

Charles Darwin University - Institutional Assessment Framework

Equity update

A. Institutional equity focus

The promotion of equity and access with the aim of ensuring equal opportunity for all who study at CDU is a theme that addresses population diversity in the University's natural catchment area and is seen as a potential competitive advantage.

The approach adopted by the University continues to be promotion of nationally identified equity target groups, with an emphasis on students who are of low economic status, but with the goal of improving access, participation, retention and success of students in all equity groups. Equity and access issues relevant to University staff are also being addressed with a particular emphasis on awareness of, and sensitivity to, cross-cultural issues.

B. Performance and Review

Upward trends in the access and participation of students of low socio-economic status suggest that strategies relating to these target groups have been successful. 2004 sees improved values for access of students from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds, and People from Rural and Isolated areas while there has been some decline in access of people with a disability. Retention and success indicators are relatively high for nearly all equity target groups with those for low socio-economic status aged over 25, and people from rural and isolated areas are at values equal to or above the mainstream student body.

C. Students with disabilities

At the end of 2004 the University undertook a significant review of its Disability Action Plan. A number of projects emerged from this review and a working group is currently overseeing its implementation. An area identified in the review under inclusive teaching practices is the availability of all study materials in an electronic format. To ensure that the best advice is provided the University is exploring the possibility of offering a consultancy to a colleague with the relevant experience at the Australian National University. It is anticipated that the consultancy will commence within the next two months with a completion before the end of 2005.

The University is currently producing a register of resources available to students within the University. The register will be widely circulated throughout the University and a simple mechanism developed to allow students easy access to borrow the equipment.

D. Equity management and planning

The University has developed a new unit dedicated to the support and equity needs of staff and students. Headed by a Director reporting to the Executive Director, Corporate Services, this unit provides a strong profile for equity planning and management within the University. The recent appointment in the unit of a Senior Advisor who has an academic background will further enhance equity strategy development and support programs to students. The University's Joint Implementation Group whose membership includes union delegates, senior academic and administrative staff endorses equity plans and strategies.

E. Statement of Eligibility

Charles Darwin University provides support for disadvantaged students to assist them in accessing and participating in tertiary education. In addition to the Commonwealth Learning and Accommodation Scholarships the University also provides Equity Scholarships to assist students in the purchase of study materials.

F. Contact

Ms Elizabeth Macdonald

Director Support and Equity Services

Phone: 08 89466422

Fax: 08 89466454

Email: elizabeth.macdonald@cdu.edu.au

Ms Kerrie Munro

Student Facilitator, Disabilities

Phone: 08 8946 6288

Fax: 08 89466454

Email: kerrie.munro@cdu.edu.au

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