



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Access and Equity Committee Equity Report

EQUITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY AUDIT 2004

Chair, Access and Equity Committee
L.M Martin
February, 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2004 Equity and Diversity Audit Report has been undertaken by Equity, Language and Learning Programs under the terms of reference for the University's Access and Equity Committee, which require the Committee to provide Council with an annual report on the performance of the University against its access and equity goals for students. The Report contains feedback from faculties and departments on their endeavours to meet the key aims and challenges for students from equity and culturally diverse backgrounds (including international students) as set out in the University's policy statements. It also contains examples of good practice and innovative ideas, as well as data on benchmarking with other Group of Eight and some international universities. Issues of concern are raised and a list of recommendations put forward for consideration.

Equity and diversity objectives and strategies

Equity strategies contained in the 2004 *University of Melbourne Operational Plan* are to:

- increase educational opportunities for good students from disadvantaged backgrounds through:
 - Melbourne Scholarships; and
 - Special admissions programs and criteria designed to ensure that students with outstanding educational potential are not precluded by reason of prior educational disadvantage;
- give priority to providing Indigenous Australians with the opportunities to enrol in the University and with the support they need to succeed in undergraduate and postgraduate study.

Student Equity targets in the 2004 *University of Melbourne Operational Plan* are to (by 2007):

- increase by 50% the number of students from educationally, financially or socially disadvantaged backgrounds enrolling in undergraduate programs; and
- double the number of Indigenous Australians students graduating from the University.

The diversity strategy in the 2004 Operational Plan is to:

- promote sensitivity to cultural diversity among staff and students, encouraging the study of languages other than English and giving particular prominence to the study of Asian languages and societies.

Diversity targets are to achieve (by 2007)

- increased levels of student satisfaction with University support services and student satisfaction at both Parkville and non-Parkville campuses in the biennial 2004 Evaluation Cycle survey of student satisfaction with University services; and
- high levels of student and staff satisfaction with the integrated delivery of ESL diagnostic and support services for students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

In order to achieve these targets, the University's *Equity Plan* has key objectives encompassing access, ongoing support, effective monitoring and evaluation, together with communication of the University's equity goals both to the University community and externally. These objectives are set in a context where the student profile has also been changed significantly through internationalisation. International students now make up 23 per cent of the student body, with some faculties attracting up to 50 per cent of their students from overseas (78 per cent having been born in Asia).

The Department of Education, Science and Training's (DEST) 2003 review of its Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) was the first major review of its equity program since 1990 and has resulted in increased funding to encourage universities to implement strategies to increase the participation in higher education of students from disadvantaged groups. The changed formula for 2005 reflects DEST's renewed focus on access for students from rural and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and while the overall funding has increased, universities from Queensland and Tasmania have received a significantly greater proportion of the

sector's increased funds while some Victorian and New South Wales universities will receive reduced equity funding. The University of Melbourne funding has increased slightly.

Encouraging access

A key response to the Commonwealth Higher Education reforms (Higher Education Act 2003) was the opportunity to strengthen the University's capacity to meet its objectives for access and equity. *Access Melbourne* commits 20% of the University's total Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP, previously HECS) undergraduate intake to equity places. This is a discrete quota, separate from the remainder of CSPs. *Access Melbourne* combines special entry and scholarships schemes and requires a single application (facilitated through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre). Two hundred of all Access Melbourne students (about 20% of the *Access Melbourne* intake) will be awarded a *Melbourne Access Scholarship* (which provides a HECS exempt place and \$2000 per annum for up to 4 years). A separate sub-quota of CSP places for admission through the scheme has been set for each faculty, with the varying percentages depending on the demand for the course and the current equity performance. The University's funding model will provide increased funding of between 15-20% to faculties for *Access Melbourne* places in recognition of the fact that students admitted through the scheme may require additional academic support.

DEST performance indicators

The University has focused attention for some years on improving access and retention for students from low SES backgrounds. The University exceeds the national indicator for retention rates while consistently falling below the national indicator in access. In terms of Access and Participation, Melbourne lags behind other Group of Eight (Go8) universities in most equity categories, but notably in the groups 'students from NESB' and 'students from low socio-economic status (SES)'. The University is performing only fairly in the Under 25 Low SES group with respect to Access and Participation, but Retention and Success rates are excellent. For Low SES students aged over 25 the University performs quite poorly in Access and Participation but Retention and Success are the highest of the Go8. The low Access rates for students 25 and over could be a reflection of the fact that the University of Melbourne does not have a mature age access program (other than the Community Access Program). It should also be noted that while access and participation for women remain high, the University is no longer the sector leader in this area.

Supporting students from diverse backgrounds

Key achievements in 2004 included the following:

- a revised Disability Action Plan (DAP) was lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in July 2004. A key target in the DAP is the Accessibility Audit of the University's physical environment, from which a report detailing a prioritised list of building works will be developed. An amount of \$200,000 has been allocated for disability access improvements in 2005
- improved administration and monitoring of the Diagnostic English Language Assessment test (DELA) through the Language and Learning Skills Unit's development of a web accessible data base
- development by Equity, Language and Learning Programs of the Academic Interactive Resources Portal (AIRport), an online resource for undergraduate students which becomes operational in January 2005
- growth in the Indigenous Australian Studies program with over fifty individual subject offerings across the Faculties of Arts, Education, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and Law (both undergraduate and postgraduate), including at least ten new subjects on offer in 2004
- improved services for students at non-Parkville campuses monitored through the Diversity in Services Operational Plan.

Equity issues for postgraduate students

Nationally, over half of the students enrolled in higher degrees (masters by coursework and PhDs and research masters) between 1992 and 2002 were from high SES backgrounds, and only 8.6% of the 2002 enrolment were from low SES backgrounds. People from low SES backgrounds are even less well represented in higher degrees than in undergraduate degrees.

Access rates for rural and isolated students are low at all levels of university and are lower at Melbourne than nationally in all levels of study. Postgraduate diplomas and certificates represent the highest enrolments, although these have steadily declined over 2001-2004 while Higher Degree by Research (HDR) remain fairly steady. In 2004, the highest proportions of rural students were in HDR in Agriculture and Environmental Studies (48%). The University of Melbourne has better postgraduate access and participation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than national rates, and the rates are better for postgraduate students than for the entire student population combined.

Key issues for faculties in supporting equity and diversity

Key concerns identified by faculties in relation to equity and diversity are:

- widening participation for students from low SES and rural backgrounds and for Indigenous students (there was considerable interest in monitoring the success of *Access Melbourne*)
- widening participation for non-school leavers. *Access Melbourne* does not address issues of access for non-school leavers and most faculties noted concerns about equity of non-school leaver access
- the anticipated impact higher fees from 2005 will have on students who are financially disadvantaged
- the postgraduate equity agenda
- support for international students.

The Report contains examples of good practice in the faculties in the areas of access and teaching and learning. These examples form a snapshot of the positive practices occurring within the University and it is anticipated that they will assist in the dissemination of ideas across all faculties.

Areas of excellence and priority areas for action

Aligning institutional values with an effective equity agenda presents particular dilemmas for highly academically competitive institutions such as the University of Melbourne. The reality of high selection entrance scores and accompanying perceptions of elitism can make it difficult to meet access goals, and for those students who are selected, being in a minority can create tensions that potentially affect retention. Historically, the University of Melbourne has drawn its undergraduate student population from the privileged and elite. A key area of concern for some years has been the failure over time to substantially increase numbers of students from rural and low socio-economic backgrounds. In 2003 the Access and Equity Committee reported on the major structural tensions in play that impact on the ability of the University to increase participation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and meet its targets. It was considered that the Targeted Access Program (TAP) and Melbourne Access Program (MAP), as they were configured, were unlikely to yield the necessary growth in the numbers of students enrolled at the University. *Access Melbourne* represents a significant initiative to address the issue of improving access for students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. It has attracted considerable interest from other universities Australia-wide.

Other areas of excellence in student equity identified through the quality assurance cycle include:

- an enhanced suite of language and learning programs available to students from NESB and other educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, including the flexible learning options provided through the online programs *AIRport* and *Postgraduate Essentials*;
- increase in access and participation for Indigenous students;
- a planning process (Diversity in Services Operational Plan) which addresses the support needs of students at non-Parkville sites.

Recommendations

The following recommendations cover priority areas for student equity and diversity identified for action in 2005.

1. Monitor *Access Melbourne* to assess its success in enhancing the University's student equity profile.
2. Monitor the impact of increases in fees on diversity of the University's postgraduate cohort.
3. Ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds who do gain access to the University are supported to achieve their full potential.

4. Ensure that students at all campuses (including regional sites) benefit from equity initiatives, monitoring through the Quality of Student Support Services survey (QASS)
5. Undertake International benchmarking of equity and diversity. A benchmarking project is currently in place with the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology, University of Auckland, University of Western Australia, the University of British Columbia and Auckland University.
6. Improve access for the non-school leaver cohort (investigating improving articulation from TAFE and enabling programs).
7. Improve access for Indigenous undergraduate students, introducing an enabling program for Indigenous students.

Chair, Access and Equity Committee
L M Martin

February 2005

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Access and Equity Committee

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY AUDIT 2004

1 Introduction

Under the terms of reference of the University's Access and Equity Committee (AEC) and in keeping with the *Cultural Diversity Policy*, the University has a commitment to report annually on the performance of the University against its equity and diversity goals. The audit informs the University's *Equity Plan* and *Equity Update* (required annually by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). The report also facilitates monitoring of targets in the University's *Teaching and Learning Management Plan*.

In 2003, the audit process involved the gathering of information using proformas which were completed electronically. Taking into account feedback from some faculties in 2003 it was decided to review this process and in 2004 the audit involved discussions with staff nominated by Deans, and a combination of meetings and written reports from administrative areas. Faculties were not asked to prepare a written response but the information sought related to (1) performance against plan on key strategies put in place in 2003-4 and (2) plans for 2005 initiatives.

1.1 Scope

The audit addresses equity and diversity as defined both by the *Cultural Diversity Policy* and the DEST defined categories. The key aspects of access, support, monitoring and communication for all students from diverse backgrounds are considered and feedback is provided on both equity students (students with disabilities, rural and isolated students, students from non-English speaking background, women in non-traditional areas, students from low socio-economic background) and other students from diverse backgrounds, including international students.

This audit provides:

- feedback on the University's performance in encouraging and supporting access and equity, utilising the DEST Martin indicators
- feedback from faculties and departments on the key challenges of meeting the University's objectives for equity and cultural diversity
- examples of good practice and innovative ideas from faculties and central departments
- Benchmarking with other Group of Eight (Go8) and international universities.

While equity and access issues for all DEST groups and other groups identified under the *Cultural Diversity Policy* are considered to be of importance, particular attention is paid to students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students from rural areas because the ability to widen participation in these groups has been particularly disappointing.

1.2 Diversity of the student profile

In addition to the increased diversity of the student profile as a result of the success of equity initiatives, the University of Melbourne student profile has changed significantly through internationalisation.

At the University of Melbourne, international students make up 23% of the student body (for the Faculty of Economics and Commerce it is almost 50%). As with Australian universities generally, the majority of international students at the University of Melbourne are born in Asia (78%).

Figure 1 (below) illustrates this, indicating that the proportion of international students in the Faculties of Economics & Commerce, Engineering and Architecture, Building and Planning are significantly higher than 21%.

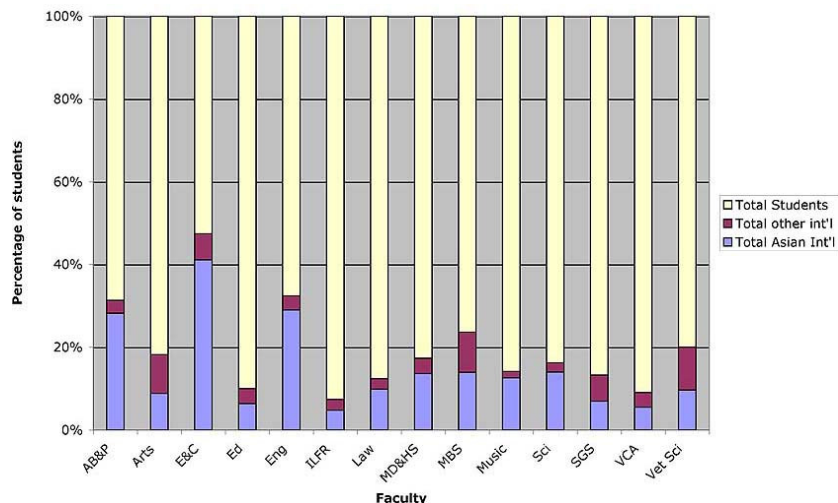


Figure 1 International student profile by University of Melbourne Faculty (source Univ Planning Office)

In 2003, Australian residents born in Asia represented 10% of the University of Melbourne total enrolment. Together, these two groups of students comprise 27% of the University of Melbourne student body.

2 University of Melbourne equity and diversity agenda

2.1 Monitoring the University's equity agenda

Access and equity objectives are embedded at the highest level of the University of Melbourne's strategic plan. One of the Guiding Values of *Strategic Plan: Perspective 2004* is 'sustaining a diverse, harmonious, scholarly community committed to equity and merit as the fundamental principles encouraging and assisting staff and students to realise their full potential'. Equity and access has prominence in the University of Melbourne's Strategic and Operational Plans as one of the nine institution-wide goals which direct and inform planning at all levels of the University. Goal 9 Equity and Access is "to entrench equity and merit as fundamental principles through which the University encourages and assists staff and students to realise their full potential".

Student Equity and Access Strategies in the 2004 *University of Melbourne Operational Plan* are to:

1. Increase educational opportunities for good students from disadvantaged backgrounds through:
 - Melbourne Access Scholarships
 - Special admissions programs and criteria designed to ensure that students with outstanding educational potential are not precluded by reason of prior educational disadvantage
2. Give priority to providing Indigenous Australians with the opportunities to enrol in the University and with the support they need to succeed in undergraduate and postgraduate study.

Student Equity targets in the 2004 *University of Melbourne Operational Plan* are to (by 2007):

- increase by 50% the number of students from educationally, financially or socially disadvantaged backgrounds enrolling in undergraduate programs
- double the number of Indigenous Australians students graduating from the University.

In achieving these objectives, the University's *Equity Plan* has four key objectives encompassing access, ongoing support, monitoring and evaluation, together with communication of the University's equity goals both to the University community and externally. These objectives are to:

- support the development of a more diverse student body by encouraging access for students from targeted equity groups

- provide all students with learning experiences, services and university life experiences which are formed by, and responsive to, the needs of a diverse University community
- further develop mechanisms which will comprehensively profile student equity groups and facilitate monitoring of access, equity and diversity policies
- communicate the University's commitment to access, equity and diversity and to embed equity philosophies, practices and responsibilities into all relevant University policies.

Responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the University's equity agenda was given increased impetus by the appointment in early 2004 of a Director, Equity, Language and Learning Programs (ELLP). This is a senior administrative position reporting directly to the Vice-Principal and Academic Registrar.

The University's Access and Equity Committee (AEC) advises on student access and equity issues and oversees the monitoring of performance in this area. The committee operates through the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. Key academic issues are reported from the AEC to the University's Academic Board and Planning and Budget Committee and issues relating to student support are reported to the University's Student Support Committee.

Key functions of the AEC are to:

- provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor and to Council through the Academic Board and Planning and Budget Committee, as appropriate, on matters relating to student access and equity consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the University
- make recommendations on access and equity matters relating to staff-student interaction referred by the Vice-Chancellor
- provide Council with an annual report on the performance of the University against its access and equity goals for students
- make recommendations and report to the Board on academic aspects of its activities
- make recommendations to Planning and Budget Committee on matters relating to the resourcing of access and equity initiatives for students.

Equity planning is linked to mainstream planning and decision-making processes and, as emphasised above, the University's equity agenda is embedded in strategic planning at the highest level. Deans' Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include faculty equity targets (reported during the annual planning round).

2.2 Monitoring the University's diversity agenda

The diversity strategy in the *2004 Operational Plan* is to:

- promote sensitivity to cultural diversity among staff and students, encouraging the study of languages other than English and giving particular prominence to the study of Asian languages and societies.

The key policy document for monitoring diversity is the University's *Cultural Diversity Policy*, which expresses a commitment to facilitate cultural awareness and to provide support structures for all students, including the particular learning and settlement needs of international students. The *Cultural Diversity Policy* acknowledges cultural diversity encompasses difference based on race, ethnicity, language, religion, value and belief systems, disability, class, sexuality, gender, age and educational background.

The University's *Teaching and Learning Management Plan 2004* (TLMP) also outlines actions planned to achieve this strategy.

Diversity targets are to (by 2007):

- increase levels of student satisfaction with University support services and student satisfaction at both Parkville and non-Parkville campuses in the biennial 2004 Evaluation Cycle survey of student satisfaction with University services

- achieve high levels of student and staff satisfaction with the integrated delivery of ESL diagnostic and support services for students from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- support faculty-level efforts to promote inclusivity in curricula, learning, teaching and assessment
- use Departmental Reviews and Course Reviews by TALQAC and the Equity and Diversity Planning Unit annual reporting to identify faculty responses to the needs of students from equity groups and international students
- ensure housing support arrangements are inclusive and that allocations result in a good mix of students in each major housing location
- review Targeted Access Program and develop strategies to ensure that the program is admitting as many disadvantaged students as possible
- examine new equity program options to promote greater participation by disadvantaged students, including the consideration of alternatives to the ENTER score as an indicator of potential to succeed.

Table 1: TLMP Strategy: 'To promote sensitivity to the diversity of the University community through teaching and learning'

Actions Planned	Performance measure	Expected outcome	Progress 2003-2004 & Officer responsible
Use departmental reviews and course reviews by Equity, Language and Learning Programs and by the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee (TALQAC) annual reporting to identify faculty responses to the needs of students from equity groups	Report to Planning and Budget Committee (PBC) on departmental reviews and to Academic Board on faculty responses	Increasing positive faculty initiatives to address these issues Improved participation and retention of students from equity groups	Reports to PBC on departmental audits and to the Academic Board on faculty responses show increase in faculty initiatives to address these issues. Improved participation and retention rates of equity students reported to faculties through the Access and Equity Committee's Equity and Diversity Audit DVC (Academic) and VP and Acad Reg
Ensure housing support arrangements are inclusive and that allocations result in a good mix of students in each housing location.	Distribution of international, rural and other local students in University housing	Better balance between local and international students in large accommodation facilities	Student Housing Program (SHAP) provided support to increased numbers of students VP and Acad Reg
Review Targeted Access Program and develop strategies to ensure the program is admitting as many disadvantaged students as possible.	Performance by faculty against TAP targets More students admitted under equity groups consistent with University Council performance targets	Improvement in faculty performance in 2004 selection round	The new Access Melbourne Program developed to replace TAP Deans VP and Acad reg
Examine new equity program options to promote greater participation by disadvantaged students, including the consideration of alternatives to the ENTER score as an indicator of potential to succeed.	Review completed and recommendations implemented	End of 2004	Access Melbourne DVC (Academic) and VP and Acad Reg, President, Acad Board

Teaching and Learning Management Plan strategies are reported on annually (see Table 1 above) and annual monitoring and evaluation of progress towards achieving access and equity goals occurs through the AEC's

Equity and Diversity Audit Report in which all faculties and central departments report on progress in implementing equity and diversity goals from the preceding year.

2.3 Department of Education Science and Training: Equity agenda 2004-2005

The Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) May 2003 policy document *Backing Australia's Future* (see web link below) provided a renewed focus on equity, introducing additional financial support for universities and students and clear directives for higher education providers. *Backing Australia's Future* also resulted in an increase in performance-based funding, introduced to encourage access to higher education for students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

Higher Education Equity Program Review

Late in 2003, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) undertook a review of its Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP). This was the first major review by the Department although (there was one undertaken at the request of the Minister by the Higher Education Council in 1995/6 which Senator Vanstone acted upon) of its equity program since 1990 and *A Fair Chance for All*, and a copy of both the Review and a response to the discussion paper are available at the web address indicated below. HEEP promotes equity objectives in Higher Education by requiring equity and access to be an integral part of institutional planning and by providing funds to encourage universities to implement strategies aimed at increasing the participation in Higher Education of students from disadvantaged groups. Nelson noted in *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* (2003), that:

While in recent years the participation of some disadvantaged groups in higher education has increased, this has not been the case for all groups. Additional financial support, culturally appropriate and responsive policy, clear directives on equity programs and performance-based rewards are needed to ensure that there are no barriers to access to higher education for any groups in Australia. (Nelson, 2003, p.34)

In 2003 DEST commissioned the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) to analyse the performance of equity groups in higher education during the period 1991 – 2002 and to investigate whether the definitions of equity groups were still appropriate. Additionally, this review would also inform the development of a new funding formula for HEEP. The review drew a number of conclusions regarding each of the 'traditional' equity groups and made additional suggestions regarding the inclusion of possible new groups.

Under the *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* package of initiatives, enhancements to HEEP from 2005 included the following.

- Increased funding of \$4.5 million per year to a total exceeding \$10 million per year from 2005, with funding to be based solely on performance.
- Establishment of minimum eligibility criteria which institutions will have to satisfy in order to receive HEEP funding including:
 - implementation of an outreach program to attract equity students to higher education
 - provision of specialised support for equity group members to assist their progression through higher education
 - provision of Commonwealth Learning Scholarships (CLS)
 - provision of institutional scholarships to complement the CLS program.

The new funding allocation acknowledges the importance of low SES as a prevailing factor of disadvantage while factoring in the additional disadvantage of low SES from rural and isolated areas. The formula used is:

$$\text{Grant} = (A/C) \times E + (B/D) \times E$$

A = number of low SES multiplied by retention and success ratios

B = number of low SES from rural and isolated multiplied by retention and success

C = total number of low SES multiplied by success and retention for this group

D = total number of low SES from rural and isolated enrolled at all eligible HE providers multiplied by success and retention ratios

E = 50% of total funding pool for HEEP (\$10,823,000)

Table 2 illustrates implications of the formula Australia-wide.

Table 2: Outcomes from revised HEEP funding formula

Institution	2005 Funding	2004 funding
University of Melbourne	\$211,544	\$166,000
Monash University	\$396,611	\$178,000
Swinburne University of Technology	\$84,309	\$112,000
Victoria University	\$194,659	\$140,000
University of Sydney	\$163,687	\$157,000
UNSW	\$104,666	\$159,000
University of Tasmania	\$639,671	\$135,000
Australian National University	\$45,629	\$111,000
Queensland University of Technology	\$530,057	\$172,000
University of Queensland	\$619,186	\$179,000
University of Southern Queensland	\$747,445	\$149,000
University of WA	\$158,772	\$125,000
University of Adelaide	\$174,229	\$121,000

The changed formula reflects DEST's renewed focus on access for students from rural and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and while the overall funding has increased, universities from Queensland and Tasmania have received significantly increased funds while some Victorian and New South Wales universities will receive reduced equity funding. The University of Melbourne funding has increased slightly.

Indigenous Support Program

The total grants allocated Australia-Wide under the Indigenous Support program in 2005 are \$26,531,000. Additional eligibility requirements are that the HE provider can demonstrate to DEST:

- implementation of strategies for improving access, participation and success of Indigenous Australian students
- participation of Indigenous Australian students in the decision making processes
- that the provider has an Indigenous Employment Strategy.

Indigenous Support Funding in 2004 for Victorian universities is in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Indigenous Support Funding allocations 2004 (Victoria)

Institution (Victoria)	ISF Allocation 2004
University of Melbourne	\$582,000
Monash University	\$341,000
Deakin University	\$873,000
La Trobe University	\$302,000
RMIT	\$119,000
University of Ballarat	\$50,000

HE Disability Support program

The HE component of the Disability Support Program at the University has two components:

- additional Support for Students with Disabilities (ASSD)
- performance-based disability support funding.

The ASSD funding provides assistance with the high costs incurred in providing educational support and equipment for students with high cost needs. ASSD funding received in 2004 was \$226,694.

The performance-based component comprises that amount of funding which remains after allocation of ASSD and Regional Disability Liaison funds. The funding formula for performance based disability funding is:

$$\text{Grant} = (A / B) \times C$$

A = number of domestic students with disabilities enrolled at the HE provider multiplied by the *success* and *retention*

B = total number of domestic students with disabilities enrolled at all eligible HE providers, multiplied by the *success* and *retention* ratios.

C = total funding pool for the HE Disability Support Program less the amount allocated to the Additional Support for Students with Disabilities and Regional Disability Liaison Officer components.

Table 4 shows the DEST estimate of performance-based Disability Support funding for 2005.

Table 4: 2005 Disability Support funding 2005

Institution (Victoria)	Estimated DSF Allocation 2005¹
University of Melbourne	\$78,746
Monash University	\$114,034
Deakin University	\$58,487
La Trobe university	\$74,128
RMIT	\$53,386
University of Ballarat	\$9,070

2.4 Equity profile 2004

Table 5 (below) shows the access indicator (commencing students in the equity group as a percentage of all commencing students) for Indigenous students, students with a disability, students from non-English speaking background, rural students, isolated students and students from low socioeconomic background. The National Average is in the final row. The sector leader in improving access for students from rural and low SES backgrounds is the University of Queensland. The University of Melbourne is below the national access indicator for all targeted equity groups but as evident in Appendix 1 which presents tables for all equity groups on a field of study basis for 2003-2004, there has been an increase in low SES (under 25). Faculty of Land and Food students at 32% account for the major portion of rural students. Also of note is the increase in students with disabilities in 2004 (2.63% cf 2.49% in 2003).

Table 5: Encouraging access in 2004: Comparison with other Go8 universities (source DEST)²

Institution	NESB	disability	Indigenous	Rural	Isolated	Low SES (urban: all)
UNSW	11.66%	2.16%	0.84%	4.87%	0.33%	6.96%
The University of Sydney	9.47%	1.74%	1.01%	7.16%	0.33%	8.37%
Monash University	7.15%	3.2%	0.27%	12.87%	0.48%	10.98%
The University of Melbourne	2.78%	2.63%	0.93%	11.01%	0.18%	8.87%
The University of Queensland	3.89%	2.75%	0.76%	16.04%	1.94%	11.43%
The University of W Australia	4.32%	2.46%	1.21%	6.73%	1.97%	7.90%
The University of Adelaide	2.76%	3.27%	1.22%	10.44%	0.68%	10.82%
ANU	3.73%	5.97%	0.83%	11.96%	0.40%	9.70%
National Average	4.04%	3.15%	1.41%	17.92%	1.45%	14.47%

¹ Source: DEST January 2005

² Note: Numbers of commencing students in Equity Groups are expressed as a percentage of the total commencing domestic students

Table 6 below shows the ratio for retention for all Go8 Universities. The University's retention ratio exceeds the national indicator in all cases but disability and compares favourably with other Go8 universities including the University of Queensland. Retention for rural students, students from non-English speaking background (NESB), Indigenous and isolated have all increased since 2003.

Table 6 University of Melbourne Retention 2004: Comparison with other Go8 universities¹

Institution	NESB	disability	Indigenous	Rural	Isolated	Low SES (urban: all)
UNSW	1.074	0.924	0.86	0.933	0.682	1.009
The University of Sydney	0.977	1.009	0.67	0.921	0.720	1.015
Monash University	1.001	0.974	0.85	0.966	0.874	1.000
The University of Melbourne	1.063	0.935	0.93	1.005	1.043	0.997
The University of Queensland	1.062	0.910	0.90	1.009	0.944	0.970
The University of W Australia	1.041	0.967	0.72	1.084	0.963	0.968
The University of Adelaide	1.003	0.966	0.66	0.972	0.825	0.978
ANU	1.046	1.035	0.96	1.007	0.947	0.994
National Average	1.032	0.967	0.77	0.978	0.856	0.79

Reference links

University Operational Plan: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/about/ataglance/>

Equity and Diversity Planning Publications: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/ellp/publications/staff.html>

Cultural Diversity Policy: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/diversity/CDpolicy.html>

Teaching and Learning Management Plan: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/publications/TeachingPlan04.pdf>

AEC Terms of reference: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/ExecServ/Statutes/r171r23.html>

HEEP: www.dest.gov.au/highered/programmes/heap.htm

HEEP Review: www.dest.gov.au/highered/equity/exec_summary.htm.

Backing Australia's Future: <http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/implementation/equity.htm>

BAF Guidelines: http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/guidelines/documents/esp_dsp_guide04.pdf

HE Report 2004-2006: http://www.detya.gov.au/highered/he_report/2004_2006/pdf/triennium_2004_2006.pdf

3 Performance and review: Access

A key response to the Commonwealth Higher Education reforms (Higher Education Act 2003) was the opportunity to strengthen the University's capacity to meet its objectives for access and equity. The new scheme, *Access Melbourne*, commits 20% of the University's total undergraduate Commonwealth Supported Places intake to equity places each year from 2005. This is an explicit quota separate from the remainder of CSPs. The *Access Melbourne* scheme combines special entry and scholarships schemes and requires a single application (facilitated through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre). Two hundred of all *Access Melbourne* students (about 20% of the *Access Melbourne* intake) will be awarded a *Melbourne Access Scholarship* (which provides a HECS exempt place and \$2000 per annum for up to 4 years). A separate sub-quota of CSP places for admission through the scheme has been set for each faculty, with the percentages varying depending on the demand for the course and the current equity profile. The University's funding model will provide increased funding of between 15-20% to faculties for *Access Melbourne* places in recognition of the fact that students admitted through the scheme may require additional academic support. Applicants will be selected on a combination of their ENTER or equivalent score and a range of other criteria specified in the application form. The published

¹ Apparent retention rate of equity students as a ratio of apparent retention rate of all students

ENTER scores for entry into programs will not apply to students admitted under the *Access Melbourne* scheme. The University is also investigating introducing additional bridging studies to optimise opportunities for equity entrants.

This scheme will replace the Targeted Access Program from 2005 and will incorporate the Aboriginal Entry Scheme. While Melbourne has had special entry schemes in place for some years, the effect on access and participation indicators has been minimal and Access Melbourne is a significant attempt to address this.

3.1 Targeted Access Program (TAP) 2004

While demonstrating some success in increasing the enrolments of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, in recent years, the University's 2004 target of enrolling 750 applicants, including at least 25 Indigenous Australian students, under the Targeted Access Program (TAP) or Aboriginal Entry Scheme was not met.

Table 7: TAP outcomes 2002-2004

	2002	2003	2004
Enrolled TAP Applicants*	622	593	612
Enrolled TAP Applicants admitted on basis of TAP	327	323	339
Indigenous Australian Enrolments on basis of Entry Scheme	15	17	14

*Excludes deferrals, discontinued and leave of absence

In terms of success rates, TAP students do well in their university courses as indicated by overall average mark distribution (23% with H1 or H2A). TAP students in Architecture, Building and Planning and in FMDHS (Physiotherapy) have done particularly well. The Access Melbourne intake targets therefore represent a significant stretch target for the University in 1995 with 1000 students to be admitted through the program compared with the achieved figure of 612 in 2004.

Table 8: Summary of 2003 academic performance of TAP 1999-2003 cohort

Faculty	H1	H2A	H2B	H3	P	N	WH	WD	Disc
Arch Building and Planning	16.41%	16.41%	24.05%	25.95%	40.46%	2.67%	0%	1.53%	1.91%
Arts	8.19%	15.27%	20.91%	18.35%	19.80%	8.59%	3.89%	4.70%	0.29%
Economics and Commerce	7.26%	10.79%	17.52%	16.03%	36.65%	10.36%	0%	0.75%	0.64%
Education	6.56%	12.74%	22.39%	20.85%	22.39%	6.56%	0.39%	0%	8.11%
Engineering	11.84%	9.63%	13.44%	13.14%	34.80%	15.25%	0%	1.91%	0%
LFR	7.35%	9.93%	15.81%	17.28%	31.62%	5.15%	0.74%	9.19%	2.94%
Law	5.84%	10.36%	17.33%	18.08%	37.00%	10.00%	1.88%	0%	0%
MDHS – Medicine	6.38%	14.77%	22.15%	20.81%	33.22%	0%	0.34%	0%	2.35%
MDHS - Physiotherapy	20.47%	22.81%	17.54%	19.30%	17.54%	0.58%	0%	0%	1.75%
MDHS – Dentistry	8.11%	16.22%	29.73%	18.92%	24.32%	2.70%	0%	0%	0%
Music	10.87%	17.39%	20.65%	10.87%	27.17%	11.96%	0%	1.09%	0%
Science	13.63%	12.41%	16.76%	16.76%	14.24%	31.38%	1.25%	1.29%	1.29%
Overall 1999-2003	9.93%	12.86%	18.29%	16.85%	27.69%	10.97%	1.25%	2.24%	1.04%

3.2 Access Melbourne 2005

Access Melbourne enhances opportunities for selection into courses as it provides prospective students with the opportunity to explain the ongoing circumstances that have affected their chance of gaining a place at the University of Melbourne. The eligibility categories¹ for *Access Melbourne* are:

- Indigenous Australians
- Difficult family circumstances
- Hardship caused by socio-economic circumstances
- Disability or long-term illness
- Non-English speaking background
- Undertaken Year 12 at a Victorian school that is under-represented in the tertiary sector
- Completed school in a rural or isolated area.

Two hundred and sixty-six Victorian schools have been identified as under-represented. Schools have been advised of their status and eligible schools are listed on the *Access Melbourne* web page. Australian postcodes identified as meeting the Rural or isolated area criteria for this category are listed on the *Access Melbourne* web page. Schools located in one of these postcodes have been advised that it is likely that all students at their school would be eligible for *Access Melbourne* and have been encouraged to lodge an application.

Marketing and Recruitment Onshore staff have actively promoted *Access Melbourne* in each interaction with prospective students, parents and teachers, using the following communication strategies:

- faculty briefings
- *Access Melbourne* brochure and poster distributed to all Victorian, border and select interstate schools
- advertisements placed in the metropolitan and regional press
- *Access Melbourne* information included in the VTAC Guide and VTAC Special Entry Access (SEAS) booklet
- two *Access Melbourne* information sessions given on Discovery Day
- a number of metropolitan and regional dinners for school principals were hosted by the Vice-Chancellor to advise them of recent changes, including *Access Melbourne*.

3.3 Undergraduate Melbourne Scholarships

A review of the existing Undergraduate Scholarships Program was undertaken in 2003 and this review, taken in tandem with the scholarships to be provided by the Commonwealth and the availability of additional funding through increases in student contributions, provided the opportunity for a significant increase in the provision of University support scholarships for Indigenous students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Following the review, significant revisions have been made to the Undergraduate Melbourne Scholarships programs from 2005. The Melbourne Rural, Indigenous and Access Scholarships plus the Group of Eight Equity Scholarships have been absorbed into the new *Access Scholarships* program which will also encompass the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships. A minimum of 10 scholarships are to be available for Indigenous Australians. Access scholarships will be HECS exempt and participants will receive \$2000 per year. Students eligible for award of a Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship will receive \$4000 per year. The new program will offer significantly more equity places and will align with the strategic outcomes and performance targets documented in the Equity and Access goal of the University's Strategic Plan. The Scholarships Office produced a 2005 Undergraduate brochure which was sent to schools in Victoria and interstate and was widely available on Discovery Day.

The 2003 target of enrolling at least 70 students with high academic potential from disadvantaged backgrounds, in undergraduate courses was met. Seventy-six scholarships were comprised of 27 centrally funded and 49 faculty scholarships. Table 9 (below) shows the numbers of Access scholarships awarded in 2004.

¹ Details of the eligibility criteria are set out clearly on the *Access Melbourne* website at <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/highereducationreforms/>

Table 9: Access Scholarships awarded in 2004**CENTRAL ACCESS SCHOLARSHIPS**

	INDIGENOUS	DISABILITY	ESL	LOW INCOME	RURAL	TOTAL NO. SCHOLARS
Central		1	4	5	4	14
Special Scholarships	3 (Melbourne Indigenous)			5 (Group of Eight scholarships)	5 (Melbourne Rural)	13
TOTAL	3	1	4	10	9	27

FACULTY SCHOLARSHIPS

FACULTY	DISABILITY	ESL	LOW INCOME	RURAL	UNDER-REP. SCHOOL	WOMEN NON-TRAD	TOTAL NO. OF SCHOLARS*
ABP		1	1	1	2	1	2*
ARTS	1	1	4	3	4		5*
ECONOMICS		3	9	3	1		12*
EDUCATION				1	1		1*
ENGINEERING		2	7	5	4	5	11*
ILFR			1				1
LAW			2				2
MDHS				2	1		2*
SCIENCE	2	3	3	1			8*
Totals within Categories	3	10	27	16	13	6	44 (Total)

*Note that some scholars qualified in more than one category.

3.4 Melbourne Access Schools Program

Encouraging students from disadvantaged backgrounds to consider university as a desirable and achievable option requires addressing issues of aspiration as well as finance. The Melbourne Access Schools Pilot Program (MAP) commenced in 2001 and acknowledges year 12 is too late to redress long term disadvantage. Two features which distinguish MAP from previous equity programs are:

- the partnership it encourages with 10 under-represented metropolitan and regional schools; and
- its focus on students from Year 10.

Students remain in MAP for three years (through Years 10-12) with 7 students from each school selected from each year level. The 2003 participation target of a least 140 students (including at least 50 from the Goulburn Valley Region) was met. The Melbourne Access Schools Program was extended to 70 new Year 10 students in 2003, with the 2002 and 2001 cohorts continuing into Years 11 and 12 respectively (a total of 210 participants).

MAP encompasses mentor support, study and organisational skills workshops, parent evenings and a Spring Residential School. A key element is the use of 'Unipals' or peer mentors (current students from non-traditional backgrounds). The Unipals receive ongoing support and training and play a key role as mentors. Unipals provide a student-centred view of the options opened through a University of Melbourne experience. Activities in 2003 included a Unipal camp in February, parent information sessions in Shepparton and Bendigo, visits to all MAP schools and special Discovery Day activities for MAP students, and over 100 students participating in Study Skills sessions held in the Goulburn Valley schools. The first cohort to complete three years with the program graduated in 2003 with outcomes reported in Table 10 (below).

Table 10: Melbourne Access Schools Program outcomes 2003

	No of students n=67	Percent
Students receiving a tertiary offer (TAFE or University)	56	80%
Students receiving a University of Melbourne offer	11	16%

A substantial proportion of MAP teachers (78% n=40) felt that the program had made a difference to students' understanding of higher education and commitment to pursuing tertiary options.

Comments from teachers included:

"MAP students were a lot more focussed and settled in making their subject selection".

"It is particularly useful for Year 10 students as their picture of tertiary education is very fragmentary at this stage of their schooling."

Program evaluation indicates that MAP has positively influenced student decision-making. When surveyed in their first year of the program (Year 10) 31% listed university as an option. This increased to 83% in Year 12. A commitment to continue MAP and an investigation of ways of expanding its influence beyond the ten pilot schools is being investigated.

3.5 Rural Outreach

Melbourne Recruitment Onshore's Rural Outreach Program creates opportunities for students, teachers and parents in rural areas to have access to University staff and information regarding courses, scholarships, teaching practices and services available at the University. Four regions were visited by a team of staff members from relevant areas including: academic, transition, faculty staff and onshore recruitment. A total of 190 parents and students attended the information sessions while 155 students attended the Master Class sessions (Master Class is the University's educational series designed for Year 10 students. The 2003 program comprised a wide variety of topics including Italian, geology, medical research and woodwind classes). All the classes are presented by senior University of Melbourne academics in either a lecture or workshop setting. In 2003 the University hosted 106 rural school visits (54 held on-campus; 52 visits to rural areas). In 2004, 870 students from 22 rural schools have visited the Parkville campus. Seventy-seven percent of these schools are classified as underrepresented in the tertiary sector. In 2003-4 the University's Rural Outreach program focussed on the South West (Warrnambool, Hamilton and surrounds) and the North East (Wodonga, Wangaratta and surrounds). Program participation is outlined in Table 11 (below).

Table 11: Student participation in Rural Outreach

Regional area	Student numbers
Warrnambool	110
Hamilton	105
Wangaratta	80
Wodonga	75
Total	370

In addition, each year, through the University's *Rural UniExperience* program approximately 100 Year 11 students stay on campus as part of a two-day program which encourages them to think about their post-VCE ambitions. In 2003, 99 students from 59 different schools took part in this event. Forty percent (or 24) of these participating schools were underrepresented schools.

The *Goulburn Valley Initiative* was established by the University to strengthen ties with regional Victoria and provide support for rural and regional development. The Faculty of Education has initiated a Key Learning Network within the Goulburn Valley to help improve the quality of regional education and to increase rural opportunities for students from the faculty. To encourage Higher Education access for rural, Indigenous and students from low socio-economic backgrounds, an Academy of Sport, Health and Education (ASHE) has been established in association with the Rumbalara Football Club, with the aim of generating interest in health and education through sporting activities. The Department of Rural Health is a rapidly growing area of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and the Rural Clinical School (RCS) was recently established in Shepparton. From 2004 two new cross-disciplinary centres will be established to address regional and rural community needs and to encourage broader University participation: the Academy of Sport, Health & Education, and the Centre for Water and Landscape Management.

Reference links

Access Melbourne: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/highereducationreforms/>
Scholarships: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/highereducationreforms/newscholarships.html>
Goulburn Valley Initiative: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/alumni/goulburn.html>
ASHE: http://uninews.unimelb.edu.au/articleid_1446.html
Rural outreach: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/admissions/events/rural/index.html>
MAP: http://uninews.unimelb.edu.au/articleid_1329.html

4 Performance and review: Student support

4.1 Inclusive administrative processes

Student Administration works with the Disability Liaison Unit to provide Alternative Examination Arrangements for students with a disability or medical condition. Students are contacted prior to the examination period to check which examinations they will be sitting. Student Administration aims to be flexible with its policies to meet specific requirements of diverse student groups. For example, the protocol for photographic identification for student cards has been adapted for students who wear face-covering clothing.

Equity, Language and Learning Programs has developed a suite of publications to support inclusive administrative practices and updated the Cultural Diversity website. Publications include Guidelines for Inclusive Publications, Guidelines for Inclusive Events and an Interfaith Calendar which encourages staff to consider the religious diversity of the student population when organising tests, examinations, placements and other events (see web links below).

4.2 Addressing financial disadvantage

The University's **Financial Aid Office** provides long-term and short-term loans to students in need of support. In 2003, the University provided 285 long-term loans (total of \$811,980) and 969 short-term loans (Total \$488,232). This, in addition to the trust fund bursaries, postgraduate bursaries, housing bursaries and special grants, means that 1,906 students were supported for a total of \$1,785,626.

Student Housing Services advisers assist students to secure affordable accommodation. The Student Housing Access Program (SHAP) has provided accommodation and assistance for more than 40 students in 2003/4, and the Housing Bursary Program has supported 238 students by offering bursaries of \$30 per week in rent assistance (Total 2003 fund \$275,000). The programs target equity students (including those in serious financial need and those who may experience discrimination in the rental market). Postgraduate and Trust Fund Bursary programs also assisted 369 students in financial need. These bursaries ranged from \$100 - \$7,000.

Difficulties with tenancy issues can have a negative impact on students who have moved out of home, particularly international, rural and interstate students. Student Housing Services has taken a proactive approach to foster productive working relations with housing providers and improve compliance to the Residential Tenancies Act to improve student access to appropriate housing and information about their rights and responsibilities. The *New to Melbourne* program provides information and advice to new students from rural areas regarding accommodation and costs.

4.3 Supporting students with children

Children's Services are currently unable to meet the increasing demand for limited places; this is of concern since availability of affordable childcare has significant impact on some students' ability to access university. Student demands take priority over staff demands for childcare.

Research is currently being undertaken into preschool children's development of understanding of cultural and racial diversity.

The service is a member of Playworks and the Multicultural Resource Centre (MCRC). The Federal Government provides Resource and Development Officers to work with centres where children with special needs are enrolled. MCRC provides professional development and newsletters and the centre has resources for parents to borrow.

Children's services, the Melbourne University Student Union, UMPA, ELLP, Counselling and the Equal Opportunity Unit collaborated to revise a booklet to assist students who are also parents: *A degree with the Lot: A Guide for student parents*.

4.4 Improving support for students with disabilities

The major initiative for 2004 was the completion and lodging of the University's revised Disability Action Plan (DAP) with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in July. A key target in the DAP is the undertaking of an Accessibility Audit of the University's physical environment, from which a report detailing a prioritised list of building works will be developed. An amount of \$200,000 has been allocated for disability access improvements in 2005.

The University's Academic programs Committee has established a Working Group on Students with Disabilities to consider all matters relating to the assessment of students with disabilities. The Working Group will revise the University policy on students with disabilities, prepare good practice guidelines for providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities and recommend a range of measures to ensure compliance with the soon to be introduced Disability Standards for Education. A student forum was held in October 2004, to seek feedback from students on disability services provided by the University. The feedback from this forum will be fed into the 2005 planning processes.

The growth in the number of students accessing the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU) can be seen in Figure 2 (below). The number of students indicating that they had a disability on their enrolment form was 1180 and the number of students registering with the DLU (as at October 2004) was 901 students.

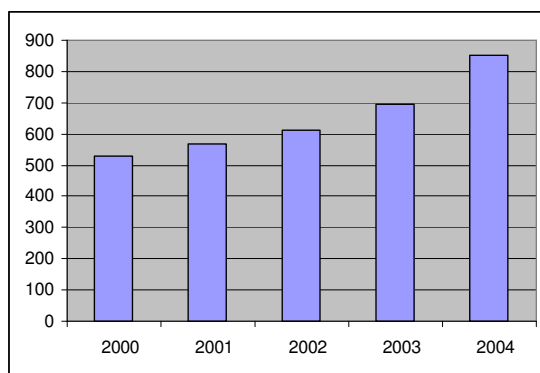


Figure 2 Numbers of students accessing the DLU 2000-2004

The nature of the disabilities as nominated by students attending the DLU is indicated in Figure 3 (below).

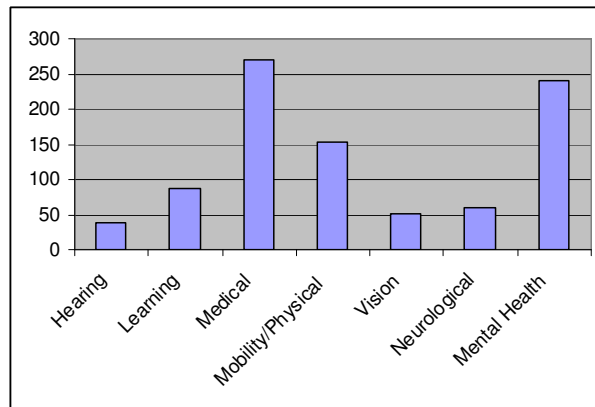


Figure 3 Disability types 2004

Guidelines for Information Access for Students with a Print Disability were introduced in 2002 to address issues of the timely and appropriate availability of materials for conversion to accessible formats. An Implementation Report of the policy's first year of implementation showed:

- improved timeliness (in 2003, 37% of subject reading packs submitted at least 4 weeks prior to semester cf 7% in 2001 and 8% 2002)
- significant improvement in reading pack quality ("It is now uncommon for the Disability Liaison Unit to receive subject reading packs that include photocopies which are second generation, reduced in size or with misaligned edges").

The Automated Audio Capture service (*iLecture*, developed by the University of Western Australia) is now available in over 39 lecture theatres on the Parkville campus. The *iLecture* process automatically records digital audio from lectures and generally makes it available for students an hour after the lecture using *QuickTime* Streaming. The online lectures mean that students can clarify and revise difficult points, especially when English is their second language. This service will assist students from Non-English Speaking Background (NESB), students with disabilities and part-time students, many of whom are working long hours due to their disadvantaged financial circumstances.

4.5 Language Support

Language support for international students and for students from NESB and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds has been enhanced with the establishment of the Language and Learning Skills Unit (resulting from the amalgamation of the Learning Skills Unit and the English as a Second Language Unit within the Centre for Communication Skills and English as a Second Language (CCS&ESL) in July 2003).

As illustrated in Figure 3 (below) the Language and Learning Skills Unit (LLSU) provided a total of 1904.5 hours of workshops/classes in 2004 (as at October 26 2004). Hours for the Faculty of Arts include 708 hours of ESL credit subjects for the Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics and 84 hours for the Community Access Program (CAP) Study Skills subject. Hours for the Faculty of Science include 495 for the Professional Skills Program in the Department of Information Systems (PSP).

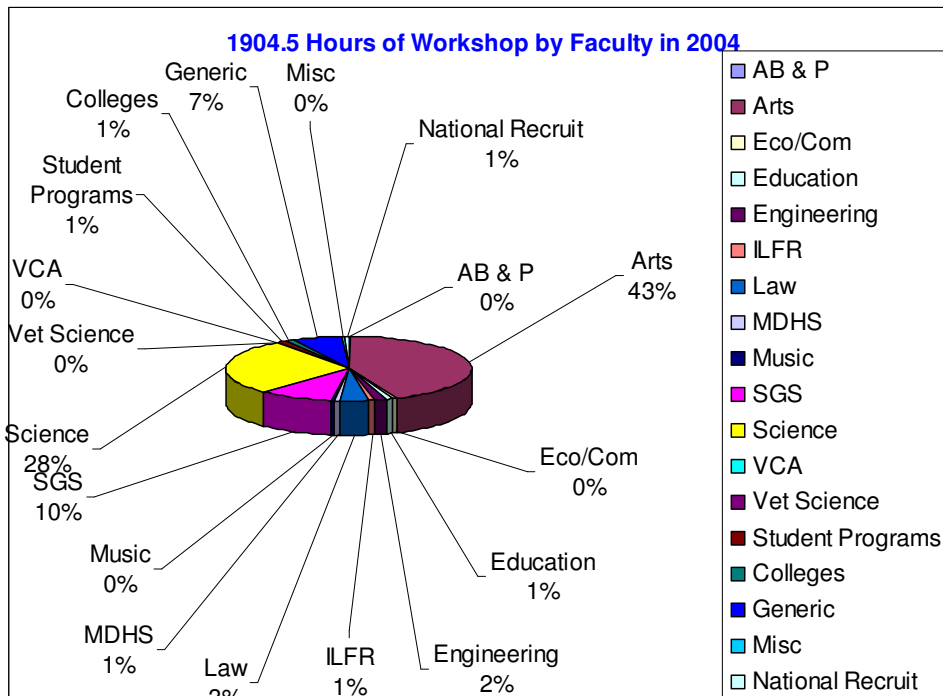


Figure 4 Group teaching (in hours) provided by LLSU in 2004 (as at **October 26**)

Figure 5(below) shows individual Tutorial Hours in 2003 and 2004 (for accurate comparison, hours are shown to October 26 only). Total hours for individual tutorial sessions for 2004 (up until October 26) was 2259.7. There has been an increase in demand for individual tutorials (up 37 % on 2003 figures) and this increased demand is reflected across all faculties.

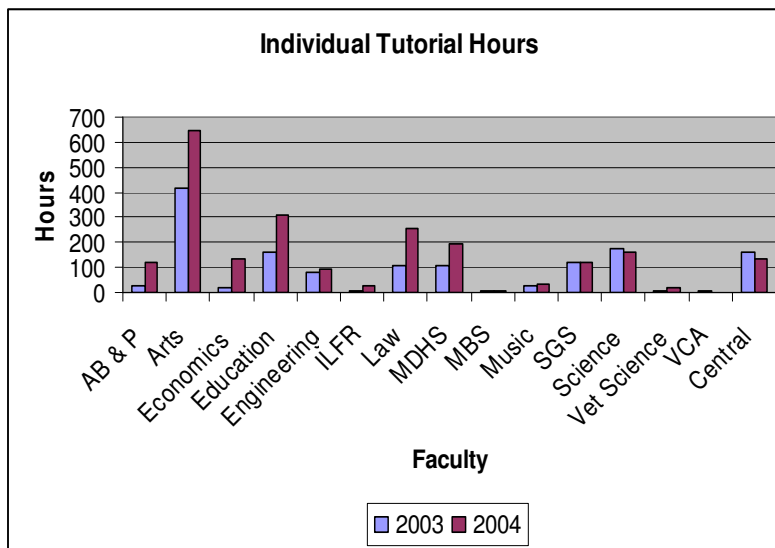


Figure 5 Individual tutorials by hours 2004 (as at October 26)

The major reason students came to LLSU was for assistance with academic writing - the traditional form of assessment - including theses at the postgraduate level. Students require assistance with understanding and conforming to the various genres required by their departments, in addition to needing help with literature reviews, organisation and structure, addressing the criteria, in text citations and referencing, and cohesion, amongst others. Another significant reason students came to the LLSU was for help with study skills: time and study management, motivation and exam preparation. NESB students, both local and international, in particular request assistance with grammar and language expression. Of all students attending an individual appointment

at LLSU approximately 35% of individual appointments are with postgraduate students and 65% undergraduates (42% overall are international students).

A major project for 2004 was the development of a data base to facilitate administration and monitoring of the diagnostic English language Assessment test (DELA). This was successfully completed and improved the service to Faculties and students in processing results of their tests and following up on action taken.

A key initiative for 2004-2005 is the development of the Academic Interactive Resources Portal (AIRport), an online resource for undergraduate students. AIRport has 3 gateways: Gate 1 is an interactive transition/academic skills resource, Gate 2 provides short courses, focusing on the needs of students from NESB, and Gate 3 provides faculty specific online short courses. Gates 1-2 have been trialed in 2004 and will be operational by February 2005; discussions are underway with several faculties to develop Gate 3 courses in 2005.

4.6 Supporting Indigenous students

The University explicitly includes strategies and targets relating to Indigenous Australians, their issues and their effective engagement in education, in its Strategic and Operational Plans for 2004. The target over the 2003-2007 period is to double the number of Indigenous Australian students graduating from the University. Additional targets include to:

- increase the number of scholarships available to Indigenous Australian students to a minimum of 10
- increase by 20% the number of offers made to Indigenous Australians through the Aboriginal Entry Scheme
- develop an enabling program for Indigenous students to ensure there are clearly articulated pathways to undergraduate programs at the University
- review the University's staff recruitment procedures and practices to secure the appointment of up to 5 additional Indigenous Australian employees.

Indigenous education is supported through the activities of the following organisational units and consultative mechanisms:

- the Centre for Indigenous Education (CIE)
- Indigenous Australian Studies Programs
- VicHealth Koori Research and Community Development Unit
- the Indigenous Employment Strategy
- Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development (VCA)
- Programs developed to be offered at Shepparton in the Goulburn Valley Region including the Academy of Sports Health and Education (ASHE).

The CIE has been actively engaged in facilitating these goals within the University, offering a range of recruitment initiatives, scholarship programs and support activities. In 2004, the University undertook an evaluation of the effectiveness of its mechanisms for consultation with Indigenous Australians with the aim of improving effective participation, actively encouraging Indigenous Australians in decision-making and building relationships between the University and its wider communities.

With regard to performance, Indigenous Australian students have performed well in relation to other students at the University in 2003/4. Growth associated with the equity indicators of retention, participation and success has been steady over recent years (see Appendix 1, Table 6). Enrolments in science-based courses have increased as has diversification of participation in humanities and social sciences.

The University currently employs 26 Indigenous staff, 17 of whom are in academic positions. The University Council has adopted a strategy to increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed at the University. The strategy aims to promote the University as a preferred employer for Indigenous Australians within the Higher Education sector and contains targets for 2004 and later years. Dr Ian Anderson has recently been appointed the inaugural chair in Indigenous Health (Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences). There are now two Indigenous Australians occupying professorial chairs at the University of Melbourne.

An Indigenous Employment Coordinator will be appointed in 2005 to implement the Indigenous Employment strategy. A working party including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and community representatives will promote the implementation of the strategy and evaluate its effectiveness.

The Indigenous Australian Studies program has experienced growth with subject offerings across the faculties of Arts, Education, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and Law. There are now over fifty individual subjects for students to choose from at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including at least ten new subjects on offer in 2004. In 2003/2004, the University offered the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Australian Studies and has recently called for applications to the Masters of Social Health (Aboriginal Health) as well as maintaining excellence in supervision of students undertaking Indigenous Australian research for higher degrees. Professor Marcia Langton, Foundation Professor of Indigenous Australian Studies was named a joint winner of the inaugural Neville Bonner Award for Indigenous Teacher of the Year

Scholarships developed in partnership with the Melbourne Business School and BHP Billiton have resulted in the successful completion of the MBA by two Indigenous Australian students as the first intake.

4.7 Ensuring the University meets the needs of students at non-Parkville campuses.

One of the key challenges for student services at the University of Melbourne is to ensure that the core elements of the 'Melbourne Experience' are enjoyed by students on smaller rural and regional campuses and not just by those studying at Parkville. In 2003, the University's Student Support Committee established a reference group to look at the support needs of students at all campuses and sites. The first part of the group's *Planning for Diversity* report outlined the current situation in terms of service delivery to students at non-Parkville campuses by providing:

- a profile of the student population with regard to geographical location; and
- clarification of service delivery responsibilities of Parkville-based student services.

The Report then provided a *Diversity in Services Operational Plan* which outlined draft performance targets for the services provided by Student Programs, Counselling, Health and Disability Services, Equity, Language and Learning Programs and the Centre for Indigenous Education. The targets are reviewed annually with a report provided to the Student Support Committee. Satisfaction with support services is measured through QASS.

4.8 Assisting students on their career path

Careers and Employment have increased their visits to rural campuses and counselling appointments can now be provided over the telephone for students from country campuses and on exchange overseas. Advice for any student can be provided via email and resumé reviews can be undertaken via phone and face-to-face sessions. An Email Bulletin, produced weekly during semester has 3,000 subscribers who receive information about other useful websites and which employers are recruiting. The *Willing and Able mentoring Program* for students with a disability has been extended to students in their penultimate year.

Reference links

Centre for Indigenous Education: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/cie/>

Australia's national policy on Indigenous Education: www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/aep.htm

Disability Liaison Unit: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/>

Disability Action Plan: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/laws/unipolicies/actionplan.html>

Financial Aid: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/finaid/>

Housing Service: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/housing/>

llecture: <http://www.infodiv.unimelb.edu.au/tss/help/audiocapture.html>

Improving Information Access <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/ellp/publications/improve.html>

Language and Learning Skills Unit: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/lisu/>

ELLP cultural diversity publications including the Interfaith Calendar:

<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/ellp/publications/EDPub%27s.html>

Planning for Diversity: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/ellp/downloads/pdf/Planning_for_Diversity_pdf.pdf

WAM: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/careers/employers/wam.html>

QASS: http://www.upo.unimelb.edu.au/upo_EC.html#QASSS

AIRport: <http://airport.unimelb.edu.au>

5 Performance and review: Targeted areas

Targeted areas for 2004 included:

- improving access and retention for students from low socioeconomic background;
- equity issues for postgraduate students; and
- enhanced awareness of the learning and teaching needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

5.1 Improving access and retention for students from low socio-economic backgrounds

The University has focused attention for some years on improving access and retention for students from low SES, as illustrated in Figures 6 & 7(below). The University exceeds the national indicator in retention rates while consistently falling below the national indicator in access.

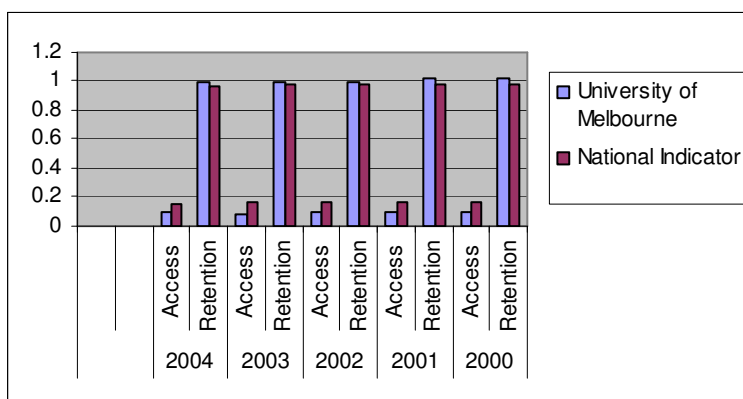


Figure 6 Low SES (under 25) 2000-2004 Access and Retention

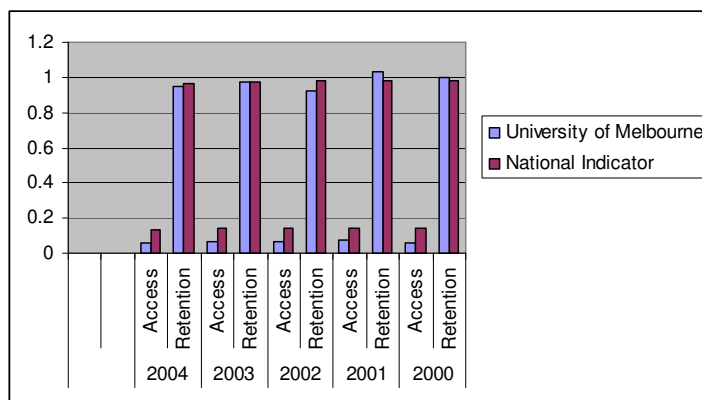


Figure 7 Low SES (25 and over) 2000-2004 Access and Retention

Tables 5-6 (section 2) indicate that Melbourne lags behind other Group of Eight (Go8) universities in most equity categories, but notably in the equity groups 'students from NESB' and 'students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds'. The University is performing only fairly in the Under 25 Low SES group with respect to Access and Participation, but Retention and Success rates are excellent. Monash Access and Participation levels are significantly higher but their Retention and Success rates are lower. For Low SES over 25 the University performs quite poorly in Access and Participation but Retention and Success are the highest of the Go8. The Low Access rates could be a reflection of the fact that the University of Melbourne does not have a mature age access program (other than CAP).

It should also be noted that while access and participation for women remains high, the University is no longer the sector leader in this field. Appendix 1 provided tables for all indicators with data shown on a field of study basis for 2002-2004.

The *Uni Book* was developed in 2004 to encourage access for students from low socio economic background. The booklet was publicised to Victorian schools with 8000 booklets being distributed to students from under-represented schools. The booklet was designed for students in year 10 who are the first in their family to consider higher education.

5.2 Equity issues for postgraduate students

The Nelson reforms have focused attention on equity issues for undergraduate students, but attention should also be given to equity issues for postgraduate students. The recent DEST report, *Analysis of Equity Groups in Higher Education 1991 – 2002* recommended that 'greater emphasis should be given in the equity policy framework to access for people from low SES backgrounds into higher degrees' (James 2004). Nationally, over half of the students enrolled in higher degrees between 1992 and 2002 were from high SES backgrounds, and only 8.6% of the 2002 enrolment were from low SES backgrounds. People from low SES backgrounds are even less well represented in higher degrees than in undergraduate degrees (See Figure 6 below).

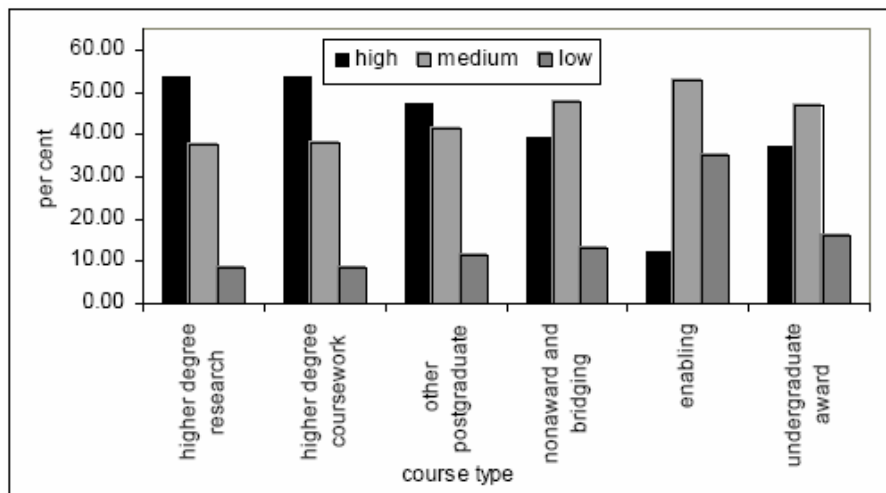


Figure 6: Participation share of socio-economic groups by level of course, 2002. Source: (James et al 2004)

Rural and isolated students are underrepresented at all levels of university study. Access rates for both of these groups of students are lower at Melbourne than nationally (see Figure 7), in all levels of study. Postgraduate diplomas and certificates have the highest enrolments, although these have steadily declined over 2001-2004 while Higher Degree by Research (HDR) enrolments remain fairly steady. In 2004, the highest proportions of rural students were in HDR in Agriculture and Environmental Studies (48%). Other universities, which are based in regional areas or offer comprehensive distance education, are more likely than the University of Melbourne to attract rural or isolated students.

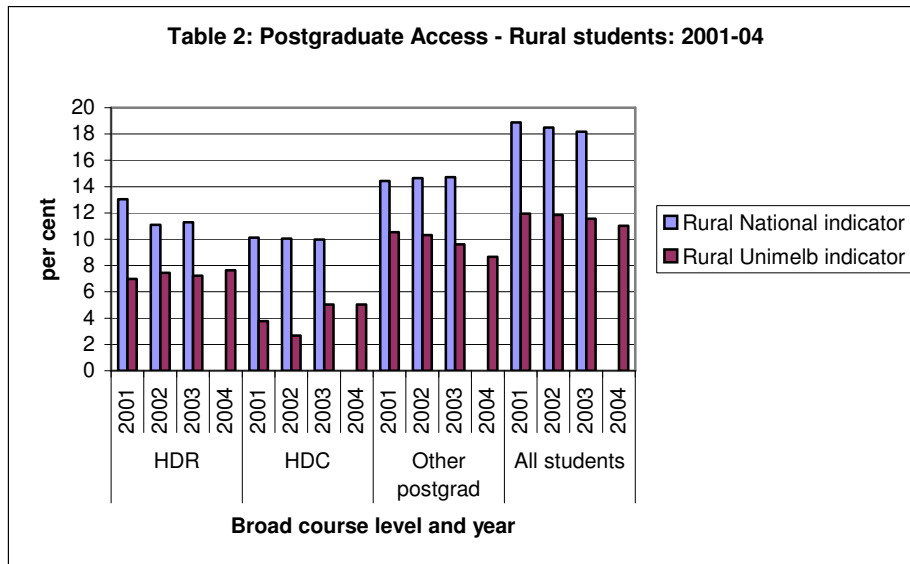


Figure 7 Access Rural postgraduate students 2001-2004

The University of Melbourne has better postgraduate access and participation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than national rates, and the rates are better for postgraduate students than for the entire student population combined. (See Figure 8 below)

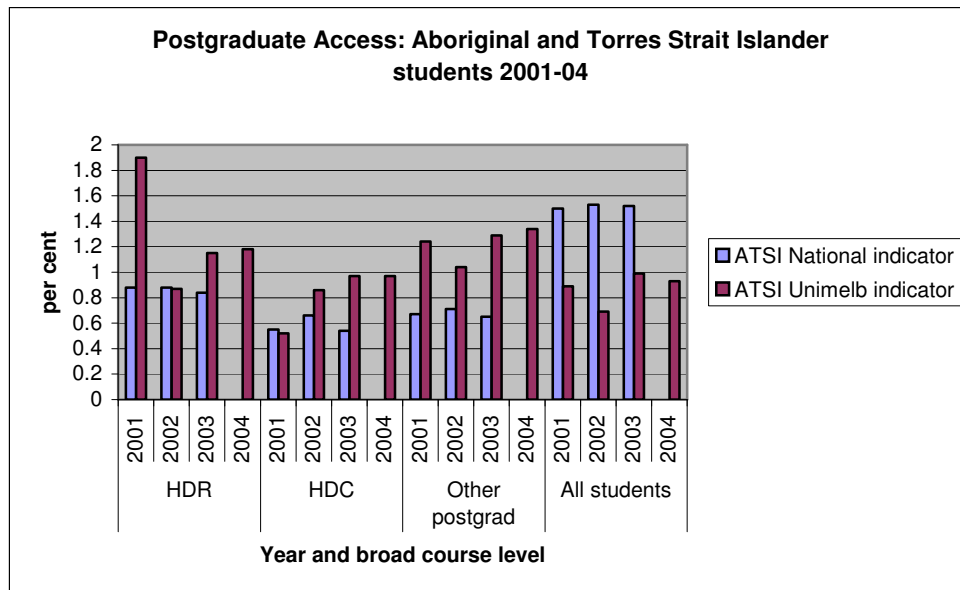


Figure 10 Postgraduate access Indigenous students

5.3 Enhancing Cultural Awareness

The University's Cultural Diversity Policy outlines a commitment to providing effective institutional arrangements for affirming and promoting the value of cultural diversity. Staff development programs for both general and academic staff aim to increase awareness of the need to be responsive to the needs of our increasingly diverse cohort. In addition, a suite of publications support cultural awareness of the needs of students with diverse backgrounds.

Publications for staff include:

- Guidelines for Inclusive Publications
- Guidelines for Inclusive Events

- Improving Information Access for Students with a Print Disability
- Fair in Form: Fair in Effect: Indirect discrimination
- Interfaith Calendar 2004-2005.

Publications for students include:

- The Uni Book (for students from year 10 from low SES)
- Understanding Uni (for parents of students who would be the first in their family to attend university)
- Staying Sane on Campus: Tips and techniques for optimising mental health while studying at uni
- Towards Success: a series of 8 study guides for students with a disability
- Academic Skills: A guide for international students
- Studying in Australia: A guide for North American study abroad students

The Cultural Diversity website, which includes resources for staff on addressing issues of cultural awareness was updated in 2004.

In 2003-2004 the Faculty of Education and Asialink investigated approaches to learning and teaching in Asia that should be taken into account in the design and delivery of academic programs onshore, offshore and online. The resulting report was *Students from Asia: Issues in learning and teaching*.

Reference Links

CD website: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/diversity/>

CD Self-Audit: http://www.unimelb.edu.au/diversity/CD_T&Lguidelines.html

CD publications (students and staff): <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/ellp/publications/index.html>

Uni Book: http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/ellp/publications/students_2.htm#UBook

Students from Asia: <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/ExecServ/Council/Attachments/appb0304.pdf>

6 Key issues for faculties in encouraging and supporting equity and diversity

In addition to the issues outlined above, visits to faculties elicited information across a range of areas; key issues and examples of good practice are listed below. Comparisons nationally indicate widening participation for students from low SES and rural backgrounds and for Indigenous students has to be a key priority for the University. There was considerable interest in *Access Melbourne* and in monitoring its success. A number of other issues were also of interest.

6.1 Widening participation for non-school leavers

Access Melbourne does not address issues of access for non-school leavers and most faculties noted concerns about non-school leaver access. The Law School, for example, described access for mature age students as extremely difficult. The introduction of the Graduate course in Medicine, on the other hand, has broadened the diversity of that faculty's cohort. The Arts Faculty also noted a decline in mature age access, and while the Community Access Program (CAP) offers such a pathway, for students from equity background, CAP course fees and the requirement to obtain an H2A average to enter the Arts degree may be issues.

As illustrated in Table 5 and Figure 6 (above) the University access and participation rates for students from low SES are declining and are considerably below national indicators and also of most of the other Go8 universities.

6.2 Financial disadvantage

A number of faculties expressed concern about the issue of financial disadvantage and the anticipated impact of higher fees from 2005. Some postgraduate diplomas (in Education and MDHS for example) may be particularly vulnerable given the nature of their cohort (often women from low SES). The School of Graduate Studies expressed concern about the lack of scholarships for coursework students, and observed that male students are more likely to receive financial support from their employers to assist them to study. Veterinary Science noted

that many postgraduate scholarships are offered by external bodies, for whom equity is not a great consideration in selection of recipients.

An issue raised by both faculties and Financial Aid staff was the implications for financially disadvantaged students of the University's offer to guarantee a transfer to a Commonwealth Supported Place for local fee-paying students who gain an average of H2A in their first year. Prospective students may not realize how difficult it can be to obtain this average mark and will need to either find funds up front for their fees or access FEE-HELP until the \$50,000 limit is reached. Potentially such students may find themselves with greater levels of up front debt than they anticipate.

Related to this is the need for more affordable accommodation for students (particularly in light of the fact that Brookes Gillespie accommodation is still not available). The Faculty of Arts expressed concern about the availability of affordable accommodation in light of *Access Melbourne* and how students who may be eligible to apply for the University will be unable to take up a place if they cannot afford to live in Melbourne. The lack of suitable accommodation for students undertaking clinical placements in regional and rural areas was discussed by MDHS. The additional costs associated with these placements, including the cost of the accommodation and loss of income through absence from part-time employment can prove a particular hardship to students from equity backgrounds.

There is growing concern that some student housing providers are exempt from compliance with the Residential Tenancies Act if they are affiliated to a university. Student Housing Services have been working with various providers to ensure compliance and therefore protect students, but affiliated providers remain as a gap in this area and students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly vulnerable.

6.3 Postgraduate education

While the University of Melbourne has responded to the Higher Education reforms announced under DEST's *Backing Australia's Future* with a range of initiatives to improve access to the University for students from equity backgrounds, through *Access Melbourne*, to date the focus has been almost exclusively on improving access for undergraduate students. The major changes for postgraduate students will be to the fee payment systems – through HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP – and a small number of additional scholarships for research students. There have been only a few extra scholarships announced for research students (31 for Australia), and still no income support measures (eg Austudy, scholarships) for coursework students (an issue highlighted as a concern for some time).

The report *Postgraduate Student Equity at the University of Melbourne: Trends, issues and the potential impact of the Higher Education reforms* recently prepared for the AEC by Equity, Language and Learning Programs, identifies some of the key issues affecting access and participation of postgraduate students, particularly for low socio-economic status and rural students. It analyses the possible effects of the Nelson reforms on postgraduate students – both immediately and as a result of potential change in the undergraduate population, and considers ways forward for the University of Melbourne by identifying areas for further research and suggestions to address current issues.

The key issues in postgraduate equity which arise from this paper are outlined below.

- Debt does not seem to be the major deterrent, although there may be some debt aversion among certain groups. An increase in enrolments in Higher Degrees Coursework (HDC) in the last few years, overall and among some equity groups, indicates that the Postgraduate Education Loans Scheme (PELS) (now replaced by FEE-HELP) may have improved access to courses that are the most likely to have high, up front fees
- Access for low SES students remains an issue at all levels of postgraduate study
- If debt is not a deterrent and postgraduate students have overcome aspirational barriers that face low SES and rural undergraduate students, then a lack of income support seems the main deterrent for those who already have a degree. Loss of working income through study, cost of living and the other financial responsibilities that many postgraduates have, and a lack of flexibility in courses to allow them to be undertaken while working, may have a greater impact than the cost of the course itself.

The absence of significant improvement to undergraduate equity for low SES, rural and isolated students will continue to have an impact on postgraduate equity enrolments: there needs to be more people from this group graduating from undergraduate degrees before major improvements in the postgraduate cohort can be achieved. Some concern has been expressed by members of the AEC regarding the impact of higher fees for postgraduate students, especially in courses where the expectation of higher future income capacity is not present, such as for some postgraduate diploma courses where fees could rise from \$8,000 to \$14,000. These courses are often undertaken by nurses, teachers and members of the police force - professions where future income levels will not be high.

Perhaps the University's equity agenda should support the investment in the community that such courses represent. It has also been noted that while some faculties are working hard to introduce initiatives to support postgraduate access for rural students through distance education, the faculties are then charging individual courses extraordinary amounts for IT support for the courses (with implications for sustainability).

6.4 Support for International and NESB students

Language support for international and Australian NESB students is an ongoing concern for many faculties, many of which have introduced new initiatives to improve this support. Some faculties (for example Science) are concerned about how to encourage students to take the DELA or other language assessment, and then to take the results sufficiently seriously to follow through on suggested support. Others, such as Veterinary Science, find it difficult to fit extra language support into a very full student program. The Engineering Faculty has introduced its own online language assessment called the Engineering Study Skills Assessment (ESSA) which is followed up with a language program provided through LLSU. Measures taken to improve such support within faculties include the ongoing International Student Support Program (ISSP) in Medicine, and the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) in Economics and Commerce. In addition, Law appointed a Language and Learning Director, and Education appointed an International Student Support Officer. LLSU has liaised with a number of faculties to embed a workshop program within a course, with LLSU staff liaising with faculties to design programs which target the particular needs of students in each faculty.

Aside from language issues, additional areas were identified for international students regarding the provision of academic support. These were within courses where a significant part of learning takes place outside the university classroom. In MDHS, students need extra support in the culture of health professions in Australia and in Education, the faculty provides sessions to prepare international students for teaching in an Australian classroom.

6.5 Orientation and transition

All faculties see orientation and transition as an important part of student support in the faculty and in helping a diverse cohort adjust to university life. In particular the Academic Orientation Day, implemented in 2004, was often mentioned as a very positive addition to the orientation program as it increased attendance at academic events and gave faculties the chance to introduce new activities. Ways of encouraging students to work together was a focus of a number of programs, for example study groups in Economics and Commerce, and the Science Faculty's Learning Centres. A difficulty in encouraging international students and local students to mix was raised by several faculties as being an area of concern.

7 Good practice: Access

Architecture Building and Planning (ABP) holds information expos in regional and low SES areas eg Brimbank, Keilor, Ballarat. The ABP Summer School is very popular and attracts a number of students from equity backgrounds to consider Architecture as a career.

The **Arts** Faculty is able to provide an alternative pathway for access via the Community Access Program (CAP), although the fees can be a disincentive for many students. Arts has focused recruitment efforts on state high schools in an attempt to encourage access from under represented schools.

Economics & Commerce is developing a plan to encourage Indigenous students to study Economics & Commerce. The Transition Officer visited the Northern Territory with the CIE and a bridging program is also being developed. The Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) won an award in 2004 and continues to actively support faculty staff in addressing the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The web resource *First Year's Lobby* has been well received by students.

Education has facilitated transition for their international students through a social program coordinated to encourage students to 'connect' with their faculty. The faculty has also introduced a peer writing support program for its international students.

Attempts to break down the image of **Engineering** as a male dominated discipline have been enhanced by the appointment of four post-doctoral female academics, following dispensation by the Equal Opportunity Commission. Wherever possible, faculty speaking engagements are given to female engineers. Introduction of the online Engineering Study Skills Assessment (ESSA) with follow up language support is being monitored and there are plans to trial online language support through LLSU's Academic Interactive Resources Portal (AIRport see section 3.10). The removal of Specialist Maths as a pre-requisite for entry in 2005 should encourage more students, especially females, to apply for engineering. Several new undergraduate courses have been developed (Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, Biomedical Engineering and Engineering Management), which will have their first intake in 2005 and may have special appeal to women. The faculty now has 5 Indigenous students which is particularly significant given that for many years there were no Indigenous students studying Engineering.

The **Land and Food Resources** Faculty offers many opportunities for access to both higher education and vocational education and training (VET) programs via its dispersed regional campus structure and interactions with the campus' local communities in Victoria. In addition, a number of programs are offered flexibly via the web (eg Master of Agribusiness) or in the workplace (many of the VET programs) to allow students unable to undertake full-time on-campus study improved access to education. A large number of school visits are undertaken throughout Victoria including rural and isolated locations, as well as to under-represented schools, to encourage students to consider the wide range of opportunities possible through the Faculty. The Faculty continues to conduct a vocational program for Indigenous students and has an academic member of staff dedicated to this program.

The **Law** Faculty has experienced no problem meeting its TAP targets. The faculty has structured selection processes with clear guidelines. The Juris Doctor program (Melbourne JD) facilitates a more diverse cohort than is apparent with undergraduate students. However, the financial commitment required is a key factor here.

In the Faculty of **Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences** (MDHS) one third of the annual intake into Medicine is under the Graduate Program and this has contributed to the broadening of diversity within the school. Twenty percent of Physiotherapy students are also non-school leavers. The members of the *Outlook* program, which supports rural students, are active in visiting schools to speak to prospective students to encourage them to apply for courses in the faculty. The *Outlook* Program is a student support group involved in rural issues, including providing small amounts of money to help some students with costs associated with rural placements. One area of concern is the need to encourage applications from students of equity backgrounds living in outer urban growth areas. It may be possible to use Access scholarships to encourage students from these areas to return to work there upon graduation.

Mature age students who need to work a substantial number of hours to support themselves are now able to undertake the first year of the **Music** course on a part-time basis. The prerequisites for some Music subjects have been re-written to make them more accessible to CAP students.

The **Science** Faculty's success in widening participation is reflected in the fact that 77% of Victorian schools are represented in the current Science intake. Science offers a broad range of school outreach activities, including:

- an Outreach Officer in the School of Chemistry working with Year 9 and 10 students;

- VCE Biology workshops attended by 3,500 students this year, with 25% of these students attending an additional session offered by the faculty;
- about Careers in Science programs run in conjunction with Engineering;
- Chemistry and Physics have run approx 15 one-day workshops for secondary school teachers;
- 250 schools are on the Science@Melbourne Network database, where Science and Maths Co-coordinators receive newsletters, course and careers information and invitations to events;
- staff resources have been increased to ensure that all requests for school visits can be met; and
- additional scholarships (now 10) have been made available for international PhD students.

The Faculty is developing a set of culturally sensitive fieldwork guidelines to ensure that all subjects requiring fieldwork cater for diverse dietary, religious and other requirements for students and staff.

The post-first year entry into **Veterinary Science** can eliminate a lot of inequity by providing a more level playing field where a student's performance at university, rather than at school, is the basis for entry to the course.

The **School of Graduate Studies (SGS)** has developed the Academic Orientation Program for International Postgraduate Students (AOPIPS). SGS has also adopted and is implementing a support plan for research students based away from the Parkville campus, which includes regular visits, web resources for departments and meetings with off-campus postgraduate coordinators.

8 Good practice: Teaching and learning

Architecture Building and Planning curriculum has a strong focus on the comparative architecture and the way landscapes differ culturally. Postgraduate students from diverse backgrounds are employed as a means of increasing the diversity in teaching.

Every new tutor in the Faculty of **Arts** attends a faculty tutor induction program, particularly designed to improve teaching in first year subjects. The program includes an overview of the first year cohort, identifying and supporting students at risk, cross-cultural awareness and small group teaching.

The Faculty of **Economics and Commerce** is reviewing a number of its programs to ensure their ongoing relevance and success. For example, a TLU staff member is conducting longitudinal research into the Student-At-Risk program, in terms of what makes a difference to students identified as being at-risk.

The Faculty of **Education** has created the position of International Student Support Officer. This person is a source of referral and advocacy and interviews all new international students, sits on committees to ensure relevant issues are accounted for and supervises a tutoring service for international students. To actively encourage cultural awareness and enhance understanding of the implications for inclusive teaching practices, Education has introduced Cultural Diversity Teaching and Learning infusion grants. Examples of projects funded in 2004 include:

- study skills for international students (a program carried out in liaison with LLSU)
- introduction of professional practice workshops for international students;
- the Asian Pedagogies Project
- assistive technology for international students.

The initiatives have been actively supported by the faculty's 'Diversity Champion' through the Faculty of Education's Cultural Diversity Plan. The BEd will be reviewed for content in relation to issues of equity in education.

The Asian Pedagogies Project was a key initiative which resulted in the *Issues Relating to Pedagogy and Students from Asia at the University of Melbourne Report*. The initiative brought together staff from across the University, including Asia Link, Equity, Language and Learning Programs and faculties.

Diversity awareness is part of the **Engineering** Faculty's transition subject, 'Making Connections' and 194 students are involved in the Engineering Mentor Scheme, which has two strands for new and continuing students and includes peer and industry mentors. The Engineering transition guide, *How to Survive and Thrive*

@The University of Melbourne 2004, and postcards advertising transition and learning support programs were well received by students. The e-space web resource for first year students has proved particularly useful in facilitating transition. The 'transition out' program, *Kickstart Your Career*, run in conjunction with Careers and Employment and sponsored by companies, now has 165 students registered and is regarded as being very successful.

The **Faculty of Land and Food Resources** has implemented strategies which support students admitted with lower ENTERs to succeed in their studies including careful monitoring of academic progress and additional tutorial support. A transition program 'Land on Your Feet' has been operating for a few years and is well received by students. Students unable to gain entry to a degree program in agriculture, horticulture or forestry are able to articulate to these degree programs if they successfully complete an advanced diploma in the relevant disciplines. Improved pathways for students to articulate from VET programs to higher education courses are also being explored.

The **Law** Faculty is undertaking a major curriculum review. The curriculum includes diversity issues and comparative law. Awareness of diversity issues and their implications for inclusive teaching is enhanced by the faculty's team of student liaison officers including Mental Health, Queer, Mature Age, Disability, Indigenous and International/NESB. The faculty's EO Committee also provides a focus for equity issues in Law. At the request of students, the faculty is looking into providing a prayer room facility. The faculty has a state of the art wireless environment and has a scheme to assist students to purchase laptop computers.

Tutorial sizes in the faculty of **MDHS** are among the smallest at the University (10-12 students) and the Problem Based Learning approach facilitates student interaction. The International Student Support Unit (ISSP) Program's specialized support for international students in clinical interactions and mentoring for international students are international best practice. Staff at the ISSP have carried out research into Asian student migration and globalization of medical education and the implications for supporting students.

Music students have the opportunity for regular one-on-one tuition in their instrumental study, providing a means of mentoring which is uncommon in other undergraduate courses. Students are also part of ensembles which involve diverse groups of students. At the end of Semester 1, tutors identified international and local NESB students in need of extra support. These students were then invited to a series of seminars on essay writing skills.

The Faculty of **Science** carefully monitors progress of students admitted with an ENTER score lower than 80. It has been found that, while these students can struggle at the beginning, they have high retention rates and tend to progress more easily in later years. Faculty research suggests these students are 20% less likely to present at the Unsatisfactory Progress Committee if they have attended Science 101. A Good Practice Kit for tutor training is currently being developed. The Faculty has established a new Student Adviser position: Manager, Student Access, Equity & Diversity. This role facilitates the implementation and monitoring of equity initiatives. Paying greater attention to matching first year students with similar subject combinations has had a positive effect. The percentage of Study Groups continuing after the initial period has increased from 10% to 30%.

The curriculum of **Veterinary Science** is being reviewed to ensure that it is as inclusive as possible of international and political arenas. The faculty holds a Curriculum Evaluation Seminar each year for students to provide feedback on their perceptions of the course.

The **School of Graduate Studies** has developed *Postgraduate Essentials*, a joint project with LLSU and Information Division. *Postgraduate Essentials* is an online academic support course designed for PhD students studying part time or based off the Parkville campus. The program has been trialed very successfully, with the second course currently underway and very well subscribed. The new modality seems to especially suit international and regional students. It is intended that the *Postgraduate Essentials* be further improved and offered to all incoming PhD students from 2005 onwards.

Reference links

TLU and the First Years' Lobby (TLU): <http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/undergraduate/lobby.html>

ISSP: <http://www.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au/aboutus/structure/admin/fiu/research.html>

E- Space: <http://www.eng.unimelb.edu.au/e-space/index.html>

Science First year Lounge: <http://www.science.unimelb.edu.au/1styear/>

Kickstart your career: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/careers/students/events/ksyc/>

Making Connections: http://www.eng.unimelb.edu.au/courses/ugrad/firstyear/making_conn.html

5 Areas of good practice and recommendations for priority areas of action

Aligning institutional values with an effective equity agenda presents particular dilemmas for highly academically competitive institutions such as the University of Melbourne. The reality of high selection entrance scores and accompanying perceptions of elitism can make it difficult to meet access goals, and for those students who are selected, being in a minority can create tensions that potentially affect retention. Historically, the University of Melbourne has drawn its undergraduate student population from the privileged and elite. A key area of concern for some years has been the failure over time to substantially increase numbers of students from rural and low socio-economic backgrounds. In 2003 the Access and Equity Committee reported on the major structural tensions in play that impact on the ability of the University to increase participation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and meet its targets. It was considered that the Targeted Access Program (TAP) and Melbourne Access Program (MAP), as they were configured, were unlikely to yield the necessary growth in the numbers of students enrolled at the University. *Access Melbourne* represents a significant measure to address the issue of improving access for students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. It has attracted significant interest from other universities Australia-wide.

Other areas of excellence in student equity identified through the quality assurance cycle include:

- a significantly enhanced suite of language and learning programs available to students from NESB and other educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, including the flexible learning options provided through the online programs *AIRport* and *Postgraduate Essentials*
- a significant increase in access and participation for Indigenous students
- development of a planning process (Diversity in Services Operational Plan) which addresses the support needs of students at non-Parkville sites.

The following are **Recommendations** areas for priority action in student Equity and Access for 2005:

1. Monitor *Access Melbourne* to assess its success in enhancing the University's student equity profile. Perceptions of elitism and feedback from students that they will not 'fit in' has been a concern, and success and retention of students who enter under *Access Melbourne* will be monitored carefully and will be a key focus of support programs.
2. Monitor the impact of increases in fees on diversity of the University's postgraduate cohort.
3. Ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds who do gain access to the University are supported to achieve their full potential.
4. Ensure that students at all campuses (including regional sites) benefit from equity initiatives, monitoring through QASS

5. Undertake International benchmarking of equity and diversity. A benchmarking project is currently in place with the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology, University of Auckland, University of Western Australia, the University of British Columbia and Auckland university.
6. Improve access for the non-school leaver cohort (investigating improving articulation from TAFE and enabling programs).
7. Improve access for Indigenous undergraduate students, introducing an enabling program for Indigenous students.

References

James, R., Baldwin, G., Coates, H., Krause, K. and McInnis, C. (2004). *Analysis of Equity Groups in Higher Education 1991-2002*. Canberra, Centre for the Study of Higher Education for the Dept of Education, Science & Training.

Nelson, B. (2003) *Backing Australia's Future*. DEST. AGPS:Canberra.

Appendix: DEST Performance indicators (by field of education)

Appendix Tables 1-7 provide field of study data on all DEST equity indicators (where data was available)

Table 1: Students from low socio-economic background 2003/2004

Equity group and broad field of education	Access ¹ 2004	Access 2003	Participation ² 2004	Participation 2003	Retention ³ 2004	Retention 2003	Success ⁴ 2003	Success 2002
People from low SES (Aged under 25) National Indicator Unimelb Indicator	11.91%	16.17% 11.37	0.14	0.40 ⁵ 0.14	0.998	0.973 1.000	0.98	0.97 0.98
Natural & phys sciences							0.98	0.97 (0.98)
Info Tech							0.96	0.99 (0.95)
Engineering/Surveying							1.01	0.97 (0.97)
Architecture & Building							0.97	1.00 (0.98)
Agric, Environ Sci							0.99	1.03 (0.98)
Health							0.98	0.99 (0.98)
Education							0.97	1.01 (0.99)
Management & Comm							0.99	0.98 (0.96)
Society & culture ¹							0.99	1.00 (0.96)
Creative Arts							0.98	0.99 (0.97)
People from low SES (aged 25 & over) National Indicator Unimelb indicator	7.73%	13.99% 8.96%	0.10	0.34 0.11	0.946	0.976 0.973	0.97	0.96 0.97
Natural & phys sciences							0.96	0.99 (0.98)
Info Tech							1.00	0.91 (0.95)
Engineering/Surveying							1.00	0.97 (1.01)
Architecture & Building							0.99	0.96 (0.95)
Agric, Environ Sci							0.87	0.93 (0.96)
Health							0.93	0.98 (0.97)
Education							0.93	0.97 (0.98)
Management & Comm							0.97	0.92 (0.93)
Society & culture							0.99	0.99 (0.95)
Creative Arts							1.01	1.03 (0.93)

¹ Access= commencing students as % of all commencing students.

² Participation = students in equity group as % of all students, divided by % of people aged 15-64 in the state who are equity group people.

³ Retention = apparent retention rate (equity group students) divided by the apparent retention rate (other students). The apparent retention rate is the number of students who re-enrol at an institution in a given year, as a proportion of the students who were enrolled in the previous year, less those students who have completed their course. It is an apparent rate because it does not include those students who have deferred their study or who have transferred to another university.

⁴ Success = the ratio of the student progress rate (equity students) to the student progress rate of all other students.

⁵ Participation rates for low SES (both under 25 and 25 or more) are provided as a ratio of students with a low SES to students with a high SES.

Table 2: Rural and isolated students 2003/2004

Equity group and broad field of education	Access 2004	Access 2003	Participation 2004	Participation 2003	Retention 2004	Retention 2003	Success 2003	Success 2002
Rural students								
National Indicator		18.18%		0.72		0.973		0.99
Unimelb indicator	11.01%	11.6%	0.45	0.47	1.005	0.997	1.00	1.00
Natural & phys sciences	13.06%	15.2% (17.2%) ²	0.54	0.58 (0.66)			1.01	1.00 (1.01)
Info Tech	6.13%	7.4% (14.2%)	0.22	0.23 (0.56)			1.01	0.98 (0.95)
Engineering/Surveying	11.44%	14.0% (16.3%)	0.51	0.55 (0.61)			1.01	1.00 (1.02)
Architecture & Building	7.69%	8.9% (11.3%)	0.30	0.29 (0.43)			1.01	1.00 (1.02)
Agric, Environ Sci	32.23%	33.8% (35.3%)	1.52	1.64 (1.50)			0.97	1.01 (0.99)
Health	13.33%	13.2% (22.2%)	0.52	0.52 (0.87)			0.99	1.00 (0.99)
Education	9.06%	9.8% (25.2%)	0.43	0.47 (1.05))			1.00	0.99 (0.99)
Management & Comm	6.20%	6.2% (14.1%)	0.25	0.27 (0.57)			1.01	1.00 (0.96)
Society & culture	8.95%	9.0% (16.3%)	0.35	0.36 (0.62)			1.00	1.02 (0.98)
Creative Arts	8.85%	8.8% (18.0%)	0.37	0.37 (0.68)			0.99	1.00 (0.98)
Isolated students								
National Indicator		1.50%		0.29		0.875		0.92
Unimelb indicator	0.18%	0.23%	0.66	0.77	1.043	0.879	1.00	0.99
Natural & phys sciences	0.17%	0.3% (1.2%)	0.59	0.82 (0.22)			0.83	0.98 (0.98)
Info Tech	0.00%	0.0% (0.7%)	0.00	0.42 (0.14)			1.05	1.09 (0.89)
Engineering/Surveying	0.00%	0.3% (1.7%)	0.82	1.43 (0.30))			1.05	1.05 (0.99)
Architecture & Building	0.00%	0.5% (0.5%)	0.61	0.62 (0.08)			1.04	1.07 (0.96)
Agric, Environ Sci	1.47%	0.7% (3.4%)	3.43	2.87 (0.10)			1.07	0.92 (1.01)
Health	0.2%	0.6% (2.1%)	1.02	1.16 (0.40)			1.07	1.02 (0.95)
Education	0.17%	0.0% (2.1%)	0.76	0.59 (0.47)			1.02	1.07 (0.91)
Management & Comm	0.07%	0.0% (1.1%)	0.27	0.21 (0.22)			0.99	1.06 (0.94)
Society & culture	0.07%	0.2% (1.1%)	0.32	0.47 (0.20)			0.81	0.98 (0.89)
Creative Arts	0.00%	0.1% (0.9%)	0.27	0.29 (0.16)			0.91	0.99 (0.91)

¹ Category includes Law.

² The figures in brackets refer to the national indicators for the particular field of study.

Table 3: Students from NESB 2003/2004

Equity group and broad field of education	Access ¹ 2004	Access 2003	Participation ² 2004	Participation 2003	Retention ³ 2004	Retention 2003	Equity group and broad field of education	Access ⁴ 2004
People from NESB National Indicator Unimelb indicator	2.78%	3.84% 2.50%	0.63	0.72 0.48	1.063	1.041 1.018	0.97	0.96 0.97
Natural & phys sciences	2.20%	2.1% (5.0%)	0.54	0.44 (0.91)			0.98	0.94 (0.97)
Info Tech	5.81%	5.9% (8.8%)	1.28	1.23 (1.65)			0.99	0.98 (1.00)
Engineering/Surveying	5.59%	6.8% (8.5%)	1.30	1.06 (1.52)			1.00	0.94 (0.94)
Architecture & Building	3.74%	3.7% (4.0%)	0.81	0.78 (0.79)			0.95	0.98 (0.99)
Agric, Environ Sci	0.37%	0.7% (1.6%)	0.23	0.18 (0.29)			0.98	1.06 (0.96)
Health	2.63%	1.9% (2.5%)	0.64	0.51 (0.56)			1.02	0.99 (0.97)
Education	1.62%	1.8% (1.6%)	0.31	0.24 (0.24)			0.98	0.92 (0.95)
Management & Comm	6.60%	5.3% (5.7%)	1.28	0.90 (0.99)			1.00	0.97 (0.97)
Society & culture	1.75%	1.4% (2.3%)	0.37	0.24 (0.40)			0.97	0.98 (0.98)
Creative Arts	1.35%	1.1% (1.8%)	0.28	0.17 (0.35)			0.99	0.94 (0.98)

Table 4: Students with disabilities 2003/2004

Students with Disabilities National Indicator Unimelb indicator	2.63%	3.0% 2.49%	0.25 ⁵	0.89 0.73	0.935	0.959 0.984	0.95	0.93 0.96
Natural & phys sciences	2.89%	2.8% (3.1%)	0.27	0.78 (0.94)			0.95	0.94 (0.91)
Info Tech	2.58%	1.5% (2.9%)	0.25	0.60 (0.89)			0.98	0.94 (0.92)
Engineering/Surveying	2.53%	1.9% (2.2%)	0.20	0.57 (0.62)			0.95	0.94 (0.93)
Architecture & Building	2.64%	2.7% (2.1%)	0.26	0.81 (0.72)			0.94	0.95 (0.96)
Agric, Environ Sci	5.31%	2.7% (2.6%)	0.33	1.01 (0.80)			0.97	0.98 (0.93)
Health	2.90%	1.8% (2.6%)	0.20	0.50 (0.73)			1.02	0.98 (0.95)
Education	1.34%	2.5% (3.0%)	0.19	0.61 (0.85)			0.86	0.95 (0.93)
Management & Comm	2.13%	2.1% (2.0%)	0.17	0.49 (0.59)			0.98	0.93 (0.95)
Society & culture	2.87%	3.4% (4.2%)	0.30	0.94 (1.28)			0.93	0.97 (0.92)
Creative Arts	2.81%	2.3% (3.7%)	0.23	0.64 (1.02)			0.97	1.04 (0.93)

¹ Access= commencing students as % of all commencing students.

² Participation = students in equity group as % of all students, divided by % of people aged 15-64 in the state who are equity group people.

³ Retention = apparent retention rate (equity group students) divided by the apparent retention rate (other students). The apparent retention rate is the number of students who re-enrol at an institution in a given year, as a proportion of the students who were enrolled in the previous year, less those students who have completed their course. It is an apparent rate because it does not include those students who have deferred their study or who have transferred to another university.

⁴ Access= commencing students as % of all commencing students.

⁵ The population reference for students with disabilities was changed from 4% in 2003 to 11.7% in 2004.

Table 5: Women in non-traditional areas 2003/2004

Equity group and broad field of education	Access ¹ 2004	Access 2003	Participation ² 2004	Participation 2003	Retention ³ 2004	Retention 2003	Equity group and broad field of education	Access ⁴ 2004
Females National Indicator Unimelb indicator	58.58%	57.06% 59.6%	HDR:UG 1.024	HDR:UG=0.89 HDR:UG =1.016	1.007	1.020 1.007	1.02	1.06 1.03
Natural & phys sciences	53.55%	56.0% (54.0%)	0.967	0.905 (0.860)			1.02	1.06 (1.07)
Info Tech	23.23%	28.5% (21.9%)	1.26	1.371 (1.104)			1.02	1.04 (1.04)
Engineering/Surveying	23.40%	23.0% (14.6%)	1.170	1.043 (1.381)			1.01	1.05 (1.04)
Architecture & Building	50.33%	44.1% (41.4%)	0.849	1.020 (0.976)			1.03	1.02 (1.04)
Agric, Environ Sci	50.55%	49.6% (47.0%)	1.093	1.185 (0.930)			1.02	1.06 (1.04)
Health	69.49%	70.8% (74.4%)	1.020	1.060 (0.875)			1.03	1.01 (1.02)
Education	73.38%	73.5% (72.9%)	0.795	0.793 (0.821)			1.04	1.03 (1.04)
Management & Comm	40.29%	41.1% (47.6%)	0.971	0.980 (0.814)			0.99	1.01 (1.04)
Society & culture	61.45%	64.3% (65.9%)	0.988	0.977 (0.887)			1.01	1.02 (1.05)
Creative Arts	67.08%	65.0% (64.8%)	0.859	0.863 (0.889)			1.01	1.01 (1.05)

¹ Access= commencing students as % of all commencing students.

² Participation = students in equity group as % of all students, divided by % of people aged 15-64 in the state who are equity group people.

³ Retention = apparent retention rate (equity group students) divided by the apparent retention rate (other students). The apparent retention rate is the number of students who re-enrol at an institution in a given year, as a proportion of the students who were enrolled in the previous year, less those students who have completed their course. It is an apparent rate because it does not include those students who have deferred their study or who have transferred to another university.

⁴ Access= commencing students as % of all commencing students.

Table 6: Indigenous students 2003/2004

Equity group and broad field of education	Access 2004	Access 2003	Participation 2004	Participation 2003	Retention 2004	Retention 2003	Success 2003	Success 2002
Indigenous students								
National Indicator		<i>1.52%</i>		<i>0.71</i>		<i>0.756</i>		
Unimelb indicator	<i>0.93%</i>	<i>0.99%</i>	<i>1.61</i>	<i>1.65</i>	<i>0.934</i>	<i>0.907</i>	<i>0.95</i>	<i>0.94</i>
Natural & phys sciences	0.29%	0.68%	0.60	0.88			0.98	0.81
Info Tech	0.32%	0.00%	0.14	0.15			0.84	1.09
Engineering/Surveying	0.13%	0.30%	0.42	0.41			0.98	0.63
Architecture & Building	1.10%	0.49%	1.45	0.86			0.99	0.88
Agric, Environ Sci	1.47%	1.42%	2.50	2.84			0.84	1.00
Health	1.21%	1.36%	2.14	1.99			0.98	1.01
Education	0.62%	1.05%	1.94	2.38			0.94	0.92
Management & Comm	0.73%	0.66%	0.86	0.78			0.89	0.95
Society & culture	1.27%	0.98%	1.86	1.77			0.94	0.92
Creative Arts	0.94%	0.91%	1.72	1.89			1.06	1.04