

Federation University response to the National Priorities Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) consultation paper

Federation University is a multi-sector provider, delivering skills, training, education and applied research across regional Victoria and in Brisbane. We work closely with industry partners, locally, nationally and globally, to provide a high-quality student experience, co-design and co-deliver TAFE and higher education programs and address workforce needs and employer demand.

Federation is committed to facilitating meaningful links between the University and industry, including strong pathways for the realisation of tertiary aspirations amongst students and increasing the level of tertiary education, skills and pathways to employment. We are proud to have established strong WIL partnerships with a range of industry partners, and we are continuing to expand these connections.

We strongly support the NPILF and look forward to further engagement with the Commonwealth Government to progress and implement.

Principals, Metrics, Indicators and Distribution Method

Overall the Principles outlined in the NPILF consultation paper provide a reasonable level of guidance for universities in developing indicators. However, the principle to 'improve uni-industry engagement to enhance student employability' focuses on employment and does not identify self-employment generation, where this also needs to identify genuine start-up or own business activity rather than insecure employment in the gig economy. This should be reviewed and refined to cater to this increasing focus in universities.

The metrics should ensure simple reporting. If this criterion is met, 12 metrics proposed are reasonable provided they are not too generic to distort the focus of the Demonstrator and Innovator components. The Indicators are sufficiently flexible to cater for non-post-secondary learners, especially in-work reskilling and upskilling. However, the Metrics are too rigid to provide effectively for these learners and provision of learning to them.

We support per-EFTSL rate + base + loading distribution.

We suggest the following changes to the proposed metrics:

Review and refine:

- The 'proportion/increase of academic workforce actively from industry' is too broad. A significant number of casual/sessional staff who are looking for full-time employment or are employed in the gig economy with limited relevant industry experience fall into this classification. It needs a qualifier.
- Proportion of final year students rated as 'job ready': rated by whom and what is the validity of the assessment? We suggest other metrics are used for example, proportion of students who are employed/self-employed within 6 months of graduation, given the direct correlation between effective WIL and improved employment outcomes.

Consider adding as options:

- Increased engagement in accelerator/incubators/start-ups/spin-outs
- Increase in number of industry certifications forming part of course curriculum e.g. AWS, Tableau, Cisco, IBM, UiPath, Adobe

Measure and maintain WIL activities

Federation believes that existing frameworks employed by universities to monitor and measure the success of WIL activities can be developed to support the NPILF metrics, and by 2024 there will be a coherent measurement capability similar to other data capture mechanisms for reporting.

We suggest the Government considers establishing a common platform and portal to support universities in promoting WIL activities. In addition, a common and consistent framework to measure the quality of WIL activities across the sector would be of value.

Promoting WIL activities to SMEs and industry

University engagement functions are highly sophisticated and incorporate platform and portal support. However, there could be an additional function to include R&D incentive opportunities on a Government platform/portal, particularly for SMEs.

Students can be encouraged to consider WIL and employment opportunities through the Extension of the National Skills Commission portal to include FAETHM/Burning Glass style data with labour market data together with job advertisement/categorisation/PD information and links to QILT and University websites.

Best practise partnerships and exemplars

- Federation's 25-year transformative and innovative partnership with IBM delivers a strong pipeline of job-ready IT graduates, and has achieved the co-designed and co-delivered Bachelor of IT, Graduate Certificate in IT, Bachelor/Masters in Cognitive Enterprise, the P-TECH program supporting disadvantaged secondary students, and the launch of IBM's Neurodiverse employment program, which supports students with autism.
- Federation is delivering a new Master of Teaching program, an 18 month 'higher apprenticeship' in partnership with the Victorian Government, where students will be employed in schools as para-professionals during the course of their study.
- Our Bachelor of International Sport Management will be delivered with the World Academy of Sport and incorporates applied industry expertise and connections in combination with practical academic insights to ensure graduates are prepared to succeed.

For additional information please contact:

Professor Duncan Bentley
 Vice-Chancellor and President
 Federation University
 T +61 3 5327 9242
 M +61 488 665 257
vc@federation.edu.au