

MEDIA RELEASE

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Performance Framework Proposed for Regional Universities

For regional Australia to continue its economic development through the growth of highly skilled jobs, educational attainment, wages, and productivity, regional universities must be able to increase student participation and courses.

Any performance framework that determines whether universities can expand should take into account the context in which the institutions operate and the factors which they can control.

The Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Professor Greg Hill, said that the Nous Group had developed a performance framework, in collaboration with RUN, that captures the contribution of universities against the broad objectives of the Higher Education Support Act: teaching quality, equity, and contribution to social cultural and economic needs. It uses a comprehensive assessment of inputs, outputs, outcomes and broader community impact to measure success.

“Too much is riding on this process for a superficial approach to be adopted,” Professor Hill said.

“Unless performance is carefully defined, there is a risk of rewarding the wrong behaviours and constraining innovation and opportunity for those students most in need of higher education.

“A narrow focus on attrition does not fully capture the expectations that both government and community have of higher education. This includes: the unique experience of participation in a university education; and the skills and services this delivers, not only to students themselves, but, in the case of regional universities, to their communities and economies.

“The *Performance Framework for Regional Universities* includes core, optional and institution-specific measures, along with a submission process, so that universities can be judged on the unique role they serve within the sector and their local communities.

“It also applies weighting and context to retention measures to avoid punishing regional universities for successfully expanding access to higher education to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“We hope that the Government will consider the framework as it develops performance measures to determine funding increases for universities from 2020,” Professor Hill said.

“We consider the framework to be a robust basis to assess university performance across the sector.”

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A PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES - SUMMARY

The framework comprises:

- Six core performance measures: employer satisfaction, student satisfaction, and participation rates of equity groups in addition to weighted attrition and completion rates and employment outcomes;
- Three optional performance measures which universities can select from a pre-approved list of measures, including regional employment outcomes, staff incentives for teaching performance and community engagement, workplace learning, and economic value to the community.
- Up to one institution-specific measure, approved by government, which could include measures such as the success of dual sector arrangements or support for regional disaster relief.

Performance to be evaluated through a submission process to government in which universities have the opportunity to articulate the strategic context and narrative behind relevant performance measures and explain institutional differences.

Submissions should be evaluated by an independent and impartial process/panel, including assessment by a broad range of respected members of the Australian higher education sector.

Nous Groups' *Performance Framework for Regional Universities* report is available at: http://www.run.edu.au/cb_pages/publications.php