



Cooperative
Research
Australia

**CRA's Submission to the 'Support for
students policy' requirements
Consultation Paper
(September 2023)**

Cooperative Research Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate, the Ngunnawal people. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands across Australia upon which our members operate.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.

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Executive summary

Cooperative Research Australia (CRA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Department of Education's "Support for students policy consultation paper".

CRA is the voice of industry-research collaboration and advocates for the translation of research into commercial, economic, social, and environmental outcomes that benefit all Australians. Our members are the lynchpin in the Australian innovation system and are focused on creating new products, services, industries, and value in our economy. CRA represents Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs) and their spinoff/successor entities, CRC – Projects grant participants, 30 universities and research institutions, as well as other industry-research collaboration entities, associated businesses, alumni and professionals.

The highlights of CRA recommendations are:

- Supporting equitable learning opportunities, early identification of at-risk students, non-academic support, a safe learning environment, and regular reporting to foster fairness and inclusivity while ensuring student success and retention.
- Robust collaboration among key stakeholders and transparent communication to ensure new arrangements work together effectively.
- Investing in staff training and capacity-building programs, coupled with ongoing reviews and feedback mechanisms, is deemed crucial for a successful alignment.
- Including mentoring programs, industry involvement, and upskilling practices.
- Flexibility, staff training, and a clear monitoring and evaluation framework.
- CRA highlights OECD resources, such as the Education at a Glance 2023 Report and the Education GPS tool, as valuable references for the Guidelines.
- Considering the use of Comparative Benchmarks for assessing compliance and recommends a transparent, data-driven, and capacity-building approach to non-compliance.
- Recognising institutional diversity, ensuring adequate funding, offering professional development, and establishing clear communication channels in implementing the Guidelines for supporting students effectively.

Cooperative Research Australia is committed to working collaboratively with the Australian Government in shaping the Australian Universities Accord to fulfill its purpose of addressing high education challenges. We are committed to a prosperous and innovative future for all Australians, and -as such- we are open to facilitating a platform for further consultation and/or clarification on any of the recommendations.

Question 1: Are there features of the Code that could also be applied to domestic student support and included in the Guidelines?

In line with our submission with the Accord, we advocate for equitable learning opportunities, early identification of at-risk students, non-academic support, a safe learning environment, and regular reporting to promote the values of fairness and inclusivity while ensuring student success and retention across the board.

Question 2: How do we ensure that the Code and the new arrangements work together effectively?

CRA is an advocate of robust collaboration among key stakeholders, and transparent communication to disseminate best practices, policy updates, and research findings, which is applicable to this instance.

Additionally, we believe that investing in staff training and capacity-building programs is crucial for equipping educators to identify at-risk students, provide appropriate support, and create a safe learning environment.

Lastly, ongoing reviews and feedback mechanisms could be implemented to assess effectiveness and build continuous improvement.

Question 3: What other detail should be included in the Guidelines and why?

Given that the Support for students policy Guidelines will contribute to student success and, therefore, national education outcomes, we believe a holistic approach would be beneficial. As per our submission in response to the Universities Accord Interim Report, we advocate for inclusivity and access, collaborative learning and continuous development, among other things.

To complement the proposed details, we recommend the explicit inclusion of a mentoring program to aid students in navigating academic challenges, fostering a sense of belonging and personal development. This initiative could be extended to bringing in industry as mentors for career pathway evaluations as they progress in their curricula.

In addition, we suggest promoting upskilling practices across the entire organization and integrate advanced systems into the learning experience to effectively keep up the pace with technological advance.

Question 4: Are the proposed individual student and institutional level requirements practical and implementable? If not, how could they be improved?

We recommend that, when discussing implementation of the requirements, they should address flexibility for tailored support allowing for institutions unique circumstances, further investment in staff training and professional development and a clear monitoring and evaluation framework.

Question 5: Are there examples of best practice, reports, and reviews that focus on supporting students to complete their studies, that could be drawn on for the Guidelines?

The OECD's resources, such as the *Education at a Glance 2023* Report, the [Education GPS](#) tool in conjunction with their case study on *Institutional missions and profiles in higher education in Lithuania*, offer a comprehensive approach on national efforts to promote the development of a more diversified and efficient institutional landscape in the national higher education system. Copies of the reports will be attached to this submission.

An interesting point that resonates with CRA across these materials is the embedded need to develop the innovation capacity in Higher Education Institutions and strengthen VET and university's alignment to create flexible pathways to HDRs.

Through the principle of collaboration between research institutions and industry, together with a stronger role of funding and regulations in nurturing innovation, the Guidelines can enrich the student's experience which will then transform in higher graduate levels and a future-ready skilled workforce.

Question 7: Is there other information that should be reported, or that could be re-purposed, that would demonstrate compliance and assist in monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of these Guidelines?

We recommend implementing Comparative Benchmarks. This can identify areas for improvement, provide opportunities for learning best practices from their peers and promote healthy competition.

Question 8: What needs to be taken into account in the Department's approach to non-compliance?

We recommend the approach should be based on the principles of transparency, data-driven, continuous monitoring and capacity building.

- Transparency: Clearly communicate expectations, findings, and consequences to institutions.
- Data-Driven: Use a qualitative approach with quantitative backup to inform actions and interventions.
- Continuous Monitoring: Regular assessments can help identify recurring issues and trends.
- Capacity Building: Provide support and resources to institutions struggling with compliance.

Question 9: What practical considerations need to be taken into account in implementing the Guidelines?

In implementing the Guidelines for supporting students effectively, several practical considerations must be taken into account. Firstly, recognizing the diversity among higher

education institutions in terms of size, structure, and resources is crucial. The Guidelines should offer flexibility, allowing institutions to customize their support systems to meet their specific needs and capacities.

Adequate funding and support should be made available for institutions facing resource constraints. Additionally, staff responsible for implementing the Guidelines should receive training and professional development opportunities.

Clear communication channels between the Department, institutions, and stakeholders are essential, ensuring that everyone is well-informed about the Guidelines' requirements and expectations. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms should be established, with a focus on data collection and analysis to track the Guidelines' impact on student outcomes.