents, discipline-specific pathways (for example Health, Education, Business), or outreach courses that enable vulnerable cohorts to access further and higher education and careers.

Such partnerships enable the delivery of outreach, excursions and family-inclusive strategies to increase engagement and remove barriers to further and higher education. Institutions noted that partnered community events (such as AgFest and the Mid-Winter Trout Festival cited by the University of Tasmania) can be effective in reaching communities that are typically harder to engage and thereby help to build trust, interest and positive public perceptions of higher education.

e. Pedagogical Principles

'Enabling' (FFUR) pedagogy and curriculum design types, scholarship of teaching and learning, and research have developed over recent decades, in large



part due to the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA) supporting various fora and networks, including nation-wide conferences, research symposia and stimulating a relatively wide body of associated research literature which has developed as a result. The NAEEA website provides a list of this work which is updated regularly (see <https://enablingeducators.org/resources-list/>).

Sector consultation as part of this project has demonstrated that FFUR courses across institutions are guided by a range of aligned pedagogies and learning frameworks, including: 'Enabling' pedagogy; transition pedagogy; pedagogy of care; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing (particularly the '8 Ways of Learning' and 'Both-ways' approach); dialogical teaching; and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). These are outlined in the accompanying Best Practice Guide.

Despite differences in structures and processes, it is clear that common values of care, empowerment and equity underpin FFUR courses across institutions. Consultation also demonstrated that, in order to engage and retain students, FFUR courses must be tailored to cohorts and communities and must aim to foster trust, belonging, and academic confidence.

Academic literacies are most often taught through core units and/or across all units utilising discipline-embedded academic literacies approaches.

Scaffolded progression ensures that students develop key academic literacy skills during their FFUR course of study to enable them to successfully progress into and succeed within their undergraduate studies and careers. Providers noted the importance of surfacing the 'hidden curriculum' through the explicit teaching of the values and norms of higher education to build navigational capacity for students. This approach is key when considering transferability and portability. As one provider pointed out, FFUR units should "contain empowering philosophy underneath them. That should be about more than remedialism but also passing on ideas...not just criticality in terms of being able to think about disciplinary knowledge, but also critical skills towards thinking about how these institutions and education systems operate." This enables students to gain knowledge, not only about the fields of education, but also about how to understand, navigate, succeed and contribute to knowledge-making and being skilled themselves.

f. Support Structures

Within institutions, structural and support features include education staff who provide academic and pastoral care, professional staff who provide onboarding, triaging and administrative help, as well as access to broader university academic and other support services, and connection with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units.

Providers reported holistic forms of support which are embedded throughout



the student lifecycle. Many offer FFUR-specific support in addition to the supportive curriculum approaches, with a variety of offerings including:

- Academic support and peer mentoring
- Tutoring and cultural mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Wellbeing support and early intervention programs
- Transition programs from FFUR into undergraduate study
- Online, 24-hour academic support via third-party services
- Online student tailored support via LMS and academic and professional support staff, ensuring equitable access regardless of location

Providers also emphasised the importance of familiarising FFUR students

with the wide range of institutional supports on offer to all students, while also tailoring approaches and offerings specific to the FFUR cohort. Examples of tailored approaches to supporting and retaining FFUR students include case-management style support staff, drop-in sessions, localised administration teams and academic pastoral care roles.

g. Governance, Quality Assurance and Success Measures

It was reported by project respondents that the participating FFUR courses take part in aligned institutional governance processes and institutional quality assurance. Such processes include course approval via teaching and learning committees and academic boards, annual and external reviews, and benchmarking (including benchmarking across some institutions that offer FFUR). Governance requirements and processes are specific to course type and institution.



Focus group responses from participating institutions indicated that success is measured through retention and academic performance, completion and conversion rates, student engagement and wellbeing, equity impact, and qualitative feedback. Some participants indicated that they also track longitudinal outcomes of their students' progression into undergraduate study to inform continual developments in curriculum design and support services.

In the context of tertiary harmonisation, metrics which improve understanding of other valuable outcomes following FFUR, including the subsequent enrolment of students into the VET system were also regarded as important, but difficult to track using current systems.

h. Successes and Challenges

Many providers proudly highlighted student stories of achievement and transformation as being the greatest successes of their work. As one participant noted:

“When you hear their stories, they’ve already been put in that box, and when I do the research... all the comments, really, were about how they’ve transformed as people, and how they’ve recognised themselves” (FFUR Provider)

Other noted course-level successes include higher education sector awards, cross-institutional collaboration, various transformative student outcomes,

findings from research and evaluative studies, and strong internal institutional engagement.

However, despite such successes, the challenges were reported as many, including: funding students facing complex and rigid institutional processes and complex application systems; lagging online systems; institutional jargon barriers, student retention within flexible delivery formats; governance hurdles for non-award courses; and a history of concerns about sustainability for retaining a fee-free model (with one institution noting that funding has only recently been made available to their university).

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities, there remain clear tensions between needing to deliver in the regions, on Country, and the costs associated with this delivery model.

Respondents called for sector-wide collaboration, best practice guides, and ethical data practices, all focused on equity, to ensure the continual development of FFUR courses that best suit the fast-evolving and unique expectations and needs of their students and communities.

i. Portability and Benchmarking

Participating institutions largely supported the concept of portability, with institutional-level benchmarking showing consistency in core learning outcomes across FFUR units in nine



institutions and providing a baseline for others. Several providers noted that they accept and recognise other institutions' FFUR courses as basis for undergraduate admission (usually neighbouring institutions or ones that are long-established), through localised agreements or case-by-case. Digital transition passports to deliver seamless student recognition was proposed as one solution for portability. Despite general support for portability, concerns surrounding what are described as 'policy gaps' and 'over-standardisation', and related potential impacts, remain.

The alignment of FFUR courses within the AQF was also questioned. Some institutions instead already offer, or suggest, other methods of transferability, including with the support of the Tertiary Admissions Centres (TACs); online portals; a register of benchmarked courses for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); and modular unit shells.

j. Innovation and Future Directions

FFUR courses and units continue to develop and innovate in pace with evolving student needs, shifting teaching practices and increasingly rapid technological advancements. Recent innovations include responsiveness to generative AI, modular design, authentic and secure assessment, and community co-design to ensure courses are relevant to community and industry needs and utilise up-to-date technologies.

When considering the future directions

“

“When you hear their stories, they've already been put in that box, and when I do the research... all the comments, really, were about how they've transformed as people, and how they've recognised themselves”

– FFUR Provider

of FFUR courses, participants suggested a variety of current and new approaches, including the creation of a national curriculum bank, as well as microcredentials for FFUR educators to deepen expertise in the sector.

In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led course and unit development, and flexible place-based delivery models were identified as key areas for more focus. FFUR models that are adaptable to place, student need, and delivery modality, including hybrid models, dual enrolment across FFUR providers, and regional hub-based approaches were also discussed.

Outreach into communities, shorter-form FFUR, FFUR delivered in external contexts, FFUR ‘tasters’, and community partnerships were noted as being crucial to engaging with ‘hard to reach’ cohorts. FFUR must closely inform, intersect with, and complement other university and government equity initiatives, particularly those supported by outreach funding and needs based funding.

Digital infrastructure for student transitions was also recognised as an area in need of development, with suggestions that the Unique Student Identifier (USI) may be well-positioned to ensure de-identified data on the flow of students between FFUR, higher education and VET. Other ideas noted a need to elevate the transformative impact of FFUR courses to bring greater national awareness and focus to the sector.

IMPLICATIONS

The survey and focus group responses provided useful insights into current FFUR practices, student cohorts and delivery. These often-consistent findings have informed the recommendations of this Report, including suggested Framework, approaches to probability, as well as the accompanying Best Practice Guide.

The contributions of providers underscore the transformative impacts and future potential of FFUR courses for creating equity and widening participation in higher and further education. Project participants emphasised the need for sustained and responsive funding, policy

innovation and sector-alignment and sector-wide collaboration to ensure FFUR offerings remain responsive, inclusive and impactful.





The FFUR Framework

In response to the project findings and the desire to nationalise FFUR courses so that students gain portable pathways into undergraduate study, a FFUR Framework is proposed. The Framework consists of different elements important for establishing further understanding, consistency, and equity and diversity of FFUR offerings. The FFUR Framework is designed to leverage cohort and place-based strengths which have developed across the country over time.

The FFUR Framework includes the following five elements with key information about each outlined in the following sections:

FFUR COHORTS; EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE: who are the students?

FFUR TAXONOMY: what are the offerings?

FFUR COMMON LEARNING OUTCOMES (FOR ALL FFUR TYPES): introducing flexible consistency across all types of FFUR offerings

NATIONAL FFUR ACCESS SCHEME: portability through flexible consistency

I. INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES

II. FFUR MINIMUM STANDARDS

III. NATIONAL FFUR ACCESS REGISTRY

IV. FFUR 'TOP-UPS'

FFUR EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

The FFUR Framework draws on new and established tools and best practice approaches identified as important by the research conducted for this project. This FFUR Framework can be used to support national FFUR policy and governance, providing shared understanding, consistency and portability of the offerings.

THE FFUR FRAMEWORK: FIVE COMPONENTS FOR BEST PRACTICE

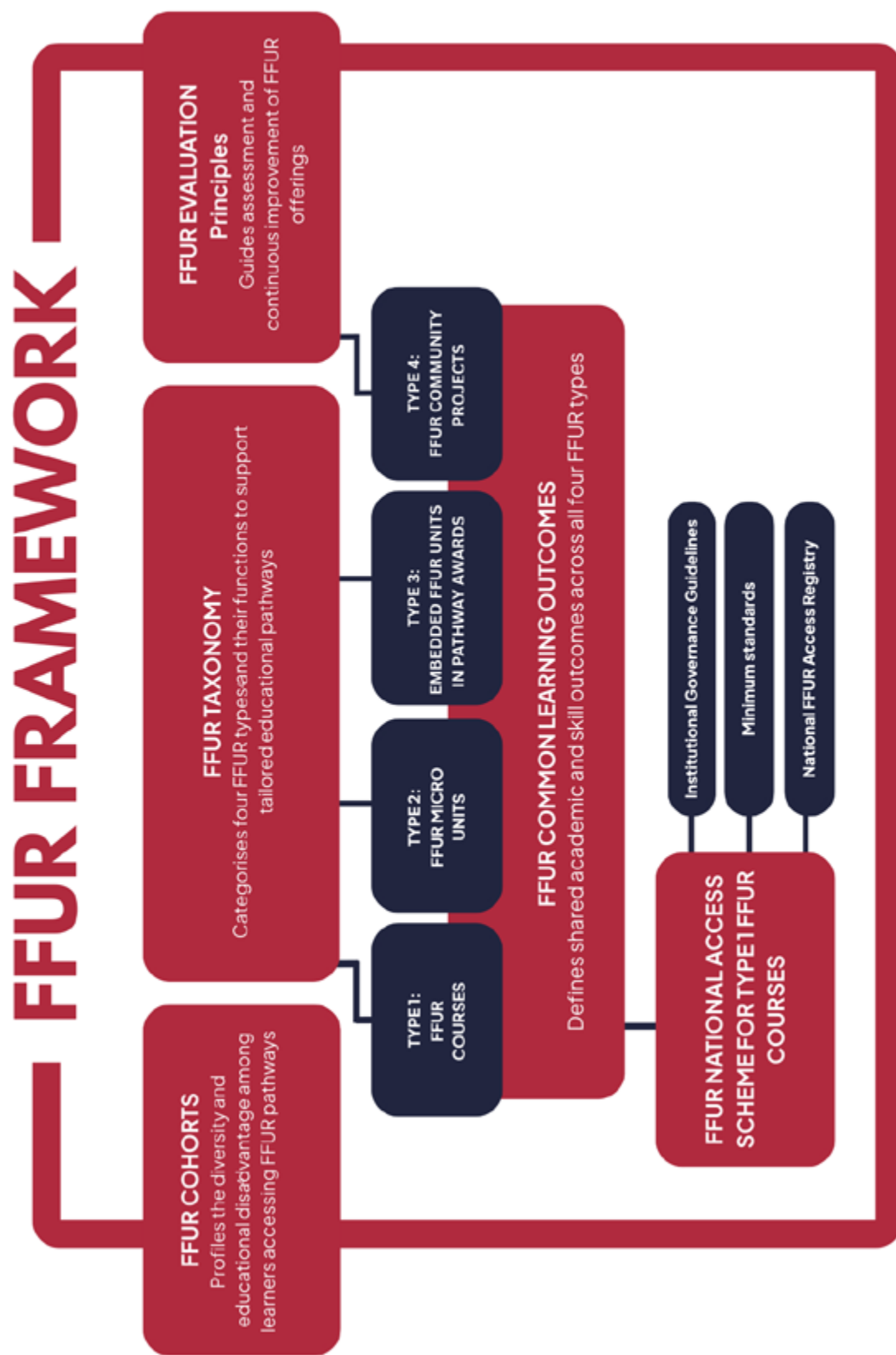


Figure 1. The FFUR Framework outlines 5 key elements for best practice in FFUR design and delivery



WATCH: What is the most misunderstood thing about students who enrol in FFUR programs?

PART ONE OF THE FFUR FRAMEWORK: FFUR COHORTS; EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Educational disadvantage is complex and does not follow neatly defined formal equity groups (Di Gregorio et al., 2025; Severs et al., 2016; Burke, 2012). The current official equity categories, while foundational for identifying broad patterns of disadvantage, are often insufficiently nuanced to capture the diversity of educational challenges and barriers experienced by FFUR cohorts. Equity categories have been criticised for tending to treat disadvantage as overly time-limited, discrete and static, overlooking how factors (such

as financial hardship, regional isolation, refugee status, carer responsibilities, or experiences of trauma and addiction) can differentially impact and/or intersect, and might change over time and/or compound, for individuals (Di Gregorio et al., 2025). To address this issue, there is a need for enhanced and consistent approaches that recognise disadvantage beyond rigid categories that tend to erase visibility of individual experience. This is how worsening forms of disadvantage can be prevented or ameliorated through education. Provision and evaluation tools need to enable recognition and inclusion of students and student circumstances in ways that reflect the lived realities of learners. The



goal being to open more opportunities for more people, as we know that access to higher and further education can be transformative for so many people from a wide diversity of backgrounds (Allen, 2025).

All FFUR pathway types (outlined below in the FFUR Taxonomy) attract a wide range of students, with a significant proportion being from equity backgrounds (Crawford et al., 2020; Davis et al., 2023;

Larsen et al., 2025; Seary & Willans, 2020; Stokes, 2024; Syme et al., 2022). These students often share accounts of how their educational journeys have been restricted or impacted by complex forms of disadvantage at different stages in their lives, including financial hardship, disability, regional isolation, health challenges, learning difficulties, homelessness, addiction, domestic violence, or other forms of trauma as well as the competing demands of work, family, and financial pressures.

It is important to understand the diverse range of educationally disadvantaged learners who access FFUR pathways, including individuals who are, or who have faced, issues such as financial hardship, carer responsibilities, health and learning difficulties, homelessness, addiction, or trauma.

The following list of [*Factors that Impact Educational Disadvantage*](#) was originally conceptualised by members of the NAE EA Executive Group, and is refined further below, to convey understanding of the wide breadth of cohort diversity and intersecting factors when designing responsive and inclusive FFUR offerings.

“Viewing students for their strengths and moving away from the deficit lens. It’s crucial that this thought underpins curriculum.”

“

– (FFUR Provider)

Table 1. *Factors of educational disadvantage in FFUR Pathways*

FACTORS THAT IMPACT EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE	
Socioeconomic Status	The student resides at a residential address as identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as being in the lowest 25% of socioeconomic disadvantage in Australia.
Financial Hardship	The student has experienced various forms of financial hardship in the past which has impacted schooling/ learning development in specific areas or currently. They may have no current fixed address.
Regional, Rural, Remote or Isolated Area	The student lived in a rural, remote or isolated area during schooling and/or are currently living in a rural, remote or isolated area.
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	The student identifies as Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
First in Family	The student is the first in their immediate family to attain a higher education qualification.
Refugee or migrant background or status	The student is an Australian Permanent Resident or a holder of a Permanent Australian Humanitarian visa who may have experienced or be experiencing discrimination as a result of their background.
A non-English speaking background or English language difficulty	The student originally came to Australia from a non-English speaking country or didn't undertake any formal education at an institution where the language of instruction was English.
Carer Responsibilities or Sole Parent	The student holds primary responsibility for care of dependent child/ren and/or other family members while studying. Or, in the past the student has held long-term carer responsibilities that have significantly impacted educational opportunities.

Personal illness or disability	The student has experienced medical/psychological condition or disability or a learning, sensory, physical, psychological or other disability/disorder that has impacted on study.
Experience of Domestic and Family Violence and/or trauma	The student has experienced ongoing effects of domestic and family violence and/or other significant forms of trauma, including bullying or other forms of abuse.
Out-of-home care experience	The student is currently living in out-of-home or foster care or lived in out-of-home or foster care during schooling.
School type/environment/ alternative educational environment	The student attended a disadvantaged school (according to the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) or alternative or low performing school which impacted on educational opportunities. The student attended an Australian rural or regional school during formative years. The student was home schooled for all or part of their schooling.
Prior inability to access educational pathway or gaps in knowledge and skills	The student has not previously been able to achieve entry requirements to access desired university program or has gaps in knowledge or skills as a result of their educational background.
Undesired changes in employment type or unemployment	The student has experienced changes in their employment type or was/is unemployed.
Suffered discrimination in educational history	The student has been impacted by significant forms of discrimination or adverse events in educational or occupational history, including discrimination (race, background, gender and sexual identity), stereotyping, bullying, and physical/mental health issues.
A childhood history of disadvantaged (parental/carer/ family) circumstances	The student's education has been disadvantaged as a result of personal circumstances or parental/carer/ family circumstances.



Institutions should aim to gain a nuanced understanding of their FFUR cohorts and the associated diversity of needs, through confidentially collecting and analysing student data of various types. This information should be viewed through an intersectional lens and consider how the above characteristics may compound, resulting in more complex levels of educational disadvantage. Research shows that utilising mixed methods and approaches to measuring student success enables better insights into what a wide diversity of students experience and need. For

learners facing multiple intersecting factors leading to educational disadvantage, success should not be measured by marks, pass rates or completion rates alone. Gauging the success of students in FFUR courses by only these metrics, indicates something about ‘what’ is happening, but not about the how, why, when and how to respond. For more information about this research and suggested approaches to understanding success in a FFUR course, see Measures of Student Success in the *Best Practice Guide*.



PART TWO OF THE FFUR FRAMEWORK: THE FFUR TAXONOMY

Background to the FFUR Taxonomy

In Australia the concept of educational equity by promoting opportunities for all people to gain a second chance at both accessing and succeeding in higher education beyond schooling, was emphasised through early policy such as A Fair Chance for All (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990).

What have become known as FFUR offerings have developed across Australia in response to community and other contextual needs, particularly in areas outside capital and major cities where there are more long-term challenges with employment and other socioeconomic issues (Davis et al., 2023).

As FFUR course requirements are currently at the discretion of the offering institution and are tailored to local cohort needs, courses vary across the sector in type, entry requirements, content, mode of delivery and program duration. FFUR courses are not currently recognised in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) or formally recognised between institutions nationally.

Despite the longstanding presence of access pathways within Australian Higher Education, there is currently no nationally accepted taxonomy of 'Enabling' education types. There has

been innovation over time as part of a place-based and cohort-specific approach to FFUR pathways, since other university entry schemes have developed and changed, and especially as prerequisites for awards have reduced and been removed in many locations. FFUR courses have been critical to empowering students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and non-traditional pathways, including lower levels of VET, portfolios and recommendation schemes, to access and succeed in higher education (Department of Education, 2024b).

The National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia's (2019b) [*Declaration on Enabling Education in Higher Education*](#), defined 'Enabling' (FFUR) education into three main forms: Enabling Courses, Enabling Pathways and Enabling Initiatives. These three categories provided short descriptions about the form and function of 'Enabling' (FFUR) delivered nationally (see image, p.2). Since then, new contexts, additional pathways and FFUR approaches have evolved.



FFUR Diversity and cohort differentiation

Pathways to higher education, including FFUR offerings, are varied and complex, because they have emerged over time to provide university access to specific populations and communities. Undergraduate programs are also diverse in terms of the types and levels of preparation required. Therefore, there is no simple transferable model: instead, there is an ecosystem of different entry types and pathways which can lead into undergraduate study.

As outlined in the ‘[Enabling components](#)’ (NAEEA, 2019b, p2), some institutions offer FFUR places as individual modules or units of learning, not as full courses (or programs) of learning. For example, many providers customise the FFUR units required for successful completion to the destination Award. Some ‘Enabling’ (FFUR) units successfully completed are also recognised for credit into some Awards, mostly in the form of RPL when assessed, leading to unspecified credit towards a qualification (e.g. counted as an elective subject within an Award).

As part of the research undertaken for this FFUR project, many providers explained that they design FFUR courses of study according to the desired destination Award, which determines the number and type of FFUR units required for successful completion. In this sense, FFUR units are utilised as a type of admissions pathway. Some institutions provide individual



FFUR units of learning as preparation or support, as well as other full FFUR courses of learning which provide access to Awards, depending on cohort need.

Since the NAEEA defined the three components of ‘Enabling’ study (Courses, Pathways and Initiatives), the sector has further expanded and diversified. Project participants pointed out the need to continue to respond and innovate in response to other changes in higher education, as new pathways emerge, including the introduction of Undergraduate Certificates which are now embedded within the AQF.

[Figure 2](#) provides examples of four student journeys through different FFUR offerings, tailored for their particular needs. These are for illustration purposes only, as there are many more patterns of study than the four included below.

STUDENT JOURNEYS

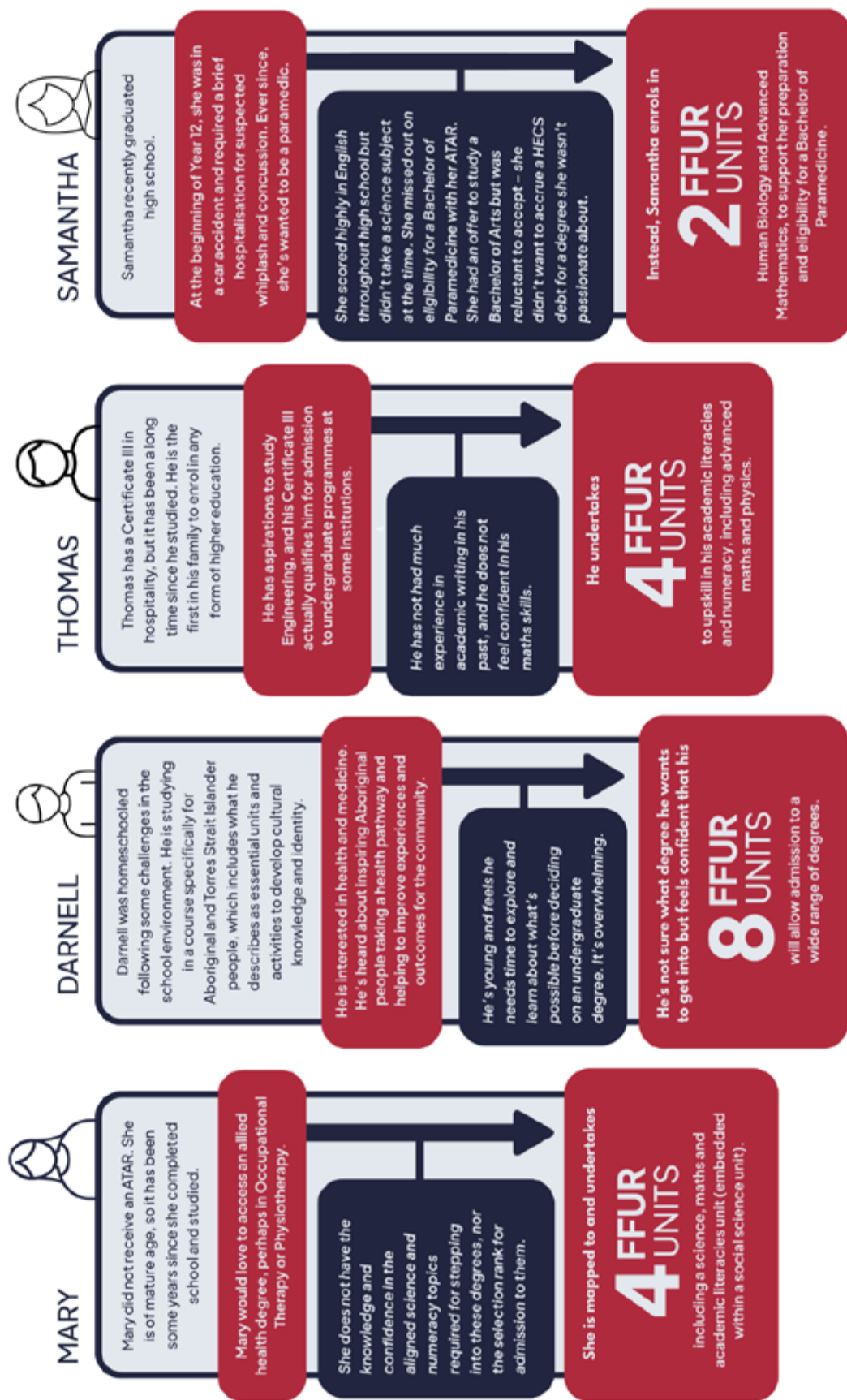


Figure 2. Examples of diverse FFUR student pathways.



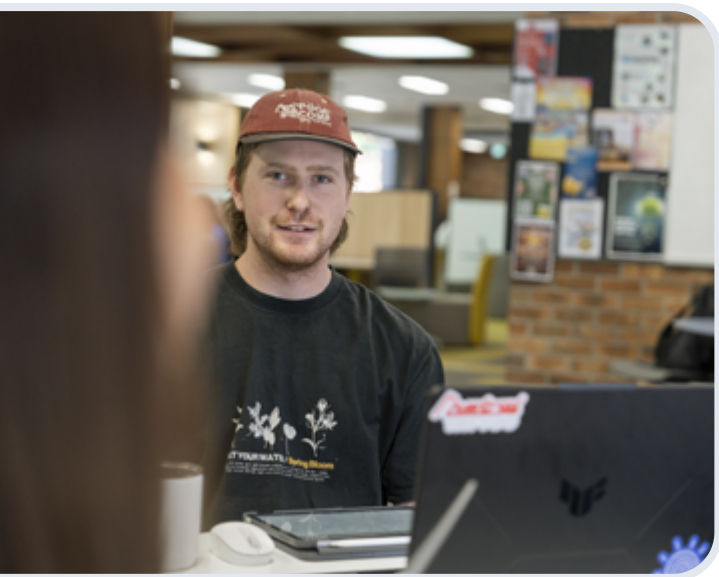
The FFUR Taxonomy

As described above, universities have developed different FFUR types for cohorts who are transitioning to university from diverse backgrounds and whose needs vary in terms of length and breadth of learning.

The following taxonomy is a quick reference guide to outline the different types of FFUR as well as to assist in understanding how FFUR programs fit into the broader pathways landscape, including admissions pathways, Needs Based Funding, Outreach and ISSP initiatives, as well as sub-degree awards.

This taxonomy defines and categorises the four FFUR types based on their function, recognition, and alignment with student needs:

- **FFUR Courses:** In-depth, programs of learning with multiple units. Enable uni-readiness and grant access to higher education study.
- **FFUR Micro Units:** Short-form FFUR units/modules. To support foundational skills and knowledge development for specific degrees. Often taken prior to, or concurrently with first-year higher education study.



- **FFUR Embedded Units:** One or two FFUR units which provide transition and support for students within a pathway award (typically a pathways Diploma course.)
- **FFUR Community Projects:** Community or school-based projects in institutions with significant areas of demonstrated need. Offers flexibility of delivery of FFUR units in external settings.

The taxonomy consolidates and makes consistent the institution-specific approaches which have developed, as documented in the project research and consultation, including the above descriptions by the NAEAA (2019b). It also speaks to the consultation feedback which identified a widespread concern about the need to continue the place-based responsiveness required to support the wide diversity of cohorts to participate and succeed in higher education.

“

“A lot of our students have never been validated. They’ve often been excluded in a school situation or educational situation. So, it is really important to show that we value them and value their experience.”

– FFUR Provider

Within the FFUR ecosystem below, it is proposed that consistency through standards and other mechanisms be introduced, but without impacting the place-based and contextual tailoring required to meet the local cohort’s needs. Each of the standards and mechanisms are discussed in the following sections. Noting that not all types must align to minimum standards (only those with transferability across institutions) but all types must adhere to FFUR Common Learning Outcomes. More about these elements will be introduced in subsequent sections of this report.

TABLE 2. FFUR Taxonomy: a quick reference guide to assist understanding and development.

TYPE	FUNCTION	PROPOSED NATIONAL RECOGNITION/ TRANSFERABILITY	PROPOSED ASSESSMENT TOOLS & STANDARDS
1. FFUR COURSES Aligns with NAEFA (2019b) category of 'Enabling Courses'	In-depth, longer course of learning, with multiple units. Where there is no set number of units required for all students, the number of units is determined by the FFUR provider based on the individual student's needs and desired destination. Many institutions require multiple units to be successfully completed to ensure wide-ranging preparation and rigour.	Could enable access to degrees at participating institutions when aligned to proposed National FFUR Access Scheme (with Minimum Standards).	Aligns with FFUR COMMON LEARNING OUTCOMES
	For those requiring both: a. access to a desired Award and b. the aligned preparation for the Award Some institutions provide these courses/units in collaboration with high schools for final year high school students. In Western Australia and Queensland some institutions have long established relationships with schools and are included in curriculum, particularly where no other higher education pathway exists due to school context or individual students' circumstances.	Institutions would assess preparedness, incl. alignment with degree type and demand. Could be incentives for institutions to accept individuals who have successfully completed and satisfied requirements set out in the proposed National FFUR Access Scheme. This could include: • Demand driven funding for FFUR students gaining access to any Table A Australian university degree (as is the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students). This funding would follow the completed FFUR student, which stimulates FFUR transferability. This would increase numbers of students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and equity groups Note that in the current FFUR policy definition, "... it is possible for students to receive credit towards a higher education award course for units of study undertaken in their FEE-FREE Uni Ready or enabling course" Australian Government (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021)	AND NATIONAL FFUR ACCESS SCHEME: (Including FFUR INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES + MINIMUM STANDARDS)

TABLE 2 cont. FFUR Taxonomy: a quick reference guide to assist understanding and development.

TYPE	FUNCTION	PROPOSED NATIONAL RECOGNITION/ TRANSFERABILITY	PROPOSED ASSESSMENT TOOLS & STANDARDS
2. FFUR MICRO UNITS <i>Aligns with NAEFA (2019b) category of 'Enabling Initiatives'</i> <i>Aligns with NAEEA (2019b) category of 'Enabling Initiatives'</i>	Shorter duration FFUR units – aligned with cohort need, with assessable components.	Could be included in the NATIONAL MICROCREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK in recognition of completion. Would not be transferable as a FFUR course, as it would not align to FFUR Access Scheme and Minimum Standards.	Aligns with FFUR COMMON LEARNING OUTCOMES
	Individual FFUR units of learning provided for cohorts who need to gain aligned foundational skills and knowledge for specific degrees, including in the transition from non-traditional and other educational systems such as VET (e.g. cert III and IV) and to transition into Higher Education learning styles. This is to enable uni-readiness in subject-areas aligned to the subsequent Award, given that access can be gained without requisite subject(s). High numbers of first-in family and disadvantaged groups who need specific preparation and university-ready literacies incl. in STEM, to be prepared to succeed.		

TABLE 2 cont. FFUR Taxonomy: a quick reference guide to assist understanding and development.

TYPE	FUNCTION	PROPOSED NATIONAL RECOGNITION/ TRANSFERABILITY	PROPOSED ASSESSMENT TOOLS & STANDARDS
3. EMBEDDED FFUR UNITS IN PATHWAY AWARDS Aligns with NAEFA (2019b) category 'Enabling Pathways'	These are one or two units of FFUR study which provide transition and support for students within a pathways award, typically a pathways diploma course, as part of a longer pathway of study (a diploma typically being 8 course units in total).	No changes proposed. FFUR units are often recognised through credit and RPL within the final Award.	Aligns with FFUR COMMON LEARNING OUTCOMES AND Aligned with AQF level 5
	Enables the student to be admitted to the pathways award due to the transition and support FFUR units embedded within the first weeks/ term of study (FTE).	Note that it is pointed out in the current policy definition that "While it is possible for students to receive credit towards a higher education award course for units of study undertaken in their FEE-FREE Uni Ready or enabling course, a course that consists primarily of units of study that lead to the higher education award that students are preparing to undertake, would not be FEE-FREE Uni Ready or an enabling course. This is because it would not be consistent with the intention of the definition in HESA."	

TABLE 2 cont. FFUR Taxonomy: a quick reference guide to assist understanding and development.

TYPE	FUNCTION	PROPOSED NATIONAL RECOGNITION/ TRANSFERABILITY	PROPOSED ASSESSMENT TOOLS & STANDARDS
4. FFUR COMMUNITY PROJECTS	Suggested in consultation as new funding rounds (short and longer-term funding) through a national competitive funding pool could be considered - tied to CSP and EFTSL and focused on community/ schooling-based projects in institutions with significant areas of demonstrated need (e.g. populations with low literacies which preclude them from participation in other FFUR types 1-3). Enables progression through FFUR and other pathways. Further widens participation initiatives and activities funded through outreach fund.	Could be offered according to the cohort achievement levels and project type. These projects could involve FFUR being delivered in community/on country. Place-based learning to enable engagement and reach. Being explored as part of the ATEC FFUR Policy Sandbox approach.	Aligns with FFUR COMMON LEARNING OUTCOMES Depending on cohort needs, and initiative, may align with Access Scheme and/or AQF 5.



According to recommendations by the Department of Education (2024a), some FFUR individual units of study might align better to the National Microcredentials Framework (NMF)² rather than a nationally transferable framework (as discussed in sections below). Using this approach, individual or short ‘FFUR micro’ units of study are regarded as nuanced preparation and/or learning support for transitioning students who require specific field-related preparation before embarking on a particular award they have gained entry to (e.g. as many institutions do not have prerequisites). These FFUR types do not provide access to undergraduate awards but instead offer aligned preparation and/or support for specific degrees. They function and are structured differently at different institutions. ‘Micros’ draw on a very small fraction of FFUR EFTSL funding, compared to full FFUR courses of study. It is also important to note that there are few FFUR courses which are offered at full-time duration for a full year and draw on the full 1.0 EFTSL of funding per student enrolment, as will be explained throughout this Report. Although not earmarked for the national portability scheme (as outlined below) ‘FFUR micros’ could be considered for access to specific awards by home institutions (which has familiarity with the offering) especially if coupled with another pathway, such as a Certificate III or portfolio.

PART THREE OF THE FFUR FRAMEWORK: COMMON LEARNING OUTCOMES

To ensure national consistency, it is proposed that all types in the FFUR Taxonomy should align with the following [NAEEA Common Learning Outcomes](#) (NAEEA, 2019a).

The NAEEA *Common Learning Outcomes* (2019a) outline the shared academic and skill outcomes expected across all FFUR types. These learning outcomes include knowledge of higher education environments, and development of academic literacies, critical thinking, and independent learning skills. Moreover, they provide a consistent blueprint for FFUR delivery, irrespective of type, location, length or mode of delivery. It is recommended that providers ensure their FFUR offerings irrespective of type, meet these common learning outcomes, that they are communicated clearly to students, and that this information is included in the unit/course handbooks.

The *Common Learning Outcomes* cover three domains (knowledge; skills; application of knowledge and skills), and detail FFUR learner achievement across these domains.

These learning outcomes are key to ensuring that students transition well into university level learning environments. Research on student experiences in

² The framework defines microcredentials as a certification of assessed learning or competency, with a minimum volume of learning of one hour and less than an AQF award qualification, that is additional, alternate, complementary to or a component part of an AQF award qualification. <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-publications/resources/national-microcredentials-framework>



WATCH: What can FFUR educators do to support their students?

FFUR (Bennett et al., 2018; Allen, 2025) highlights that one reason for their success is that students who are often unfamiliar with higher education are typically immersed within the institutional environment in ways that build a strong authentic knowledge of university life along with relevant navigational, contextual and academic capabilities. This process of becoming ‘uni ready’ involves FFUR units of study which very closely resemble undergraduate styles of learning and the same university structures they will progress into. Furthermore, FFUR students are typically taught by staff familiar with

undergraduate teaching, including best practice in university transition and inclusive pedagogies, as well as the types of FFUR enabling pedagogies outlined in the accompanying FFUR Best Practice Guide. This is important so that students can clearly understand the context, what is expected, and be set up to succeed. As Pitman et al. (2016) found in their study of university pathways, including VET, students from FFUR programs strongly reported that their pathway provided them with a sense of belonging at university, and the confidence and preparation to pursue a higher education qualification.

Applying these outcomes would ensure consistency and quality across the full spectrum of FFUR Types 1–4, nationally.

PART FOUR OF THE FFUR FRAMEWORK: NATIONAL FFUR ACCESS SCHEME

Despite there being no formalised national recognition of FFUR completion between institutions, ‘transferability’ has developed over time in varying ways. The various Tertiary Admission Centres already support portability for students in some contexts and institutions utilise other direct entry mechanisms.

Building on this ad hoc approach, the National Access Scheme is proposed to support greater transferability, by allowing wider confidence in FFUR quality and consistency. The National Access Scheme assists institutions to both offer and accept FFUR in ways that



suit their contexts, cohorts, FFUR and undergraduate courses and other needs, as they change over time.

The National Access Scheme is relevant only to full courses of FFUR (Type 1 as outlined in the Taxonomy.) The scheme sets expectations for:

- Type 1 FFUR Course Governance Guidelines
- FFUR Minimum achievement standards
- Approaches to a national FFUR Access Registry for portability
- Consistent attainment ratings to assist with student mobility.

For providers to have their Type 1 FFUR Course recognised and accepted by other institutions nationally, they would be expected to adhere to the standards and admission processes recommended below.

FFUR Institutional Governance Guidelines

The National FFUR Access Scheme could provide portability to an undergraduate course at another institution for a student who has successfully completed Type 1 FFUR study. In addition to aligning to the NAEEA Common Learning Outcomes, it is proposed that Type 1 FFUR courses align with the [Institutional Governance Guidelines](#), as recommended by the NAEEA which draws on the Higher Education Standards Framework (*Declaration on Enabling Education in Higher Education*, NAEEA, 2019b, pp. 5–6).

This would ensure that FFUR offerings are embedded within all of the relevant quality assurance approaches and processes of the wider institution, including for ensuring academic integrity, student experience and progression (including approaches to orientation for new students and reporting on student demographics, success, completion and conversion), teaching and learning (including clear instruction about learning content and alignment with assessment) and for student wellbeing, safety, and regular review.

By ensuring consistent and robust institutional governance of FFUR Courses (Type 1) nationally, university admissions will have confidence in the equivalency and quality of Type 1 FFUR courses across providers.

Proposed FFUR Minimum Standards

The following achievement level descriptions provide an understanding of the typical performance of students in numeracy and academic literacies (reading and writing). Providers of undergraduate courses may accept any of the below and/or other FFUR unit competencies types sought, as evidenced by the FFUR provider, to align with the requirements of the undergraduate course applied for.

FFUR providers assure the standards, including the integrity, depth and breadth of study, which the student has achieved.

Table 4. Proposed FFUR Minimum Standards

PROPOSED FFUR MINIMUM STANDARDS: ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS	
ACADEMIC LITERACIES	
Knowledge and Skills (explicit and/or embedded in relevant FFUR units)	Academic Literacies content, whether offered as stand-alone FFUR units or embedded within discipline-based FFUR units, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pathways units, are designed to provide in-depth knowledge and skills to equip students with the levels of complexity of understanding required for entry into undergraduate study. Academic Literacies instruction aims to engage students in the processes and practices of reading, writing, and communicating in the higher education context. Academic Literacies units aim to develop students' thinking and critical reasoning, as expressed within the types of written language forms included at a commencing undergraduate level. • A range of academic writing skills and practices, including those involved in the production of different text types important at the introductory undergraduate level. • Analysis and implementation of the principles of academic integrity and their application. • Critical reading aimed at developing student capacity for deeper understanding of a variety of texts, with scaffolded introduction to academic text types. • Research skills and effective use of evidence from scholarly literature to support an argument, including referencing. • Digital Literacies, including effectively navigating digital systems, platforms and tools. • Understanding of, and effective, ethical use of artificial intelligence tools. • Effective communication for a range of audiences and purposes, including oral presentations. • Critical thinking skills.
Individuals who study Academic Literacies are typically adept in:	
Upon completion, students can typically:	1. Apply the technique of critical reading to a variety of texts. 2. Demonstrate academic skills of close analysis. 3. Demonstrate the ability to source, critically analyse and evaluate information in support of an argument. 4. Demonstrate the required depth and breadth of knowledge of the conventions of conveying information in an academic context through a range of relevant written reports, essays or other relevant methods. 5. Demonstrate membership in an academic community by adhering to the principles of academic integrity and referencing.

Table 4 cont. *Proposed FFUR Minimum Standards*

PROPOSED FFUR MINIMUM STANDARDS: ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS	
NUMERACY – FFUR FUNDAMENTAL MATHEMATICS	
Knowledge and Skills – FFUR Fundamental Mathematics	Fundamental Mathematics is a partially non-calculator introductory mathematics study which covers a range of topics and mathematical skills relevant to aligned degrees requiring a fundamental level of mathematical knowledge and ability. The learning outcomes include an understanding of and competence in the skills of numeracy, arithmetic, fractions, decimals, percentages, ratio and scale measurement, basic statistics and units of measurement. A report or essay task can also be included to convey understanding. This provides a standard level of core numeracy knowledge. However, additional micro bridging study in algebra and/or statistics may also be useful in addition to the units if the subsequent undergraduate course requirements assume additional knowledge in algebra. Depending on the undergraduate course, students may also benefit in undertaking additional study in algebraic methods and mathematical applications including statistics.
Individuals performing at this level are typically adept in:	• Numeracy, place value, arithmetic algorithms, mental arithmetic, order of operations, directed numbers. • Fractions, decimals and percentage calculations and approximation of numbers. • Calculator use. • Basic statistics. • Ratio and scale measurement. • Scientific notation, units of measurement, prefixes, unit conversions.
Upon completion, students can typically:	1. Demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of numbers and arithmetic. 2. Use the skills of some basic arithmetic competently and accurately where relevant, without the use of a calculator. 3. Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of mathematics relevant to degrees requiring a fundamental level of mathematical ability. 4. Apply fundamental mathematical and statistical concepts in real world problems.

Table 4 cont. Proposed FFUR Minimum Standards

PROPOSED FFUR MINIMUM STANDARDS: ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS	
NUMERACY – FFUR ADVANCED MATHEMATICS	
Knowledge and Skills – FFUR Advanced Mathematics Advanced Mathematics typically has a longer duration than other FFUR units due to the breadth and complexity of topics. It prepares students for the commencement of undergraduate study that requires more in-depth knowledge of specific mathematical principles than Fundamental Maths. This is suitable for those wishing to undertake undergraduate courses requiring advanced or extension level mathematics. Advanced Mathematics covers number systems, basic algebra, simultaneous and quadratic equations, functions and graphs, sequences and series. It aims to develop the algebraic and graphical skills necessary for calculus, and the trigonometric and calculus skills necessary for entry to an undergraduate science or mathematics degree and covers the topics of trigonometry, and differential and integral calculus, with some applications in the physical sciences. A report or essay task is also included to convey understanding. Recommended for degrees in Mathematics, Engineering, Computer Science, Surveying and Biotechnology.	
Individuals performing at this level are typically adept in:	• Number systems: natural numbers, rationals, integers, surds and real numbers. • Basic algebra: expanding, factoring, simplifying, solving equations and inequalities, quadratic equations, simultaneous equations. • Curve sketching lines, circles, parabolas, hyperbolae, ellipses, polynomials, rational functions. • Sequences and series: arithmetic and geometric progressions. • Trigonometry: sine and cosine rules, graphing trig functions, trig identities. • Differentiation: definition, derivatives of standard functions, product rule, quotient rule, chain rule, optimisation and other applications. • Integration: definition, integration by antidifferentiation, integration by substitution, exponential growth and decay, and other applications.
Upon completion, students can typically:	1. Explain the different number systems and how they are used within various scientific disciplines. 2. Use algebraic skills to solve real world problems. 3. Use graphical skills to solve real world problems. 4. Communicate mathematics in oral and written forms. 5. Determine the correct use of mathematical notation. 6. Formulate and solve real world problems in the language of mathematics. 7. Identify and use trigonometric skills sufficient for the understanding and practice of calculus. 8. Use differentiation theory and skills to solve real-world problems. 9. Use integration theory and skills to solve real-world problems. 10. Communicate mathematics in oral and written forms. 11. Determine the correct use of mathematical notation.

Note to Minimum Standards: Providers of undergraduate courses can also consider any other FFUR fields of education studied, as aligned to the undergraduate course application (instead or in addition to the above).



“I’m always reflecting on what worked and what didn’t work. There’ll be simple changes like the colour of the paper that I’m printing on may not work for some students...Every lesson that we teach, we are reflecting on what worked and what didn’t, and we are ready to make change.”

“

FFUR providers can utilise the FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines in the FFUR Best Practice Guide for information on the recommended design and rigour of FFUR unit types (e.g. Sciences, Health, Humanities, Social Sciences).

National FFUR Access Registry

The National FFUR Access Registry could provide information about FFUR Type 1 courses from participating institutions nationally, which meet the conditions required of the National Access Scheme above:

- The FFUR Course/s align with the FFUR Common Learning Outcomes.
- The FFUR Course/s are compliant with institutional governance processes, regarding quality assurance, student participation and attainment, learning environment and teaching.
- The FFUR Course/s include units that align with minimum standards for Academic Literacies, Numeracies

at a minimum, and other fields of Education as outlined in the Best Practice Guide.

FFUR providers could demonstrate that their courses meet the conditions of the National Access Scheme to be listed on the National FFUR Access Registry. Compliance with and entry to the National FFUR Access Registry will allow for greater trust in FFUR course nationally and improve student mobility.

This Registry provides the platform for offering a standardised National FFUR Completion Certificate or National FFUR Access Course Badge for FFUR Courses listed on the National FFUR Access Registry.

For undergraduate admission purposes, the FFUR Access Registry could be relied upon by admitting institutions as to the quality of FFUR courses within other institutions.

It’s important to note that the admitting institution determines the required field of FFUR study and/or number of FFUR



units to enable for correct alignment with undergraduate course types and requirements³.

Institutions may consider completion of whole FFUR courses (usually four + units) or completion of individual FFUR units aligned with the undergraduate course, sometimes combined with other prior learning. In cases where whole FFUR courses are completed, selection ranks can be derived as they are currently.

Some institutions already utilise Tertiary Admission Centres in this way.

FFUR ‘Top-ups’

Students who have completed other types of FFUR offerings as outlined in the FFUR Taxonomy or have not satisfied requirements as assessed by the institution of offer for the specific award, could be supported to undertake other specific FFUR units to ‘top-up’ their study at an institution which provides the FFUR unit required to enable the student to access their award of choice (e.g. the desired level of FFUR maths, such as FFUR Advanced Maths for Engineering degrees or FFUR Academic Literacies for Humanities degrees). This is also in recognition that not all FFUR providers offer a wide variety of FFUR units.

FFUR students requiring more specialised study (e.g. FFUR Advanced Mathematics or FFUR Physics) may enrol with another

FFUR provider. Introducing this flexibility could enable smaller programs to offer students a broader range of study options. The new FFUR provider would need to recognise the FFUR units already successfully completed at the previous institution (if they meet the rigour outlined in the FFUR Minimum Standards for Academic Literacies or another unit or units successfully completed as outlined in the FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines if a different unit type).

In cases where individuals have not completed a full course of learning but completed individual FFUR units aligned with a specific undergraduate offering, or students are seeking to ‘top up’ their prior learning (including ATAR) with individual FFUR units, admitting institutions may assess the students using a standardised access rating of the specific FFUR units (see Appendix B for an example of an access rating approach adapted from the Schools Recommendation Scheme). This access rating may involve students requesting a FFUR rating from the FFUR provider to be used in conjunction with FFUR unit grades or transcripts. This approach brings FFUR in line with direct admissions models for other alternative pathways, such as for Schools Recommendation Schemes and Portfolio Entry.

A standardised access rating guide would allow the institution assessing

3. It is important to note that as is currently the case, not all institutions enable entry for FFUR (or other pathways) to all their awards. As for all forms of access (including ATAR) the requirements for entry (by conversion of prior learning to a selection rank) are determined by the institution of offer for the specific award, which varies over time due to a range of needs, including demand, quality of learning experience, and as aligned with accreditation and work placement capacities.

the suitability of the student for an undergraduate course based on their FFUR study, to better understand from the FFUR provider the students' level of 'uni readiness'.

Further, a standardised access rating guide would allow the FFUR provider to easily rate their students against the FFUR minimum standards who are seeking to use their FFUR unit learning (rather than a whole completed course) as a basis for admission to another institution. Consistent with Schools Recommendations, FFUR providers would also have the option to provide additional information about the student in a free text field and upload a student's results.

PART FIVE OF THE FFUR FRAMEWORK: FFUR EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

Effective evaluation is critical for understanding the outcomes of educational programs and ensuring they remain relevant and responsive. Evaluation should consider values-based approaches that capture the complex variables influencing program success (Biesta, 2010). This includes adapting to changing contexts and addressing what the participants say matters to them, over time.

Student engagement, academic performance, and decision-making in higher education are shaped by personal experiences and systemic inequalities (HEFCE, 2015; Mayne, 2001;

Whitty et al., 2015). Evaluations must therefore consider these dynamics when considering the interplay of equity and effectiveness. Student-centred evaluation both values and prioritises diverse student expectations, experiences and goals.

Evaluation should be built into regular review cycles, with findings then re-informing ways to cater to the wide diversity of student needs and goals, staff development, pedagogy, curriculum and delivery design (Bennett, 2018). Recognising differential experiences across demographics, study modes, and learning environments is



essential for inclusive practice.

Recent frameworks, including the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF) (Robinson et al., 2021) and the Critical Interventions Framework Part 3 (Bennett et al., 2024), offer structured, contextualised approaches. These emphasise mixed-methods evaluation and student-centred methodologies. SEHEEF combines quantitative impact evaluation (QIE) with theory-based impact evaluation (TBIE), for both statistical analysis and qualitative insights. The following principles underpin these frameworks:

- Mixed-Methods Design – Combines qualitative and quantitative approaches for richer insights.
- Student-Centred Evaluation – Focuses on what matters to participants.
- Responsiveness to Context – Adapts to changing needs and external pressures.
- Continuous Improvement – Uses findings to continuously refine program design and delivery.

“I’m always reflecting on what worked and what didn’t work. There’ll be simple changes like the colour of the paper that I’m printing on may not work for some students. the way that I run my groups.... Every lesson that we teach, we are reflecting on what worked and what didn’t, and we are ready to make change.” (FFUR Provider)

Applying these approaches ensures FFUR programs are not only accessible but also meaningful and effective for the students they aim to support. More information about evaluation, and the importance of benchmarking (Davis et al., 2023) is provided in the FFUR Best Practice Guide, produced by a wider-ranging team of colleagues with diverse forms of expertise across main FFUR fields of education, student support and community engagement.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE:

If FFUR standards are too specific and prescriptive, new barriers may arise which reduce the pathway into higher education for disadvantaged students, and FFUR will become inconsistent with other forms of alternative entry. By providing quality standards that quantify readiness, without overly burdensome administrative requirements for both FFUR completion and admission to awards (given the very short timeframes for completion and admission to the subsequent program), such an approach enables feasible solutions for individual institutions which can calibrate admissions to the future requirements of their wide range of awards.



ADMISSIONS ACTIVITY FLOW NOTES

The rating process only applies to those applying to other institutions or courses which the home institution does not administer, and where the student is applying for portability. It is only relevant to those with Type 1 FFUR unit completion from FFUR providers.

The above process for a direct admissions assessment could involve:

> STUDENT

Student applies for the undergraduate program at the new institution after successfully completing FFUR unit/s. Student requests FFUR provider to rate their performance against minimum standards for academic literacies, and discipline competencies and skills using the access rating scale.

> FFUR PROVIDER

The student's FFUR provider completes an assessment of the student on the above criteria. They could also provide a student's results and additional information about the student in a free text field.

> ADMITTING UNDERGRADUATE PROVIDER

The undergraduate provider (or Tertiary Admission Centre on behalf of the undergraduate provider) reviews FFUR rating and any other prior learning. The application is assessed to determine whether the FFUR units studied align with the Award applied for and then makes a conditional or unconditional offer as deemed appropriate.



Potential For FFUR Demand Driven Funding

A possible incentive for undergraduate course providers to engage in this widening participation approach for including students with prior FFUR study, could be through enabling them to offer 'demand driven' places for these non-traditional pathway students in undergraduate degrees. This could build on the Government's investment in FFUR to nationalise and create portability of FFUR.

The availability of this funding could be contingent on institutions demonstrating a 'track record' of enabling students' success through these or similar admissions pathways.

This would allow institutions committed to FFUR pathways to further develop a strong path into their undergraduate offering for these cohorts.

Being 'Uni Ready': An important note on FFUR Volume of Learning

Becoming 'Uni Ready' is contingent on a range of intersecting factors. The number and type of FFUR units to be completed before accessing an undergraduate course are currently determined by various elements including:

- the needs of the individual student
- FFUR unit alignment with the undergraduate program desired
- the level of study completed prior to FFUR.

To adequately prepare students for the depth of learning required at a university level, volume of learning for a Type 1 FFUR course is typically set as a minimum of 100+ hours per unit of learning.

While it is most common that FFUR courses average 400 + hours of learning across four units, flexibility of units and volume is highlighted by the sector as important. For most providers, this



WATCH: Why FFUR programs are vital in our communities.

enables the majority of students to meet the minimum standards and become 'uni ready'; however, this is not always the case.

As such, the National FFUR Access scheme does not dictate minimum volume of learning. Rather, the scheme prioritises students meeting, consistent minimum standards as the measure of 'uni readiness' over rigid timeframes or volumes of work. FFUR unit and volume flexibility allows for flexibility with alignment to undergraduate fields of education and recognition of other forms of prior learning (e.g. ATAR, vocational and professional learning) ⁴.

Through this approach, offering undergraduate providers make decisions about the alignment and number of units required for their undergraduate course types.

It is important to note however, progression to undergraduate STEM courses often requires more FFUR units of learning (and time) due to the level of numeracy and/or scientific knowledge required on commencement of those undergraduate degrees.

⁴ As stated in the AQF Volume of learning explanation (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2014, p.2), providers may offer a course of learning "in more or less time than the specified volume of learning, provided that delivery arrangements give students sufficient opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes for the qualification type, level and discipline. Students may be fast-tracked through the qualification, for example by providers offering three semesters per year, longer study hours in the traditional two semester model, or intensive periods of study. Conversely, some cohorts of students may be offered a longer duration of delivery to support their successful achievement of the qualification outcomes. Students may be offered more self-paced methodologies, including online delivery and workplace delivery, which will vary the duration required to achieve the learning outcomes. The duration may be reduced for individual students if credit towards the qualification is given in the form of recognition of prior learning, advanced standing or credit transfer. Provider decisions about the duration of the delivery of a qualification must take into account the students' likelihood of successfully achieving the learning outcomes and ensure that the integrity of the qualification outcomes is maintained. If the duration of delivery is substantially different from the volume of learning specified by the qualification type specification, providers should be able to provide pedagogical rationale to support the variation."



A Note On The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

Type 1 FFUR ACCESS COURSES could be recognised in the AQF as a qualification type, as aligned to the FFUR Institutional Governance Guidelines and Minimum Standards. If included in the AQF, Type 1 FFUR courses of study could be listed like the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE), which is not aligned to a specific AQF level, as was listed as one suggestion in the review of the AQF for Enabling courses (Noonan, 2019). This would also not include any additional volume of learning requirements.

Further consultation should be undertaken with the FFUR sector through the FFUR Working Group to explore inclusion in the AQF.

Intersection With Institutional And Community Outreach Initiatives

Outreach activities (most often funded through the National Outreach Fund) offered by an institution should be closely interlinked with, and conducted as, an integral part of the provider's comprehensive pathways strategy, so that all pathways available to students (particularly FFUR courses) are clearly mapped out for participants to easily navigate.

Providers should consider how resources can be leveraged to deliver a range of activities which can target all cohorts, and involve a wide range of community members, including those at school and those who have left school. Consideration should be given to the unique circumstances of each cohort and designing activities which appropriately respond to these, as guided by evidence from literature.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Access (Commencing) Enrolments

All Equity Students – States and Territories (2018 – 2024)

Table 6: Commencing Enrolments of Equity Groups, Australia, 2018 – 2024

Access (Commencing) Enrolments – All Equity Students – States and Territories (2018 – 2024)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Growth
New South Wales	27456	26961	28117	27164	25840	25651	26272	-4.31%
Victoria	23280	22362	21051	21480	19799	20834	21915	-5.86%
Queensland	21222	20803	19984	21044	20149	19052	19256	-9.26%
Western Australia	7812	7661	7557	8490	8751	8916	10260	31.34%
South Australia	8611	9018	9218	10144	9745	9565	10086	17.13%
Tasmania	7469	7229	9849	6543	5778	5951	5480	-26.63%
Northern Territory	1733	1853	2142	2260	1355	1155	1378	-20.48%
Australian Capital Territory	2000	2037	1656	1940	1768	1696	1803	-9.85%
All Equity Students	101670	99751	101353	100910	95086	94686	98326	-3.29%

Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success [ACSES], 2026, Interactive tool. <https://www.acses.edu.au> Filters= Access; Enrolments; All Equity Students; National Dashboard; States and Territories

Appendix B: Example FFUR Access Rating Guide

Literacy knowledge and skills, especially writing, embedded within FFUR unit/s. Academic Literacies instruction aims to engage students in the processes and practices of reading, writing, and communicating in the higher education context. Academic Literacies units aim to develop students' thinking and critical reasoning, as expressed within the types of written language forms included at a commencing undergraduate level.

Table 7: Example Standardised FFUR Access Rating- Academic Literaciest

ACADEMIC LITERACY RATING			
FFUR Unit Titles + Codes			
Please refer to expected academic literacy achievement descriptions and rate student attainment levels across unit/s with embedded academic literacies.			
DEVELOPING	SATISFACTORY	GOOD	VERY GOOD
Could further develop and consolidate through a focused pathway program (e.g. did not achieve a pass grade of 50% in academic literacies, including writing). Demonstrates limited communication skills, requiring substantial scaffolding. Encounters difficulty navigating digital systems, platforms and tools. Research capability and referencing skills are at an early stage.	With scaffolding/support, can communicate issues both verbally and in writing (e.g. grade of 50%-60% in FFUR units with embedded academic literacies, including writing type unit/s). Demonstrates emerging critical thinking, showing some ability to interpret or analyse. Uses digital systems, platforms and tools at a basic level. Shows developing research capability and attempts to use referencing conventions accurately.	Communicates effectively but sometimes requires additional assistance in refining written work or referencing (e.g. good grade of 61%-74% in FFUR units with embedded academic literacies, including writing type unit/s). Demonstrates insightful critical thinking and analysis. Effectively navigates digital systems, platforms and tools. Demonstrates strong research capability and command over referencing.	Strong communication skills, both written and oral (e.g. higher grade 75% or more in FFUR units with embedded academic literacies, including writing type unit/s). Demonstrates in depth, complex critical thinking and analysis. Commands digital systems, platforms and tools to great effect. Demonstrates exceptional research capability and command over referencing.

Appendix B: Example FFUR Access Rating Guide

Numeracy: Fundamental mathematical knowledge and skills (refer to minimum standards) Fundamental Mathematics is partially non-calculator introductory mathematics study which covers a range of topics and basic mathematical skills required for some aligned higher education degrees. The learning outcomes include an understanding of and competence in the skills of numeracy, arithmetic, fractions, decimals, percentages, ratio and scale measurement, basic statistics and units of measurement.

Table 8: Example Standardised FFUR Access Rating- Fundamental Numeracy

FUNDAMENTAL NUMERACY RATING			
FFUR Unit Titles + Codes			
Please refer to expected numeracy achievement descriptions and rate student attainment levels across unit/s with embedded numeracy competencies.			
DEVELOPING	SATISFACTORY	GOOD	VERY GOOD
Could develop and/or consolidate through a focused pathway program (e.g. did not achieve a pass grade of 50% in FFUR Fundamental Mathematics).	Satisfactory numeracy as evidenced by successful achievement of FFUR Fundamental Mathematics grade of 50%-60%	Commendable numeracy as evidenced by successful achievement of FFUR Fundamental Mathematics grade of 61-74% .	High achievement in numeracy as evidenced by successful achievement of FFUR Fundamental Mathematics grade of more than 75%.

Appendix B: Example FFUR Access Rating Guide

Numeracy: Advanced numeracy knowledge and skills (refer to minimum standards)

Advanced Mathematics typically has a longer duration than other FFUR units due to the breadth and complexity of topics. It prepares students for the commencement of undergraduate study that requires more in-depth knowledge of specific mathematical principles, including number systems, basic algebra, simultaneous and quadratic equations, functions and graphs, sequences and series. It aims to develop the algebraic and graphical skills necessary for calculus, and the trigonometric and calculus skills necessary for entry to an undergraduate science or mathematics degree and covers the topics of trigonometry, and differential and integral calculus, with some applications in the physical sciences.

Table 9: Example FFUR Standardised Access Rating- Advanced Numeracy

ADVANCED NUMERACY RATING			
FFUR Unit Titles + Codes			
Please refer to expected advanced numeracy achievement descriptions and rate student attainment levels across unit/s with advanced numeracy competencies.			
DEVELOPING	SATISFACTORY	GOOD	VERY GOOD
Could develop and consolidate through a focused pathway program (e.g. did not achieve a pass grade of 50% in FFUR Advanced Mathematics).	Satisfactory knowledge and skills, as evidenced by successful achievement of grade of 50%-60% in FFUR Advanced Mathematics.	Commendable knowledge and skills, as evidenced by successful achievement of grade of 61-74% in FFUR Advanced Mathematics.	High achievement in advanced numeracy, as evidenced by successful achievement in FFUR Advanced Mathematics grade of more than 75%.

Appendix B: Example FFUR Access Rating Guide

Any other FFUR fields of education studied, content knowledge and skills and other information (so that undergraduate program providers have all FFUR study information, as aligned to undergraduate program application destinations). See FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines in the FFUR Best Practice Guide for more information:

Table 10: Example FFUR Standardised Access Rating

*FIELD OF EDUCATION RATING			
FFUR Unit Titles + Codes			
Please refer to expected achievement descriptions and rate student attainment levels across unit/s with relevant competencies.			
DEVELOPING	SATISFACTORY	GOOD	VERY GOOD
Could develop and/or consolidate through a focused pathway program (e.g. did not achieve a pass grade of 50% in undergraduate program aligned FFUR unit).	Satisfactory scientific or other knowledge and skills as evidenced by successful achievement of grade of 50%-60%.	Commendable scientific or other knowledge and skills as evidenced by successful achievement grade of 61-74%.	High achievement in science or other field as evidenced by successful achievement of grade of more than 75%.



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