Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

UNPUBLISHED REPORT

The Cost and Effectiveness of Enabling and Related Programs In Australian Tertiary Education

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Terms and Acronyms

Please note that throughout the course of this report the term ‘Enabling’ program refers to those programs used as a basis for reporting ‘Enabling’ students in official statistics under the terms and conditions specified in the ‘Enabling’ Guidelines published annually in the *HECS and Fees Manual* (refer Attachment 1). The use of the capitalised ‘E’ is to enable a distinction to be made between the use of the term in its official reporting sense and its more general dictionary sense (relating as it does to some form of empowerment).

The term ‘Enabling-like’ program has been adopted for use in this report to refer to programs that parallel ‘Enabling’ programs in practice.

Throughout the report ‘university’ or ‘higher education institution’ is used to refer to the 41 publicly funded higher education institutions (37 publicly funded universities plus Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Australian Maritime College, Avondale College and Marcus Oldham College) and two private universities (Bond University and University of Notre Dame Australia) which make up the Australian ‘higher education sector’ or ‘university sector’ (AVCC 1999a).

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector refers to the tertiary education sector in Australia concerned with preparation for work, and which incorporates the: *“sum of the Commonwealth, State and Territory public systems [the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system] and training provided by private providers and employers”* (TAFE NSW 2000, p.2).

The following acronyms have been used in this report:

AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
ANTA	Australian National Training Agency
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee
BHERT	Business Higher Education Round Table
C. of A.	Commonwealth of Australia
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training (prior to 1996)
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (1996-8)
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (since 1998)
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DTIR	Department of Training and Industrial Relations, Queensland
HEC	Higher Education Council

HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NTDE	Northern Territory Department of Education
OECD	Office of Economic Cooperation and Development
QTAC	Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre
TAFE	Technical and Further Education (refer above)
UAC	University Admissions Centre (New South Wales)
TEPA	Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority, Brisbane
UK	United Kingdom (comprising England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)
USA	United States of America (with US used as adjective)
VET	Vocational Education and Training (refer above)
VTAC	Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

Executive Summary

Background and Aims

The Commonwealth introduced a provision in 1988 which allowed disadvantaged students undertaking certain bridging/preparatory and academic learning support programs offered by universities to be reported as 'Enabling' in official statistics and be counted under Commonwealth funded load. This provision was introduced to support programs which sought to increase opportunities for access with success to higher education for groups that were under-represented in higher education by affording these students a Commonwealth funded (and, since 1989, HECS-exempt) place during their period of Enabling study. The provision is governed by a set of Guidelines (Attachment 1) that includes stipulations that those eligible must be non-overseas students who are members of identified disadvantaged groups and who are studying either in non-award programs that provide preparation for university study or structured academic learning support held concurrently with award study.

This report describes the outcomes of a project to review Enabling provision and its value as an equity strategy in the context of Australia's National Framework for Equity in Higher Education (DEET/NBEET 1990). The principal concern of the study has been whether the Enabling provision represents a cost-effective means of Commonwealth support for these types of programs or whether superior options exist. As such the project considers the options available for preparing students for higher education study and supporting access pathways for disadvantaged groups to the full range of university courses.

Function of Enabling and Related Programs

Enabling and related programs represent a diverse range of approaches which exist as part of a spectrum of provision designed to encourage and support increased participation in higher education by under-represented groups. Bridging programs serve a dual role in preparing students who require additional preparation for further study, and in providing an entry qualification for students who lack such a qualification. Supplementary programs can provide 'preparation after enrolment' through academic learning support held concurrently with award study and generally serve to promote student retention and success through targeted intervention.

Enabling and related programs are intended to address the outcomes of disadvantage. This concerns more than the 'topping up' of skills and knowledge, and explains the explains the emphasis given to issues such as student awareness and confidence building, the positioning of students to make informed choices, the need for students to experience the culture of higher education, the need for universities to open up and liberalise their culture, etc. An understanding of how these programs operate must be based on an understanding of the nature of disadvantage as it affects each group.

Use of Enabling Programs

The Enabling provision has been used by a majority of universities, covering all types of institution, as a means of providing or supporting entry pathways for indigenous students. For disadvantaged groups other than indigenous peoples the provision has been used less consistently, tending to be utilised by those universities serving the most disadvantaged groups in society – particularly regional universities – and to target those disadvantaged groups afforded the highest priority by government – particularly socioeconomically disadvantaged and rural/isolated groups. However, a number of existing policy and implementation issues have prevented the provision from achieving its full potential in terms of improving participation by these disadvantaged groups. In particular, administrative practices in some universities reporting Enabling students have become less than effective over a number of years, and the existing reporting and accountability arrangements covering the Enabling provision are flawed. These issues can be readily addressed through ensuring more rigorous administrative practices to manage Enabling student enrolments, and moves to ensure that universities report regularly on key aspects of program implementation and performance to secure regular dialogue between universities and government on the implementation of the provision.

The provision for reporting students against supplementary Enabling programs is used less frequently than for bridging program provision. This is somewhat surprising given the degree of activity in academic learning support undertaken in universities and their perceived importance as strategies for improving student performance. There is considerable scope for the increased use of supplementary Enabling programs as strategies for disadvantaged students. Particular note is made of the potential for the provision to be used to support strategies linked to special entry schemes, and to the potential for its use to support strategies of the type now emerging in the sector which involve structured academic learning support conducted concurrently with a reduced award study load to serve as an alternative to pre-enrolment preparatory programs for students with significant preparatory requirements. At present, some supplementary Enabling programs appear poorly targeted to identified disadvantaged groups.

Enabling provision has been used very infrequently to prepare and support prospective postgraduate students, although this role is allowed for in the Enabling Guidelines.

Pre-enabling programs and articulated pathways which take account of severe educational disadvantage exist in some areas but are neither well coordinated nor comprehensive across the educational sectors. The need for comprehensive articulated pathways into further study is particularly pressing in indigenous education. Meeting the needs in this area represents a particularly vexing issue.

Utility and Performance of Enabling Programs

The outcomes of the study suggests that Enabling programs in their current form are regarded by students and equity practitioners as fulfilling a number of important functions in relation to further education and preparation for study. The success rates of these programs are comparable to award programs when the characteristics of the student group and 'non-participating/inactive' students are accounted for. When similar considerations are made, the transfer rates from these programs into award study generally appear quite sound and the subsequent performance of prior-Enabling students in award study is on a par with comparable groups. One-in-three Enabling and Enabling-like students report as having completed Year 12, and some students present with experience in university study. This suggests that the role of these programs to prepare students for university study may remain attractive to students who otherwise already qualify for entry, particularly for a proportion of students who have experienced a significant absence from formal study. This conclusion is also supported by the observation that preparatory/bridging programs remain popular alongside well established special entry schemes that can provide direct entry to award study, often on similar selection criteria.

There is no evidence that alternatives to Enabling provision represent more cost-effective options for preparing educationally disadvantaged students for higher education. In fact, the provision of relatively long-duration preparatory programs to disadvantaged groups offered by universities is largely dependent on the Commonwealth's Enabling provision as a principal funding mechanism. The results of the study indicate that Enabling programs serve a particular clientele which as a group presents with certain differences from the groups served by programs funded through different mechanisms. Enabling students tend to be older, more motivated, more focussed on continuing study in the host institution and have greater family and work commitments than their TAFE Enabling-like counterparts. They present as more obviously disadvantaged and less financially secure than their university Enabling-like counterparts.

Programs offered through universities have generally been developed in response to local needs. Bridging programs are typically aimed at providing entry into the host institution. The wider use of these programs to serve as a general entry qualification into tertiary study is limited by the difficulties inherent in other institutions and State Admissions Offices determining the entry standard afforded students by successful completion of individual programs. The system of recognition of access programs which is in place in the UK, which has served to ensure the transportability of the qualification obtained and to provide a clearer focus on the role of these programs for higher education preparation, may serve as a useful model for consideration for adaptation to the Australian context.

Enabling Guidelines

There currently exists a disparity between the methods used to identify disadvantage as a basis for selecting students into Enabling programs and the identifiers of disadvantage used to monitor equity performance in the university

sector. There is a need for government and universities to come to a common understanding of what criteria are used in practice to target Enabling programs. The programs' current emphasis on addressing the needs of educationally disadvantaged individuals and their role in serving adult, including 'second chance', learners are not formally recognised.

There also currently exists a disparity between the perceived objectives of Enabling provision by different stakeholder groups relating in particular to what constitute valuable outcomes for these programs. While there is a need for stakeholders to develop a common understanding of the objectives for Enabling provision to ensure agreement on how the performance of these programs should be assessed, there is also a need to ensure that other positive outcomes of Enabling study are recognised and valued.

Overall, there is a considerable lack of awareness or understanding of the Enabling Guidelines amongst the general equity community.

Enabling Reporting and Statistics

Overall, current statistical collections are inadequate for the purpose of supporting informed policy decisions. Potential benefits to implementing Enabling provision lie in the development of processes by universities to introduce a formal exit point for Enabling study, in developing more rigorous process for reporting the characteristics and performance o Enabling programs, in encouraging the reporting of non-award courses that meet the definition of Enabling programs in the statistical collections, and in including an additional data element relating to Prior Qualification designated as 'Enabling' in the statistical collection to facilitate the tracking of prior-Enabling students through the sector. The study has also highlighted the difficulties inherent in comparing program performance across sectors based on the differences in the large national datasets currently maintained by the higher education and VET sectors.

Sectoral Involvement in Enabling Provision

A major conclusion of the study is an appreciation of the desirability of a multi-sectoral approach to bridging/preparatory provision. The current situation in New South Wales presents a robust model where a strong and diverse portfolio of enabling programs are offered by both the university and VET sectors providing the public with choice and representing a sound basis for individuals to access programs and pursue educational pathways that meet their own particular needs.

Universities themselves bring much to bridging/preparatory provision through making available considerable infrastructure and resources to students, and through providing a 'real university' experience to students preparing for entry into award study at a university. The presence of enabling programs in universities also supports the development of an environment within higher education that values diversity and appreciates its benefits, helping to prevent elitist non-inclusive models from re-emerging in the sector which prejudice

opportunities for non-traditional students. The risk of such 'reversion' will be heightened as demographic projections suggest a steady rise in school leaver candidates for tertiary entry over the next decade.

While excellent bridging/preparatory programs exist in TAFE, the inconsistency of provision between States and Territories and the continuing debate in the sector over the appropriateness of TAFE offering programs which do not have immediate vocational outcomes pose risks to the effective offering of Enabling-like provision by this sector.

Excellent examples of cross-sectoral collaborations in enabling provision exist – with the Certificate in Tertiary Access to Griffith University offered through the Logan Institute of TAFE in Brisbane serving as a model for a successful program of this type. Both local and international experience suggests that collaborations involving further and higher education institutions in this area tend to work best when they occur as a result of a perceived mutual need and benefit by the institutions concerned; while mandated or legislated collaborations appear to fare less well.

Best Practice in Enabling Provision

Elements of best practice identified that would enhance the capacity of bridging programs to maximise their performance include: providing a student-centred approach to learning, providing a flexibility of approach to cater for a diversity of needs, and possessing clearly defined objectives against which performance is regularly reviewed. Elements which promote student retention, completion and transfer to award study include: taking steps to ensure that all students have a clear understanding of what is required for satisfactory completion of the course and what this entitles the student to in terms of access to places in specified courses; providing a completion 'qualification' which serves as an incentive to students to complete Enabling study; providing students guaranteed entry into an award program upon successful completion of bridging study; providing some degree of discipline-specific content or focus to provide students with a clear career focus and stronger links with particular disciplines; and the adoption of strategies that more closely integrate enabling provision with award study.

HECS Exemption Status

The importance of the HECS-exemption status afforded Enabling students is difficult to assess. However, it appears likely that the imposition of HECS on students studying in Enabling programs would have some impact on demand for these programs. Certainly a key finding of the student survey conducted as part of this study is that a principle difference between the student bodies of Enabling and fee-paying university-based bridging programs is that the former group presents as less financially secure; and the literature highlights the relative tentativeness and vulnerability of students in pre-enrolment bridging programs.

International Models

The study of international models suggests the desirability of Enabling and related programs being considered within a wider framework than as purely equity strategies. The linkages between widening participation in higher education and lifelong learning as has emerged recently in Europe and New Zealand, and the linkages between widening participation and initiatives to enhance student retention in the USA provide useful models for consideration in the Australian context.

Future Research

The report concludes with suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Background

Since 1988, a category of student known as 'Enabling' has been recognised in official university statistics. This provision was introduced to allow universities to include disadvantaged students studying in preparatory programs as part of Commonwealth funded load. This was seen as a significant equity initiative by providing a means of funding bridging places for members of identified disadvantaged groups as a strategy for:

> *Enhanced student mobility, particularly in terms of transfers between TAFE and higher education, and broadened access to higher education (and its full range of courses)…* (CTEC 1987, p. 75).

When the Higher Education Contributions Scheme (HECS) was introduced in 1989, Enabling students were one of only a few categories of students nominated as HECS-exempt. Since that time, the Guidelines governing the Enabling provision have allowed for HECS-free Commonwealth-funded places to be provided for students in a range of preparatory and academic learning support initiatives targeting identified disadvantaged groups (see Attachment 1).

In early 1999, the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) advertised for tenders for a research team to study the effectiveness of Enabling and similar courses in enabling people from designated target groups to undertake higher education award courses. The effectiveness and cost of the courses was to be compared with alternative modes of providing equivalent assistance. Funding for this study was to be provided under the Evaluations and Investigations Program (EIP).

Several factors prompted the decision to conduct a review of Enabling provision at this time:

- a steady rise in the number of Enabling students reported, representing an increasing cost to the Commonwealth, particularly through the HECS-free status of such courses;
- government concerns about the apparent effectiveness / performance of these programs as reported in official statistics;
- an awareness of alternative models for provision both in the VET sector and within higher education;
- an awareness of apparent inconsistencies in Enabling reporting; and
- the fact that no formal review of this provision had been conducted since its inception in the mid-1980s.

In April 1999 the tender for this study was awarded to a joint proposal submitted by the University of Southern Queensland (USQ), the Bremer Institute of TAFE and the Queensland Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority (TEPA).

This report describes the outcomes of this study.

1.2 The concept of 'Enabling'

The term 'enabling' is used in the tertiary education sector in two senses: its generic sense and its use as a category in official higher education statistics reporting in Australia. (Throughout this report, when referring to the latter 'official' sense, 'Enabling' will be written with a capitalised 'E'.) As the use of the term in its differing contexts has the potential to cause confusion, the different potential interpretations of its meaning will be discussed briefly.

The term 'enabling' is widely used in educational circles. The literal dictionary meaning of *"enable"* is as follows:

a. *To give power to (a person): to strengthen, make adequate or proficient.*

b. *To impart to (a person or agent) power necessary or adequate for a given object: to make competent or capable.*

c. *To supply with the requisite means or opportunities to an end or for an object.*

d. *To regard as qualified or competent: to ascribe qualifications to.*

e. *To make possible or easy.*

f. *To become able, gain strength or power.* (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 200).

Each of these forms apply in some way to the meaning ascribed to 'Enabling' as used in official DETYA statistics. The term can be used in a variety of contexts depending on exactly *what* it is that individuals are being empowered, authorised or supplied with the means to do. For example, the Ministerial Advice from NBEET entitled: *The Enabling Characteristics of Undergraduate Education* (Commonwealth of Australia 1994) concerns: *"how universities develop in graduates the capability and willingness to continue learning throughout their lives"* (C. of A. 1994, p. 1). By contrast, the UK-based 'Enabling Education Network' is: *"an information-sharing network aimed at supporting and promoting the inclusion of marginalised groups in education worldwide"* (EENET 1999), clearly interpreting the term 'enabling' within a different frame of reference.

In official higher education reporting the term Enabling is rigorously defined by way of Guidelines published in *The HECS and Fees Manual* (DETYA 2000a; Attachment 1).

Under the terms of the Guidelines as currently in place:

- Enabling programs may be bridging - undertaken prior to award study - or supplementary - a structured program taken concurrent with award study;
- Enabling students must be *"non-overseas students";*
- Enabling programs must enable members of stated disadvantaged groups to take up a Commonwealth-funded higher education place;
- study in Enabling programs cannot be credited to award study; and
- the decision to report Enabling students – and hence the responsibility for them being granted a Commonwealth-funded place but with HECS-exemption status – is left to the reporting institution.

The identification of disadvantage is based around membership of one of the broad groups identified in *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET/NBEET 1990) as being under-represented in higher education – these being:

- people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds - expressed in the Guidelines as *"being from lower socio-economic groups"* prior to 2 June 1997 (DEET 1995), and *"being from low socio-economic background"* after an amendment dated 2 June 1997 (DETYA 2000a);
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People - expressed in the Guidelines as "being Aborigines" pre-1997, and "being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent" post-1997;
- women - expressed in the Guidelines as "being women" pre-1997, and "being women in non-traditional areas" post-1997;
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds - expressed in the Guidelines as "being of immigrant background" pre-1997, and "being from non-English speaking background" post-1997;
- people with disabilities - expressed in the Guidelines as "being disabled persons" pre-1997, and "having a disability" post-1997; and
- people from rural and isolated areas - expressed in the Guidelines as "coming from outer metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas" pre-1997, and "being from rural or isolated backgrounds" post-1997.

It is worth noting that there is considerable difference between some of the definitions prior to and following the guideline amendments made on 2 June 1997. For example, *"being from lower socio-economic groups"* suggests current membership of the Low socioeconomic status (SES) group while *"being from low socio-economic background"* suggests someone who may currently belong to any socioeconomic group but who was a member of the Low SES group at some (presumably critical) time in their past. Similarly, there is clearly a difference between the scope of a program targeting *"... women"* and programs targeting *"... women [studying or wishing to study] in non-traditional areas".* The potential for confusion or differing interpretations is compounded by the fact that there is no stipulation in the Guidelines as to exactly how groups should be identified. In particular, there is no indication of how the groups specified in the Guidelines should relate to the group identifiers defined by Martin (1994) which have otherwise been used as a basis for DETYA reporting.

With regard to the two types of programs specified:

> *A bridging programme is provided for particular types of disadvantaged students who need preparation prior to commencing a formal award course – it is offered to students to enable them subsequently, if they so choose, to commence an award course …* (DETYA 2000a).

The phrase: *"– it is offered to students to enable them subsequently, if they so choose, to commence an award course …"* was added as part of the wording amendment put in place on 2 June 1997. It altered the sense of the statement which had been in place prior to the amendment quite significantly. The original statement read as follows:

> *A bridging programme is one which is conducted prior to the commencement of a formal award course, and which is provided for particular types of disadvantaged students who need additional preparation prior to commencing the award course* (DEET 1995, p. 47).

The amendment served to state more implicitly that the aim of the bridging program was to enable a student to commence an award course. Importantly, the amendment noted that the student was empowered (the literal dictionary meaning of 'enabled') with making this decision, to commence an award course: *"if they so choose."* This is in line with a group of principles which Devlin (1997, p. 5) indicated had been put in place: *"within the Department of Employment, Education and Youth Affairs to help shape policy and program development."* Included amongst principles describing 'equality of opportunity for all', 'the need for reliable information to stakeholders' and 'the need for incentives and encouragement rather than prescription' were:

> *There should be no compulsion or pressure on individuals, nor 'social engineering' to arrive at arbitrary targets imposed by central planners; …[and] the emphasis should be on individual choice and responsibility, with Government intervention to ensure that all groups have a fair go, and that the 'dice are not loaded' against certain groups* (Devlin 1997, p. 5)

Another point to note is that the Guidelines both before and after the 1997 amendments referred to bridging programs providing for *"… disadvantaged students who need (additional) preparation prior to commencing an (formal) award course."* There is no stipulation as to how this 'need' should be assessed and there is no stipulation that the bridging program be needed by the student as an entry qualification. Each of these points will be taken up later in this report in discussions directed towards determining how well Enabling bridging programs have met the terms of the Guidelines in practice.

With regard to supplementary programs, the Enabling Guidelines state:

> *A supplementary programme is provided for students subsequent to their commencement of a formal award course … and which is undertaken concurrently with their course. Such programmes provide supplementary teaching in the form of a separate, discrete programme which is systematic and structured and aimed at addressing difficulties experienced by*

> *particular types of disadvantaged students undertaking the award course* (DETYA 2000a).

Here the emphasis is on the supplementary programs being undertaken concurrent with award study, on them being: *"systematic and structured"* and on the programs addressing the impact of an individual's disadvantage.

1.3 Scope of the project

The study focuses primarily on the bridging and supplementary courses which have been used by universities as a basis for reporting Enabling students to DETYA. A third group of programs that parallel these in practice as offered by any educational sector have been identified and, for the purpose of this study, referred to as 'Enabling-like' programs.

Defining the programs to be considered in this latter category was a significant concern for the project. All universities have introduced a diverse range of strategies in an effort to broaden the student base and enhance student success, in line with the pressures and obligations inherent in the move from 'elite' to 'mass' higher education (Trow 1973) and the social and economic responsibilities that have developed with it. These programs often have a role in equity provision and may be thought of as 'enabling' in the broadest sense of the term. However, it was not the intention of this study to consider all of those programs that might generally be considered as enabling or which have equity as part of their aim.

To keep the project manageable, Enabling-like programs were identified as those that resembled programs of the type that are or have been used as a basis for reporting Enabling students. It was therefore necessary to first consider the range of programs that make up Enabling programs.

The first observation is that the Enabling provision represents an equity strategy for providing opportunities for *"non-overseas students"*. Hence programs which cater for the needs of international students have been excluded from this study unless they also provide opportunities for significant numbers of domestic students – typically migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). (It is worth noting here that prior to 1997 the Guidelines referred to *"fee-paying overseas students"* as being excluded, thus allowing non-fee-paying overseas students to be included in the programs. Hence until the time that government-sponsored programs for international students (such as ADAB) were phased out in the mid-1990s, some international students were reported quite legitimately as Enabling students. However, as programs targeting this group are largely now of only historical interest, they were not studied in any depth in this project.)

The most common programs reported to DETYA as Enabling are various types of bridging programs which prepare students for entry into an award program who, for whatever reason, require such preparation. A range of selection criteria are used by such programs, based on local factors and differing interpretations of the disadvantaged criteria. Programs may seek to provide a general education

experience which qualifies students to apply for entry into a range of award programs, others provide more specific preparation for identified course streams – such as Humanities, Science/Technology, Law or Medicine. These programs are generally of a sizeable duration, typically extending over at least 40 nominal contact hours.

There are numerous programs offered by universities which are similar in type to the range of bridging programs used as a basis for reporting Enabling students to DETYA but which do not take advantage of the Enabling provision. These may involve fees to students, but other funding mechanisms are also involved.

Similarly, a range of bridging and preparatory programs are offered by the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector which are clearly of this type – most notably programs such as the Certificate in Adult Tertiary Preparation (ATP) offered by Queensland TAFE, the Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC) offered by NSW TAFE, the nationally accredited Certificate in Spoken and Written English which is partly funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), and various preparatory communications, mathematics and science/technology courses.

In a consideration of this study 'drawing the line' between which bridging programs to include and which to exclude is not straightforward. For example, there are literally hundreds of short preparatory and orientation programs of perhaps a few hours to a few days duration which have essentially similar aims to the Enabling programs but which simply operate at a lesser scale. By necessity these shorter duration programs have largely been excluded from consideration in this study, although their role in 'enabling' students is freely acknowledged.

Supplementary programs are less commonly used as a basis for reporting Enabling students but examples do exist, including the University of Technology Sydney (UTS)'s Academic Development Program which involves academic learning support structured into subjects and Charles Sturt University (CSU)'s on-line Study Link units. However, although supplementary Enabling programs are not common, the range of academic learning support programs available in the tertiary sectors is immense. All universities offer academic learning support in some form and the scope of the project could easily have blown out to include a consideration of a wide variety of academic learning support and general student support strategies. Again, while freely acknowledging the importance of this diverse group of programs in 'enabling' students to undertake successful award study, it was necessary to limit the scope of those programs actually studied as a part of this project.

To keep the project manageable it was necessary to develop some guiding principles for identifying programs of interest. Based on the types of courses generally reported as Enabling to DETYA, it was concluded that courses of interest to this study would generally have the following characteristics:

- A course of study addressing the skills and knowledge necessary to enable a disadvantaged student to access a tertiary education award program with a reasonable chance of subsequent success in study.

- The course should qualify students for entry to a level of course equivalent to an undergraduate award program.
- The course of study should be based on a set curriculum.
- The course should be of a reasonable duration – over 40 contact hours being used as a starting point.
- Courses should be conducted primarily for domestic students.
- Programs may be conducted prior to the commencement of award study or occur in parallel with award study.

A list of the Enabling and Enabling-like programs identified is included as Attachment 2.

Basing the scope of this study on the *HECS and Fees Manual* definition of Enabling has served to place outside of the scope of this study many programs that many would consider as 'enabling' in the broadest (generic) sense and which represent strategies that often attempt to achieve the same types of aims as those which have been identified in this study as 'Enabling' or 'Enabling-like'. Programs of this type which have **not** been included in the scope of this study include the following:

- School links, outreach, and short 'taster' programs (King *et al.* 1993).
- Recruitment and awareness schemes – including 'summer schools' and 'discovery programs' for targeted groups in secondary schools. Technology summer schools for girls in middle secondary school is a common strategy for women in non-traditional areas (WINTA) – one has been held annually at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) since 1987. As well, each year the Faculty of Science at the University of Sydney offers the Science Gifted and Talented Discovery Program for identified Years Eight to 10 students in the form of three day workshops held during school holidays; while the University of Adelaide invites schools to nominate participants to participate in the Siemen's Science Fair over three days in January (Hayford 1998).
- Special entry schemes. Most, if not all, universities have special entry schemes which provide 'access through the door' based on specifically identified criteria, including disadvantage. Many include some form of targeted support. UAC (1999) represents a comprehensive overview of the university access programs available in New South Wales. For examples in other States reference is made to Daniels (1992); McNamara (1995); Mulligan & Benson (1995); and Tranter (1998). Related access strategies may involve targeted places, quotas for identified groups or entry score loading.
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer arrangements (Alaba *et al.* 1993; NBEET 1994d; Ramsay *et al.* 1997).
- Orientations and transition support programs (Andrews & Van Dyke 1998).
- Upgrading and extension programs; that is, programs primarily intended to enable students to improve their entry qualification or strive specifically for distinction grades.

- General Indigenous support unit activities (HEC 1997; DETYA 1999b).
- Learning Centres / Academic Skills Centres and 'drop-in' support centres – except if organised into structured courses. Good reviews of academic skills adviser programs exist - for example Kennedy (1995) - and a general position description for the Academic Language and Learning Skills Adviser position has recently been developed (Carmichael *et al.* 1999).
- Targeted equity tutors or tutoring assistance, including the Aboriginal Tutoring Assistance Scheme (ATAS) (NBEET 1994b).
- Flexible learning strategies (NBEET 1994e).
- Learning strategies embedded in award programs and curriculum reform initiatives (Grenfell 1998), including inclusive curriculum initiatives (Hutchinson 1997).
- Mentor and role model schemes; for example, University of Tasmania (2000).
- Peer tutoring / Supplemental Instruction programs (Martin *et al.* 1993; Hill *et al.* 1998).
- Liaison officers, central contact points and information offices.
- Disability support programs (NBEET 1994c; Redway & Heath 1997).
- Student counselling and careers advice.
- Resource rooms and resources subsidisation schemes.
- Organised student networks and support groups – although these are often an outcome of bridging programs.
- Alternative assessment arrangements.
- Loans, childcare assistance and scholarships.
- Accommodation support schemes.

For an overview of the full range of tertiary access and equity initiatives available the reader is directed to the *Good Universities Guide to Access & Equity Programs* (Ashenden *et al.* 1997), the published higher education equity plans and indigenous education strategies (DETYA 1999a and 1999b) and equivalent publications covering the VET sector (ANTA 1997).

1.4 Research aims and strategies

The aims of the project included:

- Identification of all relevant Enabling and Enabling-like programs across the higher education and training sectors.
- Understanding the basis for decision-making by Enabling providers in the conduct of these programs.

- Documentation of the full range of benefits afforded by study in Enabling and Enabling-like programs as perceived by the various stakeholders in the process.
- Assessment of the objective performance and cost-effectiveness of Enabling and Enabling-like courses using existing statistical collections.
- Identification of any anomalies in the means in which Enabling students are reported and examining the validity of existing information concerning these students.
- Identification of elements of 'best practice' in Enabling provision.

The expected overall outcome from this study was an improved basis for policy and decision-making in terms of the management of Enabling and related program provision.

Information and outcomes from each phase of the project were compared and analysed together to obtain a comprehensive picture of the cost, status and performance of Enabling and Enabling-like programs offered by different types of institutions to the full range of disadvantaged groups across educational sectors. The layered multi-method approach included the following elements:

- Preparatory Phase:
  - Literature review and international models.
  - Review of available programs in Australian tertiary education.
  - Case Studies: Understanding the range of programs and how they operate.
- Stakeholder Input:
  - Student survey.
  - Practitioner seminars and on-site visits.
  - Call for submissions.
- The Determination of Relative Effectiveness and Cost:
  - Analysis of program performance: published performance and statistical analysis.
  - Program costing.
  - Cost-effectiveness analysis.
- Review of Enabling Reporting

1.5 Summary

- This report describes the first detailed review of the Enabling provision since its introduction in 1988. The study considers the range of programs that are used as a basis for reporting Enabling students ('Enabling' programs) and programs that parallel these in practice ('Enabling-like' programs).

- The principal concern of the study is whether the Enabling provision represents a cost-effective means of Commonwealth support for preparatory and support programs for members of identified disadvantaged groups or whether superior options exist. As such the project considers how best to provide and support access pathways for disadvantaged groups to the full range of university courses, and to support their subsequent retention and success.
- The Enabling Guidelines are included as Attachment 1. Enabling programs are defined as programs against which Enabling students may be reported. Key features of Enabling provision:
  - non-overseas students from six disadvantaged groups are targeted;
  - programs can be either 'bridging' (pre- award enrolment) or 'supplementary' (conducted concurrently with award enrolment);
  - programs must qualify student for, or support, access to award courses;
  - programs must not contribute credit to an award;
  - Enabling students are granted exception from paying HECS for study in the Enabling program; and
  - the responsibility for use of the provision rests with the institution.
- The scope of the study has needed to be defined quite carefully while appreciating that the range of 'programs that parallel Enabling programs in practice' is potentially extremely broad.
- The research approach was to collect information through a range of sources in appreciation of the limitations inherent in any single approach – utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods within a multi-method, multi-layered approach. The approaches taken included:
  - a quantitative analysis of the characteristics and performance of Enabling and related programs;
  - a large survey of students entering a wide range of bridging programs;
  - an extensive series of consultation exercises with stakeholders;
  - a comprehensive analysis of the programs currently being offered across both the university and VET sectors in Australia;
  - a review of Enabling reporting;
  - a consideration of international models; and
  - comprehensive reviews of the national and international literature.

1.6 Outline of the report

Chapter 2 is a literature review intended to provide a broad context for the study. It is divided into the exploration of a number of themes relevant to a consideration of Enabling programs: issues associated with the identification of disadvantage;

barriers to higher education access by disadvantaged students; the history of the Commonwealth's Enabling provision; the nature of bridging and student support programs in the Australian higher education context with regard to their structures, aims and content; issues relevant to a consideration of adults in tertiary study; the relevance of HECS-exemption as a benefit for Enabling students; and a review of the available literature on the performance of Enabling and Enabling-like programs.

Chapter 3 considers Enabling-like provision in a number of relevant international contexts: the initiatives for widening higher education participation in England associated with recent policy changes aimed at supporting lifelong learning, and initiatives to address equity and the needs of 'the under-prepared student' in US higher education are studied in depth. Overviews are also provided of the situation with access programs in Scotland, and preparatory and academic learning support provision in the post-secondary education sectors of Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. This is intended to provide an international context for the study and a basis of comparison between varying approaches and philosophies in enabling provision worldwide.

Chapter 4 discusses the nature of Enabling reporting and the institutions that choose to offer and report students against Enabling programs. Enabling programs are profiled in the context of broader equity program offerings, in particular comparing Enabling and Enabling-like programs.

Chapter 5 considers a number of case studies of Enabling and Enabling-like programs in Australian higher education as a means of illustrating the diversity of programs that fall under these categories and as a basis for consideration of aspects of best practice.

Chapter 6 describes the outcomes of an exercise undertaken to seek broad stakeholder input into the study. This was pursued through conducting practitioner seminars in major capital cities, conducting on-site visits to speak with staff and former Enabling students at Australian tertiary institutions, and a general call for submissions.

Chapter 7 describes the outcomes of a student survey exercise intended to collect demographic data and attitudinal information from commencing students of different types of Enabling and Enabling-like programs across Australia.

Chapter 8 describes the outcomes of a quantitative analysis of the characteristics, performance and cost of Enabling and Enabling-like programs.

Chapter 9 is a general discussion intended to bring the major points of the study together and to highlight issues arising. It also includes a call for further research on identified themes.

All chapters, with the exception of Chapters 5 and 9, conclude with a summary. The report also includes a full bibliography and supporting attachments.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: The Australian Context

Enabling programs are intended to achieve a number of aims in Australian higher education. They serve to prepare and to serve as an access route (for the case of bridging programs) or to support an access route (for the case of supplementary Enabling programs) for prospective students with particular needs, they position some students to improve their subsequent performance in tertiary study, and they serve as one group of strategies for broadening educational participation by identified disadvantaged groups. In the Australian context, these programs have been perceived and supported principally as equity strategies and have been most influenced by those policy developments primarily geared to opening up university access and broadening higher educational participation.

This literature review is intended to provide a context for the broad study of Enabling provision that is the subject of this report. It is divided into the exploration of a number of specific but related and overlapping themes relevant to a consideration of Enabling programs overall:

- Section 2.1 considers issues associated with the identification of disadvantage in the context of Australia's national framework for equity in higher education
- Section 2.2 discusses barriers to higher education access by disadvantaged students.
- Section 2.3 describes the history of the Commonwealth's Enabling provision.
- Sections 2.4 and 2.5 discuss the nature of bridging and academic learning support programs in the Australian higher education context with regard to their structures, aims and content.
- Section 2.6 considers issues relevant to a consideration of adults in tertiary study.
- Section 2.7 reviews the literature on the performance of Enabling and Enabling-like provision in Australian tertiary education.
- Section 2.8 considers the relevance of HECS-exemption as a benefit for Enabling students.

2.1 Educational equity and the identification of disadvantage

> *A well-educated population has become a defining characteristic of a modern society. Education is seen as a mechanism for instilling democratic values, as well as the means for developing the productive and social capacity of the individual … There is ample evidence that more secondary and tertiary education for young people improves their individual and social opportunities. There is also growing evidence, albeit less direct, of a payoff for whole societies from increasing the educational attainment of the whole population* (OECD 1999, pp. 1, 2).

A major aspect of Australia's thrust to 'increase the educational attainment of the whole population' has been based on targeting programs to broaden representation in higher education to those whose educational potential has not been fully achieved as a result of the impact of disadvantage. The national framework for equity in higher education in Australia was defined in *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET 1990). Through regular monitoring by government, annual reporting by institutions and the use of financial incentives and seed funding the government and university sectors have sought to pursue a series of national equity objectives and targets. The approach has been based on targeting groups identified as disadvantaged by virtue of their under-representation in higher education, with the overall equity objective of the sector defined as follows:

> *To ensure that Australians from all groups in society have the opportunity to participate successfully in higher education. This will be achieved by changing the balance of the student population to reflect more closely the composition of the society as a whole* (DEET 1990, p. 2).

Six under-represented groups were identified: people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women (with an emphasis on non-traditional areas of study, and research), people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), people with disabilities, and people from rural and isolated areas. 'Official' definitions for these groups, to be used as a basis for monitoring and reporting, were not put in place until five years after the release of *A Fair Chance For All*, in the form of the Martin (1994) equity group identifiers, with amendments for some of the more difficult-to-define groups being introduced (for disabilities) or sought (for socio-economic disadvantage and rurality) well after that time (Western *et al.* 1998). Two of the groups were defined by Martin on the basis of postcode of home residence – low socio-economic status (Low SES) and people from rural and isolated areas. The other four groups were based on self-identification, with people from NESB defined as people born overseas who speak a language other than English at home and who arrived in Australia within the past ten years; non-traditional areas of study for women being confirmed as engineering (to which a female enrolment target was set at fifteen per cent of total enrolments in *A Fair Chance For All*) plus agriculture, architecture, business and science (where the benchmark for 'equitable' female participation was set at forty per cent); and with standardised question prompts being used to tease out disabilities likely to interfere with study according to their type.

The performance of the sector in improving participation levels for disadvantaged groups has been mixed. The 'official' view (Gallagher 1998) is that women and NESB are now over-represented in higher education and so are afforded a low priority by government; the participation of people with disabilities has improved significantly but the priority for this group remains high, particularly as the interests of this group are protected in some quite powerful State and Federal antidiscrimination legislation (Lawrence 1996); while the other three groups remain significantly under-represented and so are afforded a high priority by government (Skuja 1997; Dobson & Birrell 1998; Dobson *et al.* 1998). However, the identification of disadvantage represents a complex issue and many concerns exist:

- The severe limitations inherent in the postcode methodology, particularly as used to identify Low SES – fully articulated by Martin (1994) but largely unheeded since – have created a situation where severe doubts exist as to the ability of the official statistics to be used as a reliable basis for decision making on issues concerning socioeconomic disadvantage in the higher education context (Western et al. 1998).
- The current rural/isolated postcode method fails to account for important parameters such as proximity to regionally-based tertiary education facilities which have a major bearing on access to further education opportunities (Western et al. 1998) – a situation now partly rectified by the tendency for official statistics to separate considerations of 'rural' from 'isolated'.
- Reasonably sound statistics for people with disabilities have only recently begun to be collected and it is not clear if the observed 'improvements' in this area represent genuine improvements to participation or simply an artefact of improved information collection strategies and higher levels of disclosure.
- The decline in emphasis now afforded women in non-traditional areas does not consider that, despite significant improvements in business and science overall, female participation remains a little below the 40 per cent accepted (but arbitrary) equity threshold for agriculture and architecture, and has not yet reached the fifteen per cent level set for engineering in *A Fair Chance For All* as a target for 1995 (Dobson et al. 1998). There is also the phenomenon that Cobbin (1995) referred to as the 'academic gerrymander' applying to a consideration of women's participation in higher education. Noting the over-enrolment of women in teaching, nursing and arts, this author argued that:
-

  > *... women continue to enrol in studies frequently associated with a low status career [however] If all enrolments (men and women) in teacher education and nursing courses are excluded, women's participation remains at less than 50% among university undergraduate courses* (Cobbin 1995, p. 17).

  Conceding that teaching and nursing diplomas had been upgraded to bachelor degree level, Cobbin concluded that incorporating teacher education and nursing into the higher education sector had merely changed the definition of a university program: *"rather like an academic gerrymander"* (Cobbin 1995, p. 18). It is significant in this context that Gallagher (1998) noted the improvement in female participation in science overall, masked a continued under-representation of women in computer and information science, mathematics and physical sciences.
- Although NESB are over-represented in higher education overall, it is clear that very strong performance by people from Asia and Eastern Europe is tending to mask under-representation by immigrants from other ethnic groups, particularly from southern Europe and the Middle East (Birrell et al. 1996; Skuja 1997). It can be argued that in affording this group a low priority for equity in higher education, insufficient consideration is given to the observed disadvantage in other areas that

> this group is required to overcome. For example, it is readily demonstrated that people from NESB are over-represented in the unemployed in Australia, achieve more variable workplace outcomes than their ESB counterparts, and are less effectively serviced by the health, justice and public housing systems than are the Australian population as a whole (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1994).

An important consequence of the nature of the Martin (1994) identifiers is that they have served to fundamentally alter the way in which some groups are now perceived. For example, imposing a 'ten-year in Australia' limit on people from NESB serves to exclude immigrants of longer standing who may be no less disadvantaged by Australia's dominant Anglo-Celtic culture than more recent arrivals. But the change in perception has been most profound for the grouping defined on the basis of socio-economic status. Whereas *A Fair Chance For All* had described the group in terms of coming from a socio-economically disadvantaged *background* (an emphasis shared by the Commonwealth's Enabling Guidelines – Attachment 1), the postcode method recommended by Martin emphasises *current* socio-economic status – which represents a quite different target group. Such differences can add to the range of interpretations made of the Enabling Guidelines with regard to the identification of members of disadvantaged groups.

Finally, as with any non-inclusive definition, the groups identified in *A Fair Chance For All* also served to promote inaction for disadvantaged individuals who were not captured by the group identifications used. For example, residents of the 'mortgage belt' outer suburbs of the large State capital cities, which tend to have poor infrastructure and public transport, may be equally as 'isolated' from educational access as rural residents (Mukherjee 1996). (It is interesting that the Enabling Guidelines prior to amendments made in 1997 did not define regionality on the basis of 'rural and isolated' but rather: *"coming from outer metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas"* (DETYA 1995).) Another group whose situation has tended not to be considered as a direct outcome of the way in which the equity framework has operated is young men, who complete secondary education at a lower rate than young women, are over-represented in youth unemployment and who exhibit poorer retention and progression in the first year of university study (Ainley & McKenzie 1991; Skuja 1997; Dobson *et al.* 1998; Mackenzie 1999) but whose consideration in higher education equity circles has frequently been treated as taboo (Bull & Clarke 1997). Excluding groups from consideration can have real consequences; as noted by NBEET (1994b, p. xi): *"disadvantage can amount to discrimination through neglect."*

As will be considered later, the problems associated with 'official' sector-wide definitions of disadvantage are generally overcome by individual programs adopting definitions considered more relevant to the individual circumstances of their student body, often by considering disadvantage on a case by case basis. This creates some significant differences between the perceptions of officials and practitioners in terms of both who should be targeted and who is actually targeted by equity initiatives, including Enabling programs. This does not necessarily

represent a problem so long as there exists a common understanding between those operating at the different levels of the limitations of the approaches used, the practical implications of these limitations, and the need to overcome these limitations in practice. An important consideration is not to confuse indicators intended to routinely monitor sector performance with a view to identifying potentially undesirable trends at the macro level (which is the function of the Martin identifiers) and the criteria used to identify individual disadvantage as a basis for targeting equity initiatives and actually selecting students for entry into the programs.

It needs to be appreciated that alternative system-wide definitions of disadvantage exist in the context of Australian tertiary education from which ideas may be drawn. For example, the *Access and Equity Policy for the VET System* in Queensland targets disadvantaged groups similar to those defined in *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET 1990) – women, people with a disability, residents of rural and remote communities, people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), Aboriginal people, and Torres Strait Islander people – and includes a number of other groups: Australian South Sea Islander people; the long-term unemployed; the educationally marginalised, including people with literacy and numeracy needs; people who have been displaced through industry and enterprise restructuring; people in custody and detention centres; and older people (DTIR 1999). UAC (1999) describes the entry requirements for the Educational Access Schemes offered by New South Wales' universities and includes detailed criteria for eligible disadvantage under which students can apply which include categories such as 'disrupted schooling', 'financial hardship', home environment and responsibilities' (with subcategories such as 'severe family disruption', 'adverse study conditions', 'excessive family responsibilities' and 'abuse'), 'English language difficulty', 'personal illness/disability', 'school environment' ('disadvantaged or isolated school' and 'HSC by distance education') and a number of 'unlisted disadvantages'. There may be real advantages in rethinking the system-wide basis for identifying disadvantage which utilise the experience gained through the use of other models as a starting point.

2.2 Access barriers to disadvantaged groups

One of the most fundamental barriers to increasing the representation of traditionally under-represented groups occurs at the level of accessing award study. The importance of such barriers cannot be underestimated as there can be no equity without fair access.

Australia has a high level of access to tertiary study on world standards. This is evident by the fact that although Australia ranks below the OECD average in terms of the proportion of its adult population having attained upper secondary education, it ranks fifth highest in terms of the proportion of its adult population having tertiary education (BHERT 1999). However, all in all there is some evidence to suggest that university admissions systems have traditionally been biased against non-traditional students and members of disadvantaged groups, with the degree and nature of this bias varying between universities and

influenced by their underlying assessment philosophies (Fulton 1992; Gardner 1993; Gale & McNamee 1995; Beasley 1997a and 1997b). Featuring largely in this bias has been an over-reliance on the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) as a basis for selection, which was described by Pascoe *et al.* (1997, p. xiii) as:

> *…one of the restrictive features of the Australian system, during a period where a more open national system is required, and [which] obscures the existence and value of other entry methods.*

These authors point out that:

> *The Australian system is not biased in a structural sense, in that particular social categories are not routinely excluded from university entry at the point of selection. It is biased in a systemic sense, in that alternative methods of entry are all indirectly linked to the TER* (Pascoe et al. 1997, p. xiv).

Pascoe *et al.* (1997) referred to the need for universities to broaden their attitude to access pathways and to adopt more inclusive attitudes as a critical issue for improving opportunities for non-traditional students. This need is appreciated by some universities. For example, many universities now have an admission scheme which adds bonus points to the TER scores of target groups in recognition:

> *…that TER scores do not provide a fair means of access for all students, and [which]… seek to redress that unfairness by this process* (Beasley 1998, p. 13).

The need is also appreciated by government as indicated by DETYA's announcement of its intention to:

> *[make] available $1 million for the exploration of alternatives to the TER as a basis for admission to higher education* (Gallagher 1998, p. 7).

There have long been calls for: *"the development of new systems of assessment and more liberal admission (as opposed to selection) policies"* (Power *et al.* 1987, p. 5). Since that time universities have made progress in broadening entry criteria. Rosenman (1996) discusses strategies to create pathways for non-traditional students that include: Open Learning, delayed entry into professional courses, the broader use of credit transfer and recognition of prior learning (RPL), the use of bridging programs and the inclusion of criteria other than a single entry score as a basis for entry; as well as concepts such as a 'Year 13' and a 'Foundation' or common first year for award programs. Non-traditional students who lack traditional qualifications are now encouraged to approach university study through a range of bridging provision, special entry arrangements (which may involve sitting for a Special Tertiary Admissions (STAT) Test), or the seeking of RPL (for example, Murdoch University (1999)). Gallagher (1998) noted that these pathways were being increasingly utilised with 22 per cent of undergraduate commencers in 1997 being admitted on the basis of special entry mechanisms and a further 7.3 per cent being admitted on the basis of TAFE studies. Enabling

programs form yet another means of supporting this broadening of access pathways for disadvantaged groups.

However, cultural, as well as structural, changes are required on the part of universities. As Cohen *et al.* (1997, p. 22) noted:

> *Values, particularly those relating to equity, can be located in the assumptions underpinning admissions procedures. The strength of these values will depend on the philosophy informing the admissions procedures and criteria used and may take different forms.*

These values can readily be expressed through the level of discretion exercised by universities in accepting non-traditional students. For example, Cohen *et al.* (1997, p. 96) found that for New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory universities:

> *In most years former TAFE students faced greater difficulty in gaining admission to university than other applicants, especially HSC students [*and] *Former TAFE students have great difficulty in gaining admission to courses with high cut-offs*.

Ramsay *et al.* (1997, p. xv) in a study of cross-sectoral linkages at the University of South Australia reported that:

> *generally, students were not finding the process of credit transfer easy [*with a suggestion for] *... an increased level of automation of credit transfer ... to facilitate the often confusing and bureaucratic credit transfer processes be put in place*.

Attitudinal changes to the value of a diverse student body and the validity of providing educational opportunities to non-traditional student groups appear to be required within the higher education sector as a whole.

2.3 The history of Enabling provision in Australian higher education

In 1984, the Government's broad policies of social justice and equity prompted it to request of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) that it bring forward recommendations for:

> *... ways of achieving rapid, substantial and sustained reduction in the mismatch between the composition of society and the social composition of tertiary institutions, individual faculties and the tertiary sector as a whole* (cited in DEET 1993, p. 194).

In this climate the higher education sector began to respond.

> *In 1987, CTEC undertook an assessment of the extent to which institutions were already operating equity programs. It was found that over the 1985-*

> *87 triennium, some progress had been made in reviewing entry procedures, in the establishment of bridging or introductory programs, and in the modification of course structures* (DEET 1993, pp. 195-6).

To enable the expansion of bridging programs, being developed for groups such as women and indigenous students at the time, CTEC lobbied successfully to government to allow these students to be reported against funded load. In its *Report for the 1998-90 Triennium*, CTEC made the following observation about bridging programs:

> *Special groups of potential students are sometimes denied access o university, or to particular courses of study at university, because they lack skills in particular subjects. The low participation rates of women in science and engineering courses … are cases in point. One way of removing these barriers to participation is to provide bridging courses for special groups of students. However, as things presently stand, universities are not able to count enrolments in such courses as part of their student load. If the mounting of bridging courses is an essential part of a university's plan for access and equity, then there is a good case for enrolment in these courses being counted in the student load. The Council endorses the Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness that CTEC review its policy on the calculation of student load in relation to enrolments in bridging courses* (CTEC 1987, p. 46).

As a result the Commission sought to:

> *… allow institutions to include in their calculation of student load the full-time equivalents of students participating in approved bridging courses"* (CTEC 1987, p. 13).

'Approved' courses were defined under a set of Guidelines and 'Enabling' students were identified as a distinct group in official statistics. Students so reported were funded in the same way as other Commonwealth-funded students, albeit at a modest funding level. When the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) was introduced in 1989, the category of: *"students in approved bridging and supplementary courses that are additional to award course load"* (Dawkins 1988b, p. 22) was included as one of a limited number of HECS-exempted groups which were allowed. This did not arise as a recommendation of the Wran Committee which initially recommended the introduction of a student contribution scheme, nor of the HECS Policy Committee set up in the wake of the release of the *White Paper* to implement the reform (Professor Meredith Edwards, personal communication) but appears to have been introduced into the policy by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) during its development.

Two major motivations have been put forward for making Enabling students HECS-exempt. One is the emphasis given at the time to expanding opportunities for disadvantaged students, as is clearly evident in contemporary policy documents including the Ministerial Statement: *A New Commitment to Higher Education In Australia* that announced the introduction of the HECS (Dawkins 1988b). In this context it was feared that the imposition of HECS may serve to

deter students from identified disadvantaged groups from participating in bridging programs. The second major reason related to arguments put forward to justify the introduction of HECS. There was a perception that it was justifiable to ask students to contribute to the benefits that they derived from higher education. However, as Enabling programs provided no qualifications in themselves then it was deemed inappropriate for students to have to pay for their participation in these courses. Enabling provision was also seen at the time as being beneficial in assisting some institutions to meet funded load at a time when Commonwealth funded places were expanding considerably (Bruce Milligan, personal communication).

The principles and ideas that had sparked Enabling provision and many of the access and equity initiatives developed during the mid-to-late 1980s were finally articulated in *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET 1990) which defined the national framework for equity in higher education in Australia that has remained in place since that time.

The Enabling provision has continued since that time as a significant Commonwealth-supported equity initiative. Enabling programs seek to address each of what the First Assistant Secretary of the Higher Education of DETYA has identified as the:

> *Three major issues which the Commonwealth and universities need to address to help students from a range of backgrounds … enter and succeed in higher education…*
> - *facilitating access for all who can benefit;*
> - *providing an environment where informed choices can be made; and*
> - *helping students to achieve successful progression and completion of an education which meets their needs* (Gallagher 1998, p. 7).

However, despite the emphasis given to Enabling programs as an equity initiative, the broadening of the participation base in higher education has also been driven by other agendas. Most obvious are the group of factors associated with what Trow (1973) described as a move from 'elite' to 'mass' higher education and the associated move to 'lifelong education' (Slattery 1989). Both of these major trends are responses to broad-ranging and fundamental changes to society prompted by globalisation, the introduction of increasingly sophisticated communications and information technologies, the shortened half-life of knowledge and the changing nature of work (Slattery 1989; Dolence & Norris 1995; Taylor *et al.* 1996). Governments all over the world have found it desirable to support this broadening of participation in their higher education sectors based on considerations as diverse as supporting international competitiveness through fully exploiting human capital, avoiding the social problems which arise from an unequal distribution of educational opportunities, and supporting social justice objectives (Clarke 1997).

The diversification of the student body has created a situation where a larger number and proportion of students are coming from backgrounds and situations outside of the traditional recruitment base of elite higher education. This has created the need for a broadening of the range of strategies available to

prospective students to prepare them for a higher education experience and for supporting them once enrolled. As Rosenman (1996, p. 13) put it:

> *The transition from elite to mass provision of higher education has been a catalyst for the emergence and growth of a demographically and scholastically more diverse student body, in contrast to the traditionally narrow population of high achieving school-leavers. Multiple pathways are needed to cater for students with different backgrounds and entrance qualifications.*

In providing a basis for non-traditional students to enter higher education with a reasonable expectation for success, Enabling programs also potentially serve these broad social agendas.

2.4 Bridging programs into higher education

2.4.1 The development of university bridging programs

University bridging programs (which are also frequently referred to as preparatory programs[1]) typically represent courses of study that provide an alternative entry qualification to university; whether a 'tangible' qualification is awarded or not for course completion. (Although, as is discussed in Chapter 4 this is somewhat of an oversimplification as bridging programs include courses to which students may be referred on the basis of need *after* enrolment but prior to commencing award study - effectively representing a 'condition of enrolment' rather than a 'qualification for entry' in these cases.) Bridging programs therefore can assist in overcoming the hurdle of lacking traditional entry qualifications. However, bridging programs have a broader role in preparing students for tertiary study through providing extensive preparatory studies for the prospective students. In this way bridging courses are different to the special entry / educational access programs that are now commonly available which allow entry to award programs by non-traditional students who meet particular criteria, often based on disadvantage – although the latter can include some level of orientation and preparation, and are frequently associated with targeted support after enrolment. University bridging / preparatory programs can be seen to address both of what West (1993, p. 146) referred to as: *"The two interrelated dimensions of access in higher education, opportunities for progression and educational orientation."*

Bridging programs such as the University of Newcastle's Open Foundation Course, University of New England (UNE)'s University Preparation Scheme, and the Flinders University Foundation Course (which date back to 1974, 1979 and 1981, respectively) were developed as strategies to provide mature age students who lacked traditional entry qualifications the wherewithal to access degree

[1] Preparatory programs are commonly referred to as 'access programs' in the UK. However, in Australia the term 'access program' is used to refer to special entry schemes which do not involve extensive preparatory study but allow entry to award programs after application based on specified criteria and possibly some form of special admissions test. Such schemes are now often associated with some form of ongoing student support.

courses (Stanley 1995; Beasley 1997a; Cantwell *et al.* 1999). These programs emerged as a result of the expansion of adult education – which was boosted in the late 1970s during a period of poor demand by more 'traditional' students - but there was a significant and conscious equity focus to these programs which typically provided opportunities for groups that are now formally recognised as disadvantaged. However, the major growth in the development of bridging programs has occurred since the higher education reforms of the mid-to-late 1980s and has had equity as its principle driving force. The availability of targeted equity funding (such as through the annual Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) allocation to universities from the Commonwealth), seed funding for equity initiatives (available through mechanisms such as the Commonwealth's National Priority (Reserve) Fund in the late 1980s) and the availability of the Enabling provision in official reporting, within the context of the growth of a broader social justice framework, enabled and encouraged a significant number of universities to expand into this type of preparatory provision.

Cobbin and Martin (1993) reviewed the state of development of higher education preparatory programs in each of the years 1992-4. Their findings provide a useful overview of the state of developments at that time. They reported a fairly stable number of programs of around 75-80 over the three-year period, but with an underlying dynamic nature with some programs dropping out and others entering during that period and a degree of program rationalisation very much evident. The principal target groups were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (25 per cent of programs in 1992), Mature Age (16 per cent), Educationally Disadvantaged (13 per cent) and open entry (12 per cent), with only a small percentage of programs appearing to specifically target women, the socio-economically disadvantaged, people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and people with disabilities (the latter being represented by one program only in 1994), and none specifically targeting people from rural and isolated areas – although it was clear that women and the socioeconomically disadvantaged were actually heavy users of the general preparatory programs overall.

The majority of programs were one or two semesters in length, were offered in a range of modes (except for indigenous education programs which were predominantly full-time) and varied in size according to the criterion group – with small programs being most prominent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and large programs tending to be associated with open entry. Some degree of automatic entry to degree study after course completion was guaranteed for around 55 per cent of courses; with the exception of courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people where guaranteed entry was a feature of closer to 90 per cent of courses, and for courses targeting Mature Age where this figure was closer to 10 per cent. On the whole the course qualification was formally accepted only by the institution offering the course, with broader formal recognition of preparatory qualifications being limited. Course completion rates were quoted as 60 per cent on average with completion rates higher for Educationally Disadvantaged (73 per cent) and Open Entry (69 per cent) than for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (52 per cent) and Mature Age (54 per cent). Fee structures varied considerably across programs. Courses targeting the Educationally Disadvantaged emphasised general preparatory content ('top-up'

basic skills, personal development, academic and university orientation) with only one-in-three of these programs including discipline–specific content. However, discipline-specific content featured more heavily in courses targeting the other groups, with three-in-four of the Open Entry programs being made up of discipline-specific content alone.

2.4.2 The targets of university bridging programs

In many ways the situation with bridging programs which Cobbin and Martin described in 1993 appears to fit very well with what the authors of *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET 1990) appear to have intended. The latter document recommended the strategies that universities should adopt to help improve equity for each of the identified disadvantaged groups. Included in its recommendations were *"bridging and supplementary support programs"* (aligned with the concept of Enabling which was well in place by that time) for people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (p. 14) and people from rural and isolated areas (p. 44) – two of the disadvantaged groups most linked with educational disadvantage; *"bridging courses, especially in mathematics and science"*, and *"supplementary support"* for women (p. 27); and *"bridging courses linked specifically to entry to award courses"* for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (p. 21). Bridging programs were not seen as being major strategies for people from NESB and people with disabilities although the need for *"adequate support programs"* (p. 35) was identified for people from NESB.

The emphasis noted by Cobbin and Martin (1993) on targeting bridging programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the high rate of guaranteed entry for members of this group on completion of the program, the emphasis on basic skills formation for the most educationally disadvantaged groups, and the lack of emphasis on this strategy to target people from NESB and people with disabilities are all consistent with the recommendations included in *A Fair Chance For All.* The apparent lack of emphasis in targeting programs to Low SES and rural/isolated people appears to go against the 1990 recommendations. However, it is likely that programs targeting the 'Educationally Disadvantaged' will include significant proportions of Low SES and, if the student catchment allows, rural/isolated individuals as well (Dawkins 1989; Ainley & McKenzie 1991; Broadbent 1993; NBEET 1995b; Patton & McMahon 1997; Clarke *et al.* 1999; HREOC 2000). Most of the strongest correlates of educational disadvantage have poverty and/or socio-economic disadvantage as underlying themes, be it via limiting access to services (Smith 1985; Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1994), the educational and professional level of parents (Williams 1987; Jamrozik 1991), or through influencing the type of school attended (Anderson & Vervoorn 1983; Williams 1987; Jamrozik 1991).

The link between educational disadvantage and people who experienced disadvantage as a result of living in regional areas is also clearly established. DEET (1990 p. 47) noted that:

> *Rural students are often disadvantaged through limited subject choice and lack of access to study resources such as libraries. As well, many people in*

> *country regions are required by their work or circumstances to be more mobile than people in metropolitan areas, so they are often adversely affected by varying standards of assessment and accreditation in schools.*

Educational disadvantage is frequently associated with living in rural and remote areas through factors including the availability and accessibility of schools; the quality of curriculum, staff, facilities and resources such as information technologies; the risk of disrupted schooling; and the opportunities for supportive learning experiences (HREOC 2000). In commenting on schooling in regional areas, Ainley and McKenzie (1991, p. 16) note:

> *Advantages are seen to reside in security provided in smaller more supportive environments, the greater possibility for providing pastoral care, the organisational flexibility that is possible, and the potential for greater community involvement. Disadvantages typically concern restrictions on curriculum range in the secondary years, high levels of teacher turnover and a high proportion of inexperienced teachers, lack of access to cultural facilities, and a limited range of occupational models in the community.*

Attitudinal differences towards education also exist between rural and urban school students. James *et al.* (1999, p. xv) highlights:

> *…large and striking differences between the attitudes of school students towards their education, particularly on the possibility of going to university. … On average, rural students, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, are significantly less likely than urban students to believe that: a university course would offer them the chance of an interesting and rewarding career; and that their parents want them to do a university course. Also, rural students are significantly more likely than urban students to believe that: a university qualification is not necessary for the job they want; their families cannot afford the costs of supporting them at university; the cost of university fees may stop them attending; and there is no point in them going to university.*

These authors conclude that: *"Rurality and lower socioeconomic status combine to produce the greatest educational disadvantage"* (James et al. 1999, p. xvi).

Many preparatory programs are seen as providing opportunities for mature aged students, including so-called 'second chance learners' who had missed educational opportunities earlier in life. Some differences occur in the strict definition afforded a 'mature aged' student. A minimum age is generally cited, typically between 21 to 25 years of age (Hester 1994). There is a need to consider the degree of overlap between this mature age group and identified disadvantaged groups. West *et al.* (1986) in an extensive study of mature age university students reported that those students entering study who had been early school leavers or who had obtained HSC but had not proceeded to higher education at the time tended to come from disadvantaged backgrounds. This observation is supported by studies of the social profile of students entering undergraduate study through special entry arrangements at the University of New South Wales (Magin 1992; 1998). Gallacher *et al.* (1995, p. 13) observed more generally that:

> *... there is evidence ... that adult returners, entering through access courses, are likely to have considerably higher proportions of students from socio-economic groups which are traditionally under-represented in higher education than are found among school leaving entrants.*

In a discussion of the University of South Australia's Diploma of University Studies program, Fopp and Ellis (1997, p. 12) noted that:

> *One of the characteristics of the target group is that they were forced to leave school largely because of the opportunity-cost to their parents of keeping them at school (the costs borne and the income foregone) and the expectations about what was appropriate education (including gender expectations). These are structural and systemic inequities; they are major sources of disadvantage.*

Other evidence supporting the possible association between a background of socio-economic and financial disadvantage, and adult 'second chance' learners appeared in the report of a Mature-Age Students' Survey conducted by the University of Western Australia (UWA 1998) where 55 per cent of respondents indicated that neither of their parents had attended university, a factor which correlates strongly with Low SES or low family income status (Terenzini *et al.* 1996) and a very high proportion of respondents, 81 per cent, agreed that the financial costs of studying represent a very real strain for mature-age students, again suggesting individuals undergoing the impact of some degree of financial disadvantage. Perhaps the most direct evidence for an association between adult education, second chance learning and a background of disadvantage comes from the observation that access programs in the UK, which are targeted on the basis of a minimum age criteria of 21 years, are significantly over-represented by members of disadvantaged and minority groups (Gallacher *et al.* 1992; Varlaam *et al.* 1994; refer to section 3.1.3).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples represent another major target of university bridging programs. As the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australian society, a consideration of the importance of appropriate educational pathways for indigenous Australians serves to highlight many of the key issues associated with university bridging programs per se.

Devlin (1997, p. 5) noted that despite an improvement in participation by indigenous Australians in higher education over the last decade:

> *Indigenous people are still under-represented in higher education ... [and] they remain one of the most disadvantaged groups in higher education, particularly as their success and retention rates are only about 80 per cent of that for other groups.*

A more recent report into the status of indigenous education in the Northern Territory highlights the continued crisis being experienced in indigenous education across Australia. NTDE (1999, p. 2) found for indigenous educational outcomes:

- *an overall decline in attendance at the same time that enrolments have been increasing;*
- *actual attendance in terms of days per week being worse than system averages would show;*
- *actual enrolments omitting more compulsory school-age children than system participation rates would show;*
- *poor retention rates beyond Years 7 and 10;*
- *advice from employer bodies that, more than ever before, they are unable to find people who meet basic literacy and numeracy entry criteria for employment and training;*
- *a repeatedly stated observation from Indigenous elders that their children and grandchildren have lesser literacy and numeracy skills than they do.*

The nature of the disadvantage imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can be viewed at a number of levels. At perhaps the most obvious level, Ainley and McKenzie (1991, p. 18) reported that:

> *Some of the influences which have been seen to be barriers to Aboriginal participation in education are low socioeconomic status; ... poverty; ... geographic isolation; ... inappropriate teaching methods, curricula, and school environment; ... and the absence of aboriginal staff in schools.*

Bourke *et al.* (1996) reported on the impact of the current education system ignoring differences in student learning styles, failing to provide for indigenous students to learn in a culturally appropriate manner, basing assessment on white-middle class references, basing curriculum on issues that lack relevance to the life experience of minority group students and generally promoting the need to conform to the dominant culture's expectations and values which is frequently opposed by indigenous peoples.

A study into the plight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people sponsored by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation looked more closely into the causes of disadvantage for this group (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1994). It considered such factors as income poverty, unemployment and disadvantage in education, health and housing as representing the *outcomes* of disadvantage rather than the *causes*. The *actual* historical *causes* of disadvantage for Indigenous Australians were defined in terms of dispossession, the elimination of social and economic options through a long history of an abuse of rights, and the consequences of prolonged exclusion from access to education, employment, housing and health. This study went on to define the causes of continuing disadvantage in terms of the proportion of indigenous Australians living in remote locations, continuing ethnocentrism and discrimination, a lack of control over the establishment and operation of services and institutions, and the psychological and spiritual impact of the 'European invasion' (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1994). Lukabyo (1995, p. 1) refers to the educational disadvantage experienced by this group as stemming from a:

> *legacy of neglect … stemming from dispossession, deprivation, poor health and poor education in particular, perpetuated from generation to generation by various Australian governments.*

Addressing disadvantage which is so entrenched presents immense challenges for the higher education sector. The wide use of Enabling bridging programs to service indigenous students in universities (refer to Chapter 4) is an indication that most universities see these programs as playing a key role in meeting the needs of this particularly educationally disadvantaged group.

2.4.3 The pedagogy of university bridging programs

A commonly held view is that bridging programs are 'remedial programs' intended to assist students to 'top up skills and knowledge' in order to reach an 'entry standard' into award study. Such a description is both unpalatable in terms of its reliance on 'deficit' language and philosophies, and totally inadequate in describing the breadth and complexity of the role played by bridging programs. Certainly there is a need for these programs to address the development of skills and knowledge in line with the needs of the educationally disadvantaged target groups, and hence an emphasis on generic and academic skills are key elements of the bridging program curriculum. However, it is suggested that the key to understanding the nature of bridging programs targeting disadvantaged students and the role which they serve, is an appreciation that they are not simply about 'topping-up' knowledge and skills but, rather, are about overcoming the broad range of outcomes of disadvantage. These outcomes have resulted not only through barriers that have prevented knowledge and skills acquisition but are also due to a range of social, cultural and economic factors including: different attitudes, beliefs, expectations and value placed on education (Chapman 1992); lowered aspirations and lack of encouragement in educational attainment (Ainley & McKenzie 1991; Williams *et al.* 1993b); lack of support, insecurity, competing priorities, and social isolation (NBEET 1994b); a limited understanding of higher education processes and culture (NBEET 1995b; Whiteley & Neil 1998); and a limited awareness of educational opportunities and value (Clarke 1997).

NBEET (1994b, p. 24) note that:

> *The educational disadvantage associated with members of groups of relatively low socio-economic status is not a question of inherent characteristics. Rather it reflects social forms, conduct and attitudes; it is a consequence of limited, even foreclosed opportunities, often realistically depressed aspirations and lowered expectations. For instance, the possibility of higher education as a choice may not arise, nor be seen as appropriate or attainable. These responses are part of the processes by which educational disadvantage is socially constituted. They become starkly evident in the institutional context of universities which have traditionally been saturated by elitist values.*

Preparatory / bridging programs typically involve a broad-based pedagogy. For example, McGill and Box (1997, p. 4) in commenting on the overall structure of the UniAccess bridging course offered by Murdoch University stated that:

> *The overall structure of the course was informed by the principle of supporting and encouraging the students in their intention to enrol at the University; to enable them to feel confident about their ambitions; to have a selection of skills that would be vital in their study agendas; a deep familiarity with the University, its staff, academic structures and facilities; as well as a broad appreciation of the requirements of academic study.*

Murphy *et al.* (1992) surveyed students who had undertaken undergraduate study after completing the University of Western Sydney (Nepean)'s New Start (now Unistart) Program. Benefits of the program cited other than academic/scholastic preparation included:

> *'motivation', 'better communication', 'familiarisation with university surroundings', 'building confidence', 'was enjoyable', made friends', 'established study groups', 'saw faces that I knew at university', 'learned skills that were useful at university' and 'gave second chance'* (Murphy *et al.* 1992, pp. 99-108).

As bridging / preparatory Enabling programs have as a fundamental aim the need to overcome the effects of disadvantage, the pedagogy of these courses must be based on a sound understanding of the outcomes of disadvantage.

Townshend (1995) notes that adults bring varied life experiences or 'baggage' to their new learning situation. This baggage is influenced by the learner's psychological, emotive and cognitive states and serves to colour their perceptions and abilities based on their past experiences. This can prove an asset if the learner can draw on them to add meaning to an idea. However, such baggage can also form 'dispositional barriers' whereby a learner may be faced with unwillingly having to 'unlearn' something that they had formerly accepted as 'true', or with having to deal with unacceptable feelings of incompetence or unknowing. Failing to cope with such barriers can contribute to negative feelings of ambivalence, anxiety, and perhaps hostility on the part of the learner. Hence, program pedagogy needs to embed within it strategies that address the needs of students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds and carrying the 'baggage' of that disadvantage. As one example, the STEPS bridging program (Coombes 1997, pp. 2-3) offered at Central Queensland University (CQU) identifies:

> *... the following characteristics [incorporated] into the design and organisation of the curriculum [of STEPS] which have succeeded in helping many of these students become confident and capable writers, researchers, learners and thinkers: small classes; group work; cooperative learning and peer support; integration of skills and processes throughout the subject studied; breadth and relevance of support for students; learning networks; valuing non-competitive learning (except against oneself); positive affirmations and new affirmations (for 'damaged' learners); valuing of life-skills and diverse learning styles; transformative learning; challenging world views.*

These authors also report a wide range of teaching and learning techniques to overcome individual differences and learning needs.

Generic skills acquisition appears to be a fundamental aspect of bridging program curricula. In describing the subjects chosen for the Diploma of University Studies offered at the University of South Australia, Fopp and Ellis (1997) noted the need to include along with the content-specific units a generic skills unit *Introduction to Tertiary Learning* in which:

> *…students could demonstrate their ability with spoken and written language, with elementary research skills, and organising answers to questions around a clearly stated argument and a procedure* (Fopp & Ellis 1997, p. 5).

as well as the subject *The Self as Learner:*

> *…to develop and reinforce confidence, examine expectations of students and staff, and discuss such practical issues as time management and personal organisation* (Fopp & Ellis 1997, p. 5).

It is well recognised that persons from disadvantaged groups tend to have diminished self-esteem compared with persons regarded as advantaged. An important aspect of bridging program provision therefore is that they seek to enhance self-concept, self-confidence and self-direction (Ripple & Jaquish 1981; Hiemstra & Sisco 1990; James 1994). The pedagogy must also seek to help students to overcome previous negative perceptions of education and the impact of negative educational experiences (Dashwood *et al.* 1992).

It has been noted that the overall lack of family experience of higher education among Low-SES groups contributes to their limited awareness of the nature of university study and the range of opportunities for entry; to a failure of some to properly understand the potential value of higher education; to a failure to obtain appropriate career guidance; and to a general inability to 'negotiate the system' efficiently and effectively (Clarke 1997). It is interesting in this respect to note the positive effect that has been reported for university bridging programs in changing expectations and orientations to higher education among disadvantaged groups. In her evaluation of the effectiveness of the Certificate in Tertiary Access to Griffith University offered through Logan Institute of TAFE, Bond (1996, p. iv) reported:

> *… positive changes in perceptions of higher education amongst the participants and their children [and cited this as] a significant factor in the 'breakdown' of the cycle of socio-economic and educational disadvantage.*

Time management is often included in the curriculum of bridging programs as an essential skill for adult learners trying to balance concomitant responsibilities of family and employment (West *et al.* 1986; Price e*t al.* 1991).

Another common curriculum component is career planning and awareness. This can be important in promoting future retention as US research: *"indicates that clarity of career choice is a particularly significant factor in student persistence"* (Boddy & Neale 1998, p. 52). It also ties in with the importance of improved

employment, career change and income enhancement as motivations for adult students undertaking bridging programs (Collins & Penglase 1991).

It has been stated that a key role of bridging programs is that they provide an opportunity for people with little familiarity with university study the ability to 'benchmark' their abilities and capabilities. This is evident in the aims of the University Preparation Scheme (UPS) offered by the Australian National University (ANU):

> *UPS courses were envisaged as fulfilling three main objectives: (a) to impart knowledge about the subject matter … (b) to develop the necessary skills for university study; and (c) to provide a setting in which students could gain confidence in their academic abilities and gain a recognition of what degree of scholarship and commitment was required for university study.*

Similarly, Collins and Penglase (1991) found that a major motivation cited by students, particularly females, for undertaking the Open Foundation Course at the University of Newcastle was 'to prove to myself I could do it'. This aligns with the point highlighted by Stone (1998) of the need for adult learners to overcome fear and self-doubt which frequently act as barriers to academic progress. This also aligns with the role of bridging programs to empower individuals to make decisions of whether they should continue on with study or not – *"being in control of and responsible for one's own learning"* (James 1994, p. 216). It provides a 'taster' of a university experience, to enable students to assess if they have the necessary aptitude to study at a tertiary level, and to check if concomitant responsibilities can be managed along with study. Nichols (1998, p. 2) states for the Macstart bridging program at University of Western Sydney (UWS) Macarthur that: *"Students are encouraged to use their time in the program as a way of assessing whether university is suitable for them."* It has been argued that having this decision made in a pre-award bridging program likely represents a more cost-effective alternative to having students drop out at some time while undertaking an award program (refer to Chapter 6).

One compelling argument, which is often overlooked in considerations in this area, is a consideration of the importance and desirability of the involvement of universities themselves in bridging program provision. NBEET (1994b, p. 24) observed that:

> *Any effective intervention to mitigate the disadvantage processes must take into account the barriers to equitable participation which are located in university culture and practice as well as the characteristics attributed to members of disadvantaged groups as they relate to those barriers.*

In other words, as universities are a part of the problem, they need to be included as part of the solution. Cultural change requires an integrated and holistic approach that requires universities as a central agent. *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET 1990) when commenting on the bridging and supplementary programs required to be provided by universities to address the needs of people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, noted that:

> *These bridging courses should not duplicate secondary or TAFE courses … They should be directed towards students who need specific knowledge and skills for higher education. If these bridging programs are to have a significant impact on participation by disadvantaged groups and make effective use of the resources available, their successful completion needs to be linked to entry to the institution's courses.*

It has been widely argued that appropriate acculturation to a university experience is best accomplished by a program that has the close involvement of a university (refer to Chapter 6). As well, the focus of the program can be important. Unlike bridging programs offered in the VET sector which tend to aim for a general preparation for further study or employment, the bridging programs offered by universities most often gear their study to entry into the host institution. Typical is the comment made by McGill and Box (1997, pp. 3-4) who stated that:

> *… the UniAccess [bridging] program was specifically designed to bridge students into Murdoch University's first year courses. It was not our aim – nor did we think it appropriate or, indeed, possible – to offer a generic university entrance programme within the context of what we were planning. With that codicil in place we could orient the components of the programme to best fit the general and specific requirements of both the students and the University.*

Fopp and Ellis (1997) have suggested that any dilution of the program curriculum to allow for alternative aims – employment, other further education options – may merely serve to dilute its focus and potential impact in university entry.

Considerable discussion has concerned the need for universities to open their culture and to display a willingness to accept non-traditional students. The tendencies for universities to close their culture and remain elitist are very strong and barriers to opening the university culture clearly remain (Cohen *et al.* 1997; Ramsay *et al.* 1997). It can be argued that keeping universities within arms length of alternative entry pathways for non-traditional students and giving them responsibilities in this regard serves to make the return to elitist values and attitudes all the more difficult. The importance of involvement and dialogue as an essential element of maintaining cultural change in universities is perhaps best articulated in the indigenous education literature (Yunupingu 1994; Lukabyo 1995; Bourke *et al.* 1996; NTDE 1999).

As a result of these considerations, bridging programs typically have a structured curriculum involving combinations of some or all of the following:

- Generic Skills
  - basic literacy, numeracy, computing, library, research
  - time management
- Academic Skills
  - academic literacy (including report and essay structure)
  - computer and mathematics literacy

- information literacy
- oral presentation (including seminar presentation)
- laboratory work and/or practicum experience
- study skills, research and exam preparation
- independent learning
- preparation for entry hurdle (eg STAT Test)

- Orientation
  - acculturation to a university environment
  - knowledge and use of resources
  - knowledge and use of services
  - creating a 'fit' between student and institutional expectations
  - enabling students to benchmark knowledge, skills and abilities
- Social Orientation - networking
  - self-esteem and self-confidence
  - awareness of 'group' eg. women's studies, indigenous studies, models of adult learning
- Career Awareness and Planning
- Foundation units
- Discipline-Specific Content

The most appropriate curriculum mix will depend very much on the specific group(s) targeted but will also change according to individual circumstances and aims (Dashwood *et al.* 1992). For example, courses intending to prepare students for a broad range of tertiary courses will necessarily take a different approach to those which are aiming to prepare students for a course in a particular discipline. Also, although all bridging programs need to address the needs of prospective students who lack traditional entry qualifications, individual students will have particular needs and come from different backgrounds and 'starting points', thus necessitating a particularly flexible and student-centred curriculum (CNAA 1989). Fopp and Ellis (1997) refer to a number of 'competing issues' which need to be addressed during the development of preparatory courses, such as determining the optimal length of course to provide sufficient preparation without overburdening students with non-award commitments; choosing the appropriate subject mix and balance between process and content; determining the correct level at which the subjects should be pitched; considering the degree of overlap between preparatory program and undergraduate curriculum; and deciding on the modes of delivery to suit the client group. Stanley (1995) contrasted the emphasis on content and disregard for process inherent in the University of Melbourne's Community Access Program approach which made available undergraduate subjects as a basis for mature age entry, with the *"50/50 blend of process/content"* (p. 9) which is the basis for the University of New South Wales' University Preparation Program. In his view the former model represented a traditional elite model for mature age

entry, while the latter, with allowance for students to develop the skills required, as being more aligned with equity goals.

Finally, arguments have emerged that suggest the desirability of an extension of bridging programs in the higher education context. For example, the recent emphasis being given to the study of transition into higher education suggests a broader role for bridging programs. McInnis *et al.* (1995, p. 32) found that:

> *A large proportion of the school leavers (45 per cent) believed that the standard of work expected at university was much higher than they expected. A substantial majority (64 per cent) agreed that 'studying at university is more demanding' than at school. Students' perceptions of the academic links between school and university were not very positive, and … only 36 per cent agreed that their 'final school year was a very good preparation for the university study they were doing'. The students divided along similar lines in response to the item 'the subjects at university clearly build on my study at school' – 34 per cent agreed and 37 per cent disagreed.*

Students described the problems related to transition in terms of an *"abrupt shift to personal responsibility for managing their learning"* (McInnis *et al.* 1995). With the trend in senior schooling to broaden the curriculum away from its traditional emphasis on preparation for university entry – a trend prompted by the dramatic rise in school completions over the past two decades – it is unlikely that this situation will improve (Masters & Hill 1988; Morrow 1992; Maxwell 1996). With at least one-in-five of undergraduate students failing to complete an award (DETYA 1999c) there may be merit in universities considering the recommendation by McInnis *et al.* (1995, p. 66/p. 121) to:

> *… purposefully engineer[ing] such a transition instead of leaving it to chance … by developing a purposeful induction program which encourages the induction of students into university life.*

Bridging/preparatory programs may have a role to play in this area.

Another potential role for bridging programs comes through a consideration of 'transfer shock'. This phenomenon is now well documented in the international literature for students transferring between educational institutions and sectors. Sharma and Dobson (1996) found that while TAFE transfer students at Swinburne University (a multisector university) performed as well as school leavers in subsequent undergraduate study, TAFE transfer students entering Monash University (which does not have a TAFE division) performed less well – a trend they attributed to the relatively higher degree of integration of Swinburne TAFE students into the institution compared with the Monash case where students need to transfer to a totally new institutional setting. In commenting on an observed decline in student progress rates observed for some student groups in Australian higher education between 1993 and 1995 – including students with incomplete higher education qualifications and those with TAFE background - Dobson *et al.* (1997, p. 18) suggested as a strategy: *"the minimisation of 'transfer shock' through appropriate bridging programs."*

Bridging programs have also been shown to support the general goals of lifelong learning. For example, Cooper *et al.* (2000a, p. 1) describe the role of the bridging program offered by the University of South Australia Whyalla to provide:

> *... an opportunity for mature-age women to return to study after child-rearing, and for other women and men to work towards a career change or a move out of unemployment.*

2.4.4 Enabling bridging programs as formal entry qualifications

Enabling and Enabling-like bridging programs have largely been set up to provide entry to the host institution; in fact many do not provide a completion qualification as such and many even lack a clear completion point. Cobbin and Martin (1993) found only limited recognition of Enabling and Enabling-like course completion as a basis for entry outside of the host institution. Contemporary course literature suggests that where such arrangements exist they are very specific. For example, mutual recognition of successful preparatory course completion between the University of Canberra, Australian National University and the University of New South Wales is widely advertised, with similar arrangements noted between Perth-based universities. At least one instance (Curtin University) has been identified where the full recognition of Enabling qualifications from other universities has been pursued as an intentional strategy to increase the participation of indigenous students (Walker & Humphries 1999). Other programs simply advertise the known cases of former preparatory students who have accessed award courses in other institutions or indicate that consideration may be taken on a case by case basis. In fact, many of the better-established and better-known bridging programs can provide students with a reasonable degree of mobility of entry into a number of universities, albeit into general programs in n on-elite institutions. However, it appears that Enabling and Enabling-like students most frequently access university study by direct entry to0 the host institution.

A barrier to the more broader use of university Enabling and Enabling-like bridging programs as a general formal entry qualification is that State Admissions Centres lack specific knowledge about the nature of the qualification that these courses provide and so generally treat these programs conservatively when developing the Guidelines for processing them as a basis for entry (Andrea Goodwin, Manager, Operations and Assessment, University Admissions Centre (UAC), personal communication).

From the perspective of tertiary applications, pathways from Enabling and tertiary preparation programs to university study are, in many cases, ambiguous and confusing. Procedures detailing entry to further study on the basis of achievement in Enabling or tertiary preparation programs are quite explicit in Queensland. Intending students have access to tertiary entrance schedules developed by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) that allow them to calculate their notional Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) and make an informed decision about

the courses for which they are likely to be eligible. These schedules also specify the universities that do not accept enabling or tertiary preparation programs as a basis for entry (QTAC 1998). A similar process is in place for intending students who have completed a tertiary preparation program at TAFE.

The current model of entry to tertiary courses from Enabling studies in South Australia is loosely based on practices and procedures developed by QTAC. Schedules are used to allocate a notional TER in those cases where the South Australia Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC) has already identified the specific program as an accepted basis for tertiary entrance. While it is the case that not all Enabling courses are recognised by South Australian universities as meeting the minimum requirements for entry, the relevant policies are not documented or communicated in literature available to intending students (SATAC, personal communication).

Students who complete Enabling and tertiary preparation studies in New South Wales are assessed by the University Admissions Centre (UAC) using a number of schedules depending on the program they have undertaken. However university policies regarding the acceptance of these schedules are not made explicit. Decisions are made at the course level by admissions officers at individual institutions as to whether or not enabling and preparation programs are an acceptable basis for entry to an award course (UAC, personal communication).

In contrast, as Enabling programs are non-award, they are not regarded by the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) as meeting the minimum tertiary entrance requirement of Year 12 equivalence (VTAC, 1999). Enabling program students are not awarded a notional rank and have the options of making an application as part of a special entry scheme, relying on other competencies gained in the workplace, using existing school qualifications if they have attained Year 12 or other post-school studies such as a TAFE award course. The decision as to whether or not the student is offered a place ultimately rests with the selection officer responsible for the course for which the student has applied. As tertiary preparation courses at TAFE are regarded as post-school qualifications, these applicants are assessed in the same manner as any applicant who has completed a course at a similar certificate level.

As such, it is possible that students who attempt to enter higher education through Tertiary Admissions Centres on the basis of the successful completion of an Enabling program are excluded from undergraduate places as a result of current university policies in relation to tertiary entrance. It is also potentially the case that students applying through UAC or VTAC may unknowingly lodge six void preferences if they have failed to clarify the entry requirements relating to the specific courses for which they may be eligible. Intending students are thus required not only to have a firm commitment to a tertiary institution but also to have decided on a particular course at that university and confirmed that they are eligible for entry on the basis of their enabling studies.

While QTAC, and to a less extent other admission centres, appear to have developed relatively progressive and transparent policies in relation to Enabling

courses and tertiary preparation, the extent to which students who complete these programs are able to enrol in award courses is limited by the manner in which these courses are assessed. Currently, it is not possible for students to gain entry to high demand university courses on the basis of completion of an Enabling course. For example, students would have to achieve a GPA of 6.5 or higher on the basis of more than two semesters of study to obtain a rank of 88 which is the highest rank attainable for completing an enabling or preparation course. This rank is substantially below the rank required for entry to law or engineering courses. It further suggests that enabling students may experience difficulty in gaining access to undergraduate courses at a range of competitive tertiary institutions.

By way of contrast, students who complete a TAFE Queensland Certificate IV in Adult Tertiary Preparation are able to obtain a maximum rank of 98, provided they also sit the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT). These students would need to achieve a minimum STAT score of 164 and a GPA of 6.26 or above but would have access to all but the highest demand courses at the most selective of institutions. As this qualification is formally recognised as part of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) it is accepted virtually without restriction by all universities. Unfortunately, Enabling courses do not currently experience anywhere near the same degree of portability.

Access to award courses is also limited by the extent to which tertiary institutions accept students who have completed an Enabling program. For example, Queensland University of Technology will not accept a student who has completed an Enabling course which consists of less than five subjects and University of Queensland has placed a limit on the allocation of ranks for applications on the basis of a four subject (or two semesters full-time) enabling course. Thus it appears to be the case that students who choose to apply for an award course at a different institution may find that their achievement in an Enabling course is not recognised or accepted as an adequate basis for admission.

One means of overcoming this problem is to consider some form of State-based or national accreditation system for university bridging/preparatory programs as is in place in the United Kingdom (refer Chapter 3) and as has been advocated from some quarters in Australia (Beasley 1997b).

2.5 Academic learning support provision in higher education

2.5.1 Academic learning support provision for members of disadvantaged groups

As Enabling provision also covers ‘supplementary Enabling programs’ which are represented by structured academic learning support programs which students can undertake concurrently with study, it is necessary to briefly consider academic learning support provision in higher education as it applies to disadvantaged groups. These broad range of programs will include what will be regarded as supplementary Enabling-like programs for the purpose of this study.

Academic learning support strategies are in place in all universities to assist students to overcome the impact of transition into tertiary study and to promote persistence and success. To appreciate the nature of these programs it is therefore necessary to consider the factors which influence student persistence and success in tertiary study. Evans (2000) lists these factors under a series of headings:

- Student demographic characteristics – including age, socioeconomic status, linguistic and cultural background, gender, educational background and past educational performance;
- Student psychological characteristics – including academic preparedness, metacognitive ability, personality and attitudinal traits, and goal orientation;
- Social factors – including family and peer support, access to sources of financial support and degree of involvement with the institution; and
- Institutional factors – centring on the notion of the 'fit' between the student and institution in terms of mutual expectations, level of academic and social integration, the level of perceived relevance of courses, and perceptions of the dedication or quality of staff.

Power *et al.* (1987) viewed the institutional arrangements assisting first year students to persist and progress as being critical to improving participation by: *"disadvantaged groups hitherto under-represented in higher education"* (p. 43). They identified by survey the major problems experienced by first year students as: allocating time between study and other commitments, ability to cope with the workload, ability to achieve required standard of work, found workload heavy, fatigue, finding books in the library, and time for social activities. They concluded that there was a need for strategies directed at improving the knowledge of higher education courses and institutions, strategies directed at improving motivation, strategies directed at improving knowledge of subject material at entry, strategies directed at improving tertiary skills, strategies directed at improving standards of literacy and numeracy, strategies directed at assisting in adjustment to higher education, teaching support services, and non-academic (including social) services.

NBEET (1994b) provides support for these general perceptions specifically in relation to socioeconomically disadvantaged students. They developed a list of the factors which put strain on socio-economically disadvantaged students performing successfully in higher education once access has been achieved - many resulting from the fact that students from this group often seek to commence higher education study later in life. These factors include: lack of time to study; under-developed or rusty learning skills; competing claims of employment or family; social isolation at university; and separation from familiar social networks. A range of confounding features may also emerge which can make it difficult for the socioeconomically disadvantaged student to remain motivated to study or focussed on educational goals: needing to deal with study over a longer timeframe (studying part-time or after completing a bridging course); having the stigma of a 'non-standard student' who fits less well into the university culture; studying in isolation - through distance education or in a situation where the individual is

incompletely socialised within the peer group; or being more likely to study in a generalist program without the added incentive and motivation provided by clear profession-based goals (Boddy & Neale 1998).

A Fair Chance For All (DEET 1990) listed a number of potential strategies that could be employed under the banner of supplementary support programs that could assist people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds:

> *extra tutorial assistance; self-paced learning programs; course counselling; development of study skills (e.g. examination technique and essay writing); mentor schemes; peer group support* (DEET 1990, p. 17).

It further listed *"Aboriginal support units in higher education institutions"* and *"supplementary study units concurrent with award courses"* (p. 21) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and *"…appropriate bridging and supplementary courses … to make up for any lack of knowledge and skills caused by inadequate schooling … [particularly in mathematics, science and technology"* (p. 47) for students from rural and isolated areas.

Clearly not all of these strategies fit with the definition developed for 'supplementary Enabling programs' (see Appendix 1). The need for programs to be simultaneously *"systematic and structured"*, not to be able to be credited to the gaining of the award, targeted on the basis of disadvantage, and amenable to the calculation of the student load undertaking the course (Commonwealth of Australia 1989) tend to run counter to the ways in which student support is conducted in universities – and, as is discussed in Chapter 4, the use of the Enabling provision to fund supplementary student support is not common in the sector. It is also worth noting that support for indigenous students is often funded through specific mechanisms such as the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) thus not requiring a consideration for these programs to be funded by alternative means such as through the Enabling provision. However, it is worthwhile to consider the nature of learning support in universities to provide a context for the study of the 'supplementary' Enabling and Enabling-like programs which are included in this study as programs of interest. These programs inherently concern the desire to encourage students to persist and to be successful in their studies. Hence, they will be discussed in this context.

2.5.2 Student retention and success in higher education

Student support provision has a number of potential aims relating to the welfare of the student and the responsibility of care of the institution; but at their core they have a common set of goals relating to the improvement of student retention and success. Student attrition and suboptimal student success levels are increasingly being perceived as an important form of wastage in higher education. The importance of student success has been expressed in monetary terms. Dobson and Sharma (1998) estimated that the cost of funding for failure of bachelor degree subjects amounted to some $360 million in 1996; made up of $269 million in public costs and $91 million in costs to the individuals concerned. There is increasing pressure on universities to attempt to address those factors which

contribute to poor student retention and success that can be influenced by the institutions.

Student attrition and success (aka progress) rates are now routinely monitored for the higher education sector by disadvantaged group. The national figures for 1997 are noted in Table 2.1. These data indicate that there is room for improvement in the success rates for all equity groups, but particularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disabilities and students from isolated areas. Retention appears as principally a concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and people from isolated areas only. However, programs which enhance retention and success are important for any educationally disadvantaged individual – which is likely to include students from all identified disadvantaged groups. Although it has been argued that:

> *Once students from Low SES backgrounds enrol at university and pursue their studies, they tend to do about as well as the general student population. That the success rates of Low SES students is little different to that of the larger student body suggests that, once access to higher education has been achieved, these students may not need a great deal of subsequent intervention to ensure their success* (DETYA 1999d, p. 42).

It has been pointed out by several observers that this view fails to take account of the fact that all universities already have in place a broad range of intervention and student support programs for which disadvantaged student groups are heavy users (Ramsay *et al.* 1996; Abbott-Chapman 1998; DETYA 1999a and 1999b).

Table 2.1: Student Attrition and Success in Higher Education, 1997; taken from DETYA (1999d)

	Success	Retention
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	0.78	0.78
People from NESB	0.97	1.05
People from rural areas	0.99	0.97
People from isolated areas	0.95	0.90
Low SES, under 25yo	0.97	1.00
Low SES, over 25 yo	0.96	1.07
People with disabilities	0.94	0.99

(All values have been standardised to a common metric in which a value of 1.0 denotes parity with the general student population, according to Martin (1994).

Student attrition figures underlie a complex series of student behaviours incorporating internal attrition (internal transfers which do not represent an institutional loss), cross-institutional transfers, and attrition from the system. The latter includes:

- deaths, which, as Abbott-Chapman *et al.* (1992, p. 3) note: *"unfortunately … does happen";*
- 'stop outs' or 'break' students who leave temporarily for a multitude of reasons – for example, to replenish financial reserves or to address an emergent problem - intending to return to study in the near future;

- ‘goal fulfilment’ students who leave after achieving their goal – say a unit or two of study for professional development purposes; and
- ‘drop outs’ students who leave study before achieving their goals without an intention to return to study in the near future; which includes ‘push-outs’ who leave because of exclusion or failure – the behaviour often misinterpreted by government and the general public alike as representing all student attrition – and students who withdraw for a range of other reasons, related to such factors as finances, family / work commitments or simply ‘burn-out’ (Abbott-Chapman *et al.* 1992; Ramsay *et al.* 1996; Tinto 1998).

It is the last category of attrition that causes most concern, although the distinction between ‘stop outs’ and ‘drop outs’ can be muddy, depending on an interpretation of what constitutes ‘the near future’ and often only obvious when able to be viewed in hindsight (Astin 1977). Even with this group some commentators have insisted that: *“dropping out is not necessarily a negative experience”* (Boddy & Neale 1998, p. 50) as students still typically leave educationally enriched in some way and take with them a range of benefits of their time in study. Murphy *et al.* (1992) noted that students who completed the Unistart program at the University of Western Sydney Nepean but deciding not to transfer to undergraduate study stated that the program still had value to them in terms of their own self-esteem and the realisation that they were academically adequate; and that the course had broadened their career aspirations to include other potential fields apart from university studies. Still, it is generally accepted that the failure of individuals to achieve their educational goals represents to some degree a personal loss to the individuals concerned and their families; a certain waste of the time, effort and resources that had been devoted to that student by the institution prior to their departure; and a potential loss to society as a whole.

A large body of literature has built up on the complex relationships between students and their learning environment that influence ‘drop out’ behaviour. Much of this work has been done in the context of US higher education where, as was noted by Power *et al.* (1987) the inclusive nature of their higher education system has made a concern for attrition and student performance more of a priority than in the essentially exclusive system characterised by the British-influenced Australian higher education system – the latter which has often tended to see student attrition as a quality assurance measure (perceived as the ‘weeding out’ of undeserving students) rather than as a cause of institutional loss. Dominant theories of attrition include the Student Integration Model (Tinto 1975) and the Model of Student Departure (Bean 1980), which have been integrated into a single analytical framework (Cabrera *et al.* 1992).

Tinto’s theory is based on the hypothesis that student persistence is a function of the match between the motivation and academic ability of students and the academic and social characteristics of universities. This ‘fit’ is characterised by high student motivation, commitment and involvement. As Tinto (1998, p. 168) stated:

> *One thing we know about persistence is that involvement matters. The more academically and socially involved individuals are - that is, the more they interact with other students and faculty - the more likely they are to persist.*

Bean (1980)'s Model of Student Departure:

> *... is based on organisational behaviour theory ... and essentially posits a two stage decision making process in student withdrawal. The first stage involves students developing a set of beliefs, which in turn affect their attitudes towards both the course they are studying and the university they are attending. In the second stage, these attitudes influence students' intentions about their course of study, which in turn affect their behaviour in either withdrawing or persisting with their studies* (Ramsay et al. 1996, p. 15).

Both the Tinto and Bean models see attrition as depending on a complex interplay between characteristics of the student and characteristics of the university – with the 'match' or 'fit' between these characteristics being of paramount importance.

Important contributions to our understanding of attrition behaviour have been made by studies that examined the basis for students' decisions to withdraw. Important features to students' desire to persist include: student motivation (Cope & Hannah 1975; Sharma & Burgess 1994; Boddy & Neale 1998); clarity of future career or life goals (Williams & Pepe 1983); a retained commitment to, excitement by and belief in the relevance of the course of study (Astin 1977; Power *et al.* 1987; Tinto 1998); the alignment of student expectations and the course (McInnes *et al.* 1995; Sharma & Burgess 1994); a 'sense of belonging' by the student (Williams & Pepe 1983); and the ability to balance the competing demands of study and other commitments (employment and/or home) (West *et al.* 1986; Wheeler 1989; Price *et al.* 1991; Sharma & Burgess 1994; French & Boyle 1996; Promnitz & Germain 1996; Ramsay *et al.* 1996). Other reasons cited as having a significant impact on withdrawal decisions include: personal reasons (Price *et al.* 1991; Promnitz & Germain 1996), loneliness and social isolation (Wheeler 1989), dissatisfaction with the teaching / learning environment (Wheeler 1989; Price *et al.* 1991; Sharma & Burgess 1994; Ramsay *et al.* 1996), fear and self-doubt (Stone 1998); poor academic preparedness or low academic achievement (Williams & Pepe 1983; Wheeler 1989; Price *et al.* 1991; Ramsay *et al.* 1996), and financial problems (Price *et al.* 1991; Sharma & Burgess 1994).

Cultural issues also appear as important. For example, Bourke *et al.* (1996, p. 3) questions whether:

> *Indigenous Australian students are failing to remain in universities because the pressure to conform to the dominant culture on which the education system is based is rejected.*

A similar exercise to the above can be undertaken to investigate the factors affecting **student success** in higher education. Factors identified in the literature that contributed to the performance of students included: the motivation of students, their approach to studying, and their cultural expectations (Killen 1994).

Killen (1994)'s own work led to the conclusion that four factors were of prime importance – two internal to students: self-motivation and effective study techniques; and two external: family support and enthusiastic lecturers.

These findings suggest that the introduction of programs that generate and maintain motivation, commitment, focus, effective study and time management skills amongst students are justified as major persistence strategies. There is also a need for students to be better informed about issues which are needed to make decisions on course and career selection, and

> *... for the development of study skills relevant to university study and for the development of a university environment more empathetic to the needs of a diverse student population* (Price et al. 1991, p. 14).

The range of services provided to students which are particularly likely to assist members of identified disadvantaged groups include orientation and transition support, academic counselling, learning assistance or study skills programs, adequate child care facilities, personal counselling, welfare advice/information, financial advice/assistance, careers advice, student employment, on-campus accommodation facilities, health services, and legal support; as well as specifically targeted support for groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with disabilities (Student Support Services Australia 1993; Promnitz & Germain 1996; Abbott-Chapman 1998; DETYA 1999a and 1999b). Student Support Services Australia (1993, p. 1) stated:

> *The services play a role in the maintenance of diversity and heterogeneity in the university community by providing support to students with differing needs.*

Further, as Abbott-Chapman (1998, p. xii) noted about the University of Tasmania's student support services:

> *All the support services provided by the University are involved in one way or another in supporting students' studies – not only Counselling, Careers and the Learning Skills Unit but also the Student Information Service, Child Care, Student Employment Service, University Accommodation [and] targeted programs. ... All these services have a part to play in enabling students, both direct from school and mature age to cope with the many, sometimes conflicting demands made upon them, and which create anxiety about academic performance and 'doing well'.*

Recreational and social services can also serve to support student integration into the university community and thus assist in improving student retention and performance (Promnitz & Germain 1996).

Different groups will require different levels and types of student support. As an example of how this manifests in practice, the following discussion considers the special support needs of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** students. Recurrent assistance for indigenous Australian higher education is provided in the form of separately identified support funds. Wheeler (1989) found that Aboriginal students who failed were: less prepared for their courses, rated the

quality of teaching low, reported difficulty in achieving the required standard of work, had pressure from family and job commitments, used support services less often, and reported loneliness and social isolation; with those most at risk being male, younger, and English as a Second Language (ESL) students – the latter category being particularly interesting as indigenous Australians almost by definition are effectively excluded from the NESB designated equity group and the number of indigenous people whose first language is not English is generally not taken account of in official policy. Most, if not all, universities in Australia now focus their indigenous support efforts through an indigenous unit which specifically seeks to address these sorts of issues. However, NBEET (1997, p. xii) found that indigenous units had: *"varying positions … across institutions in terms of viability, status and influence within the institution"* which made the impact of their efforts variable across the sector. Indigenous units are typically staffed by high proportions of indigenous people and have a degree of autonomy. However, it has been pointed out that there is a need for the responsibility for indigenous outcomes to be shared by all stakeholders. Anderson *et al.* (1998, p. xix) included as a recommendation:

> *That universities broaden the responsibility for indigenous students' access, participation, retention and success to become part of faculties' processes of accountability, so that Indigenous students rights and interests are endorsed and owned by all participants within the university.*

Bourke *et al.* (1996, p. xiii) found that:

> *For indigenous students the need for expanded and improved support services for on-campus students was the major recommendation from both on-campus incomplete respondents (82.4%) and on-campus successful respondents (69.9%). The view was highlighted when 93.8 per cent successful off-campus indigenous students also expressed the need for improved support services.*

Baumgart *et al.* (1995) emphasised the need for learning assistance and academic advice, counselling services (with a particular emphasis given to the need for an understanding of the socio-cultural problems facing students in this group), library, residential accommodation, health and recreational activities. Lane (1998, p. 19) identifies the following as key support mechanisms for indigenous students:

- generous but realistic selection processes and course guidance;
- pre-course orientation and socialisation into a group;
- attention to the full range of social, academic and personal support needs of each student;
- the 'key factor', the home-base system – fixing responsibility for a particular group of students on a particular AISU [the local Indigenous support unit] staff member;
- making sure that students experience a sense of integration and comfort with their studies and fellow students as soon as possible;
- monitoring student progress, especially in their first semester and year;
- ensuring appropriate tutorial support to all undergraduate students;…

Further, Roberts (1998, p. 43) commented on the importance of the advocacy role of staff of indigenous support units as identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

> *Support staff were seen to have particularly important roles in respect of advocacy as well as in assisting them with their academic work. They not only provided a point of contact, academic counselling and advocacy service, but also were seen to have a fundamental role in assisting them with issues relating to accommodation, finance and child care. Students commented that without provision of such services many would not have been able to handle the situations that confronted them, particularly when it involved negotiating with government departments over allowances and housing.*

Greater activity is occurring in pursuing in-context learning support for indigenous students utilising closer ties with faculties; for example, as described by Baskin *et al.* (1995).

2.6 Adults in higher education study

2.6.1 Considerations of an adult pedagogy

As mature aged students have been a significant target of Enabling provision, it is necessary to review the special considerations which need to be made in the education of this group. Practitioners involved with adult learners need to include a consideration of these elements in the design and delivery of their courses.

The concept of 'andragogy': *"the art and science of helping adults learn"* (Goodsir 1978, p. 10) emerged during the 1970s in contrast to the concept of pedagogy which had been dominated up to that time by theories based on child learning in compulsory school settings. The concept is not based on a fundamental difference between the way adults and children learn, but rather on:

> *...significant differences that stem from the conditions surrounding adult and child learning and differences that emerge in the learning process as various degrees of motivation emerge* (Ingalls as cited in Goodsir 1978, p. 10).

These differences manifest in a number of ways. Firstly, as individuals mature beyond adolescence there is an increasing need to identify areas of learning around life problems. In its simplest interpretation this implies the need for life-centred learning. It is argued that andragogy needs to be based on applying learning to adult situations, to exploit the life experiences of the adult learner and ground the educational process in something concrete and relevant. Secondly, andragogy needs to be based far more on self-directed learning to reflect the changes experienced as a person matures towards an independent self-concept. Thirdly, the adults' readiness to learn needs to be acknowledged. Andragogy based on the teacher's perception of what *ought* to be learned and utilising

'academic pressure' to oblige the student to comply needs to be replaced by an andragogy based on:

> *...what is needed by the learners who are ready to develop themselves in their respective roles ... oriented towards living and specific social circumstances, eg. working, art, music, recreation, etc.* (Goodsir 1978, p. 14).

The fact that adults are primarily motivated 'from within' needs to be recognised. The fourth main difference between pedagogy and andragogy relates to differences between the child and adult in their orientation to learning. Whereas children have been conditioned to have a subject-centred orientation to most learning, adults tend to have a problem-centred orientation to learning, often based on learning that has immediate application. As well, adults need to know what they are studying and why they are studying it (Goodsir 1978; Richardson 1994; Westrup & Jack 1998). Richardson (1994) argued that mature age students tend to adopt a 'deep' approach to study – they are typically keen to learn and to develop their academic skills.

The andragogical model is a process model, compared with the content models used as a basis for traditional education:

> *The content model is based on the educator deciding in advance the objectives, content, method, etc. for the program. The andragogical educator is seen as facilitator, consultant, change agent who creates a suitable climate for learning and in an atmosphere of mutual planning, diagnoses needs, objectives, and learning experience with the target population. The difference is that the process model provides the means and opportunities for learners to improve themselves* (Goodsir 1978, p. 15).

The implications of andragogical theory is that programs targeting adults must take account of the particular learning styles and needs of adult learners. Alternatives which rely on pedagogical considerations more attuned to younger learners will be less appropriate than programs geared specifically to adults. One illustration where this may be important in a consideration with respect to Enabling provision is the trend in some States, particularly Victoria, to abandon tertiary preparation programs geared specifically to adult learners – such as the now defunct Tertiary Orientation Program formerly offered through Victorian TAFE – and relying more on adult matriculation based on the HSC curriculum. Such moves could be seen as inappropriate for the adult learner, even regressive.

Mature age students also appear to have their own particular student support needs. In a survey of mature age students conducted at the University of Western Australia (UWA 1998), 81 per cent of mature age respondents marked true or mostly true to the statement: 'Specific support strategies or services are needed for mature-age students'. Further, female mature-age students reported particular concerns as significantly more females than males marked true or mostly true the statements: 'A project officer who is responsible for our concerns and needs is needed', 'Special bridging courses need to be available for mature-age students (study, computing, writing skills, etc.)' and 'Counselling needs to be available to

help mature-age students deal with their specific problems'. The survey found that mature-age students were heavy users of the libraries (99 per cent used these facilities), food services (95 per cent) and academic advisers (77 per cent) but not of services such as religious services, child care, sporting clubs, Guild education officers and Guild social functions (less than 20 per cent for each). This is consistent with the strong agreement of respondents with the statement: 'The additional pressure of work makes it impossible to become involved at university other than academically' where 83 per cent strongly agreed or agreed. As such, mature aged students lack many of the opportunities to develop social links with peers in their institution which are noted as having a significant impact on attrition risk (Tinto 1998). In this context it is significant that Enabling and Enabling-like programs assist students to develop social networks between students in similar circumstances which last into undergraduate study and is noted as an extremely supportive feature arising from preparatory program involvement for mature aged students (refer to Chapter 6).

2.6.2 The performance of adult students in higher education

Mature aged students, variously defined as students with a minimum age between 21 to 25 years of age (Hester 1994) have shown particular patterns of enrolment and performance over the years. Hore and West (1980) reported a heavy concentration of mature aged enrolments in arts, business and education. This emphasis on 'less prestigious' courses was seen to partly reflect a tendency for mature aged students to seek generalist courses which will enhance their life and employment skills, but was also generally related to these students lacking the pre-requisites or 'assumed knowledge' for science-based or more prestigious courses and also was seen to reflect the high proportion of mature aged 'second chance learners' who are female (Hore & West 1980, Hester 1994). Mature aged students have also tended to study in alternative modes, particularly as part-time students and external students, and frequently study while undertaking full-time employment (Hore & West 1980, Hester 1994).

This overall profile of mature aged students influences a particular enrolment and performance pattern in higher education study that is well documented. Mature aged students typically have a superior academic performance to school leavers in terms of Grade Point Average (GPA – showing higher distinction and credit rates) and lower failure rates, but have tended to have higher attrition rates and lower graduation rates than their school-leaver cohorts (Hore & West 1980, Collins & Penglase 1993; Hester 1994; Sharma & Dobson 1996; Beasley 1997a).

It has been suggested that mature aged students life experience, motivation, clarity of educational goals, and level of commitment tend to make them good students in an academic sense (Hore & West 1980; Boddy & Neale 1998; Tinto 1998). However, factors - often relating to their individual circumstances – put pressure on members of this group persisting in their studies. These pressures include such factors as the difficulties in balancing the competing demands of study and other commitments (West *et al.* 1986; Wheeler 1989; Price *et al.* 1991; Sharma & Burgess 1994; French & Boyle 1996; Promnitz & Germain 1996; Ramsay *et al.* 1996); the risk of 'burn out' or the impact of a change to educational goals or to

life circumstances when study is extended over an extended period through part-time study (Hore & West 1980; Wheeler 1989; Price *et al.* 1991; Price *et al.* 1991; Sharma & Burgess 1994; Ramsay *et al.* 1996); or the impact of the lowered social involvement and academic contact created by part-time study and concurrent commitments (Cope & Hannah 1975; Tinto 1975; Williams & Pepe 1983) all of which can impact on persistence decisions.

Any study of the 'performance' of mature age students in a higher education context must take account of these observed enrolment behaviours.

2.7 The characteristics and performance of Enabling and Enabling-like programs in Australian tertiary education: A review of the available literature

2.7.1 Performance of indigenous Enabling provision

Although still significantly educationally disadvantaged in society as a whole and under-represented in higher education overall, the participation of indigenous Australians in universities has improved significantly since the mid-1980s – with indigenous students more than doubling their representation of the higher education student body between 1985 and 1995 from 0.5 per cent to 1.1 per cent (DEETYA 1998b). Enabling programs have been part of the general educational environment in which this increase in participation has occurred, which overall has been influenced heavily by the goals developed under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educational Strategy (NATSIEP 1989). These goals included considerations for the provision of a learning environment conducive to participation by indigenous peoples, a greater involvement of indigenous people at all stages and level of higher education provision, and improved research on indigenous issues.

However, although Enabling provision represents a logical strategy for providing access to a group which has experienced the level of disadvantage afforded indigenous peoples in Australia, their potential use in indigenous education has likely not been maximised. The apparent improvement in indigenous participation in Australian universities underlies a situation where indigenous students are over-represented in Enabling and sub-degree level courses but considerably under-represented at degree and postgraduate level (Broadbent 1993; Skuja 1997). As well, the group displays lower levels of retention and progression in all fields of study, and at most course levels, than non-indigenous students (McLelland & Kruger 1993; Skuja 1997; Dobson *et al.* 1998). Skuja (1997, p. 60) commented that:

> *This pattern of performance suggests that the sector seems to be relying on very large intakes of Indigenous students to achieve improved participation rates, without addressing the considerable loss rates involved.*

Following the *Review of Mechanisms for Allocating Indigenous Support Funding* conducted by DEETYA in 1998 (Adams 1998), the Commonwealth

developed new guidelines governing indigenous funding to universities which sought, in part, to address the concerns identified with regard to Enabling programs. This involved the introduction of a negotiable cap on indigenous Enabling load of no more than 30 per cent of an institution's total indigenous load to be achieved within a reasonable time period for those universities affected, in the absence of a 'convincing case' to the Commonwealth that there are special circumstances justifying an exception *(Review of the Indigenous …* 1999). This move recognised that a major reason for the poor performance of indigenous Enabling programs related to the very poor Enabling completion and transfer rates into award studies apparent for some of the largest indigenous Enabling providers (see Chapter 8). It was felt that the 'Enabling cap' would put pressure on these providers to rationalise their Enabling provision and encourage a greater emphasis to be placed on indigenous student participation in award programs.

As discussed in Chapter 4, misuse of the Enabling provision by some universities has occurred. This has generally been the result of a breakdown in administrative processes to appropriately manage the enrolment of Enabling students, particularly relating to the absence of appropriate culling of inactive or poor performing students, and to misinterpretation of the Enabling Guidelines amounting to students maintaining their Enabling status into award study. This behaviour has certainly had a major impact on lowering the perceived performance of some indigenous Enabling preparatory programs, including the performance of some institutions that account for significant proportions of the overall indigenous Enabling load. Moves to promote greater care and rigour by these universities in managing Enabling load is certainly warranted and will result in a dramatic improvement in the official performance of these programs, and indigenous Enabling provision overall. It is important though that the impact of these behaviours by some universities not detract from a consideration of the true potential that Enabling programs have in improving participation with success in higher education for this group, and the place that such programs have in the overall indigenous education strategies employed by most Australian universities.

There have been many notable successes in indigenous Enabling provision (DETYA 1999b). NTU (1999) describes the influence that the Aboriginal Pre-Law Program and the Indigenous Law Students' Mentoring Program have had in helping to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students at the Northern Territory University from nine (representing 2.6 per cent of the total law student body) in 1994 to 36 (8.7 per cent) in 1998. In a submission to the project by the staff of the Wilto Yerlo Foundation Science Course (FSC) offered by the University of Adelaide it was pointed out:

> *…that of the 7 Indigenous students who commenced studies in Medicine at the University of Adelaide since 1993, 4 completed the FSC first; of the 5 Indigenous students who commenced studies in Engineering at the University of Adelaide since 1993, 4 completed the FSC first; of the 16 Indigenous students who commenced studies in Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences at the University of Adelaide since 1993, 14 completed the FSC first; the only Indigenous student to commence studies in Dentistry*

> *at the University of Adelaide since 1993 completed the FSC first* (Peter Beavis, Coordinator Foundation Science Course, Wilto Yerlo, University of Adelaide, personal communication in the form of a submission to the EIP project).

Murdoch University (1996) reported that around 80 per cent of students supported by PEPA (Professional Education Program for Aboriginal People) at Murdoch University passed first year of the demanding Veterinary Science course; albeit a program involving, at the time, seven students per annum.

Byrt (1995) discusses the progress of the Monash Orientation Scheme for Aborigines (MOSA), an indigenous bridging program, during its first decade of operation. This serves as a frank and insightful case study into the issues affecting the performance of programs of this type. During the period 1984-1994, 181 students enrolled at MOSA, of whom 82 students (45 per cent) passed and 82 went on to enrol in undergraduate courses. This was considered by Byrt as a sound result given that there are no formal admission requirements for the course except that most are expected to have reached Year 10 standard, and as entrants come from very diverse backgrounds and experiences from communities all over Australia. The reasons for withdrawal were varied:

> *Many students come with unrealistic expectations either of themselves or the institution. Most of those that withdrew make a serious attempt at their studies and left because of personal problems, family demands, ill-health, financial problems or difficulties with housing. Many students left MOSA to enter the workforce directly* (Byrt 1995, p. 7).

Byrt further reported that of the 82 students from the 1984-1994 cohorts who subsequently enrolled at university, 49 (59 per cent) subsequently withdrew from their undergraduate course – 41 per cent of these withdrawing from first year, 37 per cent from second year and 22 per cent from third year or later - again for a diverse range of reasons. However, it was found that at least 47 per cent of these withdrawing students were employed in the workforce at the time that the study was conducted. The study found greater levels of success amongst students in the 31-45 year old age group, leading to a conclusion that a degree of maturity positioned students to be more successful in the MOSA environment. Since, over the period studied, the older students tended to be the students with the lowest levels of prior formal education, the study actually found a poor correlation between years of formal schooling and success at MOSA - although students with 11 or 12 years of formal schooling did display higher pass rates than the rest of the group. Significantly, the performance of the program varied considerably from year to year, with particularly low pass rates experienced between 1989-1992. It was stated that:

> *They may have resulted from a combination of several factors such as ineffective recruitment procedures, low student or staff morale or lack of stable leadership. In any event, there appears to have been a loss of community confidence culminating in the dramatic drop in enrolments in 1993* (Byrt 1995, p. 25).

Performance fluctuations, for the types of reasons cited, appear to be not uncommon in programs of this type, and serve to further complicate performance assessment.

Clearly, any assessment of performance must be made with a clear understanding of the often diverse range of circumstances of students entering these courses and the implications that these have on the performance of individuals and their ultimate 'fit' with the programs concerned. In this regard, considering the student bodies of the largest indigenous Enabling programs is instructive. Edith Cowan University (1999) note a significant diversity of students undertaking their Aboriginal University Orientation Course (AUOC) in terms of age (with 54 per cent aged over 30 years), origin (with a roughly 50:50 split between metropolitan and country residents) and gender. With regard to prior formal schooling, a third of the students had had no secondary education, a third had had secondary education to Year 10, and the remainder mainly reported some experience of TAFE courses. Each of these factors would be expected to have an impact on the attitudes to education, the level of educational disadvantage and the capacity to study for the individuals concerned which, in turn, should impact on their future performance. The performance of students will also be influenced by the study mode of the AUOC course, which is conducted through distance education, a mode of study which puts or highlights a further set of issues that impact on persistence and performance in study. The student body of the other large external indigenous Preparatory Studies Program offered by the University of Southern Queensland (which is based on the Tertiary Preparation Program, refer to Chapter 5) is similarly diverse.

These examples serve to highlight the importance of the basis for selection on subsequent performance. The larger general preparatory programs have tended to approach 'open entry' in their approach to access, achieving improved participation (at least in the Enabling program itself) but at the expense of subsequent student performance. Other programs have sought to ensure higher student performance through a more rigorous screening of applicants based on criteria associated with student success; for example as noted by Clarke and McNabb (1998) at the University of Melbourne.

The issue of excluding students based on their perceived 'potential' is an emotive and contentious issue in Enabling provision, with positive benefits of participation other than transfer to award study often cited as a justification for the wide inclusion of students - such as positive employment outcomes; an increased awareness of university culture that can be transmitted to communities; the gaining of social skills, confidence and self-esteem; and the recognition and valuing of indigenous knowledge and culture (Byrt 1995; Bond 1996; Edith Cowan University 1999; Peter Beavis, personal communication). The issue is made more complex in situations where clear alternative pathways may not be present for students who are excluded, as is the case for the many indigenous peoples studying in remote locations that are attracted to the external bridging programs offered by Edith Cowan University and University of Southern Queensland discussed above. Creating the correct balance between liberal and restrictive entry policies into Enabling provision, and having appropriate pre-

Enabling educational pathways available are both crucial, albeit perplexing and problematic, issues for this group.

It is clearly important that the expectations placed on indigenous higher education must remain realistic and achievable. It must be remembered that in 1973, there were only 122 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Australian higher education (Anderson & Vervoorn 1983). In 1998, just a single generation later, this had increased over 50-fold to 6 188 (DETYA 1999e). The barriers to participation with success for this group are immense, ranging from the impact of differences in Aboriginal learning styles (Andrews & Hughes 1988; Bourke *et al.* 1996), the pervasive impact of socioeconomic disadvantage, poverty, language differences and geographic isolation (Ainley and McKenzie 1991), a general lack of appropriate schooling (NTDE 1999), and continuing ethnocentrism and discrimination (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1994). Addressing disadvantage which is so entrenched and pervasive presents immense challenges for the higher education sector (NBEET 1997) and it should not be expected that addressing these issues will be simple, straightforward or necessarily able to be assessed through traditional Western-centred perspectives. However, it would be difficult to argue that with the problems being experienced by other educational sectors in addressing the needs of indigenous peoples (for example, as described in NTDE 1999) that there does not remain a strong need for the continuation of indigenous Enabling provision in universities in some form. As noted by Byrt (1995, p. 25):

> *Education in relation to indigenous communities is a current issue of great importance. …There is a strong belief amongst Australian Aboriginal people that constructive and real change will occur only when the people themselves are in full command of their destiny. Education is seen to be one of the major vehicles for achieving this goal*.

2.7.2 Performance of non-indigenous Enabling and Enabling-like provision

A review of the performance literature for Enabling and Enabling-like programs reveals some consistently reported findings:

- significant attrition and low transfer rates into further study appear as general characteristics of preparatory programs of all types;
- students who complete preparatory programs and transfer to further study appear to generally perform well; and
- the detail of student performance is significantly dependent on characteristics of the particular student constituencies served by the programs.

Each of these trends will be discussed in turn.

Significant attrition and low transfer rates into further study appear as a feature of all types of Enabling and Enabling-like programs. Stanley (1995) reported on the performance of students in Australian National University (ANU)'s University Preparation Scheme (UPS) which has operated since 1979 as a fee-paying part-time course. Despite a sharp growth in demand to reach over

250 enrolments in the mid-1990s, around half of those enrolled in any year in the long-standing 26-week UPS program decided against continuing on to apply for entry into university (although retention rates in the 13-week more intensive program introduced in 1991 were higher at 75 per cent). As only around 70 per cent of student applications were successful in gaining a place at ANU, the overall attrition rate was determined to be 63.7 per cent. While it was suggested that: *"participants drop out for a multitude of reasons"* (Stanley 1995, p. 7), the only explanation explicitly given was that:

> *Many of the participants who drop out do so after satisfying themselves that they just do not possess the necessary commitment or time to embark on a university degree* (Stanley 1995, p. 8).

Similar findings were found for the fee-paying part-time University Preparation Course offered by the University of New South Wales where of the 362 students undertaking the course in 1995, 158 (43 per cent) subsequently enrolled in undergraduate courses at the University in 1996 (Magin 1998). Significant attrition rates are also commonly experienced in preparatory programs undertaken by TAFE. For example, success rates for the Certificate in Adult Tertiary Preparation (ATP) offered at Gold Coast Institute of TAFE were reported as 63.6 per cent in 1998 and 41.2 per cent in 1998-9 (Janet Diehl, Co-ordinator Adult Tertiary Preparation, personal communication in the form of a submission to the EIP project).

Hence, bridging/preparatory programs appear frequently to serve as an effective screen of prospective students – providing a basis for tentative students to make decisions about their desire, capacity or potential for further study. **However once students pass through this screen they generally appear to perform extremely well in subsequent study.** For example, of 70 students who graduated from the Macstart course offered as a part-time, 24-week Enabling bridging program at the University of Western Sydney (UWS, Macarthur campus) in 1998, 62 (88 per cent) transferred to undergraduate study at UWS and three others moved into further study at other institutions – implying a transfer rate of students completing Macstart of 92 per cent for that year, although it was stated that some appear likely to defer their studies (Ruth Crowe, Macstart Coordinator, UWS, personal communication) – a result at least partly attributed to the University guaranteeing an undergraduate place for successful Macstart students.

With regard to the performance of students in this program, Nicholls (1998, p. 18) noted in a study of the 1992-1996 Macstart cohorts:

> *[O]verall, former Macstart students are succeeding academically in their undergraduate studies at a level at least similar to all undergraduates at UWS Macarthur. On some measures they are performing better than the whole population with former Macstart students being able to achieve credits and above at a rate significantly higher than the whole population.*

Coombes (1997) reported on a study of the STEPS (Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Study) Program at Central Queensland University. This is a 13-week full-time Enabling program with selection based on the results of entrance tests,

consideration of disadvantage and a face-to-face interview. They cited a rate of transfer of those students who have successfully completed STEPS into undergraduate programs of 71.9 per cent, and a subsequent undergraduate attrition rate of former STEPS students of 15.7 per cent, somewhat below the University mean.

Lewis (1994) compared the subsequent performance in undergraduate study of students admitted via alternative modes of entry to the University of Wollongong. He found that students entering through the Enabling Gateway Program, a 14-week part-time Enabling program offered prior to 1999, consistently performed better than the mean on the basis of both 'Mean Aggregate Mark' and 'the Proportion Passing At Least 75 per cent of Credit Points Attempted'.

Beasley (1997b) analysed the subsequent degree performance of students entering Flinders University after undertaking the 22-week, $400 fee-paying general bridging University Foundation Course (UFC). He found no statistical difference between first-year Grade Point Averages and attrition rates between former-UFC and non-UFC students, when analysed as matched pairs of individuals from each group. However, former-UFC students displayed a significantly lower graduation rate than non-UFC students, which the author attributed to the impact of these students having: *"…a range of family, personal and work pressures upon them that younger, more affluent traditional students do not have"* (Beasley 1997b, p. 21). This observation conforms to the observed trend of good academic performance but poor graduation rates described by Hester (1994) as typical of mature age students in higher education study (refer section 2.6).

However, **the make-up of the student body appears to have a bearing on the perceived performance of preparatory programs.** For example, Bond (1996) studied the performance of students entering further study through the Certificate in Tertiary Access to Griffith University offered through Logan Institute of TAFE as a joint university/TAFE initiative. She found that as a percentage of total enrolments in the Certificate in 1992-3, 60 per cent completed the course and 39 per cent went on to enrol in university in 1993. However, there was a significant difference between target groups ranging from 52 per cent completion and 42 per cent transition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and 76 per cent completion and 48 per cent transition for 'Educationally disadvantaged' students – agreeing with trends noted by Cobbin and Martin (1993).

Jackson *et al.* (1996) identified three main age groupings of students undertaking preparatory study at Victoria University of Technology, each presenting with different aims and motivations, preferences for study mode and ultimate 'academic potential':

- *18-25 – those who did not complete secondary education but have now decided to pursue further study, often in full time mode*
- *26-35 – students with school age children who prefer part time courses*
- *36-50+ - those who have decided to take a new life direction* (Jackson *et al.* 1996, p. 25).

Davies (2000) compared the outcomes for students entering study at Murdoch University through two distinct equity programs – the Uni Access Program and the Uni Quest Programs. Uni Access is four-week full-time on-campus Enabling preparation program while Uni Quest is a one-week 'taster'; with students from both programs having access to the same support programs on entry to undergraduate study. Davies study compared the performance of 135 Uni Access students enrolled between 1997-1999 and 134 Uni Quest students enrolled between 1991-1999. It was found that Uni Quest students outperform Access students in terms of unit outcomes – with Access students proportionately failing units more frequently; and with the distribution of Access students skewed towards 'Pass' compared with a skew towards 'Credit' for Quest students. However, age appeared to be an important variable, with a greater proportion of younger students being present in the Access program: *"The removal of under 30 year of age students from comparative studies indicates that other students perform similarly"* (Davies 2000, p. 7). As well, while both programs target a similar range of specific identified disadvantaged groups, Uni Access further targets non-TEE Year 12 students and residents of rural and isolated areas, two particularly educationally disadvantaged and 'at risk' groups, not targeted by Uni Quest (Mulligan 1998). Hence, the results appear to reflect to some degree differences in the target populations of the two programs.

A similar impact of student make-up on overall performance has been observed in comparisons between the Open Foundation Course (OFC) and Newstep Programs at the University of Newcastle. Both are Enabling bridging programs but target very different groups – OFC targets mature aged learners over 20 years of age with a composition of two-thirds female, while Newstep targets 17-21 year olds who have not qualified for entry to university, often represented by boys with a background of disrupted or failed schooling. Cantwell *et al.* (1999), in a comparison of the academic experiences of traditional and non-traditional student groups at University of Newcastle, found that while OFC students performed favourably in undergraduate study compared with other groups, Newstep students performed considerably worse in terms of both Grade Point Average and attrition; largely reflecting strong trends for females to perform better than males and for older students to perform better than younger students. The multi-level analysis also identified differences in student study load and field of study between groups as having an impact on student performance.

2.8 The Higher Education Contributions Scheme (HECS) as a potential barrier / deterrent to students

As stated in section 2.3 above, students reported as Enabling in official statistics are able to be counted against funded load but, unlike most other Commonwealth funded students, are not required to pay HECS for their period of study in the Enabling program. This HECS-exempt status appears to have been included in the Enabling Guidelines at the time that HECS was first introduced in 1989 because of a concern that the imposition of HECS may serve to deter students from identified disadvantaged groups from participating in bridging programs, and a belief at the time that it was not appropriate to charge Enabling students a

HECS fee for study that was not itself credited to an award course (Bruce Milligan, personal communication). As more than a decade has elapsed since the HECS was introduced, it is possible now to consider the impact of the HECS-exemption provision on Enabling students based on a greater understanding of student contribution.

It is generally argued that the provision for students to defer their student contribution payments through an interest-free loan which is payed back on an income-contingent basis, makes HECS a relatively fair system for student contribution to study costs (Chapman 1996) and there is certainly considerable merit in this general argument. Andrews (1999) sought to specifically address the question of whether HECS serves as a deterrent for socioeconomically disadvantaged people to attend higher education. His final conclusion was that it did not. Although compelling in parts, Andrews' analysis is not entirely satisfying, for several reasons. Firstly, much of the analysis is based on circumstantial evidence. There is little sound data specifically relating to HECS as a potential deterrent, rather arguments are developed from a range of indirect sources. For example much is made of an analysis of the *"willingness"* of members of this group to enter into other forms of debt, as indicated by the high debt burden of the Low SES group in society, as reflecting the impact that HECS may have on decisions to enter higher education study. In this respect, Andrews' analysis of *"the willingness of different SES groups to enter into debt"* appears one-sided in that it did not consider such findings as those of Percival (1998, p. iii) who reported that:

> *Over the period 1975-6 to 1997 there was a marked decline in the rate of home purchasing, with the analysis strongly indicating that the primary reason was the increased cost of housing. The fall in home purchasing was greatest among lower income households and single income families, as an increasing proportion became renters.*

Contrary to Davis' assertion, this behaviour does, in fact, indicate a level of debt aversion by low SES people, particularly given the ready availability of mortgage products and the fact that the Australian rental market is in many ways hostile to Low SES people – both trends which should encourage mortgage uptake. Further, Andrews' study did not give credence to the wealth of evidence developed from the experience of other countries, such as the USA and Canada, with loans schemes in higher education. Although the loans schemes from these countries differ in their nature and scope to HECS, they do share the broad characteristic of representing loans schemes that enable students to purchase educational services with an expectation of repayment at a later date. In this context, there is considerable evidence in the US and Canadian literature that lower-SES students view the prospect of debt to finance high education study differently to their peers. For example, the Canadian Maritime Higher Education Commission (MPHEC 1997) found that the cost of post-secondary education and increasing debt levels are significant factors in the decisions students make about whether or not to continue their education beyond high school, and that this effect was most pronounced for students from lower income families. O'Brien (1995) found that lower-SES students were less likely to express a preference for borrowing than higher-SES students. The US Government Accounting Office (GAO) national

study of borrowing behaviour for undergraduate students (GAO 1998) showed that minority students, who are over-represented among low-income students, had a significantly lower propensity to borrow than their peers to finance their education; while in an earlier study, GAO (1995) found that grants were significantly more effective than loans in increasing the likelihood that first-year, low income students would stay in education.

It must also be remembered that the fees and charges incurred by university students are high when compared with other education expenses (Borthwick 1999) and the level of debt incurred on individuals as a result of HECS tend to be relatively large. Andrews' study also failed to consider the overall future impact of Low SES individuals incurring significant debts, including the limitation that existing debts might place on the incurring of further debt as disposable incomes diminish. There is also the concern raised by Robertson *et al.* (1990, p.1) that: *"HECS may affect graduates' preparedness to go on to post-graduate study"* which represents even more of a concern today given the observed impact that the expansion of fee-paying courses in postgraduate education is having on deterring disadvantaged groups from pursuing study at the postgraduate level (Anderson *et al.* 2000).

Evidence that is presented by Andrews which relate directly to the Low SES group is typically based on the postcode-based method of identification popularised by Martin (1994) which has been shown to be a poor indicator for analyses of this type (Western *et al.* 1998). Given the limitations of his data sources, it could be argued that little veracity can be placed on many of the conclusions that he draws. Typical is his assumption that the inability to determine the impact of previous change to HECS on participation by Low SES individuals proves that no impact occurred. Given the limitations of the studies from which he draws, such a conclusion is presumptuous at best. Andrews contends that:

> *A number of previous studies have been discussed in this paper…..Each of these approaches have weaknesses associated with limited data and methodological concerns which prevent definitive conclusions being drawn. Notwithstanding these criticisms some strength in interpretation can be drawn if the various approaches provide findings which are broadly consistent* (Andrews 1999 p. 17).

However, this rationalisation is invalid as it is entirely possible that the use of multiple methodologies will lead to wrong inferences if the data from each study is consistently misinterpreted.

Government-sponsored research suggesting that HECS does not deter disadvantaged students has been questioned by some notable sources. The Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs of the OECD, in its *Thematic Review of the First Years of Tertiary Study in Australia* (Directorate for … 1997, p. 27) noted that:

> *... the Higher Education Council undertook to assess the differential effects of HECS on initial access and choice of fields study and found no evidence*

> *indicating any adverse consequences. Institutional officials reported that they had been able to maintain enrolments from 'target' groups in the expansion [of higher education], although other stakeholders disagreed (eg. National Tertiary Education Industry Union). Even if such enrolments were maintained, it is reasonable to ask whether they should have been increased in relation to enrolments from other groups in the course of expansion.*

With the limitations in the approaches used, the most acceptable conclusions that can be drawn is that the ability of HECS to deter Low SES individuals from attending university is unclear and that the impact of financial factors, including HECS, on the socioeconomic composition of higher education students is poorly understood.

However, even if one accepts Andrews' overall conclusions, it is significant that his study did not consider the potential impact of HECS specifically on Enabling students. The study does not consider the impact of HECS in other groups that are heavy users of Enabling programs, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from rural and geographically isolated regions, both of which are generally recognised as exhibiting some degree of debt aversion (James *et al.* 1999). Andrews' study also completely failed to take account of the impact of HECS on those for whom the deferral of their HECS debt is not an attractive option – such as those who are studying as adults while in employment. It is not surprising that national figures indicate that external students have the lowest HECS deferral rates (54 per cent in 1996 compared with 79 per cent for full-time students) and that the nation's lowest HECS deferral rates are seen in former Distance Education Centres (DECs) such as University of Southern Queensland, Charles Sturt University, University of New England and Central Queensland University despite these institutions having high proportions of Low SES students and other equity groups which by and large tend to have higher HECS deferral rates when deferment is a viable option (Dobson *et al.* 1998). For students in this category, HECS does not present as a debt and so debt aversion status is not a consideration for them. Andrews (1997 and 1999) himself noted that a reduction in applications from mature aged students occurred after quite significant HECS changes were introduced in 1997 indicating some effect may well be occurring for this group, which is a significant user of Enabling provision.

During the consultations undertaken as a part of the current study, Enabling program staff indicated a strong belief that HECS-exemption was a major attraction for Enabling students and that demand for these courses could drop off dramatically – by as much as 50 per cent in the perceptions of some - if these students were required to pay a HECS fee (refer Chapter 6). Enabling program staff pointed to the differences between Enabling students and undergraduate students. It was argued that Enabling students are particularly vulnerable as they approach their decision to enter an Enabling course, not yet empowered to undertake an award program, still uncertain about their place within the higher education culture, and not yet confident in their ability to study. It has been argued that such prospective students with a high 'risk:debt ratio' (a phrase coined by Ralph Robertson, Director, Enabling Programs Unit, University of Newcastle) may be expected to be less likely to enter into debt until they obtain a greater level

of confidence in their potential for success in future study. It is argued that this is particularly the case for Low SES people who tend to enter into debt to meet perceived significant immediate needs and wants, rather than in the hope of improving the long-term quality of their lives (Tas Bedford, TPP Program, University of Southern Queensland, personal communication).

To conclude, it is difficult to determine what impact the HECS-exemption status afforded Enabling students serves to encourage participation in these programs by disadvantaged groups or, conversely, to what degree the imposition of HECS on these programs would serve as a deterrent to study. For decisive decision-making in this area it is really necessary for a detailed study of student finances to be undertaken at a sector-wide level as is occurring under government sponsorship in the United Kingdom and as is being pursued in Australia as an AVCC-supported exercise (Yvette Devlin, personal communication).

2.9 Summary

- Identifying disadvantage presents many challenges in practice. Although considerable use is made of the Martin (1994) equity group identifiers in the higher education sector, their limitations, particularly with regard to assessing individual disadvantage for members of groups such as Low SES and rural/isolated, are well recognised (Western *et al.* 1998).
- Addressing access barriers to higher education study by disadvantaged groups is particularly important for ensuring educational equity for these groups.
- Enabling and Enabling-like programs in the higher education sector have increased over the past 20 years in response to government pressure supporting equity developments, including the setting of performance targets for participation and success, and general moves within the sector towards the mass provision of higher education. These programs provide or support alternative pathways for non-traditional students. In particular, the great majority of universities in Australia very consciously utilise Enabling and/or Enabling-like programs as significant indigenous education strategies, with the Enabling reporting provision being used as a basis for funding over 70 per cent of these programs. Enabling programs also commonly target other groups that are associated with educational disadvantage, particularly the socioeconomically disadvantaged and people from rural and geographically isolated areas.
- Mature age, often 'second chance' learners, are a significant target group for these programs. It is recognised that adult learners have particular needs that need to be accounted for by these programs.
- Enabling and Enabling-like programs are intended to address the outcomes of disadvantage. This concerns more than the 'topping up' of skills and knowledge, and explains the importance given by equity practitioners to issues such as student awareness, confidence building, experience of the culture of higher education, the need for universities to

open up and liberalise their culture, etc. An understanding of how these programs operate must be based on an understanding of the nature of disadvantage as it affects each group.

- Programs offered through universities have generally been developed in response to local needs. Bridging programs are typically aimed at providing entry into the host institution. The wider use of these programs to serve as a general entry qualification into tertiary study is limited by the difficulties inherent in other institutions and State Admissions Offices determining the entry standard afforded students by successful completion of individual programs.
- The provision for reporting students against supplementary Enabling programs is used less frequently than the bridging program provision. This is surprising given the degree of activity in academic learning support undertaken in universities and their perceived importance as strategies for improving student performance.
- It is difficult to assess the significance of the HECS-exemption status afforded Enabling students in supporting their decision to undertake Enabling study. However, there are indications that incurring a HECS fee would serve as a significant deterrent to potential Enabling students.

Chapter 3

International Models for Widening Participation in Higher Education Through Access and Support Provision

Although it is difficult to assess educational strategies outside of the particular historical, operational and policy context in which they have developed, international models of education can provide valuable insights and ideas for educational analysts. In this chapter access and support strategies for widening participation in higher education are reviewed in selected countries where the higher education systems have developed from similar antecedents to that of the Australian university sector – namely England, Scotland, the United States, Canada, New Zealand and the Republic of South Africa. The overall situation in England and the United States of America (USA) are described in some detail as a situation with many useful parallels and points of contrast to the Australian situation, while the other case studies are used more to concentrate on specific types of access and support provision.

The aim of this exercise is to investigate the means by which different educational sectors have approached the general desire to widen higher education participation, the factors which have influenced the strategies that have been developed and the means in which these strategies have been implemented in each case. By contrasting these approaches with those adopted in Australia, particularly the Enabling and Enabling-like programs which lie at the heart of this overall study, the situation in Australia can be held in starker relief and ideas for potential alternative strategies can be considered.

3.1 Widening higher education participation in England

The United Kingdom (UK) consists of four countries – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. To a greater or lesser degree, each has its own form of government and its own unique education system, each with its own history, philosophies, structures and bureaucracies. As in other western countries, the UK higher education sectors have experienced substantial growth over the past four decades associated with a general trend towards massification (Trow 1973). In particular, since the time of the *Education Reform Act* of 1988, long-established post-secondary education systems in these countries have undergone considerable change and continue to do so. For the purpose of this report, the situation in England is considered in some depth; with access courses in Scotland also discussed by means of contrast in section 3.2.

3.1.1 Higher and Further Education in England

In 1985 there were basically two post-secondary education sectors in England which had remained essentially unchanged for decades – one made up of the country's universities and the other made up of all other forms of post-school education which was known generally as the further education sector. Further education in 1985 was largely under local education authority (LEA) control and was made up of a diverse range of non-university institutions. These ranged from polytechnics, and colleges and institutes of higher education that provided higher education courses from the other side of the 'binary divide' to England's universities; and the colleges of advanced education, technical colleges, tertiary colleges, specialist institutions (such as agricultural colleges) and adult education centres which catered for general education and a broad range of vocational, leisure and cultural courses (Cantor *et al.* 1995). By 1995, in the wake of the *Education Reform Act* of 1988 and the *Further and Higher Education Act* of 1992, the polytechnics (which have since been granted university status) and the colleges and institutes of higher education have moved out of further education and out of LEA control into a higher education sector with universities under the influence of new Higher Education Funding Councils. Thus in 1995, the further education sector in England was made up of:

- 229 general and 50 specialist further education colleges which catered to the broad further education needs of young adults and adults as state-supported corporations financed largely through a funding council directly responsible to the Secretary of Education;
- 60 odd tertiary colleges which provide GCE (General Certificate of Education)-level programs largely for 16-19 year olds in specialised areas;
- 117 smaller and more specialist sixth form colleges;
- so-called 'designated institutions' which include certain adult education colleges and specialist institutions such as the National Sea Training College;
- a continuation by some higher education institutions (mainly former polytechnics) to offer further education courses; and
- some 3 000 private / independent 'college-type' institutions (Cantor *et al.* 1995).

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland higher education is defined in terms of courses which lead to qualifications at a standard above the GCE A-level (Advanced Level of the General Certificate of Education). Courses in this group include two-year sub-degree awards, first degree courses extending over three or four years, and postgraduate courses (Parry 1995). Higher education courses are principally the domain of universities (including former polytechnics) and colleges and institutes of higher education, which since the abandonment of the binary organisation for higher education in 1992, now make up the higher education sector. However, further education colleges can also offer higher education courses at the Diploma level, although comprising a minority of their provision. Further education colleges are also increasingly serving higher

education students through the practice of 'franchising' where the college delivers the first year of a degree course by specific arrangement, which is then validated by the university concerned when the student transfers into later years of the degree study (Cantor *et al.* 1995). With regard to a further aspect of higher education provision, Parry (1995, pp. 105-6) has noted:

> *In addition to study at these formal levels, and either articulated with them or deliberately detached, are opportunities for continuing education and training, embracing short courses as well as more individualised forms of flexible and open learning. Programmes differ in their liberal or vocational emphasis, their ability to offer credit for progression, and their degree of openness. As well, with the Open University, these remain parts of higher education where adults are the target or exclusive audience. Not all these levels and types of activity are to be found in every university and college of higher education. Indeed courses leading to qualifications below the level of the first degree, whether part-time (the majority) or full-time, are almost exclusively a feature of provision in the (former) polytechnics and the (present) colleges of higher education.*

Recent policy initiatives have had a considerable influence on the further development of the further and higher education sectors - as described in some detail below – and the sectors are in a continued phase of significant growth and change. This is further indicated by the recent announcement by the Secretary of State of a new group of sub-degree qualifications – two-year vocationally-oriented associate or foundation degrees – which are expected to account for the bulk of the planned expansion in higher education, some 100 000 more students by 2002 (Parry 2000).

3.1.2 Policies for widening participation and lifelong learning

There was a quadrupling of participants in higher education in the UK during the period 1965 to 1995. The most recent and dramatic expansions have occurred as a result of three major factors: social justice, demographic trends and economic development (Tonks 1999; Parry 2000). The discourse for widening participation in post-school education in England has most recently been bound up in the consideration of lifelong learning as expressed in the European White Paper: *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* (European Commission 1995) in which the combating of social exclusion through offering 'second chances' was elucidated as one of five main guidelines for action in striving for a knowledge-based society. These sentiments were embraced by the newly elected Blair Labour Government in the UK in its treatment of three key reports on UK post-school education which were all published in 1997:

- the 'Garrick' Committee *Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education in the United Kingdom*;
- the report of the Kennedy Committee *Learning Works* on further education; and particularly
- the report of the Dearing Committee into the *"purposes, size, shape, structure and funding in higher education"* (Parry 1998, p. 1).

The Garrick report stated a desire that the higher education sector should 'encourage and achieve equal access for everyone who has the potential to benefit from higher education regardless of the individual's social or economic background' (Garrick 1997). The Kennedy Committee put forward an agenda for improving access in further education through colleges 'reaching out' to adults, particularly second-chance learners, and those young people who are currently leaving the education and training system at 16 years of age (Dawe 1998). The Dearing Committee report included an emphasis on the need for higher education to sustain a 'learning society' (Tonks 1999). It devoted a full chapter of their report to widening participation in higher education. The report noted that:

> *The HE [higher education] field is changing. In spite of fluctuations, the prospective trend for the future is a less homogeneous student population and differential modes of study. These trends have generally been stimulated by the upskilling needs of a fast-changing world and demographic age population shifts… But HE is changing unevenly. Widened participation has been concentrated in the new universities, while across the sector certain minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities and people of all ages from socio-economic groups four and five are disproportionately under-represented. Alongside this trend is growing evidence that marginal social groups are also the most vulnerable to drop-out or withdrawal from courses even though those who do succeed are likely to do as well as, or better than, their younger, or more middle class, counterparts* (Preece 1998, p. 1).

Significantly, the publication of these key reports coincided with a change in Government in the UK. As a result, the recommendations of these reports were reviewed in the context of the social inclusion policies of the Blair Labour Government which:

> *… sought to place widening participation and lifelong learning at the heart of policies aimed at economic competitiveness, social inclusion and personal well-being; in short, to place investment and participation in lifelong learning at the centre of a strategy to build human and social capital in a knowledge economy* (Parry 2000, p. 1).

As its response to the Garrick, Kennedy and Dearing Reports, the Government released its Green Paper: *The Learning Age* in 1998 which outlined a new 'partnership' or 'compact' of shared responsibility for investment in learning between individuals, employers and the state; justified by the principle that education benefited everyone. As part of the State's contribution to this new compact, additional public funding to both further and higher education was allocated in order to achieve specific goals:

- to widen access for disadvantaged groups;
- to bring back into learning those who left education and training early; and
- to enable individuals to choose methods of learning that suited them best.

Specific strategies developed by the Government to contribute to these goals included the establishment of the University of Industry (UfI), the introduction of

individual learning accounts, proposals to extend provision for people with disabilities or learning difficulties, and programs to improve the basic skills of large numbers of the adult population (Parry 2000).

In its White Paper *Learning to Succeed* released in 1999, the Government introduced a Learning and Skills Bill to create a new funding and planning framework for post-16 education and training in further education under a single national Learning and Skills Council (Parry 2000). For higher education, additional growth places of 100 000 were mooted between 1998 and 2002 with growth funding targeted to those institutions demonstrating a commitment to widening access for under-represented groups, particularly for working class students and those with disabilities (Tonks 1999). Priority in growth in the medium term has been focussed on 'sub-degree' provision intended to be located mainly in further education colleges. Funding has also been earmarked for projects aimed at raising achievement and recruitment among those from particularly disadvantaged localities and part-time and mature students have been given additional weightings in funding considerations (Parry 2000).

In accord with the Dearing recommendations, all universities and colleges in England were required to provide statements on strategies for widening participation by October 1999. These were required to include: objectives for widening participation; plans for the additional formula funding for widening participation; and recruitment and improved retention targets for under-represented groups. Universities and colleges were to report on their progress in meeting these objectives and targets through their annual operating statements in July 2000. In addition, institutions were invited to bid for widening participation projects due to start in January 2000 for three years. Funds were available to:

- improve the quality of provision for disabled students;
- develop partnerships between higher education institutions, colleges of further education, schools and community organisations;
- disseminate and embed good practice in widening participation; and
- develop progression opportunities from further education to higher education through links with Lifelong Learning Partnerships (Parry 2000).

In line with the Government's 'compact' philosophy, students were also expected to make a greater contribution to their own education. Free tuition and a means tested maintenance award had been in place for undergraduates since the 1960s as a means of ensuring that entrance to higher education was not restricted by ability to pay. More recently, a student loans scheme had been introduced to compensate for the declining value of the maintenance award (Tonks 1999). In response to the recommendation made by the Dearing Committee that students should contribute directly to the costs of their undergraduate education, the Government abolished maintenance grants and replaced them with loans (repayable by graduates in work on an income contingent basis), and introduced a flat-rate, up-front, means-tested tuition fee of £1 000 per student (representing around a quarter of the average cost of a course) which were implemented in 1998/9. In doing this the Government rejected the preferred Dearing option for retaining a balance of grants and loans

for maintenance alongside a tuition fee. However, in order to help to ensure 'free higher education for the least well off', students from lower-income families who would have been eligible for a maximum maintenance grant under previous arrangements (around one-in-three students in England and Wales and 40 per cent in Scotland) had their fee waived and additional maintenance loans were provided to ensure that 'no student, parent or family need be worse off than under the present arrangements' (Parry 2000).

The nature of student contribution has been a topic of considerable debate in the UK. In particular, the changes became a major political issue in the lead-up to the Scottish elections in 1998; so much so that the first parliamentary committee set up by the new Scottish parliament in 1998 was the Cubie Committee to review tuition fees and financial support for students normally resident in Scotland and to 'have regard to the desirability of promoting access to further and higher education'. As a result, the issue with student contribution remains controversial and the policy situation remains fluid. There is also some suggestion that the recent policy changes may have worked to deter some groups from participation in higher education. For example, the number of mature students applying for higher education decreased significantly between 1998-2000, although it remains unclear whether this has been related to the changes in student funding, or to larger demographic, economic and social changes (Parry 2000). The Government's approach as inspired by Dearing has also been criticised for its emphasis on widening participation through the promotion of sub-degree level courses, its lack of emphasis on the need for cultural and curriculum change within universities to better enable the system to deal with diversity and for:

> *... the report's virtual abdication of responsibility for current participation rates in HE [stating]: 'the prime causes of uneven participation... lie outside higher education* (Preece, p. 4).

3.1.3 Achieving access and wider participation in English higher education: Access course provision

In conjunction with the sweeping changes introduced by the Blair Government, the focus on access and wider participation in England has intensified since 1998. This is reflected in the establishment by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) of the EQUALL (Equal Opportunities, Access and Lifelong Learning) committee, the creation by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) of the Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Group to ensure that the CVCP is proactive and responsive in these areas, and the creation of a new Widening Participation Advisory and Consultancy Service with the aim of assisting institutions in developing their individual approaches to widening participation (Tonks 1999; Parry 2000). However, access, of course, had been a major consideration prior to this time, at least since the advent of university extension for adult students at Cambridge and Oxford Universities in the 1870s (Fieldhouse 1996). One major manifestation of interest in this area was the development during the 1960s of The Open University (OU) in the UK: *"widely described as one of the most significant innovations in education in this century"* (Sargant 1996, p. 290). The OU provided: *"an open entry, part-time and*

modular-credit system of distance education" (Parry 1996, p. 13) targeted largely to creating opportunities for higher education access for adult learners. The academic aims of the OU were expressed as:

> *... to provide opportunities, at both undergraduate and post-graduate level, of higher education to all those who, for any reason have been or are being precluded from achieving their aims through an existing institution of higher education* (The Planning Committee Report 1969, as cited in Sargant 1996, p. 292).

Another manifestation of the importance of access as a consideration for non-traditional students are the access courses developed to provide access by adults to higher education. As these courses represent perhaps the closest parallel in English post-school education to the types of bridging / preparatory programs commonly used as a basis for reporting Enabling students in Australian higher education, they are considered here in some depth.

Parry (1996) reviews a number of strategies which occurred in the wake of the creation of the OU in the 1970s and 1980s to improve access to further and higher study by adult learners. Included as access strategies developed over this period were:

- alternative GCE O and A Level courses for adults offered by colleges of further education;
- community education courses offered by some universities and the Workers' Education Association (WEA);
- reorientation courses aimed mainly at women returning to study offered by a range of educational institutions; and
- credit-based open college organisations which used processes of accreditation to recognise the learning of adults and to promote their mobility across different types and levels of adult, further and community education.

Also developed around this time were:

> *... a band of preparatory and access courses specially designed to enable adults not holding formal entry qualifications to secure admission to first degree education in the polytechnics, universities and other establishments of higher education* (Parry 1996, p. 15).

These access programs which Parry describes as having more focussed aims than the other types of programs listed enjoyed sponsorship from a number of metropolitan authorities and often involved close relationships between particular colleges of further education and polytechnics. These courses provided for the dual needs of the target student group of preparation for higher study and a qualification for entry into higher education for those who lack traditional qualifications (Parry 1996; 2000). As Parry (2000) noted:

> *Although always part of a spectrum of provision designed to encourage adults to return to study after a break with formal education, access*

> *courses came to be associated with a combination of features which, during the 1980s, increasingly set them apart from other types of preparatory, second chance or fresh start programs offered in adult, further and higher education.*
>
> *First, the primary aim of such courses was to prepare students for higher education, with a number of programs formally linked to departments and institutions of higher education for that purpose. Second, access courses were strongly identified with equal opportunity policies (and, in some cases, with affirmative action strategies) which sought to target those groups under-represented in the undergraduate population: women, working class, and black and minority ethnic students in particular. Third, these programs claimed to offer a student-centred curriculum which sought (in contrast to content-led A level curricula or competence-based vocational curricula) to integrate subject knowledge and study skills, acknowledging the different needs and experience of adult learners but preparing students intensively and effectively for the conventional demands of elite and mass styles of higher education. Finally, these courses were based on face-to-face teaching and collective learning, recruiting local populations to local institutions and characterised by high levels of group identity, peer support and tutor advocacy.*

These courses were different from the great majority of extra-mural courses for adults offered by many of the 'pre-1992' universities, and the liberal adult education courses frequently taught in free-standing adult education institutes, which were neither designed for, nor frequently used for, the purpose of access to higher education (McGivney 1990; Parry 1995). Access courses were also distinct from the open access, part-time and distance learning programs provided by the Open University which were based on a strategy of abolishing entry requirements for undergraduate courses rather than preparing students for the experience (Sargant 1996). However, access courses in England have many similarities to bridging/preparatory programs in Australia in having:

- a strong equity focus,
- being often geared to adults who have been absent from formal schooling for a period (frequently place a minimum age level for entry at 19-21 years of age or a minimum time away from school of two-to-three years),
- being based on a relatively student-centred andragogy,
- representing local initiatives developed as specific responses to particular needs and circumstances, and
- which are aimed at local recruitment in higher education.

A major difference with the situation in Australia, however, is the type of institution where these programs came to reside. Whereas the former colleges of advanced education and community-centred universities in Australia embraced these types of programs – with Australian universities of all types employing them as a major strategy for indigenous access (refer to Chapter 4) – in the UK these programs are largely, but not exclusively, placed in colleges of further education. The polytechnics and colleges of higher education (later to be granted university

status) were not major providers of adult liberal education or in-house access programs (Millins & Jones 1990; Parry 1996; 2000).

This situation in the UK arose for several reasons. Firstly, prior to the abolition of the binary divide of higher education in the UK in 1992, the polytechnics and colleges of higher education responded to the need to compete with universities for status and students and their push to become national institutions by increasing their emphasis on higher level work, with a corresponding removal of some of their lower level portfolio. Such a climate was not conducive to an investment in broad in-house access provision. Rather, the access strategies of these institutions were generally focused on flexible admission arrangements for adults and on collaborative arrangements (initially with colleges and later with schools) designed to attract more traditional student groups as commencers. This was despite the fact that these institutions' mix of part-time and full-time provision, together with the range of professional and vocational subjects offered at different levels, had served to attract an older and more heterogeneous student population than that of universities which continued to recruit mainly from the ranks of school-leavers (those with higher points scores in their A level qualifications) and which eschewed course provision below the level of the first degree.

By contrast, the growth of access to higher education courses was promoted in many colleges of further education by a large number of factors:

> *... their long-standing provision of part-time day and evening courses which enabled adults to qualify for higher education in conventional (if delayed) ways; their routine (if skewed) recruitment of adults - the majority population of colleges; their wide range of subjects which matched most of those in higher education; their planning and funding by local education authorities which were responsible for both 'non-advanced' further education (A-level and below) and 'advanced' further education (higher level courses in the colleges and polytechnics); their history and need to respond to shifting labour market conditions and changing central and local government policies for education and training; their early involvement in cross-sector and collaborative ventures (often sponsored and encouraged by local authorities), including early open college developments; and their capacity for experiment and innovation (though not everywhere) often under difficult conditions, with many former A level tutors reinventing themselves as access course leaders, organising themselves into a national pressure group (its membership and leadership based mainly in the colleges) and occupying quite prominent positions in public debates about access, equity and quality in post-secondary and higher education (later dubbed 'the access movement' of the 1980s)* (Parry 2000).

The location of the majority of access courses in further education was further reinforced when mainstream funding for these programs was allocated from the funding council for further education.

A further difference with the situation in Australia where preparatory programs have remained unregulated (and largely unmonitored), is that access courses in the UK have been subject to quite strict regulation through the government decision

in 1987 to develop a national framework for access course recognition (Davies & Parry 1993), and an increased emphasis on standards during the 1990s as part of the activities of the Higher Education Quality Council (Parry 2000). The Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and the Committee for Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) established the Access Courses Recognition Group (ACRG) in 1989. The national framework for access course recognition which was developed has changed little over its decade of operation. It is based on a three level architecture:

- At the national level the scheme is regulated and overseen by a small sub-committee of the Quality Assurance Agency Board - the Access Recognition and Licensing Committee (ALRC). This committee is assisted in its work by the Access Recognition Advisory Committee (ARAC) comprising members from a variety of constituencies with a particular interest in access course provision.
- Authorised Validating Agencies, often made up of consortia of further, adult and higher education providers are awarded licences by the ARAC. The majority of AVAs are also Open College Networks (OCNs) and define successful achievement in terms of the credit-based scheme of the National Open College Network (NOCN).
- Providers of access courses which need to be recognised by the local AVA. AVAs are required to validate, moderate and exchange information with the providers who, after moderation and satisfying all the criteria, recommend the award to students of a 'kitemarked' access to higher education award. Students are required to achieve a nationally agreed minimum number of credits at certain levels to enable them to achieve the 'kitemarked' award, as based on an agreement about the amount and level of learning required to achieve 'readiness for higher education'.

Access programs have a strong focus on preparing students for full-time study at the level of the first degree rather than to other levels and modes of undergraduate education; are actively engaged with a selective and competitive system of admissions; are required to observe a minimum study time (500 hours); and are generally based on a whole-course approach to student learning based on a defined cohort (Parry 2000). However, the courses overall are diverse in structure, hours, content, student body and relations with higher education. In 1989, 529 access courses were identified in the UK, including 56 (11 per cent) offered out of higher education institutions (Millins & Jones 1990). A survey of access courses in London published in 1994 indicated the diversity of the student body serviced by courses of this type. Overall:

- A third of the students were in each of the age groups under 25 years, aged 25-29 years and aged 30 years and over.
- Nearly six out of 10 access students were female.
- Less than half of access students were white, four out of ten came from Caribbean or African background, and one in ten came from the Indian subcontinent or China.

- Two out of ten students spoke a language other than English as their first language, with a wide variety of languages spoken – no language, other than English, was spoken by more than two per cent of students (Varlaam *et al.* 1994).

Varlaam *et al.* also provided an analysis of the performance of students in these courses:

- Some 76 per cent of students completed their courses. The major reason given for withdrawal was financial problems, closely followed by personal problems.
- Over eight out of ten students, where a destination was known, went on to a higher education course and a further one in ten continued in education either in further education or by continuing with their access course.

Over the period of rapid higher education expansion that preceded the imposition of a cap on funded growth by the Major Government in 1994, access courses replaced A level and vocational qualifications as the main preparatory route for adults entering higher education but these courses still did not account for the majority of older students moving into undergraduate education.

> *Indeed, under these conditions, the role and need for discrete access courses began (again) to be questioned: on the one side from providers of credit-based education and learning who argued that more flexible and customised programmes based on units or modules were more appropriate to a modular mass higher education system; and on the other, from some of the leading access-led polytechnics who, under more competitive conditions for students and resources, saw their own modular, mixed-mode and credit-based provision (along with their own access partnerships with schools and colleges) as better suited to the needs of many adults (and young people)* (Parry 2000).

Significantly, this discussion occurred around the time when the UK binary system of higher education provision was abandoned in 1992 and, as was the case in Australia with post-'87 universities in the wake of the Dawkins *White Paper* reforms, former polytechnics and colleges of higher education were in the process of coming to grips with their newly won university status. Questions about access courses were also raised by the newly established Higher Education Quality Council which inherited the responsibility for access course recognition. Having a broader responsibility for the assurance and enhancement of quality across the higher education system, including the auditing of individual institutions, the Quality Council expressed concern at the expense and level of bureaucracy associated with the access course recognition process. These discussions prompted a review in 1995 of the national arrangements for access course recognition which affirmed a wide measure of support for a continuation of these arrangements.

Responsibilities for this provision passed to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in 1997. This was a new independent agency responsible for ensuring and enhancing quality and academic standards, and was formed from a

merger of the Higher Education Quality Council (which conducted quality audit) and the quality assessment functions carried out by the funding councils for higher education.

Parry (2000) reports that there are currently 33 AVAs licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA): 29 in England (of which 22 are OCNs); three in Wales (each of which are OCNs); and one in Northern Ireland (a non-OCN). Over ninety higher education institutions are in membership of AVAs (including the Open University) and 16 of which are in membership of two or more AVAs. More than 400 providers of access programs (mainly colleges of further education) are in membership of these AVAs. In England, AVAs operate in the context of a national qualifications framework for higher education (set out in the report of the Dearing inquiry into higher education in 1997) overseen by the QAA and a national qualifications framework elaborated by Dearing in his report in 1996 on qualifications for 16-19 year olds. Unlike GCE A-level qualifications and Advanced General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), which are the normal entry qualifications for admission to full-time undergraduate courses for young people and which are overseen by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), access to higher education courses for adults operate at a level equivalent to A-levels and Advanced GNVQs (that is, at the entry level to higher education) but are overseen by an exclusively higher education body.

It must be remembered that access courses, whether recognised or not, represent only one set of routes and arrangements by which adults can achieve entry to higher education. However, they do represent an example of a preparatory strategy whose strength lies in a clear focus on a particular client group (students aged 21 years and over) with a clear goal of preparing students for entry into higher education through an accredited mobile qualification.

3.2 Access courses in Scotland

Scotland has a quite separate and distinctive educational system to the other countries that make up the United Kingdom. These differences manifest themselves in many ways, including:

- course structures – Scottish universities offer many qualifications as a four-year 'honours' degree course which may have a three-year course equivalent elsewhere in the UK;
- higher education participation - over 45 per cent of young people enter higher education in Scotland compared to one in three in England;
- the relationship between the higher and further education sectors – in Scotland some 30 per cent of higher education students are studying in further education as compared with 14 per cent in England, largely as a result of closer cross-sectoral arrangements encouraged by the Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SCOTCAT) framework; and

- in their response to national policy initiatives (Madill 1996) – a trend reinforced by the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1998 which has law-making powers in relation to further and higher education (Parry 2000).

Scotland has a particularly strong educational tradition. As noted by Gerver 1992, p. 390):

> *The existence of four medieval universities in Scotland (while England had only two), and a long-established tradition of parish schools have meant that Scots for a number of centuries have tended to be better educated than their English counterparts*.

It is also significant that the development of universities in Australia in the 1850s tended to follow Scottish rather than English 'tutorial-based' models and Scotland provides a very good comparative model for Australia in a number of higher education contexts, including equity (Gallacher *et al.* 1995). The uniqueness of Scottish education impacts as much on access education as in any other facet of educational delivery. Hence, whereas in England, Wales and Northern Ireland the impetus for access course development has often been organised within the framework of 'Open College' arrangements and validated under the aegis of designated Authorised Validation Agencies (AVAs) – as described in section 3.1.3 above; the impetus for access course developments in Scotland has occurred via the Scottish Wider Access Program (SWAP) established by the Scottish Education Department.

SWAP is a unique program involving almost all of Scotland's institutions of further and higher education. It was established by the Scottish Education Department in 1988 as a major national initiative. SWAP sort to encourage the establishment of consortia of the regional councils, which were then responsible for further education and the higher education institutes (HEIs) to *"promote access to vocationally relevant education"* and *"to encourage the establishment of permanent arrangements to make easier more effective progression from further to higher education"* (Scottish Education Department 1988, as cited in Gallacher *et al.* 1995, p. 7). In this way, full-time access courses were developed in further education colleges which guaranteed students a place in an appropriate higher education course upon successful completion.

These programs were targeted towards adult students (aged 21 years and over) and initially focussed on vocationally relevant subjects, particularly science and technology; although a wider range of programs in arts, humanities and the social sciences are now offered (Munn *et al.* 1994). An emphasis was also given to providing opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Access courses are typically modular, use continuous assessment and are criterion-referenced. In these respects they differ from traditional entry routes to higher education where courses such as 'Highers' and 'A levels' are not modular and use end-of-year, norm-referenced assessments (Munn *et al.* 1994). Most access courses in Scotland make use of modules developed under a national framework of unitised provision and quality assurance led by the Scottish Vocational Education Council

(SCOTVEC), and since 1997 by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) (Parry 2000).

Access courses in Scotland have served several important agendas during the 1990s in common with the bridging/preparatory programs promoted in Australia over the same period, including addressing the Government's concerns about the need to create a better trained and educated workforce as well as concerns about under-represented groups. However, a purpose given to these courses in Scotland that contrasts with the role of equivalent programs in Australia was a strong emphasis on the role of these programs to encourage collaboration between further education and higher education (Gallacher *et al.* 1995). These links have been further strengthened by the framework provided by the Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SCOTCAT) system which has tended to promote articulation agreements in Scotland rather than the franchising and validation agreements which have been more common in England. In this context, where the proportion of higher education students studying in further education institutions and the participation rates of young people overall are much higher in Scotland than for elsewhere in the UK, access courses in Scotland have a less distinct or discrete role to play and do not feature as a group award in the revised catalogue operated by the SQA.

These access programs have proven to be particularly successful as a basis for effectively preparing adult return students for higher education study (Munn *et al.* 1994), improving the level of adult participation in Scottish higher education (Gallacher *et al.* 1995; Mackenzie & Karkalas 1995) and in providing a basis for collaboration between the further and higher education sectors (Madill 1996; Parry 2000).

3.3 Programs for disadvantaged and 'under-prepared' students in US higher education

3.3.1 The climate for equity in US higher education

Several key differences exist between the higher education sectors in Australia and the United States of America (USA) that have a major bearing on the ways in which access, equity and student support strategies operate. The first relates to the degree of inclusiveness underlying the educational philosophies of each system; the second relates to the potential for national initiatives to be instigated in higher education, which is highly dependant on the nature of federal intervention possible in each system; and a third relates to the underlying motivations for institutions to develop and offer access, equity and intervention strategies. Each of these factors will be discussed in turn.

3.3.1.1 Inclusiveness

In the USA, a particularly inclusive philosophy underlies considerations of higher education participation. As Policicchio (1994, p. 191) noted:

> *In the United States, the concept of access has evolved into the idea of universal access with the idea that institutions must address all the needs of under-prepared or under-represented students. The society now looks upon higher education opportunities as a right and an essential need of a democratic society, not a privilege for a select few.*

By way of contrast, the Australian higher education system, as part of the legacy of its antecedents in the British university system, has been built on principles that are relatively more exclusive in their nature. This has been generally appreciated as a potential factor limiting the widening of educational participation by disadvantaged groups in Australia for some time. More than a decade ago a report to the Australian Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) stated:

> *In a restricted system [as in the traditional British higher education system that Australia has emulated], the validity and fairness of the selection process in choosing those most likely to succeed remains a key issue. In a more comprehensive and open system of higher education [as, for example, is represented by the US higher education system], the focus shifts to preparation for, and social and academic integration into, higher education. ... In-so-far as the Australian system is concerned, and especially in regard to the stated policy goal of increasing participation amongst a number of disadvantaged groups, the focus must shift from a preoccupation with selection and exclusion, towards more flexible, open and relevant procedures for access* (Power *et al.* 1987, p. 7).

The US higher education system therefore provides an interesting model for Australia in terms of its attitude to access and participation. Educational participation in the USA is exceptionally high. The proportion of the 18-24 year old age group attending higher education is 44 per cent (Halsey 1992); while at the same time ‘adults (defined as over the age of 22 years) make up some 40 per cent of total enrolments (West 1993) – both figures significantly higher than for elsewhere in the western world. The size and diversity of the US higher education system, with 3 688 institutions of higher education recorded in 1994-95, including large public and private sectors, a wide range of institutional types, and covering a range of ethnic and religious affiliations (Wolanin 1996) provides considerable opportunity for access. However, not surprisingly, despite the availability of potential educational pathways and the underlying inclusive nature of educational philosophies present, equity remains a major concern in US higher education for a range of complex and interacting social, cultural economic and structural reasons.

There is much about equity in US higher education which is illusionary. This is well illustrated by a consideration of the role of community colleges – institutions created specifically to provide access to higher education for under-represented groups largely in the 1960s and 1970s. There are some 1 250 community colleges in the USA, with enrolments dominated by the large comprehensive colleges found in each State. These institutions specialise in sub-degree programs, often adopting student-centred teaching approaches and flexible study patterns such as part-time study to attract and cater for adult students – the average age of the community college student body being 29 years of age (West 1993). The role of community colleges in providing opportunities for adult students is particularly significant to a consideration of disadvantage as adult independent students are

much more likely to be low-income than other student groups (Choy & Bobbitt 2000).

Since the 1960s, a major conscious strategy for widening participation in US higher education has been the notion of community colleges serving as an open access point for non-traditional student groups with a significant emphasis placed on the transfer function from community colleges to universities serving as a key strategy for improving minority and disadvantaged student participation in universities. So, for example, Californian higher education - where State-wide agreements have existed for forty years on the right of access - makes claims to ensure equity through a system where 'there is nothing to prevent someone from entering through a community college and exiting with a PhD from University of California, Berkeley'. However, the reality is that very few people are actually able to achieve this sort of transition in practice (Dey *et al.* 1991; Fox, 1993). Although the community colleges appear to provide excellent opportunities for the less advantaged to access higher education, the transfer rates from community colleges to four-year colleges, with a few notable exceptions, tend to be very poor (West 1993; London & Shaw 1995). While rates vary significantly by college, Cohen (1992; as cited in London & Shaw 1995) reported that, on average, only 23.5 per cent of community college students transfer to four-year institutions. As would be expected with this trend, the likelihood of attaining a baccalaureate degree diminishes significantly when students begin their postsecondary education at a community college rather than at a four-year institution (Astin 1985; Richardson & Bender 1987).

In what has become a much-quoted thesis, Burton Clark attributes this trend to the conflict created between popular aspiration and the realities of limited opportunity in a highly stratified capitalist economy such as in the USA. Clark's thesis is that selection has not been abolished in America, just delayed until after students have entered the higher education system. Access into the system is readily achieved through the open entry requirements of community colleges and the wide availability of aid. However, rather than serving as a stepping stone into university, community colleges act more as a place where many students are 'cooled out' and persuaded to be satisfied with relatively low level courses. To Clark, this is an inevitable consequence of there being only limited room at the top of the educational, occupational and social pyramid (Clark 1990).

The disadvantage experienced by particular groups in US higher education is clearly evident. For example, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* calculates a 'Black-White Higher Education Equality Index' (BWHEEI) each quarter using a wide variety of available statistics on such factors as relative enrolments, participation, graduation rates, doctorates, and grants. Despite some considerable gains since the early 1970s, on a scale where 100 would represent parity in higher education between Whites and Blacks, the BWHEEI in 1994 was just 65 ('Vital Signs ... 1994). Astin (1996) placed the graduation rate of Blacks nine years after entry at just 33.9 per cent. As another example, Sazama (1994) has reported a strong association between parental family income and choice of the type of institution, with wealthier students having greater access to 'Ivy League' institutions. It is generally charged that US admissions procedures serve

to discriminate against minorities (Keller 1991; 'Students sue …' 1999). The free-market emphasis in US higher education also creates financial barriers to many disadvantaged groups, with the degree of impact dependant on such factors as the nature and size of aid available, and trends in tuition fees (Wolanin 1996).

3.3.1.2 National initiatives

Although both Australia and the USA are federations of States (and Territories in the case of Australia) with education resting as a state responsibility, the extent to which the federal government can influence activities in higher education is very different in each country. In Australia a series of legislative changes over the past half-century made possible by a key referendum result immediately following the Second World War, has seen the Commonwealth able to position itself as the principal financier and key change agent in higher education. By contrast, the higher education sectors in the USA remain firmly under state control (with the exception of only a few institutions such as the national military academies) and the situation in each State is influenced greatly by local political factors, and the unique histories and traditions of the large diversity of institutions present.

Hence, issues such as student diversity or equitable access tend to be considered and acted on quite differently in different States and even in different institutions. As a result, national initiatives such as the higher education equity framework described in *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET/NBEET 1990) would not be constitutionally possible in the USA as a federal government initiative as the US Federal government remains limited constitutionally in taking such a role in State issues. As Wolanin (1996, pp. 2-3) noted: *"it is not the constitutional province of the Federal government to require that the student bodies of higher education institutions look like America."* However, the US Federal Government does exert considerable influence over diversity in US higher education, in particular through three mechanisms:

- The first mechanism involves Federal supplementary assistance to States to improve educational opportunities for various groups of disadvantaged or high-risk students. These programs have been particularly successful in improving school participation and completion for Black, Hispanic and Native American people, and people with disabilities (Wolanin 1996).
- The second mechanism involves the use of national legislation. In particular, the Civil Rights Laws which were mainly enacted between 1964 and 1975 - required non-discrimination in access to programs and activities, in the awarding of financial assistance, and so on (Policicchio 1994). The laws have also given the Federal government some influence over large sections of the higher education sector. For example, the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 makes Federal funding contingent on institutions documenting their efforts to promote diversity in the student body (Policicchio 1994).
- The third realm of US Federal government influence over student diversity in higher education comes through Federal student financial aid, which represents 75 per cent of the student financial aid available in the USA (Wolanin 1996). A range of programs are available, most of them based on an assessment of 'financial need' and most representing deliberate strategies to

promote equality of educational opportunity. Wolanin (1996, p. 9) reported that in 1995: *"approximately 7 million students (or 45% of all students) received Federal financial aid from one or more of the Federal programs."* In addition to these support initiatives, *the Higher Education Funding Act* of 1965 introduced the so-called 'TRIO' programs which provide financial and support services to increase participation by identified under-represented groups (Policicchio 1994; Mitchem 1996). These have served as a cornerstone of equity development in the USA, serving more than 680 000 students in 1994 at a total cost of over US$400 million.

An interesting initiative in US higher education has been the instigation of *EQUITY 2000* as a national equity project by the prestigious College Board which is otherwise involved in aptitude testing and championing excellence in higher education standards. This initiative has sought to support strategies to promote parity in enrolment and graduation for minority and disadvantaged groups. The principal programs supported by this project have sought to develop closer ties between the higher education and school sectors, and community and industry groups to bring about improvements in secondary completion and transfer into post-school study for targeted groups (Fenske *et al.* 1997). This initiative clearly demonstrates the importance given to widening higher education participation in the US and demonstrates the ability for national initiatives to be effectively instigated by national bodies other than Government.

3.3.1.3 Factors motivating institutional activity

US higher education has more consciously operated in a highly competitive free-market setting for a much longer period than the more cloistered and regulated university systems of countries such as Australia. Considerable institutional research is undertaken by US universities and colleges and used as a basis for business decisions influencing operational practices. Whereas Australian higher education has been slow to accept the significance of the financial losses incurred by student wastage, US higher education appears far more responsive to arguments justifying the cost of intervention programs on the basis of their representing a sound investment for reducing the financial loss to the institution which results from student attrition. The formally tiered structure of US higher education, where institutions are placed in one of eight 'bands' - which directly translates to factors such as the level of institutional prestige afforded and the level of tuition fees that can be charged – serves to further promote the offering of intervention programs as a service to attract and retain students in a competitive marketplace. Typical of this attitude and culture is the following, taken from the Foreword of a US review of intervention programs:

> *Institutions that participate in early intervention or academic outreach programs are institutions that are taking control of their futures. They are institutions that essentially are saying, "We are no longer willing to accept the luck of the draw on annual enrollments and are going to take a long-term, proactive role in our future enrollments." Early intervention occurs when institutions or individual faculty members understand that by establishing [them] … they have the ability to redirect the lives of students*

> *who would otherwise not participate in higher education or in a particular area of study* (Fenske *et al.* 1997, p. ix)

Hence, programs which promote a widening of higher education participation can be readily justified on the basis of providing tangible 'bottom-line' benefits to the university or college as a business. The notion of institutions 'taking control' of issues such as the retention levels of their student body has meant that a particular emphasis is placed in US higher education on the need for *early* intervention and for a more proactive approach to be taken to intervention than is generally undertaken in Australia. Criteria have been developed to identify 'at-risk' students whose performance can be monitored essentially from enrolment and who are often directed into intervention programs, even as a condition of entry. These 'at-risk' criteria are frequently factors associated with disadvantage, including failure to meet standard entry requirements (Walleri *et al.* 1997) and first member of family to attend university (Terrenzini *et al.* 1997)

3.3.2 Equity and early intervention programs in US higher education

Harman's (1994, p. 319) asserts that: *"Perhaps more than any other society, the United States has made special efforts to open higher education to minority groups."*

A range of programs and approaches are in place to widen educational participation. Fenske *et al.* (1997, pp. iv-v) state that:

> *... early intervention programs take six forms: programs established by philanthropic agencies, federally supported programs, state-sponsored programs with matching federal support, entirely state-supported programs, systemic changes involving school-college collaboration, and college- or university-sponsored programs.*

Private initiatives include the *EQUITY 2000* program sponsored by the College Board described above, *The I Have A Dream Foundation* which supports 160 IHAD projects nationwide involving 12 000 mainly poor students, and the work of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (Fenske *et al.* 1997).

Federal and State support for widening participation in higher education takes many forms. Included in the long-running federally funded TRIO programs are such initiatives as *Upward Bound* which attempts to generate skills and motivation necessary for success in higher education through special skills programs, counselling, and financial assistance programs tied to university and community colleges; and *Student Support Services* which provides services to support targeted disadvantaged students in colleges (Policicchio 1994). The National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership Program established in 1992 encourages partnerships between Federal, State and local authorities in securing financial assistance and the provision of services to: *"help low-income and minority students obtain high school diplomas and seek admission to college"* (Fenske *et al.* 1997, p. iii).

State support for programs of this type vary considerably across the 50 United States. As just one example of a State-supported initiative that has proven very successful in recruiting minority students, the Goodrich Scholarship Program was initiated through funds from the Nebraska State Legislature in 1972:

> *The overall intent of the program is to provide a college education for persons who otherwise could not afford it while offering them a broad and meaningful experience in general education. The program has reached out to students of cultures including – African American, Asian American, European American, Latino American, and Native American. … The program offers a three-pronged approach, providing:*
> - *Financial aid in the form of tuition and fees towards a bachelor's degree*
> - *A specialized writing assistance curriculum emphasizing the humanities and the social sciences*
> - *A comprehensive program of academic support, counselling, and related student services* (University of Nebraska 1999, p. 1).

At the institutional level, a wide variety of approaches are adopted. Academic outreach programs conducted by universities and colleges seek to encourage 'at-risk' secondary students to complete high school and plan for college (Fenske *et al.* 1997). 'Pre-college' programs can involve such strategies as in-school programs, weekend academies, summer-scholars programs, parental involvement, and career awareness.

School-college collaborations are growing in importance:

> *One of the most promising examples of such collaboration is the concept of 'middle college,' which melds the last two years of high school with the two years offered in public community colleges. Such alliances enhance the recruitment of minority students and increase the readiness of entering freshmen* (Fenske *et al.* 1997, p. iv).

Colleges and universities have designed programs and services to ease student transition into the academic and social systems of the university as a means of minimising the risk of student attrition. Approaches adopted include:

> *… orientation programs, counselling and student development, assessment [accompanied by] remedial and academic support services, and the development of educational communities within the classroom* (Seidman 1996, p. 18).

The US literature speaks freely about 'the under-prepared student', the 'at-risk student', 'remedial education' and 'student readiness' which would be considered deficit terms in the Australian context but reflects the particular focus in the US on the: *"preparation for, and social and academic integration into, higher education"* (Power et al. 1987, p. 7) noted earlier. The profile of 'remedial education and outreach programs' offered by the City University of New York (CUNY) provides an interesting overview of the types of programs available under this banner. (CUNY has operated with an open admissions system since 1970 and has 75 per cent of its freshmen requiring remediation in at least one

skill, and 55 per cent requiring remediation in more than one skill (Renfro & Armour-Garb 1999).) Listed under remedial education courses at CUNY are:

1. Basic skills programs – in reading, writing and mathematics which students are required to complete if they do not meet the university-wide minimum score on the Freshmen Skills Assessment Test (FSAT). A range of courses are available including non-credit courses, courses held as a non-credit component of an otherwise for-credit unit, and for-credit collegiate courses.
2. English as a Second Language (ESL) – available as non-credit preparatory courses or courses that can be taken within baccalaureate and associates programs.
3. Immersion programs – including language immersion programs in intensive English, and a state funded free-to-student pre-freshmen program in basic skills held as an intensive course during summer vacation.
4. Continuing education programs – Basic Skills and ESL Courses are offered through the Division of Adult & Continuing Education.
5. SEEK/CD Programs – These State-funded programs provide concentrated and specialised counselling, tutorial services and a financial aid payment for book expenses for selected students.
6. Other student support services – covers tutoring and counselling services funded by the New York State Department of Education and the US Department of Education (Renfro & Armour-Garb 1999).

This list of programs is not dissimilar to the range of programs available in many Australian universities. One group of programs that show many similarities to the bridging/preparatory programs commonly used in Australia as a basis for reporting Enabling students are college and university programs that are offered during summer months for so-called 'at-risk' students. Much the same as in the Australian context (Chapter 4), such programs provide dedicated study in a general education course that provides students with heavy exposure to basic skills. They:

> *... provide students with the opportunity to develop academic and study skills, become accustomed to resources, develop relationships with peers and faculty, and begin to develop a sense of community* (Tripodi *et al.* 1994, p. 64).

These programs tend to attract high proportions of minority and disadvantaged students who share characteristics with the commonly used 'at-risk' criteria Tripodi *et al.* 1994; UCLA 1995).

3.4 Equity programs in Canadian higher education

Education in Canada is the responsibility of the Provinces and education systems, including higher education systems, in each Province tend to have their own policy frameworks and bureaucracies (Jones 1994). Tertiary education in Canada includes technical schools/institutes, two-year colleges and universities. The

development of educational equity in Canada closely parallels that in Australia in many respects. In Ontario, for example:

> *... accessibility has been a core goal in both sectors [the publicly funded university and community college sectors] ... though in practice access is often limited or influenced by supply-driven pressures* (Jones 1994, p. 228).

There are no quantitative goals specified with respect to access or participation in Ontario and a national equity framework as exists in Australia is not present in Canada. However, under-represented groups have been identified and specific programs have been implemented to increase participation and success in higher education for these groups. Groups identified as disadvantaged in Canada include Aboriginal people (Native Americans), people with disabilities, people from NESB, racial and ethnic minorities, and women (although this is no longer a targeted group for universities). Other groups may also be included in particular Provinces; for example, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and Francophones have also been targeted in Ontario. Government initiatives developed to widen educational participation in Ontario include the following.

- Responses to the Stephen Lewis Report on Racism in Ontario, which have included increasing the number of racial minority teachers in the classroom, increasing the representivity of college and university governing boards, and adopting comprehensive approaches to harassment and discrimination.
- The development and implementation of the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy. This strategy aims to increase the access and retention of Aboriginal students to postsecondary institutions, and increase the decision making authority of Aboriginal people over decisions affecting their postsecondary education.
- The development of the Contact North Distance Education Network to increase geographic accessibility to postsecondary education for residents of Northern Ontario.
- Targeted funding to assist colleges and universities in providing accommodation and support services for students with disabilities.
- The development of a comprehensive system of prior learning assessment to make colleges more accessible to under-represented groups by eliminating the need for unnecessary retraining.
- A comprehensive program to address the postsecondary needs of Francophones in Ontario (M. Carrier-Fisher, ADM, Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Operations and French Language Education, Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario, Canada, personal communication).

In addition, individual institutions are employing equity strategies such as the development of access and transitional year programs for students from particular backgrounds in particular program areas, and the development of culturally appropriate, antiracist curriculum modules for specific programs (F. Lamb, Senior Policy Analyst, Student Affairs, Anti-Racism, Equity and Access Division, Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario, Canada, personal communication).

Preparatory-type programs tend to be based in two-year colleges and represent a well-utilised route into higher education in Canada. However, these programs are not a feature of technical institutes whose links with universities generally remain poor. Examples of programs available to address the needs of under-prepared and disadvantaged students include Basic Training and Skills Development (BTSD) which is described as a 'high school upgrading course', and the post-secondary General Arts and Science program at Algonquin College, Ontario. More generally, reliance is placed on non-credit student access courses available through continuing education departments, supplementary 'remedial' classes, Return to Learning for Women programs, workshops and the general range of academic learning support services (Sharon Crozier, University of Calgary, personal communication; Marilyn Stratton-Zimmer, Algonquin College, Ontario, personal communication).

For Native Americans, bridging programs are available, often conducted out of native colleges located within reservations. Bridging/transition programs for this group are also offered through some universities, such as the University of Alberta in Edmonton and, formerly, the University of Calgary. The latter program, which had been offered since the early 1980s, comprised a two-semester program for adult aboriginal students. It involved study in two levels of a senior high school equivalency mathematics unit, a university credit course in English Composition and two additional university credit courses. The program also included hour-for-hour of tutoring for lectures and additional skills building in language/writing, study skills and computer skills training. However, a decline in government funding support from the late 1980s resulted in the gradual abandonment of the full program in favour of alternative supplementary strategies for enrolled students (Peggy Dobson, University of Calgary, personal communication). The impact of a general decline in government support funding for access strategies for aboriginal peoples has been also been reported elsewhere in Canada (Alcorn & Levin 1998).

3.5 New directions for equity in New Zealand higher education

From 1984 through much of the 1990s, successive governments in New Zealand adopted a particularly strident market-driven / deregulation philosophy as a basis for all aspects of policy development. In education, perceived inefficiencies and other failures were addressed through:

> *... the redistribution of education as a commodity to be purchased by consumers in the market rather than an inherent public good and a basic citizenship right* (O'Neill 1995, p. 8).

This resulted in a reduction in State expenditure in education, the privatisation of many aspects of educational provision, and a reliance on competitive market forces to ensure efficiencies and quality. As such, equity and efficiency were: *"set up as contradictory agendas"* (Gordon 1994, p. 12), while as O'Neill (1995, p. 8) noted: *"Efficiency, as opposed to equity ... attained the ascendancy."* However, the recent election of a Labour-Alliance Coalition government has prompted a general re-think of policy directions in most areas, including higher education.

In July 2000, the newly formed Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) released its first report entitled *Shaping a Shared Vision* which: *"fleshes out the Government's vision for tertiary education … and outlines a number of important initial conclusions"* (TEAC 2000, p. 1). Overall, 12 'conclusions' are articulated, which outline the principles to be used as a basis for future policy developments in tertiary education in New Zealand. These cover a wide scope including the need for the government to become more actively engaged with the sector, for the needs of learners to serve as a principal driver for the system's activities and approaches, and for the need to redefine the role of tertiary education in the context of New Zealand society. Included in this statement are clues to the future approach to be taken with educational equity. Conclusion 4 states in part:

> *The importance of the multiple functions of the tertiary education system should be recognised. These functions include:*
> - *inspiring and enabling individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life …*
> - *serving the needs of an open, innovative, sustainable knowledge society and economy at the regional and national levels, including those of Maori, Pacific peoples and the wider community;*
> - *helping to build and maintain a healthy, inclusive and democratic society…[and]*
> - *reducing social and ethnic inequalities…* (Maharey 2000).

The strong equity theme present in these statements is juxtaposed with a desire to orient the tertiary education system more towards lifelong learning as stated in Conclusion 5: *"The tertiary education system needs to be designed to respond to the challenge of lifelong learning in a knowledge society…"* (Maharey 2000).

Hence, there appears to be a strong influence by the policy directions currently emerging in Europe as reflected in policy directions of the Labour Government in the UK to link lifelong learning with considerations of widening participation and social inclusiveness (refer to section 3.1 above). However, aspects of the US model for higher education may be also being considered, as indicated by Conclusion 10:

> *There is a need for greater clarity of roles and responsibilities within the tertiary education system. The Commission will examine ways of promoting this, including examining the adequacy of the current range and definitions of tertiary education provider types, and the possible addition of new provider types (such as 'university of technology' and 'community college')* (Maharey 2000).

It is not yet clear what the ultimate outcomes of these emerging policy directions will be in terms of shaping equity developments in New Zealand tertiary education.

The lack of government funding support for equity programs and the absence of a national approach to equity in higher education present throughout much of the

past decade has resulted in an inconsistent response across the tertiary system to implementing programs for widening participation. However, the post-secondary education system in New Zealand has responded to educational equity considerations in a number of ways. A general move towards increased student mobility has been achieved between the polytechnic and the university sectors through improved articulation arrangements which allow students with polytechnic qualifications to gain substantial credit in university degree programs. Special programs have been put in place to address the low participation and success rates experienced by Maori and Pacific Islander students. These include the development of special 'enclave' support units, foundation education programs and considerations of inclusive curriculum (Hawke & Morrison 1994). Programs to provide academic support to 'transfer' and other disadvantaged or under-represented students have also been put in place (Richards 1995).

Bridging/preparatory programs and other strategies which parallel the type of courses often used as a basis for reporting Enabling students in Australia have been identified. The presence of these programs is significant since adults aged over 20 years of age do not require school qualifications to enter university in New Zealand – putting emphasis on the importance of the perceived need for additional preparation for a proportion of adult learners (University of Canterbury 1999). Many polytechnics offer bridging programs and universities offer a mix of bridging programs for international students, academic bridging and Maori bridging programs (Judy Nicholl, Head of Centre for Foundation Studies, UNITEC Institute of technology, personal communication). Examples of programs offered include the following.

- James (1994) reported on the Foundation Education Program at Manukau Polytechnic, which is located in a region with a high concentration of Maori and Pacific Islander peoples. This bridging program for Pacific Island and Maori candidates was introduced in the mid-1980s:

  > *to improve the students' academic qualifications so that they would meet the pre-requisite entry standards for full-time programmes* (James 1994, p. 214).

  James reported that at the time of its introduction it was the first bridging program in New Zealand and by 1994 was the nation's largest bridging program with 200 students, mostly studying full-time. All students in the program studied units in English/ Communication Skills, Mathematics, Study Skills, Computer Learning Skills and Future Focus – a career planning module – as a compulsory core. In addition, students took optional subjects according to their own chosen discipline and individual needs selected from over 30 option subjects available in both content and self-directed learning skills. Subjects were offered at four different levels, corresponding to the last four years of New Zealand secondary education, but with each level covered in a 13-week program. The course thus represented a comprehensive articulated educational pathway for Pacific Islander and Maori students who may have experienced severe disruption to their secondary education. A great deal of emphasis was given to building student confidence and encouraging informed choices.

- The Centre for Foundation Studies at UNITEC Institute of Technology in Aukland offers a range of programs including Certificate in Foundation Studies: Whitinga, Certificate in Employment and Community Skills, Certificate in Employment Skills and various short 'Special Needs programs' in areas such as Literacy and Learning, and Campus Experience. The Centre enrols between 110-150 students per semester (Judy Nicholl, Head of Centre for Foundation Studies, UNITEC Institute of technology, personal communication).

  The Certificate in Foundation Studies: Whitinga is a Level 3, 60 Credits certificate course involving 18 weeks of full-time study or part-time equivalent. This is an academic bridging program into further study that welcomes all students who: want a second chance at formal education; want to gain a recognised qualification as a step-up to future study; have been away from study for some time; or have little or no formal qualifications (UNITEC 2000).

  The Special Needs Program: Literacy and Learning is a 72-hour course conducted part-time over 18 weeks. It is designed for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties who wish to study part-time to develop a pathway for further training or employment. The course includes goal setting, employment skills, communication skills, current events, and basic computing and keyboard skills (UNITEC 2000).

- The New Start – Te Ao Maarama Program at University of Canterbury is a preparatory course for people 20 years and over who are returning to study or entering university for the first time. It serves as an equity strategy for traditionally under-represented groups – particularly Maori, people from Pacific Islands, women, people who have disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds. The program is fee-paying and offers individual guidance on ways of preparing for university study, two three-hour 'introduction to university' seminars ($20 payable on application), and a general study skills courses ($75). The latter involves a two-and-a-half hour session once or twice a week offered at different times throughout the year. Skills covered include effective note taking, reading skills, essay planning, essay writing, and critical reading. The program utilises lectures, tutorials and a Whanau group (University of Canterbury 1999).

  The University also offers a Writing and Study Skills (WASS) Program which is open to all students. The course involves lectures covering basic skills. The course is particularly suggested for school leavers who find require skills development, mature students who have not taken the New Start program, special groups (including Maori students) and continuing students who are dissatisfied with their grades – with distinct lecture courses being available for each group. Students enrol formally in WASS as a non-credit course and pay a $20 enrolment fee (University of Canterbury 1998).

3.6 Widening higher education participation in a non-racial South Africa

South African higher education has faced immense challenges in the post-apartheid era. Apartheid had legitimised and formalised historic barriers among four distinct population groups: 'Whites', 60 per cent of whom are Afrikaners of Dutch descent; 'Coloureds', people of mixed races, most of whom are culturally Afrikaners and live in the western part of Cape Province, 'Asians', predominantly of Indian origin and of whom a majority live in or around Natal; and 'Africans' or 'Blacks' representing the descendants of a number of indigenous tribal groups who make up a majority of the population. Apartheid produced separate and unequal school systems for these identified groups: *"each with its own curriculum, standards, teacher corps, and teacher training institutions"* (Richardson *et al.* 1996, p. 249). *The Extension of University Education Act* of 1959 extended this segregation to the tertiary sector. However, even after this Act was relaxed in 1983, an initial lack of government support funding restricted efforts to expand higher education opportunities for groups such as Blacks in South Africa to initiatives introduced by individual institutions. The impact of apartheid was reflected in the differences among population groups in Standard 10 pass rates (representing the matriculation level required for university admission). In 1992, just prior to the emergence of a non-racial South Africa in 1994, the Standard 10 pass rates for Whites and Asians was above 90 per cent, for Coloured it was above 80 per cent, and for Blacks it was just 44 per cent (Richardson *et al.* 1996).

South Africa's higher education system is now made up largely of 21 universities, 15 technikons and a system of teachers colleges. A significant transformation has occurred recently to South African higher education. As noted by Harman (1999, p. 12):

> *Under the first democratic government elected in 1994, the previous fragmented system of higher education based on race was reformed into a single integrated system, and the previous whites-only institutions were opened to all students who meet admissions requirements. ... A National Commission on Higher Education in 1995 provided overall direction and this was followed by a White Paper and new Higher Education Act in 1997. An advisory Higher Education Council has been set up. This will also take responsibility for quality assurance. On the recommendation of the National Council, a series of regional higher education associations have been created to help institutions within geographical regions to work together and undertake collaborative projects.*

South African universities have available a range of strategies for widening university participation. Pavlich & Orkin (1993) lists the range of interventions for widening access as: taking advantage of relaxed state apartheid practices (such as admissions through discretionary categories), financial aid, alternative admissions programs, extra-academic support linked with access, centrally coordinated outreach programs, and regional and national articulations across institutions. As well, adults aged over 23 years of age in South Africa can apply for university entry without an exemption and 'open entry' is practiced in many universities. In a survey of six 'traditionally White' South African universities Richardson *et al.* 1996) found that the available strategies for widening participation by Black students are utilised to differently and to varying degrees of

effectiveness by different universities. In some cases, access strategies were restricted to initiatives by individual departments. This study also found that development programs for academic staff were also a key feature of success in recruiting and retaining Black students. As well, it was found that:

> *… the institutions which experienced the most success in retaining and graduating African students had [a diverse range of] academic support programs in place* (Richardson *et al.* 1996, p. 259).

Bridging/reparatory programs and other strategies which parallel those used as a basis for reporting Enabling strategies in Australia are offered as access strategies for disadvantaged groups in South Africa. These programs are typically developed by individual institutions to reflect local needs and priorities, but often target specific disciplines, particularly in the area of science and technology which is afforded significant priority by government. Examples of programs of this type include the following.

- The University of Port Elizabeth offers an Advancement Program (UPEAP) which serves as a bridging program for students from disadvantaged communities who, because of their schooling background, would otherwise be denied the opportunity to pursue further study in Science, Commerce and Pharmacy. The course adopts a 'holistic, in-context' approach to preparatory study and incorporates a foundation program (Snyders 1999). The University also offers a University Practice Course (UPC) which involves concurrent support for 'under-prepared students' (a group with significant overlap with disadvantaged students). The program involves structured tutorials and in-context support for targeted students (Snyders 2000). (These programs parallel approaches for bridging and academic learning support provision offered by many Australian universities – refer to Chapter 4.)
- Miller *et al.* (1995) reported on a range of affirmative action programs for promoting access to degree programs for Black students at the University of Natal. Strategies included a program whereby:

  > *underqualified entrants register for a B.Sc. degree for which the curriculum extends over a minimum of four years rather than the normal minimum of three years. The extra year arises because underqualified students are given two years to complete the normal first year course to help ease their transition from school to university (Miller* et al. 1995, p. 325).

  Students in the program attend extra classes conducted in parallel with the mainstream course units which extends the time for their first year of enrolment. (This approach appears similar to the Aboriginal Health Science Support Program offered by the University of Sydney – refer to Chapter 4.) A similar strategy has been employed at The University of Witwatersrand in the form of the Academic Support Program (ASP) which is described as a 'bridging program'. This program was established in 1980 to target students from government schools whose first language was not English – a group which included a significant proportion of Black and disadvantaged students. ASP exists in a variety of forms across different faculties (one of the largest being the College of Science program), but typically involved a reduced first

year load (extending first year into a two-year program) with non-credit-bearing subject-specific tutorials held concurrently with the mainstream curriculum (Agar 1991; Cherry 1993). Initially targeted students were required to undertake ASP as a condition of entry, however compulsion was gradually phased out (Agar 1991).

- Meyer *et al.* (1990) reported a similar strategy involving an extended first year of study. The Academic Support Program for Engineering at the University of Cape Town (ASPECT) is described as a foundation year program for educationally disadvantaged students (mostly Black South Africans). The program involves three credit-bearing courses: Mathematics, Applied Mathematics (Mechanics) and Technical Communication. These courses are identical in content to the mainstream first year courses but differ in that twice the regular time is devoted to each of them. (This approach parallels that utilised by Swinburne University in Australia – refer to Chapter 4.)

Preparatory programs in South Africa are typically offered as face-to-face full-time courses, lacking the flexibility of study modes that would make them readily available to adult learners in employment or students in geographically isolated areas. As well, these programs do not currently attract a government subsidy as they are considered as 'non-tertiary' courses. As a result, the students participating in these programs are required to pay a fee which may serve as a deterrent to some students. The South African government is reportedly considering specified funding for these courses to facilitate their further development (Maritz Snyders, Director, UPE Advancement Programme, University of Port Elizabeth, personal communication).

3.7 Summary

- Different countries have adopted different approaches for widening participation in higher education, relevant to the particular historical, policy and operational context concerned.
- Widening participation in further and higher education is now established as a national policy imperative for the UK. The outcomes of the Garrick, Kennedy and Dearing reports in the UK have been interpreted in the context of the social inclusion policies of the Blair Labour Government, resulting in a dynamic policy framework which gives considerable emphasis to the widening of participation in further and higher education as part of a thrust to place: *"... investment and participation in lifelong learning at the centre of a strategy to build human and social capital in a knowledge economy"* (Parry 2000). Similar policy directions appear to be emerging in New Zealand tertiary education.
- Access programs in England and Scotland bear many similarities in terms of their aims, student constituencies and underlying philosophies to the bridging/preparatory programs that are commonly used in Australia as a basis for reporting Enabling students. However, significant differences occur in terms of where these programs are placed – being concentrated in further

education in the UK – and the degree to which they are regulated – being subject to a national recognition system in the UK linked with national quality assurance mechanisms. These access programs represent an example of a successful preparatory strategy whose strengths include a clear focus on a particular client group (students aged 21 years and over) and a clear goal of preparing students for entry into higher education through an accredited mobile qualification. They also represent an effective entry qualification into higher education, formally recognised by the government as a 'third route' into higher education (exclusively for those over the age of 21 years), alongside 'academic' qualifications (A levels, and Highers in Scotland) and 'vocational' qualifications.

- The British experience highlights the desirability and benefits of having a national accreditation system for access programs, and for considering access provision within the context of promoting lifelong learning as well as within a framework of social inclusion.
- The US higher education system gives significant priority to the widening of educational participation by under-represented and disadvantaged groups. There are a wide variety of programs available to pursue this end, many programs parallelling closely the sort of strategies adopted in Australia to achieve similar aims.
- Under-represented and disadvantaged groups in the USA are major beneficiaries of the wide availability of programs put in place to address the needs of 'under-prepared students'. As student attrition is closely associated with a loss of income in these institutions, the proactive use of early intervention programs for 'at-risk' students is more readily justified on economic rationalist grounds than is generally accepted in Australia.
- Although the presence of community colleges with open entry arrangements, and wide available of student aid provides significant potential for access to higher education by disadvantaged groups, the generally poor transfer rates into universities from these institutions represents a process of 'selection after entry' for these student groups. The community college model in the USA highlights the dangers in relying heavily on cross-sectoral pathways as a means for disadvantaged students to access higher education.
- Programs for widening higher education participation are common in developed economies similar to Australia. Included amongst these strategies are programs which parallel the types used in Australia as a basis for reporting Enabling students. Bridging/preparatory programs are used less frequently in Canada, New Zealand and South Africa than in Australia, largely because of a lack of concerted government funding support for these types of programs. Supplementary strategies tend to be used more frequently in these countries.
- The experiences in New Zealand, Canada and South Africa highlight the negative impact of a lack of government funding support for enabling strategies and the absence of an effective coordinated approach at the national level in ensuring sound and nationally consistent outcomes in enabling provision.

Chapter 4

Enabling and Related Programs in Australian Tertiary Education

The Commonwealth's Enabling provision is enacted through two broad and inter-related processes:

- Firstly, institutions can choose to *offer* programs that provide opportunities for access with success for disadvantaged people.
- Then, if a particular program meets the criteria set out in the *HECS and Fees Manual* Guidelines covering the Enabling provision (DETYA 2000a; Attachment 1) the university may choose to *report* some or all of the students in this program as Enabling, thus securing the students so reported with a HECS-free Commonwealth funded place for their time of study in that program.

This chapter discusses the nature of Enabling reporting and the institutions that choose to offer and report students against Enabling programs. Enabling programs are then profiled in the context of broader equity program offerings, in particular comparing Enabling and what has been identified for the purpose of this study as Enabling-like programs. (Attachment 2 includes a list of those programs identified as Enabling and Enabling-like for the purpose of this study.)

4.1 Enabling reporting

4.1.1 Overview of Enabling reporting

All educational institutions have adopted various equity strategies and put in place a range of programs to address the broad needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Some universities have included preparatory/bridging programs and structured academic learning support programs – of the type identified as programs of interest to this study - amongst their program profile. A proportion of these programs have been used as a basis for Enabling reporting, which essentially provides a basis for those programs to be funded under Commonwealth funded load while incurring HECS-exemption status on the students so reported. The Enabling provision provides particular benefits to the disadvantaged clientele – course fees are not charged and HECS is not incurred; although students in a number of programs are required to pay some form of general service fee and may incur costs for texts and materials. These benefits are particularly attractive when the clientele includes people with financial disadvantage or who may be otherwise deterred by significant financial costs

Table 4.1 presents a sector-wide overview of Enabling course enrolments based on a consideration of institution 'type'. The results of this analysis are quite

dramatic with regional institutions[1] dominating Enabling enrolments in all years considered, making up 55 per cent of Enabling enrolments in 1991, rising to a peak of 71 per cent in 1995/96 (due mainly to a significant rise in activity by the University of Newcastle around that time) and remaining high at 64 per cent of Enabling enrolments in 1999. This group includes a number of major players in Enabling provision. In particular, the University of Newcastle accounted for 46 per cent of Enabling enrolments for this group and 29 per cent of Enabling enrolments overall in 1999. Other major players in this grouping include University of Southern Queensland, Central Queensland University, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and Northern Territory University. However, the fact that Enabling provision represents a significant activity for regional institutions as a whole is confirmed by the observation that all universities defined by Kemp (1999) as regional have reported Enabling students at some time during the period 1991 - 1999.

The dominance of regional universities in Enabling enrolments makes sense when one considers some of the key characteristics of this group of institutions. Regional universities include some of the more prominent former Distance Education Centres (DECs), with external provision being a major factor in enabling some programs to service large enrolments. Regional universities have also had a history of being relatively underfunded, thus making the Enabling provision an attractive potential funding source; include universities that have relatively low prestige in the sector, and hence have more relaxed entry standards; and are typically amongst the universities with the highest proportions of disadvantaged groups in their student bodies.

Considering other types of institution, enrolments in Enabling courses have been consistently low in the so-called 'Group of Eight' large research universities where those enrolments that do occur are dominated by indigenous students. Enrolments are also modest in the universities of technology, where Enabling enrolments are dominated by one institution – Curtin University of Technology. Curtin University's major offering is the single largest indigenous Enabling program, the Aboriginal University Orientation Course (AUOC) which is offered in the external mode. (It must be appreciated that the significant supplementary Enabling enrolments reported by the University of Technology, Sydney and Swinburne University of Technology do not appear in these 'official' statistics in order to prevent 'double counting' of students – refer to Chapter 8.) The 'Other Urban Institutions' group is dominated by enrolments at Edith Cowan University, which accounted for 72 per cent of the Enabling enrolments reported for this group in 1999, followed by University of Western Sydney, University of South Australia (which includes regional student Enabling enrolments through its Whyalla Bridging Program), Murdoch University and University of Canberra.

Attachment 3A provides complete details of enrolments in Enabling courses by institution.

[1] For the purpose of this analysis, 'regional' universities include the 13 institutions listed by Kemp (1999) plus Batchelor Institute.

Table 4.1: Enrolments in University Enabling Courses by Type of Institution: 1991-99[1]

Type of Institution	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Group of Eight	60	81	103	111	104	100	126	126	114
Universities of Technology[2]	362	296	238	231	238	198	227	170	171
Other Urban Institutions	375	379	570	643	678	711	937	1 093	1 078
Regional Institutions[3]	962	1 029	1 169	1 351	2 481	2 593	2 638	2 576	2 418
Total	**1 759**	**1 785**	**2 080**	**2 336**	**3 501**	**3 602**	**3 928**	**3 965**	**3 781**

[1] Figures are March 31 census date enrolments based on DETYA's 1993 scope definition.
[2] Official enrolment figures do not include most supplementary Enabling students (to avoid 'double counting') and so the large supplementary enrolments in institutions such as University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and Swinburne University of Technology are not included here.
[3] Based on the list of 13 regional institutions provided in Kemp (1999) plus Batchelor Institute of *Indigenous Tertiary Education that offers its Enabling programs from regional locations.*

When viewed as a whole, the major players in Enabling provision are logical candidates for that role. Many factors influence the decision for a university to offer a particular type of equity program; and a range of other factors then influence the decision for whether some or all of the students in this program are reported as Enabling. In particular, these decisions will depend on such factors as:

- Student demographics – for example, Enabling preparatory bridging programs not targeting Indigenous students seem preferred by universities with high proportions of socioeconomically disadvantaged or mature aged students. Preparatory/Bridging programs in other institutions are more likely to be fee-paying. As such, the universities that offer fee-paying general bridging programs at a fee of over $300 – including universities such as Australian National University, University of Canberra, University of New South Wales, University of Wollongong, University of Melbourne and Flinders University - typically have an access rate for socioeconomically disadvantaged students at or below the national average, and an access rate for Low SES students over 25 years of age less than their access rates for Low SES student under 25 years of age (DETYA 1999d). The exception to this trend is Edith Cowan University which offers a fee-paying preparatory course but which has Low SES access rates somewhat higher than the national average, and is, significantly, a major user of the Enabling provision.
- Overriding institutional culture – for example, as noted in Table 4.1, although accounting for 29.7 per cent of higher education sector enrolments in 1999 (DETYA 2000b), the so-called 'Group of Eight' institutions (the eight largest research universities) account for just three to six per cent of Enabling enrolments in any particular year. It appears that as the competitive nature of student selection increases in an institution, or as an institution comes to operate more under an 'elitist' model there is a tendency for the following to occur:

- Preparatory programs become less common, shorter in duration or offered on a fee-paying basis. For example, in contrast to the year-long bridging programs that dominate indigenous Enabling reporting, the Australian National University offers a short (27 contact hour, three week) bridging program for indigenous students which attracts a modest fee. Both the Universities of Melbourne and Wollongong have recently closed Enabling bridging programs in favour of fee-paying alternatives.
- Special entry (educational access) programs become a more commonly used equity strategy.
- The level of proactive supplementary student support associated with special entry decreases.
- Programs targeting non-traditional students are more likely to have conditions applied such as a limitation on the courses into which special admission is allowed, tending to avoid more elite programs.

- The influence of key change agents – it is well recognised that equity provision is heavily influenced by the attitudes, biases, strengths and weaknesses of key players – such as a supportive or non-supportive senior line manager, or an assertive or complacent equity officer (Postle 1997).
- Historical developments – for example, the continuation/discontinuation of programs in the long-term after receiving government seed funding, the piggy-backing of equity programs on other initiatives such as learning centres initially developed for international students, etc.
- There is also a considerable State effect in Enabling provision - a major feature of which is the different relationships between the educational sectors. For example, whereas large university-based preparatory/bridging programs are a feature of the sectors in a number of States, the growth in dual-sector universities in Victoria has seen a tendency for preparatory provision to be moved into these universities' TAFE divisions with a growing reliance on TAFE-based preparatory programs. As a result, university-based bridging programs are not a significant feature of Victorian tertiary education. Hence most Victorian universities (in the wake of the University of Melbourne's closure of its Mature Aged Bridging Program) do not report Enabling students, and of those that do: Victoria University of Technology reports only a relatively modest Enabling load despite the degree of socioeconomic disadvantage in its student catchment (van Moorst & Ballock 1995); La Trobe University's Enabling reporting includes students from a bridging program offered at its regional Albury/Wodonga campus; and Swinburne University's Enabling reporting is based on a number of academic learning support programs centred largely on mathematics and technology skills acquisition initially introduced to increase female participation in this former Institute of Technology.

The reasons underlying why some institutions utilise the Enabling reporting provision and others do not appear to be related to the nature of the student constituency that the universities serve. Some 30 out of the 43 Australian higher education institutions (including Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary

Education, University of Notre Dame Australia and the Australian Maritime College) offer some form of bridging program specifically to prospective indigenous students with around 18 of these routinely reporting these students as indigenous Enabling load. The latter group includes universities of all types. However, not surprisingly, the largest providers of indigenous Enabling load are universities in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland which often recruit from socio-economically depressed or regionally-based Indigenous populations – specifically Edith Cowan University, Batchelor College, James Cook University, Curtin University, and the University of Southern Queensland, followed closely by the University of Adelaide and the University of Tasmania. Similarly, universities from the Northern Territory, Western Australia and, to a lesser extent, Queensland are also the major providers of supplementary programs reported as Enabling. The most significant reporters of indigenous Enabling enrolments in other States and Territories are the University of Sydney which has a strong Tertiary Preparatory Course for indigenous students and an Academic Skills program associated with its CADIGAL special entry scheme, and the University of Canberra with a very sound Foundation Program for indigenous students.

There is also a link between indigenous participation in Enabling programs and indigenous participation overall. Based on the data published in DETYA (1999d), of the five institutions in the sector with the highest indigenous participation rates (that is, indigenous student load as a proportion of total student load) in 1997, four regularly report indigenous Enabling load – Batchelor College, James Cook University, Edith Cowan University and the University of Canberra. It appears that Enabling programs have been perceived as important for indigenous students and many universities utilise the Enabling provision as a convenient means of funding these programs. Changes introduced by the Commonwealth in 2000 to place a 'negotiable' cap of 30 per cent of total indigenous load in Enabling programs (Kemp 1999) have resulted in reductions in enrolments in indigenous bridging programs in some universities, particularly Edith Cowan University and the University of Southern Queensland.

Student constituency also seems to be a major factor influencing universities' reporting of non-indigenous Enabling enrolments. Of the 12 institutions which have consistently reported the largest Enabling enrolments over the past few years:

- Over half (seven) rate in the top third for the sector in terms of access levels for students from low socio-economic status backgrounds according to DETYA (1999d) – including the top four institutions for Low SES access levels: Central Queensland University, University of Southern Queensland, University of Tasmania and University of Newcastle; as well as Curtin University, University of South Australia and Victoria University of Technology that rate particularly highly for access levels by Low SES students over 25 years of age.
- Three-quarters (nine) use Enabling programs to target regional students, typically as sole providers to the communities concerned - including the regional universities Central Queensland University, University of Southern

Queensland, Charles Sturt University, Northern Territory University and University of Newcastle; urban-based institutions that use Enabling programs to service regional areas such as University of South Australia (Whyalla), University of Tasmania (North-West Centre), Curtin University (Kalgoorlie and Esperance); and in addition, University of Western Sydney (UWS) which in serving the vast outer Sydney region functions in many ways like a regional institution to a student body that frequently lacks the infrastructure and other benefits generally ascribed to urban residents. (It is significant that prior to wording amendments introduced in 1997, the Enabling Guidelines defined the target group based on regionality as: *"coming from outer metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas"* (DEET 1995) clearly linking major elements of the student bodies of regional universities with those of a university such as UWS.)

- Others use Enabling provision to meet particular special needs – University of Western Sydney and Northern Territory University to serve a diverse student clientele in outer Sydney and Darwin, respectively; University of Technology, Sydney to provide structured academic learning support for its high proportion of part-time students, Swinburne University of Technology as a means (at least initially) of providing access to WINTA through structured support in mathematics skills acquisition; and programs for off-campus distance students such as University of Southern Queensland's Tertiary Preparation Program, University of South Australia's Advanced Certificate in Tertiary Studies, Curtin University's Agribusiness Bridging Course and Charles Sturt University's Study Link on-line support program.

The normal chain of events appears to be that programs are established to meet a local need, after which, if key players become aware of the Enabling provision and the program is amenable to matching with the Guidelines, a decision may be made to use the program as a basis for reporting Enabling students. The Academic Development Program at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) provides one example. Academic learning support was formalised into 'subjects' at UTS initially as a means of coping with the level of demand on these services generated by the institution's very large numbers of part-time students. Once organised in this way, members of nominated equity groups entering the program were able to be apportioned load and reported as Enabling as a means of assisting with the program's funding.

Programs that were well established prior to the availability of Enabling provision in the mid-1980s have tended to maintain their original funding base as fee-paying programs, including the University of New South Wales' University Preparation Program and the Flinders University Foundation Course. The exception to this is the University of Newcastle which has become the largest reporter of Enabling load largely through its Open Foundation Course which was originally developed as a subsidised nominal fee-paying program in 1974. Many equity programs arose from activities initiated in the late 1980s when seed funding for equity initiatives was widely available and/or have been developed since that time using Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) funding. During the 1990s the official Enabling enrolments have more than doubled, from 1 759 in 1991 to 3 781 in

1999 as programs have grown and developed and as an increasing number of programs have taken advantage of the provision.

4.1.2 Enabling reporting in practice

A number of different steps are involved in the provision and reporting of Enabling students:

- Firstly, decisions need to be made within the institution about which programs can and should be used as a basis for reporting. These decisions need to be based on a knowledge of the Enabling Guidelines as published in the *HECS and Fees Manual* (Attachment 1) and an understanding of how the provision can best be utilised to support the equity aims of the institution.
- Secondly, the programs concerned must be operated in a way that is consistent with the Enabling Guidelines – enrolment in an Enabling course should not attract a course fee or HECS liability; selection into the program should be based on membership of one or more of the six nominated target groups; participation in the program should not give credit toward an award; and the program should enable participants to take award courses either subsequently or concurrently.
- Thirdly, the enrolment and load details of those program participants to be reported as Enabling students need to be collected and included in official statistics submissions.
- Finally, the process should be formally validated – which according to the *HECS and Fees Manual* Guidelines is the responsibility of the institution's Chief Executive Officer who is required to sign a statement to DETYA each year that the process has been conducted according to the relevant Guidelines.

Generally these different steps involve different members of staff, typically operating in different operational sections of the university concerned – at the very least involving a statistical collection coordinator, Enabling program staff and the Vice-Chancellor; but often involving many more links in the chain. The degree to which the Enabling Guidelines are followed will depend on the quality of communication between the different staff members involved and the degree of understanding by key decision makers of the nature of the Guidelines over an extended period of time. Given the numbers of people involved in the process chain, the relative obscurity of the Guidelines which have not been widely promoted and the absence of a significant review of Enabling provision over its 15 year history, the system has functioned remarkably well. Although there is clearly a considerable degree of confusion amongst equity practitioners about the details of Enabling reporting (refer to Chapter 6), the vast majority of programs being used as a basis for reporting Enabling students appear to meet both the spirit and the regulation of the Enabling Guidelines.

However, exceptions to this general rule have occurred. The Commonwealth's Enabling provision can be misused in a number of ways:

- The provision can be incorrectly targeted. A distinction needs to be made here between differing methods of identifying the disadvantaged groups defined in

the Guidelines and actually contravening the Guidelines by allowing non-target students to be reported as Enabling. The former can result from legitimate differences in the criteria used for selecting members of disadvantaged groups that arise because of the ambiguity of the Guidelines and the documented difficulties in identifying disadvantage. Hence, programs identifying socioeconomic disadvantage through evidence of a background of individual financial disadvantage and programs seeking to capture the same grouping through a requirement for welfare card recipience will have quite different student bodies without necessarily being beyond the statement or the spirit of the Guidelines. Arguments can also be presented describing the high degree of overlap between groups as diverse as mature age 'second chance' learners or prisoners in custody and socioeconomic disadvantage, justifying their inclusion as target groups under the Enabling Guidelines (see later). However, misuse of the provision can result if programs take insufficient consideration of the program's requirement to target disadvantaged groups. It would appear that such mistakes have occurred with some supplementary Enabling programs which have tended to target support purely on the basis of a student's poor academic performance but have reported the load so targeted as Enabling. Targeting support programs on the basis of academic performance is entirely legitimate. However, to comply with the Guidelines there is a need for such programs to ensure that only those students who are members of disadvantaged groups are reported as Enabling.

- Study in an Enabling program may be credited towards award study, against the clearly stated requirement in the Guidelines. Such a misuse may occur through a simple error based on ignorance of the details of the Guidelines. A more serious misuse of the provision would be represented by students continuing to be reported as Enabling after they have entered award study, say as a basis for allowing them to retain their HECS-exempt status into an undergraduate program. Whether accidental or intentional, it appears that examples of misuse of this type, based on a misguided attempt to provide additional assistance to disadvantaged students, have occurred in the odd program.
- Students could be reported as Enabling, thus attracting a Commonwealth funded place, who had no intention of pursuing study in that program. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the processes for culling what might be termed 'non-participatory students' from programs could be improved. It is difficult to say with any certainty how 'non-participatory students' remain associated with programs. It is possible that students could seek entry to an Enabling program merely as a means to collect Austudy or ABSTUDY (in programs where this is possible) or to fulfil a mutual obligation arrangement with the government without a serious intention to study. It is also possible for students to continue to be included in program enrolments who had effectively withdrawn from the course – as Enabling students are HECS-exempt they lack the incentive to notify the university of withdrawal before the 'census date' to avoid payment of HECS which serves as an effective 'early withdrawal trigger' for other categories of student. For whatever reason, the impact of 'non-participatory' students remaining associated with programs has been to lower the apparent performance of programs by creating

an inflated failure/non-completion rate, and an underestimation of transfer rates into further study. It has served to dilute the impact of Commonwealth financial support to Enabling programs as places have been funded that were never destined to achieve a positive student outcome in terms of the aims of the Enabling provision. There is a need for universities' administrative practices to be tightened to ensure that only those students whose primary aim is to undertake Enabling program study are reported in official statistics and hence attract a Commonwealth-funded place.

- Students could be allowed to repeatedly re-enrol in Enabling courses without due cause. However, although it has been noted that a sizeable proportion of Enabling students remain in their programs the following year as continuing students (refer to Chapter 8), it is difficult to assess to what degree 'inappropriate' re-enrolment in Enabling program occurs. As the programs target educationally disadvantaged individuals and individuals still experiencing various types of disadvantage there can be ample reasons for students to need to be allowed to repeat their course of study, and it is appropriate that individual cases should be judged on their own merits. The absence of appropriate pre-Enabling courses of study in many instances may also contribute to this occurring. However, there is a need for this behaviour to be monitored to prevent misuse, possibly associated with some degree of minimum entry standards to be specified for some types of programs – particularly relating to minimum English and mathematics proficiency where appropriate – and possibly with a maximum number of 'attempts' at Enabling provision specified.

It must be emphasised again that the vast majority of Enabling programs operate within the Guidelines, and it appears likely that the cases of misuse that have occurred are largely the result of ignorance of the Guidelines or flawed administrative practices failing to address abuse of the provision by students. The situation has not been aided by the lack of scrutiny and review of the program by government over its long history and the failure of successive governments to adequately promote the Guidelines to the equity community. The reliance on a signed statement by Vice-Chancellors as an assurance measure for programs complying with the Guidelines has proven both impractical and ineffective in achieving that aim. However, simple steps can be taken to eliminate misuse of the provision, involving a greater degree of accountability on behalf of programs to report on the aims and performance of their courses, and to require universities to tighten their administrative processes to ensure the effective targeting of programs and to eliminate sources of abuse of the provision.

More significant problems are created by the differences that appear to occur between stakeholders in the way that the Guidelines are interpreted. Some major concerns have been identified. These include:

- The provision Guidelines not being widely promoted. Many potentially eligible programs do not report as Enabling simply because they are ignorant of the availability of the provision, thus missing out on the benefits that such provision affords. Some practitioners have a passing knowledge of the provision but believe, often erroneously, that their program does not qualify

for one reason or another. (For example, during the course of the consultation process reported in Chapter 6, several coordinators of bridging programs targeting equity groups stated that they did not seek to report these students as Enabling because they believed that failing to *guarantee* entry to a university award course disqualified them under the Guidelines. In fact, the Guidelines refer simply to a bridging course needing to qualify students for entry.)

- The lack of a common understanding of how groups should be defined in practice resulting in a mismatch in the methods used to identify individual disadvantage as a basis for selection and the indicators used to monitor equity performance at the sector level. The problems associated with identifying disadvantage have been discussed in Chapter 2. The Enabling Guidelines are not linked to Martin (1994) identifiers, nor should or could they be, particularly for the socio-economically disadvantaged where the postcode method employed to monitor sector performance is universally accepted as a totally inappropriate means of identifying students at the level of the individual (Western *et al.* 1998). The lack of clarity that has developed between a 'disadvantaged background' and 'current disadvantaged status' as a result of the Martin (1994) identifiers has caused particular confusion. There is an emphasis on mature age entry in many of the programs reported as Enabling, for the same reasons that has driven access developments in the United Kingdom. This can give the impression that the programs are not targeting equity groups, with apparent non-equity participation approaching 50 per cent in some instances (Bull & Clarke 1998). However, as has been discussed in Chapter 2, this may be misleading as mature age re-entry could be thought of as an effective correlate of a background of disadvantage, particularly as these programs tend to be concentrated in universities serving student bodies with high proportions of disadvantaged groups and who recruit heavily from these demographics. As a general rule, Enabling programs tend to assess disadvantage on a case by case basis, typically requiring the candidate to submit evidence of this disadvantage. Provided their criteria for selection is consistent with the broad Enabling Guidelines it is therefore likely that the profile of students in these programs conforms more closely with the spirit of the Enabling provision than could be achieved (or reflected in) the criteria used as a basis for deriving the officially sanctioned equity indicators.
- The lack of a common understanding of how programs should operate in practice. For example, government might consider it an abuse of the intent of the provision for students to be reported as Enabling who had little likelihood of completing the program successfully. However, although minimum entry standards are specified by a significant number of programs, some equity practitioners adopt a more-or-less 'open entry' approach to Enabling programs and similar equity strategies. This may in part relate to adherence to a philosophy that seeks to provide all disadvantaged individuals with the chance to succeed, but is more fundamentally related to the difficulties inherent in identifying academic potential amongst students approaching study through non-traditional pathways. As minimum entry standards are not specified in the Guidelines, these differences in attitude do not represent any form of misuse or abuse of the Enabling provision, but they will serve to influence program outcomes and, as such, impact on the perceptions that a program is

'successful' or not. This perception of success provides a principal basis for determining the 'value' of a program that will in turn influence the degree to which it is supported. There is an urgent need for all stakeholders to enter into a process that will lead to a common understanding of the key parameters of Enabling provision – with agreement on key issues such as how target groups should be defined and what constitutes valuable outcomes.

- University administrations appear to pass on the funding attracted by Enabling students to Enabling programs to differing degrees. Budget details proved extremely difficult to collect during the course of this study. However, staff conducting Enabling programs consistently reported the need to operate on tight budgets. As these programs frequently operate outside of formal Faculty/Department structures the operational areas responsible for these programs often do not feature prominently in internal funding allocation models. They are hence vulnerable to receiving limited funding. The University of Newcastle quite openly funds its Enabling Programs Unit on a marginal basis, according to the following strategy: The University actively plans to overenrol by a load equivalent to the Enabling load it is aiming for in a particular year. Under current DETYA funding guidelines, if all goes to plan, the University will receive marginal funding for each EFTSU it overenrols. This marginal funding (which is based on the marginal HECS rate), less a percentage for overheads, is passed on to the Enabling Programs Unit to fund its programs. Informal contact with a range of similar bridging programs suggests that this funding level of somewhat less than $2 000 per Enabling EFTSU (based on a marginal HECS rate of around $2 500 to the institution) does not appear as unusual as the amount flowing on to the operational area. This compares with fee levels for equivalent bridging programs in private universities or offered for international full fee-paying students ranging from $4 000 to as high as over $10 000. It also represents around 30 per cent of the funding attracted to the University by Enabling load for the majority of universities that do not base their funding strategy for Enabling programs on the University of Newcastle's 'marginal funding' rationale – a level of 70 per cent in overheads being considerably greater than that charged to operational areas in most institutions. The implications of the informal advice received by the project team suggests that it would be beneficial to investigate in more depth the degree to which universities pass the funding attracted to the institution through Enabling load on to the operational areas conducting the Enabling programs.

4.2 Enabling and Enabling-like program offerings

4.2.1 Introduction

This section aims to provide a general description of the range and scope of programs used as a basis for reporting Enabling students (termed 'Enabling' programs for the purposes of this study) and those which parallel these in practice (termed 'Enabling-like' programs). It should be appreciated that the term 'Enabling' program does not represent a hard and fast term as it is at the discretion of universities how they choose to report Enabling students within the broad

parameters of the *HECS and Fees Manual* Guidelines (Attachment 1). Students in programs may be reported as Enabling one year and not reported as Enabling the next – meaning that the program may in one year be Enabling and in another be Enabling-like in terms of the definitions used for this report. Also, it is not always the case that all the students in a program in any one-year will be reported as Enabling. For example, the Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP) offered by the University of Southern Queensland is available to disadvantaged students as a HECS-and-fees-free course with these students reported in official statistics as 'Enabling' students, and to students who do not meet the requirements for disadvantage as a fee-paying course with students reported as 'Non-Award' students. The TPP is thus simultaneously Enabling and Enabling-like. The reader is also reminded that short preparatory courses of less than 30 - 40 hours duration and a range of academic learning support strategies not directly analogous to any programs reported as Enabling were generally excluded from consideration in this study, although they too can act as enabling in its broadest sense. Overall, this section describes a group of strategies that provides access routes involving preparation or structured long-term academic learning support for disadvantaged students in higher education, a subset of which are used as a basis for reporting Enabling students.

To assist in describing current activities in this area, programs have been grouped according to broad type:

4.2.2 Pre-Bridging Educational Pathways.

4.2.3 Enabling-like Provision in School.

4.2.4 Higher Education Indigenous Enabling and Enabling-Like Programs.

4.2.5 General Preparatory/Bridging Programs Offered by Universities Targeting Low SES, Rural and Isolated, and other Educationally Disadvantaged Groups.

4.2.6 General University Preparation Programs Involving the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector.

4.2.7 Preparatory Programs Principally Targeting People from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB).

4.2.8 Enabling and Enabling-Like Programs Focussing on Specific Skills or Disciplines (including a consideration of WINTA).

4.2.9 Preparatory Programs Specifically Targeting People with Disabilities.

4.2.10 Supplementary Enabling and Enabling-Like Programs.

4.2.11 Enabling Programs for Current or Prospective Postgraduate Students.

The discussion is supported by program information collected from a broad range of sources – program promotional material supplied by universities to stakeholders, university handbooks, university websites, published university equity plans (DETYA 1999a) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational strategies (DETYA 1999b), equity program directories (such as Ashenden *et al.* 1997), other published sources (such as conference papers and

professional journal articles), and through personal contact made with equity practitioners as part of this broad study (including through: on-site visits, practitioner seminars, practitioner submissions; and telephone and e-mail correspondence). To avoid interrupting the flow of the text, references for each piece of information discussed are not cited. Every effort has been made to verify program details wherever possible and to use the latest sources. As a general caveat though, apologies are afforded for any inaccuracies that may be present relating to the details of individual programs. It must also be remembered that the situation with these programs is quite dynamic with programs continually evolving, changing affiliations and bases for funding, and coming in to and out of service as circumstances change. However, as the chapter's aim is to provide an overview of the type of provision available and the scope of programs of this type, the chapter is best read in this light, rather than as a definitive source of information on any individual programs mentioned.

4.2.2 Pre-bridging educational pathways

The Enabling and Enabling-like programs that form the basis for this study are intended to provide or support educational pathways for a diverse group of non-traditional students. These programs frequently represent one link in a chain of programs that are used by individuals to navigate their way through the educational system. Before considering Enabling and Enabling-like programs in any detail it is worthwhile considering briefly how these educational pathways can operate. In particular, what strategies are available to prospective students who, for whatever reason, are not suitably prepared to access an Enabling or Enabling-like program itself but require what might be termed as 'pre-bridging' programs.

Some pathways do exist to qualifications at a Year 10 level or to qualifications which assist entry into some vocational education and training (VET) programs but not to higher education. These include such courses as:

- the Certificate I-III pathways in General Education available through TAFE nationwide;
- School Certificate courses including the Fast Track Program to a Year 10 Certificate offered through Colleges in Western Australia, and the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE);
- the Introductory Vocational Education Certificate (IVEC) in South Australia and Certificate II in Introductory Vocational Education (FCIVE) in the Northern Territory;
- the Women's Education/Access certificate courses offered in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania; and the NOW (New Opportunities for Women) and WIT (Women in Technology) courses offered in Western Australia,
- a general unit on *Further Study* which includes a consideration of basic literacy and numeracy, and study skills suitable for preparing recent school-leavers for further study that, at time of writing, was in the process of being finalised by the Brisbane School of Distance Education.

However, these courses are typically intended as part of generalised pathways with a heavy vocational perspective, not intended specifically to lead on to bridging programs into further study.

A more structured pathway is offered at Canning College in Western Australia. Here State funded Flying Start courses in a range of areas aim to upgrade education for adult participants to an equivalent of Year 10 level. This can then articulate into Flying Start Bridging subjects that upgrade to Year 11 level and in turn bridge into TEE (Matriculation) level.

Despite the availability of these programs, individual experience suggests that there can be real difficulties in suggesting pathways for mature aged students who do not immediately qualify for entry into bridging programs offered by universities. The experience in Queensland, for example, is that the options available each have shortcomings for servicing this group. In particular, 'pre-bridging'-level courses offered through TAFE and the Queensland School of Distance Education are often geared towards recent school-leavers and hence are not found suitable by all adults; the Open Learning Institute typically provides less support than is needed by academically weak students; and community education options (such as those promoted through the 'Reading and Writing Hotline') tend to be either at too basic a level or cannot be relied upon in that programs tend to come and go according to the nature of the funding available (Jessamyn Clarke, University of Southern Queensland, personal communication).

The need for comprehensive articulated educational pathways commencing at the pre-university bridging level is particularly pronounced for indigenous peoples where the impact of educational disadvantage is well documented and generally appreciated. Some pre-bridging programs for indigenous students are available through the vocational education and training (VET) sector. These include such courses as:

- Certificate III in Tertiary Access and Certificate III in Aboriginal Access to Further Study in New South Wales. NSW TAFE also offers a Diploma in Aboriginal Studies (AQF Certificate V) with an embedded Certificate III in Aboriginal Studies which boasts multiple entry and exit points.
- Certificate II in Koorie Education Training and Employment offered in Victoria.
- Preparatory Course offered by the Indigenous People's Division of Southbank Institute of TAFE (Kangaroo Point campus), Brisbane.
- Indigenous Access Programs offered through TAFE in Tasmania.
- The NOW (New Opportunities for Women) course, which also offers qualifications for NESB and indigenous women, and the Certificate IV in Aboriginal Visual Arts offered in Western Australia.

4.2.3 Enabling-like provision in school

Until quite recent times, the curriculum and general standards for high school matriculation were aimed towards the preparation of students for university entry.

Although senior school curricula are now geared towards a broader preparation for students and the massification of higher education has seen the emergence of numerous alternative pathways for students entering universities, the route from school directly into university still dominates the thoughts of many in the university sector. Even today, most State Tertiary Admissions Centres refer to young people (under 21 years of age) applying for university entry on the basis of recently completed Senior Board subjects as 'Normal Entry' and students who do not undertake this 'Normal' route are generally referred to as 'non-traditional students'. Although not discussed at length in this study, it is clear that secondary schools retain the dominant role for preparing students for university entry. As such, the success of equity initiatives in schools (for example, Education Queensland 2000) can have a major impact on the subsequent make-up of the higher education student body.

Of relevance to the context of this study, secondary schools also provide a route for adult students returning to further study. In Queensland, for example, adults can enrol in secondary schools and study for their Higher School Certificate in mainstream classrooms – but typically with a lighter load as 'Adult Entry' through QTAC is based on the best of four Board Senior subjects rather than the five demanded for 'Normal Entry'.

The provision of adult matriculation courses outside of the school system, which also provides an option for preparatory study for adults in many States, is discussed below.

4.2.4 Higher education indigenous Enabling and Enabling-like programs

The great majority of universities in Australia very consciously utilise Enabling and/or Enabling-like programs as significant indigenous education strategies, with the Enabling provision being used as a basis for funding over 70 per cent of these programs.

Institutions from all States and Territories are involved, with indigenous Enabling being particularly utilised in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland, followed by South Australia and Tasmania. Enabling activity in New South Wales is dominated by particularly strong programs offered by the University of Sydney; the other indigenous Enabling programs in this State tend to be small.

Some 28 universities (including Batchelor Institute, Australian Catholic University and Notre Dame University) have been identified as offering Enabling and/or Enabling-like programs specifically targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Of the 51 programs so identified, 37 (73 per cent) are used as a basis for reporting Enabling students, involving 22 universities (or 78 per cent of the universities offering indigenous Enabling or Enabling-like programs). A further 15 programs (eight of which are Enabling) offered by 12 universities include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as one of a number of major equity target groups and routinely enrol indigenous Australians in small numbers into these programs. (Many more programs may be involved in serving this group

as staff in many programs reported that although data on the aboriginality of participants was not routinely collected it was felt that indigenous students did use their program as a means of entering further study.) Five of the universities in this latter category are institutions which do not offer specifically targeted indigenous Enabling and Enabling-like programs – implicating a total of 33 universities as offering Enabling or Enabling-like programs to indigenous students. In at least one instance special incentives are provided for indigenous students in these otherwise non-targeted programs – the $500 fee for any indigenous student enrolled in the University of New South Wales' University Preparation Program is payed by the Aboriginal Educational Program; which is seen as a more cost-effective means of serving indigenous students at the University than setting up a dedicated bridging program.

Table 4.2: Indigenous[1] Enabling and Enabling-like Program Offerings in Australian Higher Education, 1999

	No. Unis[2] offering Enabling / Enabling-like programs	No. Enabling & Enabling-like progams offered	No. Unis[2] offering Enabling Programs	No. Enabling programs offered	Total No. Unis[2] present
Queensland	4	7	3	6	7 [3]
N.S.W.	8	16	7	11	14 [3]
A.C.T.	2	2	2	1	3 [3]
Victoria	3	5	1	2	10 [3]
Tasmania	2	2	1	1	2
Northern T.	2	5	2	4	2
South Aus.	2	3	2	3	3
West'n Aus.	5	11	4	9	5
Total	**28**	**51**	**22**	**37**	**43 [2]**

[1] representing programs specifically geared to the needs of indigenous students, not including programs that target indigenous students as one of a number of target groups.

[2] includes a consideration of the 37 publicly funded universities, two private universities (Bond University and University of Notre Dame Australia) and four other publicly funded higher education institutions (Batchelor Institute, Australian Maritime College, Avondale College and Marcus Oldham College) that make up the Australian higher education sector.

[3] figures in this row do not tally to the total because of double counting, explained by Australian Catholic University (Australia's only multi-State university) which has campuses in Queensland, NSW, ACT and Victoria.

Of the 51 programs identified that specifically target indigenous peoples, half (25) are preparatory programs involving one year of full-time study, with 11 (44 per cent) of these programs identified as promoting part-time study options. Of these 25 programs, 11 (44 per cent) address generic skills – literacy, numeracy and study skills - and serve as general bridging programs into a range of award courses, seven (28 per cent) are geared towards the Sciences (including Health Sciences) and Technology, four (16 per cent) are geared specifically towards the Humanities or Education, and three (12 per cent) include some specific material related to the students chosen course of future study together with general

preparation. All but two of these programs are used as a basis for Enabling reporting and hence make up the bulk of indigenous Enabling programs in the sector.

Some preparatory programs include award study together with the Enabling component. For example, University of Southern Queensland's Indigenous Preparatory Studies Program and the indigenous enabling programs at Edith Cowan University – Aboriginal Foundation Studies Course / Aboriginal Tertiary Studies Course and the external Aboriginal University Orientation Course - follow the Enabling component with study in foundation (first year award study-level general studies) units. A slight variation on this theme involves the inclusion of an award unit from a selected discipline (elective streams) in the overall enabling program – for example as occurs in University of Western Australia's Aboriginal Orientation Course. The latter course is also offered in a truncated (one semester rather than the usual two): *"for those students who may only require the shorter course"*.

James Cook University has preparatory courses for indigenous students at different needs levels – Tertiary Admissions Course (TAC) I is at a generic skills level while TACII (now divided into Humanities (HuTAC) and Science (SciTAC) streams) is more advanced and targeted to specific future study areas. (The nature of articulated educational pathways available to non-traditional students is discussed later.)

While in most cases preparatory programs provide students with a qualification to apply for undergraduate programs, some programs guarantee entry into an award course, possibly based on student performance and possibly involving restrictions on the courses so offered. Guaranteed entry appears a little more common for indigenous preparatory programs than for equivalent programs targeting non-indigenous students.

Batchelor Institute's approach to its Enabling provision is somewhat unique. The Certificate in General Education, which serves as an Enabling program, is a pre-tertiary course offered through the School of General Studies which makes up the first stage of a number of Batchelor's four-stage higher education programs as well as extended programs in the vocational education and training area. The course is currently 18-months in duration but is being scaled back to a year of study. It includes basic orientation, English literacy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and literacies, numeracy, and community studies.

Some 11 (22 per cent) of the indigenous Enabling and Enabling-like programs identified are short bridging courses of four to eight weeks duration, typically studied full-time. These programs generally concern preparation into specific disciplines (pre-Law, pre-Medicine and pre-Health) and half (six) are offered by so-called 'Group of Eight' universities – Australian National University, University of New South Wales, University of Queensland and University of Western Australia. Only four of these 11 programs are used as a basis for reporting Enabling students and only two advertise flexible study options.

Four programs are available as major external offerings – Edith Cowan University's Aboriginal University Orientation Course, University of Southern Queensland's Indigenous Preparatory Studies Program, Charles Sturt University's Aboriginal Distance Education Preparatory Training (ADEPT) program, and University of New England's TRACKS (as an option). Flexibility is also provided using block study, such as at Northern Territory University and the University of Queensland.

Although support for indigenous students is provided by all universities, typically involving a dedicated indigenous support unit, formally structured supplementary Enabling or Enabling-like programs are not common in the sector. Those identified which specifically target indigenous students include: University of Sydney's Academic Skills Support Program (associated with its CADIGAL indigenous special entry scheme) and the related Aboriginal Health Science Support Program, Murdoch University's PEPA Program supporting indigenous Veterinary Science students, La Trobe University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Orientation Program, and the support provided as a major option in Northern Territory University's Higher Education Preparatory Programs in Humanities/Social Science and Mathematics/Science. University of Sydney's programs involve what is termed 'reduced academic load', an option available to students to spread their coursework over an extended period and to undertake additional 'subjects' which provide support for their mainstream units. This typically extends study time for an award by around 50 per cent (refer to Chapter 5). This strategy of providing supplementary Enabling provision in conjunction with a reduced award load provides an attractive alternative to providing bridging programs provided prior to award enrolment. The reduced award load helps to ensure that students with significant preparatory needs are not overburdened with additional workload, while the fact that students are already enrolled in award study provides the student with greater incentive to persist. However, the fact that the strategy significantly extends award study time does create a psychological barrier for some students (Sally Farrington, Student Support Coordinator, Yooroang Garang, University of Sydney, personal communication). (A variation on this 'reduced load' Enabling strategy, albeit not specifically targeting indigenous students, has been used by Swinburne University, which involved identified students in particular subjects – such as Quantitative Analysis, Mathematics, Information Methods, Physics and Professional Studies English – studying the same subject content over two semesters instead of one in specially organised classes.)

It must be appreciated that Enabling and Enabling-like programs, which are dominated by preparatory programs, represent one of a number of strategies available to universities to provide educational pathways for indigenous students. Other strategies which have particular potential for supporting indigenous equity goals include articulation arrangements with the vocational education and training (VET) sector (discussed later) and the use of award programs. The latter strategy typically involves accessible subdegree level courses in areas of particular interest or relevance to indigenous communities, such as Art, Education, Health, Tourism, Community Management, Environmental Management or Paralegal Studies.

Before concluding, it is worth noting that there is a considerable philosophical debate underway across the sector as to the appropriateness and effectiveness of conducting general enabling provision that is not targeted to the needs of particular groups. This debate is particularly intense in indigenous education where there is a strong feeling amongst many that indigenous enabling programs should be closely associated with indigenous departments and/or enclave units to ensure clear aims, cultural appropriateness and appropriate student support. The recent decision by Northern Territory University to move its successful Indigenous Pre-Law Program from the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to the Faculty of Foundation Studies has generated considerable debate.

4.2.5 General bridging / preparatory programs offered by universities targeting Low SES, rural and isolated, and other educationally disadvantaged groups

Table 4.3: Non-Indigenous Enabling and Enabling-like Program Offerings in Australian Higher Education, 1999

	No. Unis[1] offering Enabling / Enabling-like programs	No. Enabling & Enabling-like progams offered	No. Unis[1] offering Enabling Programs	No. Enabling programs offered	Total No. Unis[1] present
Queensland[3]	5	6	2	2	7 [2]
N.S.W.	7	11	2	5	14 [2]
A.C.T.	2	2	-	-	3 [2]
Victoria[4]	4	5	2	2	10 [2]
Tasmania	1	2	1	2	2
Northern T.[4]	1	1	1	1	2
South Aus.	2	4	1	2	3
West'n Aus.	3	8	2	2	5
Total	**25**	**39**	**11**	**16**	**43 [2]**

[1] as per note 1 on Table 4.2
[2] as per note 2 on Table 4.2

General preparatory/bridging programs are a common strategy for targeting educationally disadvantaged students. Educational disadvantage can be a feature of the disadvantage associated with all six of the disadvantaged groups but is particularly associated with indigenous peoples, Low SES, and people from rural and isolated areas. As to the latter group, the risk of disadvantage being incurred on people undertaking schooling in regional areas was well recognised by the authors of *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET 1990). In describing the strategies required to be adopted by universities to address the needs of this group it included:

> *Institutions should ensure that appropriate bridging and supplementary courses are available to make up for any lack of knowledge and skills*

> *caused by inadequate schooling. Supplementary courses in mathematics, science and technology are particularly important where trained teachers and necessary equipment may not have been available* (DEET 1990, p. 47).

In line with the definition of programs of interest for this study, the wealth of short programs such as university taster programs, orientation programs, and workshops utilised by universities to ease the transition for students are not considered here.

Some 41 general preparatory/bridging programs which do not specifically target indigenous students have been identified involving 27 institutions (including the Queensland Open Learning Network) across all States and Territories. Some 16 (39 per cent) of these programs are regularly used as a basis for Enabling reporting by 11 universities; these programs being spread quite evenly across the States and Territories except for the ACT. (This count does not consider TAFE-accredited programs offered through the TAFE divisions of dual-sector universities which will be discussed later.)

Programs of interest here typically concern basic skills in areas such as communications, mathematics, information literacy and study skills; opportunities for increasing awareness of institutional services and facilities; and introductory level classes in areas pertinent to award course study – with programs frequently being divided into different streams of study depending on the student's future study intentions. Areas such as confidence building, careers development, and personal care are also typically embedded into the courses of study. The curriculum mix will depend on the groups being targeted and the factors that have emerged with experience as representing individual needs. The majority of general preparatory programs do not guarantee entry to courses but promise that successful completion provides minimum standards of entry for students otherwise lacking traditional entry qualifications, particularly into areas such as Arts, Humanities and Education.

These programs can be grouped into a number of broad types. Unlike the situation with programs specifically targeting indigenous students, one-year full-time preparatory programs do not dominate here with just five (14 per cent) of the 37 programs involving this duration of intense study. (This difference appears to relate to the relative levels of educational disadvantage and cultural alienation being addressed.) More common are programs that involve between eight to 20 contact hours per week over 10 - 24 weeks of study (representing say 250 - 350 contact hours in total) which make up around one-third (12) of these 37 programs. Most of the programs used as a basis for Enabling reporting fit into one or other of these two broad groups. Additionally, four (11 per cent of) programs are offered on an intensive full-time basis over one to four weeks, with two of these programs being Enabling.

Another distinct group is made up of programs conducted on a part-time basis involving a few hours (one to four) of study per week for three to six months, typically offered as evening classes. Some 10 (27 per cent) of the 37 programs have been identified as being of this type, many of them offered on a fee-paying

basis, including the Australia National University's University Preparation Scheme (offered at a fee of $315 per unit of study), Flinders' University Foundation Course ($400), University of Canberra's UC Prep ($380), and University of New South Wales' University Preparation Program ($500). The more expensive University Access Program offered by the University of Wollongong ($1 080) involves a greater level of study (nine hours per week for 14 weeks). Most of these programs are available to some students at a discounted rate – typically to Health Card Holders – or a limited number of free places may be made available for students experiencing financial difficulties. These programs clearly cater to a particular clientele – adults wishing to enter study undertaking a bridging program on a low intensity part-time basis while employed, requiring just 50 - 60 contact hours in total to achieve preparedness. They differ markedly from the programs reported as Enabling in terms of requiring far fewer total contact hours.

Finally, several of the programs identified are offered in the external mode of study or as a self-paced learning package, including Charles Sturt University's ASSIST, Edith Cowan University's HECS-liable University Foundation Studies (which is available externally as one study option), self-paced learning packages available through Queensland Open Learning Network's Unilearn program, Southern Cross University's Success in Tertiary Education, University of South Australia's Advanced Certificate in University Studies (which is used as a basis for Enabling reporting), and University of Southern Queensland's Tertiary Preparation Program (which is offered both to Enabling students and as a fee-paying course to students who do not meet the criteria for disadvantage). The external mode provides the opportunity for increased flexibility of offering, enabling self-paced study at a time and place convenient to the student and providing educational access to students who for whatever reason cannot readily access a university campus.

The overall picture is one of a widely diverse group of programs with similar basic goals of preparing students for general tertiary entry but whose diversity derives from the varied needs of their own particular student constituencies. Different course durations, study modes and intensity of programs reflect differences in the degree of educational disadvantage and individual circumstances of the clientele. As discussed in an earlier section, Enabling programs of this type tend to be offered by the institutions serving the more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society. Regional universities and regional campuses of urban-based universities are typically geared to the needs of people from rural and isolated areas. Most programs are set up in response to perceived local needs. This is reflected in the groups targeted through the basis for selection for different programs.

The majority of general preparatory programs target people who have not undertaken secondary schooling for some period, frequently as specified by a minimum age limit (variously 19, 20 or 21 years) or by stipulating a minimum period since previous study (normally two or three years). Identified equity groups may be stated specifically in promotional literature – as would be expected this is more common in those programs reported as Enabling (occurring for at

least seven out of 16 program identified) than for Enabling-like (four out of 21) – or educational disadvantage expressed in terms such as: 'not completed school' or 'experienced educational disruption'. Other disadvantaged groups may be identified which overlap with identified disadvantaged groups, such as: prisoners or ex-prisoners, refugees, people on rehabilitation programs, the long term unemployed (which is targeted specifically by an Edith Cowan University short program), residents of disadvantaged areas, people on a pension, etc. Enabling-like programs are more likely to target on the basis of people lacking traditional entry qualifications, people who require skills development or people who lack confidence in study. Although many Enabling-like programs have a clear equity focus other commercial programs are clearly marketed for anyone with the need or desire to do them.

Preparatory programs targeting women are generally aimed at providing specific skills needed to enable women to enter non-traditional areas of study – particularly mathematics and information literacy. These programs are discussed in section 4.2.8 below. However, general preparatory programs targeting women are available. For example, University of Western Sydney offers Women's First Step. This is a free-to-student (funded out of the University's annual Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) grant), two-week full-time day program attended by 50 commencing mature-aged women students just prior to the start of the academic year. Study includes academic writing, research, library skills, computer literacy; as well as confidence and self-esteem building, and time management.

Preparatory programs do not typically target relatively recent school-leavers. However, the University of Newcastle balances its longstanding University Foundation Course for disadvantaged students over 20 years of age with the Newstep Program which targets youth aged 17 - 21 years who have missed schooling due to disadvantage. Often these students have experienced severe hardship and have been traumatised by negative experiences with the education system – particularly noting that the University of Newcastle's student catchment is one of the most socioeconomically depressed in Australia. This program is somewhat reminiscent of the SKATE Program offered in the early 1990s by University of Technology Sydney which targeted street kids, Edith Cowan University's two-week intensive Access Course for the Long-Term Unemployed, and the 'New Pathways' initiative conducted by the University of Tasmania as a one-off exercise in the summer of 1998-9. In the latter case, workers made redundant at a workplace in Bernie were invited to participate in a modification of University of Tasmania's University Preparation Program. Such programs highlight a few points regarding these types of offerings. Firstly they highlight the degree to which these programs reflect local concerns and can represent institutional responses to serving their community. Secondly, these programs highlight the impact that student demographics can have on program performance. Targeting groups who have undergone extreme disadvantage typically results in lowered attainment outcomes (in terms of completion and transfer rates) which, if not interpreted in context can reflect poorly on the programs themselves. In general, the benefits and success of programs must be interpreted in ways which reflect their overall aims. This serves to highlight the need for caution to be

exercised in comparing the performance of such a diverse range of programs as those represented by general preparatory courses.

The 1990s has seen the emergence of several interesting developments in preparatory program provision. For example, there has been a trend towards the development of structured preparatory arrangements that articulate more seamlessly into degree programs than stand alone pre-application preparatory courses. One such bridging strategy involves a preparatory component (which may be Enabling) that flows into a foundation studies component. The latter component involves the study (on a HECS-liable basis) of foundation units in an undergraduate degree which are then credited to the degree study. This essentially provides a 'protected' first semester of study in an award program that eases the transition for students who may be still be lacking confidence or be undecided about their major course of study. Such programs are offered by Edith Cowan University (Unistart / Foundation Studies Program) and University of South Australia (Advanced Certificate in University Studies / Diploma in University Studies). (The indigenous enabling programs at Edith Cowan University – Aboriginal Foundation Studies Course / Aboriginal Tertiary Studies Course or the external Aboriginal University Orientation Course are also of this general type.)

Another emerging trend has been the development of preparatory programs as qualifications in their own right. Courses of this type include the two-year HECS-liable Flinders University Preparation Diploma, the two-level four-year part-time Advanced Certificate / Diploma in University Studies offered by University of South Australia, and the one-year Enabling Southern Cross University Certificate of Foundation Studies offered for indigenous students. These programs provide stronger recognition of the student's achievement in completing what is typically a long and intense course of study (which is of particular benefit if the student then decides not to continue with further study or to complete a subsequent award), provide a sound basis for credit transfer and articulation arrangements into award courses, and potentially afford the programs greater credibility and presence within the university sector.

Another group of programs of possible interest here are those that target 'high achiever' school students. Many universities seek to attract high achieving (even 'gifted') students by offering these students study in university units while still in secondary school, which may either contribute to the student's tertiary entrance score or be credited against future tertiary study. These 'accelerated educational progression' programs are clearly different in their nature to other programs studied in this report but can represent equity programs if they capture disadvantaged (particularly Low SES and rural/isolated) students with very high potential (Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium 2000). The elite 'Group of Eight' universities feature prominently in these forms of offerings. Relevant programs include[2] the Melbourne University Program for High Achieving Students (MUPHAS), the Monash University Enhancement Studies Program, the La Trobe University Extension Studies Program (ESP), the University of New South Wales Early Admissions Scheme for Exceptionally Talented Students, Murdoch

[2] With thanks to Julie Hayford, University of Adelaide for drawing these programs to the attention of the authors

University's UniTrack Program, the University of Queensland's Enhanced Studies Program, Flinders's University Students with High Intellectual Potential (SHIP) Program, the University of Adelaide's Accelerated Entry Scheme, the on-line UniStart Program offered by the University of Southern Queensland and schemes conducted by the University of Tasmania (Hayford 1998). Programs such as Melbourne University's MUPHAS, La Trobe University's ESP and University of Southern Queensland's Unistart which do not charge fees to students and allow for regional delivery of classes (by training local teachers for the case of MUPHAS, through delivery at regional campuses for the case of ESP, and through on-line delivery for the case of UniStart) are more likely to serve as equity initiatives than those programs that charge significant student fees (such as at Monash) or do not provide students with special support (such as at UNSW). With competition for students increasing it is likely that these sorts of schemes will increase in the future.

Finally, there are a range of alternative pathways available which mimic Enabling-like provision in terms of their overall outcomes. Non-award enrolments – the enrolment in units for credit at a fee which can then be credited towards an award – provide non-traditional students with a means of tasting and easing into study. The Australian Catholic University, for example, markets Diploma and Certificate courses in Business and Computing offered through ACUcom as being: *"designed to assist students to gain entry into Bachelor programs while providing a valuable vocational qualification along the way"* – with students receiving a sufficient Grade Point Average (GPA) admitted directly into second year Business. Macquarie University offers admission on the basis of the completion of nine credit points of non-award study through its Centre for Open Education with an overall grade point average of 1.6. The cost of each unit ranges from $125 - $300 depending on the number of credit points involved. Similarly, the Open Learning Institute of Charles Sturt University offers an Associate Student Program where single subject study can be undertaken which: *"provides a very good way for prospective students to test the water without necessarily committing themselves to a full degree study"* with unit costs of around $200 - $250. These represent fairly affordable pathways. However, across the sector the use of non-award units is more prevalent for professional development and the pursuit of general interest rather than their role in enabling disadvantaged students. Seeking admission via this means at many universities can be extremely expensive – University of Western Sydney Nepean through its Access Nepean Scheme, marketed as: *"a fee-paying single-subject entry program"* offers undergraduate units at between $550 - $750 per unit, while the University of Sydney offers units for credit through its Centre for Continuing Education at a cost of between $2 000 - $4 000 per unit. (As an aside, the extent to which students enrol in undergraduate degrees simply in order to study individual units for professional development purposes and incurring only a HECS charge is an issue worthy of study in its potential to contribute to the inflation of institution's attrition rates.) Universities, or more commonly now their commercial arms, are increasingly targeting undergraduate units on a fee-paying basis as short courses to business. Deakin Australia's Short Course Program is typical of this development with advertising literature clearly targeting

corporate clients, offering corporate discounts, offering on-site delivery, and concentrating on fields of study of interest to business clients.

It is important to appreciate that general preparatory/bridging programs do not exist as solitary strategies but rather as part of a portfolio of access and equity strategies offered by the particular institution. As just one example: Murdoch University offers a particularly impressive suite of equity programs that incorporate both Enabling and Enabling-like provision. Programs include:

- Uni Access Bridging Program – a four week pre-tertiary academic program.
- UniQuest Program – a one-week taster program.
- Kulbardi Aboriginal Tertiary Entrance Course (KATEC): Diploma in University Studies – a two-semester course leading to a Diploma which provides guaranteed entry into undergraduate programs.
- Pre-Law Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- Murdoch/TAFE Alternative Entry Program – a one semester pre-tertiary academic program for prospective students under 20 years of age.
- Opening Doors Program – involving fee-paying non-award units; not assessed but participation enhances chance of being accepted as special entry.
- Introductory university units available in Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics as additional first year burden.
- Foundation units – incorporate learning skills and content from a number of disciplines: *"acknowledges the difficult adjustment during transition."*
- Units embedded in a degree such as Writing for Professional Purposes targeting NESB students and A120 Introduction to University Learning.
- Open Learning Australia through Murdoch University.
- Students with TAFE qualifications considered for entry – possibly advanced standing.
- Academic Learning Support – offered through the Student Learning section of the Teaching and Learning Centre associated with the Library:
  - Full-time equity tutor to cater for the needs of special entry students.
  - Classes and workshops run regularly.
  - Orientation workshops and classes for NESB students.
  - In-context academic learning support.
  - Learning skills assistance.

The breadth and scope of these offerings is mimicked in other institutions across the sector and is intended to meet the broad needs of a diverse student population. Whereas some students may require an extended bridging program to address significant educational disadvantage, others may be positioned to undergo a more intensive or focussed bridging program, or require just-in-time support addressing specific skills concurrently with study. Whereas some students can attend day classes on a full-time basis, others' circumstances demand part-time, block study or self-paced study at home. The more diverse, the more non-traditional, and the

more disadvantaged a student body the greater degree of flexibility of approach is needed to ensure that individual needs are met.

4.2.6 General university preparation programs involving the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector

Broadly speaking, the provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET) services are primarily aimed at improving labour market mobility and facilitating the acquisition of appropriate work skills by current and intending labour market participants (SCRCSSP, 1999). In the latest National Strategy for Vet entitled: *Bridge to the Future,* the national objectives for VET are described as follows:

- *equipping Australians for the world of work;*
- *enhancing mobility in the labour market;*
- *achieving equitable outcomes in vocational education and training;*
- *increasing investment in training;*
- *maximising the value of public vocational education and training expenditure* (ANTA 1998, p. i)

TAFE qualifications or experience represent a common basis for entry into university and transfers between the two sectors are extremely common – this trend being facilitated by the instigation of National TAFE-University Credit Transfer Schemes and the formal award structures introduced through the Australian Qualifications Framework. All universities advertise that they accept study at TAFE as a consideration for entry. Examples of well developed and well advertised credit transfer links and block articulation arrangements between the two sectors include University of South Australia 'Pathways', Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology 'Pathways', University of Newcastle 'Moving On', and University of Western Sydney Nepean 'Degreelink'.

A distinction must be made, however, between sub-degree level courses that are primarily intended as preparatory programs into tertiary study and those that are qualifications in their own right but which can serve as an educational pathway into higher level study. With regard to the former group, there are only a limited number of programs offered by the VET sector which equate directly to the types of specific Enabling and Enabling-like programs that are the focus of this study. How these operate in practice depends on the offerings provided by the TAFE sector in the particular State or Territory concerned and the relationship that has developed between particular universities and TAFE institutes.

Some preparatory courses can be offered at a nominal fee upon Ministerial discretion if it is deemed that this serves a disadvantaged client group. For example, the Certificate II in General Education for Adults (Further Study) and the Certificate II in ESL Access Education Program offered by Victorian TAFE attract a minimum fee of just $55 on this basis. However, most tertiary preparation programs currently offered at TAFE institutes do not have special arrangements regarding fee exemptions for students who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students are typically charged in the order of one dollar per contact

hour for courses of study that may require around 600 hours of contact teaching time.

Despite the moves to operate the VET sector as a free-market, access and equity remain a major area of concern for the developing VET sector. ANTA (1996) identified five designated equity groups – women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability, residents of rural and remote communities, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). Approximately two thirds of all the clients of the VET sector are members of one or more of these five equity groups (Golding *et al.* 1997). Currently, the VET sector does not recognise students from the lowest income quartile as a distinct equity group. This is largely due to the fact that it has long been assumed that VET service provision was skewed towards those from less affluent backgrounds.

Although the VET system in Australia operates under a national system of shared principles and agreements - including the *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training* and *The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Agreement* – the VET sectors in each State and Territory operate under their own State/Territory Training Authorities and, unlike the case with higher education, their funding has remained largely State-based. As a result considerable differences occur between the structures and philosophies of VET sectors in the different States and Territories, which in turn influences their operations and offerings, including in their provision of bridging and preparatory programs. This is reflected in the fact that despite ANTA's attempt to develop designated equity groups recognised at the national level, State differences remain. For example, unemployed people, people with inadequate functional skills in literacy and numeracy, and inmates of correctional centres have been recognised as disadvantaged groups and targeted in some States but not others (ANTA 1997). As well, there is considerable difference between States in how universities and TAFE interact, and this is also reflected in Enabling-like provision.

TAFE **Victoria** has pursued a particularly strident model for its vocational education sector. It was one of the first TAFE sectors to decentralise as a means of allowing TAFE Institutes to better meet the needs of its clientele and to compete at the provider level. More recently, following a government review, Victoria restructured its TAFE sector from 26 TAFE Institutes to 14 Institutes and five University/TAFE Divisions – the latter representing TAFE Institutes incorporated into universities which have become integrated dual-sector institutions – involving Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Swinburne University, Victoria University of Technology, La Trobe University and University of Ballarat. Strong associations also occur between other institutions. For example, special articulation and cooperative arrangements occur between Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE and Monash University through its regional Gippsland campus. Intersectoral links are further enhanced by initiatives such as the Victorian Open Learning Network (VOLN) established by the Department of Education in 1993 to coordinate the development of open learning initiatives across the education and training sectors, and with industry.

The tendency in Victoria has been to transfer responsibility for tertiary preparatory programs to the TAFE divisions of dual-sector universities or to employ fee-paying programs. The University of Melbourne has recently replaced its Enabling Mature Aged Bridging Scheme with a fee-paying alternative; programs such as University of Ballarat's Foundation Access Studies (FAST) program, Swinburne University's Tertiary Entry Program and Victoria University of Technology's Preparation for Tertiary Studies (Arts) now operate out of these institution's TAFE Divisions; and there is an increasing reliance on TAFE programs to secure educational pathways for non-traditional students in Victoria.

TAFE Victoria no longer offers a general bridging program into further study geared specifically to adult learners along the lines of TAFE programs still offered in New South Wales and Queensland because it was perceived not to fit with the TAFE mission of providing courses that have an immediate vocational outcome. (Similar discussions have occurred at high levels in TAFE NSW and TAFE Queensland but have, to date, not been successful in prompting a reconsideration of the offering in adult tertiary preparation certificates in these States.) TAFE Victoria's major offering is the Adult Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) involving Board and VET subjects. Each of Year 11 and 12 involves one year of full-time study or two years or more of part-time study. The program has broad aims. For example, University of Ballarat states that this program is:

> *Aimed at adults who may have left school without going to Year 12, who may want to study the VCE to gain better employment opportunities, to go on to tertiary studies, to learn something new,* or *to be able to help their children when they do VCE, as a personal challenge.*

The Council of Adult Education (CAE) is also a major player in preparatory provision in Victoria through its offering of VCE, VCE by Distance Education, Diploma of Liberal Arts, and a range of short courses in areas such as Study Skills & Essay Writing, Preparing for Tertiary Study, Maths Bridging for Tertiary Study and Preparing for STAT (the 'STAT' test being a commonly used admissions test for non-traditional applicants into universities). The role that these courses play in addressing the needs of disadvantaged students is unclear in that the CAE is generally perceived as catering to a 'middle class' clientele.

The TAFE Divisions of dual-sector universities may also offer a number of relevant programs including Diploma in Liberal Arts (incorporating Certificate IV in Liberal Arts) and Certificate IV in Humanities and Social Science (Tertiary Preparation). The Victorian model can allow for a significant degree of flexibility but the programs involved do not tend to operate on a large scale. For example, at Victoria University of Technology a program of courses is offered through its TAFE division and individualised courses of preparatory study involving these programs can be developed for students in consultation with academic advisers. The resultant preparatory/bridging course will vary in content and duration (from six months to two years) based on the specific needs of the individual students and provides guaranteed entry to Victoria University of Technology upon completion. However, the overall program is a small one – involving a maximum of 25 EFTSU. Contrary to common perceptions, dual mode institutions do not necessarily guarantee close relations between the university and TAFE divisions

involved. For example, a tightening of university enrolments required to absorb past over-enrolments at Swinburne University has led to the re-emergence of an 'elitist' model favouring school leaver entrants at that institution and a corresponding call for dual sector articulation arrangements to be tightened.

The range of pathways available in Victoria are becoming increasingly complex, with some new university degrees – such as Music Industry Studies at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology which requires a TAFE qualification as an entry requirement. Cross-sectoral collaboration is also a feature of the development of the Diploma of Further Education, a two-year bridging transition program being piloted by Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, University of Ballarat and Holmesglen Institute of TAFE in 1999.

An integrated sector model is also present in the **Northern Territory.** Some 40 per cent of vocational programs in the Northern Territory are delivered by Northern Territory University, with the remaining 60 per cent being divided between Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Centralian College (located near Alice Springs), the Northern Territory Rural College (near Katherine) and 30 - 35 private providers throughout the State. Enabling provision occurs principally through Northern Territory University (Higher Education Preparatory Programs and Aboriginal Pre-Law Program) and Batchelor Institute (Certificate in General Education).

The 'dual-sector institution' model is not a feature of tertiary education in other States and Territories. However, the VET sector can feature in different ways in university preparation.

TAFE **New South Wales** offers prospective non-traditional and adult students a choice of two programs that can serve as bridging courses into university - the High School Certificate (HSC) and the Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC) (TAFE NSW 1999). The Certificate in Matriculation uses the HSC curriculum and is subject to the regulations stipulated by the Board of Studies NSW. To qualify for entry students must have a School Certificate or its equivalent – such as the Certificate in General Education. The program is available in several modes:

- an intensive (33 hours of classes per week) one-year full-time program of study of 11 or more units,
- a two-year (24 hours of classes per week) full-time program of study of 11 or more units,
- the two-year TAFE HSC Pathways Program which combines HSC study with a TAFE Certificate study,
- a one-year reduced program of study of up to nine units involving 18 hours per week of day or evening classes,
- a program involving two to five years of part-time study and
- a distance education program through NSW TAFE's Open Training and Education Network (OTEN).

Many students use study of HSC at TAFE to improve their NSW tertiary entrance score (UAI) results if they already have an HSC or to accumulate an HSC over five years of study. The HSC is offered at 30 sites across NSW and by distance education through OTEN.

The Certificate III in Tertiary Preparation (TPC) is a specially developed bridging program for mature students which is considered as an HSC-equivalent competency-based course. *"The TPC aims to help students develop confidence and competence in a range of skills appropriate for further study and employment"* (NSW TAFE 1999, p. 17). The minimum entry requirement is Year 10 or equivalent, such as the Certificate in General Education. The course involves the study of 10 one-semester units of study, including two units of Language and Learning Skills as a compulsory unit. The course normally takes a minimum of 18 months of study, with students normally studying between one to five modules each semester (involving between four and 20 hours of classes per week). The course is offered at 50 sites across NSW and is available in flexible (on-line) mode – but not in distance mode. The course is subject to annual moderation meetings to ensure a standard level of delivery statewide. Students are charged $105 in administration fees but students may qualify for Austudy or ABSTUDY.

In New South Wales several cross-sectoral 'precincts' have been developed which involve the co-location of university and TAFE facilities. These include:

- the Coffs Harbour Education Campus – a joint venture between Southern Cross University, NSW TAFE and the NSW Department of Education (DET);
- the Nirimba Education Precinct – involving University of Western Sydney, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE, and a public and a Catholic senior high school;
- a multi-campus facility at Dubbo involving Charles Sturt University, Western Institute of TAFE and DET; and
- a shared University/TAFE facility at Ourimbah involving the University of Newcastle.

This cross-sectoral interaction is hoped to help break down sectoral barriers and to facilitate students seeking cross-sectoral educational pathways. These initiatives appear to have stimulated important developments in cooperative curriculum planning which could spill over into preparatory provision. For example, at Ourimbah a TAFE HSC pathway includes some study in University of Newcastle programs, while NSW TAFE's Tertiary Preparation Certificate is offered at the Coffs Harbour Education Campus. Some other close associations have been struck between NSW universities and TAFE Institutes in preparatory/bridging provision. For example, University of Western Sydney Hawkesbury now relies on the Western Institute of TAFE's Tertiary Preparation Certificate program as a basis for its Headstart Program, while University of Western Sydney Nepean and University of Western Sydney Macarthur have maintained their distinct bridging programs Unistart and Macstart, respectively. There is also a significant degree of

cooperation between University of Technology, Sydney and the Sydney Institute of Technology in bridging program provision.

More generally, cross-sectoral educational pathways in NSW are expanding, ranging from increasingly formalised recognition of prior learning (RPL) to formal articulation and credit transfer arrangements. As an example, the University of Western Sydney Nepean has a number of formal articulation arrangements involving TAFE Diplomas and Associate Diplomas into its Faculty of Engineering awards. One of these enables students who have completed three semesters of a four-semester TAFE Associate Diploma or Diploma together with three mathematics foundation subjects conducted by the University (and used as a basis for reporting Enabling students) to enter a three-year Bachelor of Technology degree with a full three semesters credit (refer to Chapter 5). Similar articulation arrangements between TAFE and University courses are common in most States, particularly involving engineering, technology and business courses, but the inclusion of an Enabling component in the University of Western Sydney arrangement appears quite unique.

The situation in the **Australian Capital Territory** is somewhat similar to that in New South Wales. The Canberra Institute of TAFE offers the ACT Year 12 Certificate to adults 18 years and over as a one-year intensive full-time day course or as a part-time evening program over a longer period. As in other States, a distinction is made between 'Older' students (aged 18 - 20 years) and 'Mature' students (aged over 20 years) in terms of the minimum workload needed to obtain a Universities Admissions Index (UAI). Older students must complete a study program of 12 standard units which includes study of at least two major (four unit) subjects; while Mature students can undertake an abridged package of at least three minor (two unit) courses within a year to gain a Year 12 Certificate and a UAI for entry to certain tertiary institutions. Study programs extending over one year can be taken to secure a Year 12 Certificate but do not qualify students for a UAI.

A Certificate in Pre-Tertiary Studies is also available through direct enrolment which is accepted for entry into Canberra Institute of TAFE, University of Canberra and University of New England. The course is tailored to the needs of individual students in consultation with an academic adviser. It includes English and Mathematics options at different levels as well as Science and Contemporary Australian Studies.

In **Queensland** there is a general preparatory program that equates to the TPC offered by NSW TAFE. The Certificate IV in Adult Tertiary Preparation (ATP) is offered by TAFE Queensland from 12 of its 16 Institutes and, unlike its equivalent in NSW is also offered in distance mode through its Open Learning Institute (OLI). ATP is a two-semester full-time (two to four years part-time) 630-hour bridging course. The entry level is Year 10 equivalent (including the Queensland Certificate III in Adult General Education) and the course is Austudy approved. Course fees are in the order of $650. The course is moderated annually Statewide but some differences occur in the offering of elective units at different sites depending on the resources available on-site. The ATP offering at the Brisbane

Institute of TAFE's Red Hills campus has been adapted specifically to meet the needs of hearing-impaired students and other students with disability.

HSC is not offered through Queensland TAFE. Adult re-entry students access HSC study through the secondary system in Queensland: at some secondary schools, such as Kingston State High School in Brisbane; through senior colleges (centres for continuing education) located at Hendra, Coorparoo and Oxley where Years 11 and 12 are offered in a one year condensed form through night classes (one 3.5 hour block per week); or, for young adults, by distance study through Education Queensland's Brisbane School of Distance Education.

In Queensland there is no merging between universities and TAFEs but strong links do exist. Griffith University has developed perhaps the most successful collaboration in bridging provision between a university and an independent TAFE institute with the well-established Certificate in Tertiary Access to Griffith University (refer to Chapter 5). This program was initially developed by the Griffith University Faculty of Sciences in conjunction with Logan Institute of TAFE as a WINTA initiative. Its main target groups are now Low SES and WINTA. It is a one-year full-time bridging program available in two strands (Science and Information Technology) offered through the Logan Institute of TAFE involving a Griffith University staff-member as coordinator and TAFE teaching staff. The fee for students is $80 with the program being jointly funded by Griffith University and Logan Institute. Enrolments range from 40 - 60 full-time students. Those who complete the course get a guaranteed entry to Griffith University based on some 40 direct entry degree options including Nursing, Engineering and Environmental Science. Support services for these students are provided through Griffith's Masterkey Program which is funded through Griffith's Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) allocation from the Commonwealth.

James Cook University also has a strong link with TAFE and only offers a relatively short bridging course (the 50 hour Uniprep program) itself as it relies on the ATP offered by the local TAFE institutes for students requiring greater levels of preparation. The local TAFE institute also offers a 90-hour course entitled: Preparatory Mathematics for Tertiary Study which satisfies the mathematics requirements for entry to degrees in commerce, economics, management, and administration (accounting or tourism) at James Cook University.

For the **other States**, TAFE does not offer a general tertiary preparatory qualification targeting adults along the lines of the TPC in NSW or the ATP in Queensland. Strong preparatory programs are offered by the university sector in each of these States. In Western Australia strong linkages exist between the TAFE sector and Curtin University of Technology, with close ties also being indicated by initiatives such as the joint Murdoch University/TAFE Rockingham campus. Senior colleges play a significant role in tertiary preparation provision in Western Australia.

Private providers of higher education. Watson (2000) notes some 82 private providers of higher education in Australia, other than private universities, which

account for approximately 15 000 Equivalent Full-Time Student Units (EFTSU) or up to three per cent of the total student load in the higher education sector in 1999. No Enabling-like programs were identified in these institutions.

4.2.7 Preparatory programs principally targeting people from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB)

Programs targeting non-English speakers are common in Australian education. It is difficult though to determine the extent to which this range of programs serves the group defined by DETYA as NESB (immigrants living in Australia for less than 10 years and speaking a language other than English at home) to enter university study. It is highly likely that many NESB individuals who require language skills development undertake only low level preparatory courses – say in conversational English, if any at all – prior to commencing award course study in some tertiary setting. Such students would be expected to be compromised in terms of their ability to progress and succeed in award course study and to be heavily reliant on concurrent language support programs. At the other extreme, many universities have strict entry requirements concerning English proficiency – the University of Queensland, for example, requires all entrants to have received a 'Sound Achievement' over four semesters of senior secondary English in Queensland or its equivalent.

The following discussion concerns two major groups of programs:

1. those programs involved in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction up to a tertiary entrance standard, and
2. those programs which are general tertiary preparatory programs which include NESB students as their primary target groups

With regard to the first category, a distinction must be drawn between communications courses intended to improve the skills of people for whom English is their first language (often referred to in deficit terms as English 'remediation' courses), academic literacy courses (which appear in various guises from major components of many study skills programs to units of study such as Macquarie University's English for Academic Purposes 100 and 101 award units) and courses primarily targeting NESB students through the offering of ESL. Allowance must also be made for the fact that literacy is a common element in general preparatory and academic support programs and it must be assumed that these programs, particularly those with significant proportions of NESB students in their student body, will cater to the needs of NESB students to a greater or lesser degree. (Of the programs profiled in Chapter 5, Murdoch University's Uni Access, University of Western Sydney Macarthur's Macstart, and Victoria University of Technology's Gateway to Nursing and Health Science each have proportions of NESB students well above the level for Australian society as a whole at 15 per cent, 38 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively.)

The largest and longest running migrant English program is the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) which is funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) and conducted out of several centres nationally,

including State TAFEs, La Trobe and Swinburne Universities, the UNSW Institute of Languages and Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) in Victoria. AMEP has been operating since 1949. These courses are for people who have recently migrated to Australia or are changing to permanent residence status who need to learn English to undertake further study, to seek and maintain employment or to participate in the community. Students receive up to 510 hours of teaching with at least five contact hours per week. Tuition is free to the student and available in a range of modes, full- and part-time, through distance mode (the *Its Over to You* course) and through a Home Tutor Scheme. People in AMEP classes prepare to meet the requirements of the Certificates in Spoken and Written English, (offered at different certificate levels) which are accredited certificates with national recognition. Around nine million hours of adult English language tuition are provided each year under this program, representing 40 000 clients from an annual budget of approximately $98 million. Half of the enrolments are in New South Wales and one third in Victoria, with the remainder spread between the remaining States (DIMA 2000).

A range of other programs are also available. TAFE NSW provides a broad program of study options of English for speakers of other languages spanning Certificate I to Certificate IV level and accredited short courses (NSW TAFE 1998). Articulated pathways lead to the Certificate IV in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) an 18-week full-time course designed to help prepare adults of non-English speaking backgrounds with the skills required for entry to TAFE Diploma courses and university courses. Entry requirements include the successful completion of HSC or equivalent and advanced level English. The course content includes Advanced English for Tertiary Study, Orientation to Tertiary Study, Preparation for English Language Proficiency Tests, and Computing. Similar articulated pathways exist in the VET sectors in other States and Territories, with provision in Victoria and the Northern Territory including the TAFE Divisions of the dual-sector universities. The course fees for many of these programs are kept to a minimum, for example by being placed on the Director-General's discretionary list.

Universities have adopted a number of strategies for enabling NESB students. Many universities initially tended to base their strategies for NESB people largely on overcoming language barriers, especially with regard to the language skills needed in a higher education environment. However, throughout the 1990s there has been a growing awareness that cultural barriers can be equally as important (Clyne 1991) and enabling programs for people from NESB now typically include some consideration of these cultural elements.

As one of the identified disadvantaged groups they are frequently included as one of the target groups for general preparatory programs and other equity program offerings, particularly in urban institutions. However, only one program focussing on communications skills and specifically targeting NESB students is regularly reported against as Enabling – Curtin University's one-semester English Language Bridging Course.

Another strategy, identified in at least nine universities, is the offering of (often multiple) units of study in English targeting NESB students. In some cases – such as Edith Cowan University, La Trobe University Bendigo, and as being proposed for the University of Ballarat – these are available as award course electives.

Many universities take programs developed primarily for international students of non-English speaking backgrounds and make them available to domestic NESB students. For example, University of New England has a particularly comprehensive series of articulating programs offered through its Language Training Centre (with support from their Academic Skills Office and in cooperation with the New England Institute of TAFE) which builds English skills. This includes four levels of General English Course (beginning at below IELTS 4.0), English for Further Study modules (IELTS 4.5), English for Academic Purposes (IELTS 5.0) and into the Introductory Academic Preparation Program which is a five-week general university preparatory program. Their 'LTC Learner Pathways' include multiple exit points to various levels of education, with the last bridging into University of New England's undergraduate programs.

Many universities make general preparatory programs developed primarily for international students available to domestic NESB students. These include Avondale College, Bond University, University of Adelaide, University of New England and University of Wollongong. However, this route can be particularly expensive for students, with program fees ranging from $1 650 to $10 120. Also, a reliance on servicing people from NESB through programs principally put in place for international students does not necessarily ensure that the specific cultural needs of these students are addressed.

NESB students appear as major clients of the academic skills support services which are now offered by all universities through Language and Learning Centres, special support services or Student Services - a good example being the range of workshops and courses offered by Monash University's Language and Learning Services Unit. Students from NESB are also frequently served by short language courses such as the two-week English Communication Skills course offered by James Cook University, or Wollongong University Colleges free English for Study classes for new migrants. The nature of these programs means that they fall outside of the definition for programs of interest for this study but they contribute considerably to the preparatory and support provision afforded this group.

Finally, it is not generally acknowledged that many indigenous students speak English as a second or third language and there is a need for programs – such as the Diploma / Advanced Diploma in Communications for indigenous students offered by James Cook University – to address this need in many institutions.

4.2.8 Enabling and Enabling-like programs focussing on specific skills or disciplines (including a consideration of WINTA)

The following discussion concerns a diverse range of programs that target students requiring particular specific skills other than language and communications – excluding those specifically targeting indigenous students

which were discussed in section 4.2.4 – with an emphasis on technical skills in mathematics, computing and general science. Many of these programs arose out of initiatives aimed at assisting women into non-traditional areas of study – Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Architecture, and Business with a heavy emphasis on mathematics and computing skills to address these commonly recognised gender filters. Others arose out of initiatives targeting disciplines with high female enrolments, particularly Nursing where again numeracy has tended to be a major focus. Most programs have now broadened the groups which they target to include disadvantaged students of either gender who require the development of specific skills to enter or be successful in their chosen course of study.

These programs have also developed from another source. There has been a general trend for preparatory programs which were initially largely geared to prepare students for study in arts, humanities and education expanding into a consideration for preparing students for a broader range of award study – into disciplines such as mathematics, computing, science, health, engineering and technology. This trend can be appreciated by reviewing the content of several courses considered in an earlier section as representing general preparatory programs.

- Level one: Curtin University's Foundation Studies Enabling program, University of Western Sydney's Macstart and Unistart Enabling programs, and University of Wollongong's fee-paying University Access Program are all based on a core communications and study skills curriculum but provide higher level mathematics options for students aiming to enter science, engineering or technology awards and alternatives (either more basic numeracy subjects or arts/humanities subjects) for students intending to pursue study in other disciplines.
- Level two: In some universities, separate programs addressing different discipline skills have instead developed. Some universities seem to prefer separate discipline-specific bridging programs, which are often set up to service particular courses or faculties and which are often run by those faculties themselves. La Trobe University's programs are typical of this form of development with the Bridging Courses in Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics at Bundoora being offered by the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering while the General Science Bridging Program and Physiology and Anatomy Bridging Course are offered by the Faculty of Health Sciences.
- Level three: Taken to the next logical level, skills development move from a reliance on preparatory programs to the embedding of skills in mainstream curriculum – as has occurred at Australian Maritime College where the formerly stand-alone Refresher Mathematics program has become built into the award courses.

A third rationale for the development of these programs lies in the need to upgrade particular skills to a level that meets the entry standard for particular courses. In New South Wales, for example, students commonly find they need to upgrade their skills from a two-unit mathematics HSC qualification to a three-unit mathematics equivalence level in order to qualify for entry into certain courses.

Many strategies have been introduced to address this particular need. For example, University of Technology, Sydney offers a two-week, 24 contact hour part-time course entitled: Mathematics (2/3u) Bridging Course for Mature Aged Students which is available through day and evening classes at no charge for students enrolled at the University. The University of New South Wales' Bridging Course in Mathematics pursues the same aim through a 35 - 40-hour lecture/tutorial-based program at a cost to the student of $375.

As for the case with communications / English programs, short courses are also common for other discipline specific preparatory courses. However, a comprehensive review of short duration courses of this type is beyond the scope of this study.

In the following discussion, programs of interest (Enabling and Enabling-like) have been divided into mathematics/technology skills programs which are most commonly associated with enabling WINTA, and courses targeting other areas such as the sciences.

Developing mathematics skills is addressed through several broad strategies in universities. They are key areas addressed by the academic learning support programs which are now endemic in universities. The two major programs of this type that are used as a basis for reporting Enabling students are the Enabling Mathematics program provided through the Mathematics Resource Centre operated by Swinburne University's School of Mathematical Sciences, and the Academic Development Program available through the ELSSA student support Centre at University of Technology, Sydney. These and supplementary Enabling-like programs are discussed in section 4.2.10 below.

Mathematics skills are also commonly addressed through dedicated units of study or short courses of 30 - 60 contact hour duration. These may be conducted as (often HECS-liable) foundation units as at University of Southern Queensland, Murdoch University or Sunshine Coast University; as summer classes prior to enrolment as at Australian National University, Charles Sturt University, University of Western Australia and University of Western Sydney Nepean; or offered by evening classes for a few hours per week over an extended period: as at Australian National University (as one unit in the University Preparation Scheme or through their two-level Maths Bridging Units A & B), Edith Cowan University, University of New South Wales and University of Technology, Sydney. The latter group of courses often attract a fee to students of $200 - $300 – with the University of Sydney's 52-hour, 26 week Preparatory Mathematics Program attracting a fee as high as $490. Courses of these types tend not to be Enabling, although the slightly longer Mathematics Bridging Program offered through six hours/week of evening classes over four months (and also as a more intensive summer offering) is used as a basis for reporting Enabling students at La Trobe University; while the three units Technical Mathematics 1-3 used to support the intersectoral articulation arrangement into the Bachelor of Technology at University of Western Sydney Nepean (see Chapter 5), is also Enabling. University of New South Wales also offers a fee-paying ($490) longer nine-week intensive bridging program involving 12 hours per week of evening classes for

students who currently have Advanced Level Year 10 Maths and who require a qualification equivalent to two-unit HSC Maths. Students seeking entry to UNSW award courses such as Engineering through completion of the Enabling-like general University Preparation Program are required to also complete this Mathematics Preparation Course.

Mathematics skills are often addressed through flexible study options such as HECS-liable external units of study (University of New England, University of Southern Queensland); self-paced study packages (Australian Maritime College, Central Queensland University, Queensland Open Learning Network, University of Canberra); on-line units (Charles Sturt University's Enabling Study Link program); and computer-aided units of study (Griffith University's Self-Paced Instructional Mathematics).

Mathematics also features strongly in the curricula of broader-based bridging programs that are targeted specifically for students wishing to enter engineering and technology disciplines. Many of these programs are Enabling. These can be of relatively short duration such as Victoria University of Technology's 60-hour (over either three or eight weeks) Enabling Engineering and Science Bridging Program; involve full-time study over one semester (such as the University of South Australia's Enabling Bridging Programs in Applied Science and Engineering, and in Information Technology); or involve full-time study over two semesters (such as Curtin University's Enabling Engineering and Science Enabling Course, La Trobe University's Science/Maths Bridging Program, and the Certificate in Tertiary Access to Griffith University operated through Logan Institute of TAFE).

As is the case for English language preparation, the VET sector generally provide a range of articulated offerings of relevance to prospective university entrants who need skills development in this area. For example, TAFE NSW offers an 18-week full-time Certificate III in Preparatory Mathematics and Science which aims to provide students with maths and science knowledge and skills at HSC level required for university or TAFE diploma courses, with an entry level of Year 12 or its equivalent. This can be tailored to individual needs and can be taken prior to the commencement of a diploma course or concurrent with it.

Courses providing instruction in Science-based subjects are also commonly available, typically for students entering or wishing to enter science and technology-based disciplines but who do not have the prerequisite qualifications. However, few of these programs are regularly used a basis for reporting Enabling students.

Often these skills are embedded into the curriculum of award units or may be more openly addressed through Foundation units of study conducted early in a degree course, as with the HECS-liable external Foundation Chemistry and Foundation Physics units offered at University of New England. These skills are also commonly addressed in academic learning support programs which are increasingly moving to flexible options such as web-based delivery – see section 4.2.10 below.

A common strategy employed for Chemistry and Physics skills is the provision of a short course (40 - 80 contact hours), typically available through out-of-hours classes part-time over an extended period or through intensive summer schools. Course are often offered at a fee of around $200 - $400. Courses of this type addressing Chemistry are offered by University of New South Wales, University of Western Sydney Nepean, Charles Sturt University, University of Canberra, La Trobe University, Deakin University, University of Adelaide, Edith Cowan University, University of the Sunshine Coast and as an external study package through Queensland Open Learning Network. University of New South Wales, Charles Sturt University, La Trobe University and Edith Cowan University also offer similar courses in Physics. University of Western Sydney Nepean offers a one-week course in Chemistry to Civil Engineering students prior to the commencement of semester two as an exercise in 'just-in-time' learning. These programs are generally promoted as 'top-up' courses for students lacking the necessary study prerequisites, although Edith Cowan University targets its programs on an equity basis – targeting Low SES, particularly early school leavers, and WINTA.

Discipline-specific skills can also be addressed through Continuing Education offerings. Most universities now offer single units of study on a fee-paying basis through continuing education divisions increasingly located within 'commercial arms' of universities. Although generally geared to the needs of corporate clients, these are also often promoted as a means of supporting alternative entry to university. For example, University of Sydney, through its Centre for Continuing Education offers a comprehensive Introduction to Science course involving four hours of classes per week conducted on a Saturday morning over 24 weeks during the academic year at a fee of $530. Non-traditional students are required to complete both the preparatory mathematics and preparatory science courses available to qualify for entry into Science at the University of Sydney.

Other specific disciplines of study which are targeted by dedicated bridging programs include: Agribusiness (Curtin University's Agribusiness Bridging Course involving none to 12 months of farm practice plus block study is used as a basis for reporting Enabling students), and Nursing and Health Science (at Charles Sturt University, Curtin University and Victoria University of Technology; and through 75-hour external study packages in Biology available through Queensland Open University at a fee of $250). More specific preparatory programs exist for professions such as in interpreting and music – with ANU's Preparatory Jazz Studies having been used as a basis for reporting Enabling students in 1998. University of Sydney's Centre for Continuing Education offers part-time introductory courses on a similar basis to their Introduction to Science course in a wide range of disciplines including: Ancient History, Art History, Economics, Philosophy, English Literature, Religious Studies, and Psychology. Fees for these courses range from $440 - $530 each.

4.2.9 Preparatory programs specifically targeting people with disabilities

Preparatory/Bridging and structured academic learning support programs of the type that are the focus of this study are very seldom targeted specifically to people with disability. One notable exception is the Adult Tertiary Preparation Program offered at the Red Hills campus of Brisbane Institute of TAFE that specialises in delivering its program to hearing-impaired students. The other is Edith Cowan University's five-day full-time Summer Program for People with Disabilities which specifically aims to prepare people with learning disability for university study.

However disability can often be associated with financial and educational disadvantage and it is not surprising that people with disability can represent major client groups of Enabling and Enabling-like programs which do not otherwise specifically target this group. This is particularly the case for programs with flexible study arrangements.

4.2.10 Supplementary Enabling and Enabling-like programs

The majority of Enabling students are enrolled in Enabling programs only – representing bridging program enrolment prior to enrolment in an award course. However, a third of Enabling students are enrolled in an Enabling program concurrently with their enrolment in an award course; appearing in official statistics as 'supplementary' Enabling students.

This enrolment behaviour can occur in a number of ways. The majority of these enrolments are actually associated with programs that are essentially bridging/ preparatory by nature:

- A few programs, including Central Queensland University's Women in Science and Technology (WIST) program and Northern Territory University's Higher Education Preparatory Programs for indigenous students, are programs that are actually promoted as being able to be undertaken as either bridging or supplementary Enabling programs.
- Students may be permitted to enrol in an award unit as part of, or as a supplement to, their preparatory course. For example, some students in James Cook University's Tertiary Access Course (TAC) have been permitted to enrol in a social science subject to address particular needs that were not adequately addressed in TAC itself. Other bridging programs, such as Murdoch University's Kulbardi Aboriginal Tertiary Entrance Course, include the study of foundation units offered by the University as part of the overall course of study. Many Southern Cross University Enabling students are co-enrolled in Associate degree programs as part of their enrolment profile.
- A number of programs function as preparatory programs but are generally offered to students after they have enrolled in an award course but prior to their commencing award course study. These include Batchelor Institute's Course in General Education, Murdoch University's Uni Access program, Northern Territory University's Pre-Law Program, University of South

Australia's Bridging Program in Applied Science and Engineering, University of Technology, Sydney's Supplementary Course for Indigenous Students (SCATS), Curtin University's Bridging English Program, University of Western Australia Aboriginal Orientation Course and some enrolments in their Indigenous Pre-Law and Pre-Medicine programs, and University of Western Sydney's Bridging Mathematics (Bachelor of Technology) program; as well as intensive summer offerings of La Trobe University's Maths Bridging Program and Victoria University of Technology's Engineering and Science Bridging Program.

- In some cases study in what are mainly preparatory programs may be made available to a small number of students enrolled in award programs presumably after some difficulties have been identified requiring some form of skills development.
- Preparatory programs for postgraduate students would typically be concerned with enrolled students even if conducted prior to their commencement of postgraduate programs – see section 4.2.11 below.

There are only a few programs used as a basis for reporting Enabling students that are predominantly intended to be taken concurrently with award course study and these are generally structured academic learning support offerings. (Supplementary Enabling programs targeting indigenous students have been discussed in section 4.2.4 above.)

The ELSSA Unit at University of Technology, Sydney offers four programs - 'Individualised Tuition', 'Enrichment program' (through HECS-liable social science electives), 'Enabling program' and 'Developmental program' – of which only the latter two are reported as Enabling. These two academic learning support programs were structured into 'subjects' to enable the ELSSA student support unit to cope with the very large number of out-of-hours classes held for its large part-time student population. The 'Enabling program' refers to an intensive offering which occurs in the summer vacation after first year involving nine Enabling subjects in areas such as academic writing, critical thinking, etc. The 'Developmental program' refers to the same elements provided concurrently throughout semester involving 16 developmental subjects. These programs target poor performing students in identified groups at risk of attrition with day, evening and weekend classes organised for groups of six to 10 students at a time. Enabling programs which also operate along these lines include Central Queensland University's Tertiary Skills program (that in 2000 has been replaced by a new Indigenous Bridging program), University of Sydney's Academic Skills program which support the CADIGAL special admissions scheme for indigenous students, and Murdoch University's PEPA program targeted specifically to indigenous veterinary science students.

A limitation on the use of supplementary Enabling programs has been the degree to which students can undertake non-award coursework concurrent with award study without becoming overly burdened with the work commitments involved. A straightforward solution to this dilemma lies in conducting supplementary Enabling courses concurrent with a reduced load of award study. The Aboriginal

Health Science Support program offered to special entry (CADIGAL) indigenous Health Sciences students at the University of Sydney, where academic support subjects are used to provide in-context academic learning support to students studying on a reduced award load, was described in section 4.2.4 above. A related strategy has been used by Swinburne University where students identified as 'at risk' in particular mainstream award units are offered the opportunity to study these units through an arrangement that involves twice the number of contact hours – with study thus extended over two semesters instead of one but covering the same unit curriculum – in specially organised classes. Providing concurrent support within a reduced award load framework provides a viable, and in many ways attractive, alternative to pre-enrolment preparatory programs for students requiring significant levels of skills and knowledge development. Students already enrolled in award study could be expected to be more likely to persist with further study than students in preparatory courses and the strategy provides a stronger basis for 'in-context' and 'just-in-time' support. There is significant scope for these types of strategies to be used more often in universities, in situations where sufficient flexibility exists in the award course structure to permit their use.

(It should be noted that a common trend now is for academic learning support to be 'packaged' with special entry schemes which often use disadvantage as entry criteria (UAC 2000) – examples of such programs include Queensland University of Technology (QUT)'s Q-STEP Program or the University of Queensland's UQ-Link. It is somewhat surprising that some of these programs have not utilised the Enabling provision as a means of funding the support element of these program packages, as has been done by the University of Sydney for both indigenous and non-indigenous programs; as the targeting support to special entry students admitted on the basis of disadvantage would overcome the targeting problems often associated with supplementary Enabling support.)

Charles Sturt University's on-line Study Link units have recently been introduced and are to be used both as a basis for reporting Enabling students and as a fee-paying option for non-equity group students. The program is based on skills development packages available on-line in areas entitled Academic Skills Development, Career Management, Library and Information Skills, Stepping into Statistics, Maths for Agriculture, etc. This program can be taken by enrolled students concurrently with award study or as a bridging program. Enabling-like programs which appear similar to this include the Computer-Mediated Learning (CML) and web-based 'Transitions to Tertiary Writing' initiative developed as a Strategic Innovations Project involving Monash University's Language and Learning Services Unit; the basic skills self-learning packages provided on-line by the University of Wollongong; and the web-based independent study modules used by the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Sydney (Franklin & Peat 1998).

Strategies that parallel the above range of programs in practice could conceivably include all forms of academic learning support – covering drop-in support, academic skills adviser services, special course materials, special tutorials, workshops, short-duration programs, supplemental instruction programs,

computer-supported learning and other flexible study packages (including on-line materials), and so on. Some universities – including Deakin University, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University, University of Western Sydney, and University of Newcastle - have extensive short course offerings in specific areas that can be put together into very extensive and comprehensive study programs. Although beyond the scope of this study, the contribution made by these range of strategies to enabling disadvantaged students to access and succeed in higher education study is appreciated.

Many universities now seek to embed basic skills into first year units. A more visible strategy is to provide foundation units in core skills either as compulsory units of study in areas such as communications, information literacy and numeracy as is practiced at University of Southern Queensland, University of Sunshine Coast or Murdoch University; or as elective units, such as University of Canberra's Professional Writing, Communication in Science, Graphic Communication, Literacy for Teachers, English Language and Culture; University of Southern Queensland's Enabling English for Academic Purposes and English for Specific Purposes supplementary study units; or the Foundation Units in Mathematics Chemistry and Physics offered by University of New England and Murdoch University. The role of such foundation units in Enabling and Enabling-like provision can most clearly be appreciated by noting that the Unistart/ Foundation Studies model at Edith Cowan University links a true Enabling preparatory/bridging scheme with the study of award foundation units as an overall enabling strategy. Murdoch University states of its Foundation Units: *"The primary purpose of University Foundation Units is to enable students new to the University to develop a range of study skills which will provide a foundation for subsequent university studies."* In particular, HECS-liable units such as A120 *Introduction to University Learning* offered at Murdoch University, or the 'Enriching Subjects' offered by the ELSSA Centre at University of Technology Sydney in *Essay Writing, Report Writing* and *Seminar Presentation* clearly indicates the link between foundation units and enabling provision. Many of the aims of the Core Units program developed at University of the Sunshine Coast would clearly serve to assist members of equity groups to overcome identified barriers to success, such as:

> *to enhance students' information literacy; to enhance students' computer literacy, … to foster a positive attitude towards learning and change, to develop students' confidence … to enable students to identify, understand and use different learning strategies"* (Davis 1998, p. 4).

A variation on this theme is provided via Griffith University's Bachelor of Science in Australian Environmental Studies. They offer a computer-aided self-paced learning unit of study entitled Self-Paced Instructional Mathematics that enables them to dispose with a maths prerequisite that might exclude educationally disadvantaged students while providing all students with the opportunity to develop the necessary mathematics competencies. A related approach is illustrated by University of New England (UNE)'s tUNEup program which is a modular self-directed study program available in print and CD-ROM formats which is available for students to purchase at a nominal cost. The

modules available through tUNEup cover Study Skills, Academic Writing, Library and Information Technology, and Basic Mathematics and Statistics.

It needs to be appreciated that the Enabling Guidelines stipulate that Enabling provision cannot be used as credit towards an award. Hence, programs such as Edith Cowan's University Foundation Studies Program or Central Queensland University's Women in Computing which involve a unit of study as part of an undergraduate degree cannot be considered as supplementary Enabling as credit is given for these units towards the award. An interesting proposal was put forward by the staff at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology who are developing a new Diploma of Further Education offering. These staff suggested that they offer the course's foundation units HECS-exempt up until the time they are claimed for credit into an award program at which time they proposed that HECS could be charged retrospectively.

Other programs that can serve as supplementary Enabling-like provision include the undertaking of commercial units for credit – offered by most (if not all) universities either through commercial arms – for example, through the commercial Community Access Program at University of Melbourne - or directly by the faculties – for example at Deakin and La Trobe Universities. Open Learning Australia (OLA) provides a similar avenue – it is promoted particularly in this regard at Murdoch University and Charles Sturt University.

Also of interest are programs which support transition for identified 'at risk' groups. Two good examples of this are University of Western Australia's Transition Support Program for students entering from identified rural or disadvantaged schools that includes a five-day orientation ('Flying Start'), social activities, peer-assisted study, regular academic seminars and special support including a TSP Coordinator; and Griffith University's Masterkey Program that targets special entry program (Unireach and Tertiary Access Certificate) students that consists of three components: orientation, regular workshops and peer-mentoring.

4.2.11 Enabling programs for current or prospective postgraduate students

The Enabling Guidelines allow for programs that prepare students for postgraduate study to be considered for use as a basis for the reporting of Enabling students. However, this provision does not appear to be utilised to a significant degree for this purpose. The Curtin Bridging English Program, which has already been described as an Enabling Program to which students at any level can be referred by faculties, includes postgraduate students in its potential target group. Apart from this, the experience is that it is not uncommon for postgraduate students to occasionally request to be included in programs (or parts of programs) offered to pre-enrolment or undergraduate students as they feel the need to improve particular skills, which could account for prospective postgraduate students being recorded as Enabling students.

Universities offer a number of programs and services to prospective and current postgraduate students, some of which may be considered as Enabling-like in the context of this study. As examples:

- Edith Cowan University's ESL Support Program includes a unit option ESL4101: University English for Postgraduate Studies.
- The Access English support program offered by Swinburne University through its TAFE Division includes a consideration of skills development for postgraduate students in areas such as structuring a thesis, using academic register, reading academic journals and presenting work.
- University of Wollongong has a dedicated staff member assigned with the responsibility of assisting postgraduate students in developing the skills necessary to develop their thesis.
- University of Canberra offers a subject option to postgraduate students that can involve up to 12 hours of contact time per week in Education Professional Doctorate Thesis Preparation. Swinburne University's also offers a professional doctoral preparation program.
- Programs such as University of Adelaide's qualifying Masters programs which can serve as an alternative to an Honours degree in qualifying students for entry to a Masters program, may also fit into this category.

4.3 Summary

- Enabling and Enabling-like programs provide educational pathways for students lacking traditional qualifications for entry into university. They also serve a wider clientele by preparing students for university study who require additional preparation through skills preparation, and building confidence and awareness. They also serve an important role in promoting inclusiveness and generally breaking down traditional barriers to study.
- Although the majority of Enabling programs operate within the Enabling Guidelines, some examples of misuse, whether intentional or otherwise, are evident. This appears to have included a failure by some programs to eliminate withdrawn or otherwise 'non-participatory' students from reported Enabling student statistics. Such practices have impacted negatively on the performance of Enabling programs as assessed through official statistics and represent a significant wastage of Commonwealth financial support. Poor targeting to disadvantaged groups has also been identified as a feature of some supplementary Enabling programs. There is a need for a tightening of reporting requirements and administrative practices to ensure that such cases of misuse of the Enabling provision are eliminated.
- More problematic issues relating to Enabling reporting relate to a mismatch in the methods used to identify individual disadvantage in a practical way and the indicators used to monitor equity performance at the sector level. A rethink of the Guidelines to provide more rigorous guidance to institutions which accounts for the identification methods that they themselves need to utilise would be beneficial. Other concerns relate to:

- the high level of ignorance and confusion over the details of the Enabling Guidelines across the sector, and
- potentially to the means by which Enabling funding is distributed within institutions - although the evidence able to be collected as a part of this study does not permit definite conclusions to be drawn with regard to this issue.

- The Enabling provision has tended to be used to fund access and preparatory strategies targeting those identified disadvantaged groups most associated with educational disadvantage – particularly indigenous Australians, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, rural and isolated people and women. Mature age, including second chance, learners have also been a significant target of these programs. The provision has mainly been utilised to fund preparatory programs in institutions of all types to support indigenous education and, for other groups, mainly to fund relatively long duration preparatory programs. Enabling provision is utilised by a number of regional universities, with significant use also being made by particular urban universities with distinctive student constituents – typically serving the more disadvantaged groups in society. Supplementary Enabling provision is utilised particularly by a number of urban-based universities of technology.
- Conversely, alternative funding arrangements, particularly fee-paying options, have tended to be used by more elite institutions or for less intensive programs for which an affordable fee could serve to cover costs. A consideration of disadvantage may feature in the targeting strategies of these programs but more often the programs are open to any student or prospective student who requires the service.
- The Enabling programs in higher education have developed in response to local needs, and this has contributed to a diversity of programs and approaches.
- The popularity of preparatory/bridging programs, particularly in States like New South Wales where criteria-based alternative entry arrangements are well developed, reflects positively on their perceived value and utility by prospective students. (It is assumed that prospective students would not voluntarily undertake an additional course of study unless they perceive a need to do so.) The massification of the higher education sector has been associated with an ever-increasing demand for these programs.
- The Enabling provision has been used less frequently to fund academic learning support programs – although significant programs exist of this type - and very infrequently to prepare and support prospective postgraduate students. Considerable scope exists to use supplementary support in conjunction with a reduced award load as an alternative to bridging / preparatory provision as a strategy for supporting improved student persistence and a means of better ensuring in-context support. Further, it is considered surprising that universities with special entry schemes targeting disadvantaged groups have not sought to use the Enabling provision as a basis for funding the student support provision which frequently are associated with these programs. Such strategies would have the particular advantage of better

ensuring that supplementary Enabling provision was being effectively targeted to disadvantaged groups.

- Enabling programs have a potentially broader role in assisting prospective students with the transition into higher education, as well as addressing student attrition and performance concerns.
- Enabling-like programs are available in the VET sector that enable students to access university study, and some notable collaborations between universities and TAFE exist in this area.
- Pre-enabling programs and articulated pathways which take account of severe educational disadvantage exist in some areas but are neither well coordinated nor comprehensive across the educational sectors. The need for comprehensive articulated pathways into further study is particularly pressing in indigenous education. Meeting the needs in this area represents a particularly vexing issue.
- Issues that have raised debate in Enabling provision tend to relate to who should be offering the provision and whether the preparation undertaken should be general or narrowly focused. This debate is most evident in Victoria and the Northern Territory where there is a trend within dual-sector universities to transfer responsibility for preparatory programs to the TAFE divisions and to become increasingly dependent on TAFE offerings for such provision.
- Enabling-like provision provided by the VET sector varies considerably between States and Territories and in seeking to provide a more general preparation for participants into further education and employment, these programs often lack the focus on university entry present in the university-based programs. Specific preparatory programs targeting adult learners and geared for further study are available in New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory.
- Given the strong vocational focus of modern TAFE, arguments persist in the VET sector regarding the appropriateness of conducting preparatory programs that do not have an immediate vocational outcome. The sector is under increasing pressure to base its delivery on user-pays. Economic stringency in the VET sector has impacted on issues such as student services and the resources available to students – there is an issue of whether TAFE can offer support structures at the same scale as can currently be offered in universities.

Chapter 5

Case Studies: Enabling and Enabling-like Programs in Australian Tertiary Education

This chapter provides examples of Enabling and Enabling-like programs of various broad types as a means of illustrating the diversity of programs being offered, to highlight some details of the operation of particular programs, and to highlight aspects of best practice in programs of these types.

5.1 Elements of best practice in enabling provision

As with any educational programs, enabling programs exhibiting best practice tend to be those programs which are most clearly focused on the identified needs of their client group(s) – including a curriculum tailored to client needs. Key elements in good enabling provision include a flexibility of approach to allow for individual needs, clearly articulated course objectives and a regular process of program review (particularly involving client input) that is used as a basis for continual improvement. Best practice in Enabling provision also necessarily requires a compliance with the Enabling Guidelines (Attachment 1).

Several strategies have been associated with improved enabling student success and transfer to undergraduate study from a bridging program. These include:

- taking steps to ensure that all students have a clear understanding of what is required for satisfactory completion of the course and what this entitles the student to in terms of access to places in specified courses;
- providing a clear end-point to the course preferably involving some form of completion 'qualification' which promotes course completion;
- providing students guaranteed entry into an award program upon successful completion which promotes student transfer into undergraduate study;
- providing some degree of discipline-specific content or some means of developing a future career focus as well as including process elements; and
- the adoption of strategies that more closely integrate enabling provision with award study.

5.2 Case studies

A number of case studies have been selected to illustrate the diversity of programs which are used as a basis for reporting Enabling students and those programs which parallel these in practice, and to provide details of how these programs operate in practice. As well, although it is not claimed that each of the programs described represents best practice in all areas of their operation, elements of best

practice are evident in each of the case studies presented. It should be noted that as space limitations have restricted attention to only a single representative of each broad program 'type', many excellent programs have necessarily been excluded from consideration here.

The format of the chapter follows that used in Mulligan (1998). Useful program information can also be found in the following publications: the *Good Universities Guide to Access & Equity Programs* (Ashenden *et al.* 1997), the published higher education equity plans (DETYA 1999a) and indigenous education strategies (DETYA 1999b) and equivalent publications covering the VET sector (ANTA 1997). Although a little more dated, the series *National Registers of Higher Education Preparatory Programs* (Cobbin *et al.* 1992; Cobbin *et al.* 1993; Cobbin & Gostelow 1993), developed partly under the support of Commonwealth Evaluations and Investigations Project (EIP) funding, are also recommended.

Table 5.1: List of Case Studies Presented

Institution	Program	Program 'Type'
University of Adelaide	Wilto Yerlo Foundation Science Course	Indigenous Enabling preparatory program
Murdoch University	Uni Access / Uni Quest	Short general preparatory programs (including Enabling)
University of Western Sydney Macarthur	Macstart	Longer duration Enabling general preparatory program
University of South Australia	Advanced Certificate / Diploma in University Studies	Multi-stage Enabling-like preparatory qualification
University of Southern Queensland	Tertiary Preparation Program	External general preparatory program (including Enabling)
University of New South Wales	University Preparation Program	Fee-paying (Enabling-like) general preparatory program
Victorian University of Technology	Gateway to Nursing and Health Science	Enabling-like preparatory program offered by a dual-sector university
Logan Institute of TAFE	Certificate of Tertiary Access to Griffith University	General preparatory program offered through cross-sectoral collaboration
New South Wales TAFE	Tertiary preparation Certificate (TPC)	General preparatory program offered by VET
University of Western Sydney Nepean	Bachelor of Technology pathways	TAFE / university pathway involving maths enabling
Curtin University	English Language Bridging Course	Enabling preparatory program in English
University of Technology Sydney	Academic Development Program	Supplementary Enabling program
University of Sydney	Aboriginal Health Science Support Program	Supplementary Enabling program closely integrated with award program

Program: Wilto Yerlo Foundation Science Course.

Institution: University of Adelaide, South Australia.

Program Type: Indigenous Enabling program offered by Wilto Yerlo since 1993.

General Description / Aims: This course aims to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who wish to study science courses at university with the necessary background in skills and concept development to ensure a reasonable chance of success in such courses. In particular, it aims to provide an understanding of basic concepts in chemistry, biology and physics, as well as improving mathematics, communication and study skills. In addition, the course aims to develop an understanding and appreciation of indigenous Australian scientific (traditional) knowledge and to undertake a brief comparison of mainstream (Western) science with indigenous Australian and other indigenous sciences.

Fee Structure: Enabling. Students pay a Union fee ($270 in 1999) and new students to the University pay an entrance fee ($40 in 1999). Student loans are available, if needed to pay fees, on application. Students are encouraged to purchase texts ($50-100 each) but books are available for loan. Students must purchase a scientific calculator ($20-$30). Students may qualify for Abstudy. Scholarships and grants are also available on application to assist some indigenous students.

Program Size: The class size is restricted to 12 students (six for Maths) to enable individual assistance to be given to students.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: Applicants must be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, 17 years and over. Although there is no specific assumed knowledge, it is preferable that students enrolling in this course will have completed at least Year 10 level mathematics and science.

Student Body Makeup: Indigenous: 100%

Duration / Study Mode: Full year full-time. Total contact hours per week for full-time students in this course are: semester one – 26 hours; semester two (first half) – 22 hours, semester two (second half) – 20 hours.

Course Orientation: Students who have successfully completed the Foundation Science Course have been offered places in the following degree courses at the University of Adelaide: Medicine, Dentistry, Health Science, Science, Engineering, Agriculture, and Environmental Management.

Content: The subjects currently offered are: Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Mathematics and Statistics, Communications, Research & Study Skills, and Indigenous Australian Persepctives in Science & Technology. Although most students do all these subjects – at least for the first semester – this is not an absolute requirement as each course is individually programmed to meet the student's own needs. Some students begin study in a mainstream degree course while taking some Foundation Science units. Students studying the full Foundation Science Course are given the opportunity to drop either Physics or Biology in the second semester, without penalty, to reduce their overall study load.

Other Features: For Mathematics a program of work is developed individually for each student: students progress at their own pace, independent of the rest of the class. A problem-based learning approach is used in Indigenous Australian Perspectives in Science & Technology. Lecturers in most subjects have offices in the same building as the teaching space and are available to help students outside of class time. The Mathematics Learning Centre, on campus, provides additional assistance in Mathematics for students.

Students are required to undertake practical work and prepare written reports on this in Chemistry, Biology and Physics. All students are required to participate in field study trips to Central Australia and the Coorong. These trips form an integral part of the program and in order to complete this course each student must present a satisfactory report on each field study.

Assessment: There are exams in each subject, at the end of the first semester and at the end of the year. In addition, students are assessed on written assignments, essays, practical and field study reports, oral presentations, attendance and participation.

Intake: Annually. Applications close 31 October each year for intake into semester one of the following year. All applicants are required to participate in a selection program in November/December. Applicants sit tests in literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and basic science, and attend an interview.

Eligibility for University Entry: Successful students qualify to apply for entry.

Complementary Programs: Wilto Yerlo Humanities / Social Science Foundation Program resulted from a 1995 National Priority (Reserve) Fund grant.

Information Sources: Course brochure: *Wilto Yerlo Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs, The University of Adelaide: Foundation Science Course.*

Program: **UniAccess / UniQuest.**

Institution: Murdoch University, Western Australia.

Program Type: UniAccess is a short general Enabling bridging / preparatory program introduced in 1996. UniQuest is a 'taster' program operating since 1990. Both are offered by the Office of Equity at Murdoch University's South Street campus; with UniQuest also offered at the Rockingham campus.

General Description: UniAccess is a four-week, full-time on-campus Enabling bridging / preparatory program. It aims to introduce people who have expressed an interest in further education to the skills and knowledge that will enable them to make the transition to study at Murdoch University. The course also aims to increase prospective students' familiarity with the University environment.

UniQuest is a one-week, full-time, on-campus 'taster' program providing participants with a clearer understanding of expectations of university study and providing the basis for better informed future study decisions.

Fee Structure: UniAcess is an Enabling program.
UniQuest is fully funded by the University.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: The programs target mature age people who would not normally be eligible to gain entry to university as a result of disadvantage in their previous educational background. People with disabilities or medical conditions, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, women and people from low socio-economic backgrounds are encouraged to apply. UniAccess further targets non-TEE Year 12 students and rural or isolated people. Selection criteria is based on: disadvantage - as indicated by some or all of the following (weightings apply): belonging to one of the identified Equity Groups, resident in Low-SES postcode areas (esp. SW Corridor), low income (social security recipient/Health Care card holder), identifiable disruption to schooling (sustained period, poor communication and numeracy skills - academic potential; identifiable transferable skills; previous training (non-tertiary); motivation and realistic expectations of self and study.

Student Body Makeup: (UniAccess 1998)	Low SES: 63%	Disability:	38%	Women:	high
	Indigenous: nil	Rural/Isol'd:	8%	NESB:	15%
	SW Corridor/SE Residents:		69%		

Duration / Study Mode: UniAccess is four-week, full-time on-campus.
UniQuest is one-week, full-time, on-campus.

Course Orientation: UniAccess - general preparation. UniQuest - 'taster'.

Content: UniAccess:

- Core content (mornings) develops generic learning skills and metacognitive understanding of participants' own learning skills.
- Economic, social and political relevance of higher education in Australia and participants' own place in it.
- Afternoons in specialist streams: Mathematics, Science, and Social Science/Humanities.

The UniQuest program is made up of four interdisciplinary content lectures, and tutorials incorporating learning skills and information sessions. Orientation week aims to give participants a 'taste' of what university is about and some understanding of the following areas:

- literacy and numeracy requirements;
- scientific knowledge required for some course;
- assessment of own study skills and what is required;
- the forms of tuition at university;
- the courses available and possible careers;
- how to apply for entry to university or where to go for further training; and
- personal and financial aspects of university life.

Other Features: UniAccess students have access to all university services. Accommodation in Student Village available for four weeks at rate of $16 per day (students provide own meals). Individual counselling occurs at end of course.

Assessment: For UniAccess, assessment reflects many of the criteria an undergraduate may encounter in their first year of study while recognising the participants' status as a pre-tertiary student. Academic assessment focuses on lecture attendance, tutorial participation in both home room and specialist groups, preparing and presenting a short tutorial presentation and completing a final essay. Non-academic criteria stress the willingness of the participants to get as much as they can from the four weeks on campus. The other level of evaluation is the participant's own evaluation of how they feel about university. A significant aspect of this program is that it is for the participant to consider whether study at Murdoch University is what they wish to do.

Intake: UniAccess, once a year in late January/early February.
UniQuest, once a year in August.

Eligibility for University Entry: Encouraged to apply for entry to Murdoch University.

Special Features: It is important to note that all undergraduate courses at Murdoch University begin with Foundation Studies units in the first semester of study. As well as this, any student identified in Foundation units by week three as being weak in some area is required to enrol in the unit A120 *Introduction to University Learning* (also available on-line). Both Foundation Studies and A120 significantly enhance the chances of success for special entry students, even after only short preparation courses such as UniAccess.

Murdoch University also has a comprehensive portfolio of other programs which can be utilised by disadvantaged students, including:

- STAR (Science/Technology Awareness Raising) Peer Tutoring Scheme.
- Murdoch/TAFE Alternate Entry Program - a one semester TAFE / Murdoch program for school leavers (under 20 years of age) who did not follow a TEE pathway or failed to achieve the required TER.
- Opening Doors Program – the making available of extension studies units in all Divisions, including Foundation units.
- Introductory university units available in Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics as additional first year burden.
- Special undergraduate units which can be embedded in a degree such as *Writing for Professional Purposes* targeting NESB students.
- Open Learning Australia through Murdoch University.
- Kulbardi Aboriginal Tertiary Entrance Course (KATEC): Diploma in University Studies – a two-semester course leading to a Diploma which provides guaranteed entry into undergraduate programs.
- Pre-Law Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- *Never too late!: A Step by Step Guide for Adults returning to Study* - a six-page booklet explaining the pros and cons of various pathways into tertiary study for mature-age students.

Information Sources: Brochure: *UniAccess Programme, Murdoch University's South Street Campus;* Brochure: *UniQuest Programme at Murdoch University's South Street & Rockingham Campuses;* McGill & Box (1997); Mulligan (1998).

Program: Macstart.

Institution: University of Western Sydney Macarthur (UWS-M), NSW.

Program Type: Long duration non-indigenous Enabling preparatory program.

General Description: An Enabling bridging/preparatory program conducted by the Learning Development Centre, Student Services Division at the UWS-M Bankstown and Campbelltown campuses. Macstart enables students to overcome their disadvantage; familiarise themselves with the facilities, procedures and atmosphere of UWS Macarthur; and gives students the academic skills required for success at university. The program has operated since 1992.

Fee Structure: Enabling.

Program Size: 95 students in 1999; representing a load of 35 EFTSU.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: Mature aged students who have experienced previous educational disadvantage. Disadvantage may result from disrupted education, education in a language other than English, physical disability, illness, low income or regional residency. Open to students over the age of 20 years or who have not sat for the HSC in the past two years. Selection is made on the basis of information supplied by the student and interview.

Student Body Makeup:	Low SES: 85%+	Disability: low	Women: 72%
	Indigenous: low	Rural/Isol'd: low	NESB: 38%

Duration / Study Mode: 24 weeks of part-time study, involving six contact hours per week (two three-hour classes). Attendance may involve both day and evening classes.

Course Orientation: General preparation with specific subject orientation depending on intended future study.

Content: The program focuses on essential academic skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as developing independent learners. All students study the subjects *Academic Literacy* and *Introduction to Computers.* Students enrolling in the Faculty of Business & Technology study a refresher course in two Unit HSC Mathematics. All other students study the subjects *Numeracy* and *Poster and Tutorial Presentations.* In addition students enrolling in the Faculty of Health study *Science Concepts*; while students enrolling in the Faculties of Education and Arts & Social Sciences study *Introduction to Statistics.* Additional support for English grammar is available for students if needed.

Other Features: The program is reviewed annually. Questionnaires are distributed each year to former Macstart students completing their first year of university study. Their feedback on aspects of the course which could be improved or enhanced to assist in their success at university are considered during the annual review process. Program statistics are routinely monitored including attrition rates, pass rates, distinction rates, transfer rates to undergraduate study and subsequent academic performance. Two major evaluations have taken place – Grierson (1994) and Nicholls (1998) - and a longitudinal study is currently underway.

Intake: Once annually. Course runs from April to November.

Eligibility for University Entry: All students who successfully complete all Macstart requirements are offered a place at UWS Macarthur in the following year.

Related Programs: The University also offers short bridging / orientation programs that attract 260 students each. A one-week Academic Preparation Program is offered to international and mature aged students; while a two-day University Preparation Program is available for any commencing student.

Macstart is similar in many ways to the Unistart program offered by University of Western Sydney Nepean[1]. Both universities collaborated during the establishment of the preparatory programs but they have since diverged in their development somewhat in terms of curriculum structure, staffing and student selection. UWS Hawkesbury also offered a similar program but the Headway Program curriculum has been abandoned in favour of a closer alliance with NSW TAFE's Tertiary Preparation Certificate program through the nearby campus of Sydney Institute of TAFE (SIT).

Information Sources: Brochure: *Macstart: A way to optimise your academic performance, UWS-M;* Nicholls (1998); Ruth Crowe (Macstart Coordinator, UWS-M, personal communication); *Macstart: Case Study of an Enabling Program,* submission to the EIP Study by the staff of the Learning Development Centre, Student Services Division, UWS-M.

[1] The 'Federated' University of Western Sydney, established during the period of institutional amalgamations and the breakdown of the binomial system that followed the *White Paper* reforms of 1988, was made up of three semi-autonomous entities: UWS Nepean, UWS Macarthur and UWS Hawkesbury. These entities were in the process of merging into a single University of Western Sydney during the time of the writing of this report in 2000.

Program: Advanced Certificate / Diploma in University Studies.

Institution: University of South Australia (UniSA).

Program Type: Multi-stage Enabling-like preparatory qualification.

General Description: A two stage preparatory program with multiple exit points.

Fee Structure: HECS-liable.

Program Size: Enrolments of 110 students in 1999.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: People who have experienced previous educational disadvantage or who are currently disadvantaged in the labour market. Preference is given to Low-SES, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, rural or isolated residents and people from NESB. No formal qualifications are required. Credit or exemptions can be granted for post secondary qualifications (such as TAFE) or other prior learning. Application requires a one-page written statement on reasons for undertaking the course.

Student Body Makeup:	Low SES:	90%	Disability:	15%	Women:	70%
	Indigenous:	low	Rural/Isol'd:	15%	NESB:	low

Duration / Study Mode: The Diploma is a two-stage program, conducted over four years part-time or full-time equivalent. However, on completion of the first stage students may choose to leave the course and graduate with an Advanced Certificate in University Studies. The first stage is only offered through external mode to provide flexibility for target groups (especially rural and isolated, or those for whom transport is a problem). The second stage may be studied internally, externally or in mixed mode.

Course Orientation: General preparation and 'protected' first year of study.

Content: Stage one subjects are intended to develop skills. They include *Introduction to Tertiary Learning, The Self As Learner, Information Presentation and Analysis, Person and Society, Individual and Group Skills, Information Skills,* and *Human Services.* Streams are available for English as a Second Language (ESL) students.

In Stage two, students study eight subjects which comprise the first year of a Bachelor degree, chosen by the student to reflect their individual needs or interests.

Other Features: To accommodate difficulties associated with external mode study, course material is written in such a way that, wherever possible, students are be able to find a level which is suitable for them and then proceed to the standard required.

The needs of NESB students are catered for through the provision of core units (*Introduction to Tertiary Learning* and *The Self as Learner*) in a specialist language stream - outcomes are the same as for English language students but teaching methods and curriculum are different.

Flexible Learning Centre provides teleconferenced tutorials, learning support resource collection, study skills programs and academic counselling to external students.

Completion Qualification: Students may leave after Stage one with an Advanced Certificate in University Studies. Completion of Stage two leads to a Diploma in University Studies.

Eligibility for University Entry: Many students go on to complete the Degree course they commenced in the Diploma.

Related Programs: Edith Cowan University offer what amounts to a similar program through the articulation of its Unistart Enabling preparatory program into its University Foundation Studies Program, a 'protected' first semester of study in foundation units for those who have not yet decided on a major. Flinders University of South Australia offers a HECS-liable University Preparation Diploma which involves two years of full-time study.

UniSA has a number of preparatory programs which are routinely reported as Enabling, including three programs operating through The Levels campus:- the Bridging Program in Conservation and Site Management for indigenous students, the Bridging Program in Applied Science and Engineering, and the Bridging Program in Information Technology – as well as the Whyalla Bridging Program which is the only Enabling Program offered by a university in regional South Australia.

Information Sources: Booklet: *Access Courses, University of South Australia;* Wendy Parsons (Part-time Coordinator, Advanced Certificate in University Studies, UniSA, personal communication); Mulligan (1998); Fopp & Ellis (1997).

Program: **Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP).**

Institution: University of Southern Queensland (USQ).

Program Type: External general preparatory program offered to Enabling and fee-paying students – thus being simultaneously Enabling and Enabling-like.

General Description: A tertiary bridging / preparatory program offered entirely in external mode offered by the Office of Preparatory and Academic Support (OPACS) since 1988. Available as an Enabling and a fee-paying program.

Fee Structure: Enabling (for those who qualify and are accepted) and fee-paying at a rate of $250 per unit for other students.

Program Size: Approximately 1 100 students per annum, divided between 240 EFTSU Enabling and 60EFTSU fee-paying.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: All identified equity groups (although indigenous Australians generally undertake the Preparatory Studies Program offered by Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag), people affected by other circumstances (eg. emotional trauma or long-term unemployment), inmates of correctional centres and people who wish to undertake a program of self improvement. Applications for Enabling are assessed.

Student Body Makeup:

Low SES:	80%+	Disability:	3.5%	Women:	64%
Indigenous:	low	Rural/Isol'd:	65%+	NESB:	2.5%

Duration / Study Mode: Fully external mode, largely paper-based but also involving regular teletutorials and telephone/e-mail Study Centre contact. Flexible course delivery undertaken by student involving 16 or 32 weeks of study. Core units involve 300 or 470 hours of home study; others involve 165 workload hours.

Course Orientation: General preparation with some subject specialisation available. Provides entry into all Associate Degree and Degree courses at USQ.

Content: The course includes a core curriculum of units in study skills, communication skills and, for most students, mathematics. Students are also encouraged to enrol in the unit *Career Planning* (which is compulsory for Enabling students). Depending on their intended career directions, students may also undertake units of specialisation to prepare them for study in a particular discipline. Units in more advanced mathematics, physics, chemistry, psychology and literature are available.

Other Features: External students have access to USQ's Regional Liaison Network – support staff and centres located across Queensland and the East Coast of Australia. Teletutorials are conducted routinely in each unit of study.

Diagnostic testing in basic skills is undertaken for every student entering the program so that special needs can be identified.

TPP has undergone the full course accreditation process required by all academic programs as undertaken by the USQ Academic Board, and is subject to course re-accreditation according to a regular timetable.

As a solely external offering, TPP has the potential to reach a wide variety of groups who have traditionally found access to higher education study difficult. This is well illustrated by the Tertiary Preparation Prisons Program which involves the delivery of TPP to prisoners in custody in correctional centres across Queensland – involving enrolments of around 60 inmates per semester in 1999 (Bull 1993; Clarke 1999).

Intake: Twice annually for commencement in semesters one and two. There are no academic prerequisites

Eligibility for University Entry: Guaranteed entry to any USQ undergraduate place upon successful completion of TPP.

Related Programs: The Preparatory Studies Program offered by Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag at University of Southern Queensland as an external Enabling program to indigenous students is based on the TPP curriculum.

Information Sources: Brochure: *Tertiary Preparation Program: Expanding Opportunities for Learning; Tertiary Preparation Program Handbook 2000;* David Bull (TPP Coordinator, OPACS, USQ, personal communication).

Program: University Preparation Program.

Institution: University of New South Wales (UNSW).

Program Type: Enabling-like (fee-paying) general preparatory program.

General Description: UPP is a fee-paying preparatory study program for older students who either do not possess formal qualifications or whose academic qualifications do not satisfy the minimum entry requirements for entry to the University. The program has been offered since 1982.

Fee Structure: The fee is $500; with 15 (representing around 10 per cent of intake) reduced fee places (at $150) being available upon competitive application to recipients of Centrelink allowances or pensions, or applicants who can otherwise demonstrate financial hardship.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the Aboriginal Education Program pays the fee on behalf of the student. This is seen as a more cost-effective means of providing preparatory program places for indigenous Australian prospective students than introducing a specialist indigenous preparatory program.

Program Size: Approximately 350 UPP places are available each year.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: The program targets mature aged students with a minimum age of 21 years (18 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students) who lack entry qualifications or have entry scores too low for entry to UNSW. Proof of English proficiency may also be required.

Student Body Makeup: Information on equity group membership not collected by the program.

Duration / Study Mode: The two subjects can either be completed consecutively in semester one and semester two (March-November) or concurrently in semester one (March-June). Each of the two subjects requires attendance for two hours per week (total 52 hours of contact time for course) and requires six-to-eight hours of additional private study by students. Both daytime and evening classes are available.

Course Orientation: General preparation.

Content: The course consists of two subjects, a core unit - *University Orientation and Study Skills* conducted by the Learning Centre and an elective General Education subject chosen from a specified range conducted by the Faculty.

University Orientation and Study Skills introduces students to university life by giving them the opportunity to develop the research, writing and verbal skills needed to manage tertiary studies with confidence. Topics covered include time management, critical analysis, essay writing, exam techniques and oral presentation.

Other Features: Entry into some courses require the study of other preparatory subjects – for example, for entry into Engineering, students must also pass the Maths Preparation Program offered by UNSW.

Faculties used to allow students to claim credit for the General Education subject when the student went in to an award program but have now decided not to.

Intake: Annually for semester one for both the intensive 11-week program and the two-semester program.

Eligibility for University Entry: On successful completion of UPP, students qualify for entry to all courses at UNSW with the exception of Medical Science, Advanced Science, Medicine, Optometry and Psychology. However, satisfactory completion of UPP does not guarantee admission to any specific course.

Completion Qualification: The UPP is officially recognised by the University of Sydney and the Australian National University as meeting their minimum entry requirements.

Related Programs: Programs offered by other universities which fill a similar niche to the UPP and which operate equally as successfully include the University Foundation Course offered by Flinders University of South Australia, UC Prep offered by the University of Canberra, and the University Preparation Scheme offered by Australian National University (ANU).

UNSW offers a Mathematics Preparation Program (MPP) that complements the UPP. It is recommended for non-traditional students who lack a sound mathematics background (to two-unit HSC level) who are seeking entry into the Bachelor of Aviation, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Economics, Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Engineering. UPP students also require satisfactory completion of MPP to be considered for entry into Engineering.

Information Sources: Brochure: *Entry to Undergraduate Courses in 2001 for Older Students, UNSW;* Sonia Nitchell and Patricia Swift (UPP Program, UNSW, personal communication); Magin (1998).

Program: Gateway to Nursing and Health Science

Institution: Victoria University of Technology (VUT).

Program Type: Enabling-like preparatory programs offered by a dual-sector university.

General Description: The course is designed to enable mature age applicants to achieve the minimum entry requirements into the Bachelor of Health Science – Nursing or Acupuncture, or Certificate IV in Health (Nursing).

Fee Structure: Students are charged one dollar per enrolled subject hour – or $234 for the course. Students also pay a $55 General Service Fee.

Program Size: Enrolments of 60 students.

Entry Criteria: Students should be able to demonstrate a reasonable level of competency in reading and writing. Students with limited English skills are advised to take an English for Vocational Training and Further Study course or a similar language or literacy program prior to entry. Preference is given to students who do not meet the usual mature age entry criteria for the Bachelor of Nursing.

Articulation and credit transfer arrangements exist, and recognition of prior learning (RPL) is exercised.

Student Body Makeup:	Low SES: 85%	Disability: 2%	Women: 95%
	Indigenous: low	Rural/Isol'd: low	NESB: 60%

Duration / Study Mode: A 17-week program involving 12 contact hours per week.

Course Orientation: For entry into Nursing and Health Science.

Content: The course involves five subjects – *Study Skills for Health Sciences* (51 hours), *Nursing Calculations* (51 hours), *Human Biology* (51 hours), *Chemistry for the Life Sciences* (51 hours), and *Introduction to Botany* (30 hours).

Intake: Twice a year plus the offering of a condensed two-week summer school.

Eligibility for Tertiary Entry: Successful completion qualifies student for entry into the Bachelor of Health Science – Nursing or Acupuncture, or Certificate IV in Health (Nursing).

Related Programs: The Community Education Department of VUT has, since its establishment in 1991, offered a range of preparatory programs for those wishing to do further study at the tertiary level who do not necessarily fulfil the usual entry requirements. Programs include: English for Vocational Education and Further Studies, Return to Study, Preparation for Tertiary Study (Arts), Engineering & Science Bridging Program and Introduction to Computing, as well as a range of pre-university bridging programs in general education and women's education. The University also offers the Diploma in Liberal Arts (incorporating the Certificate IV in Liberal Arts) which can serve as a tertiary bridging course.

VUT also offers 'Personalised Access and Study Arrangements'. This involves personal interview and counselling to develop personalised study options for students which are articulated through a personalised course agreement ('Student Compact') and involve a guaranteed place ('Personalised Place') into the TAFE or university course that best suits the needs of the student. This represents a strategy for involving the TAFE division in providing alternative pathways to university study which are likely to be attractive to the high proportion of socioeconomically disadvantaged people in VUT's student catchment. The program is available to all students who have successfully completed VCE or are 21 years or older.

Information Sources: Brochure: *Nursing and Pathology Collection, VUT;* Natalie Williams (Program Coordinator, Community Education Department, VUT, personal communication), Jackson *et al.* (1996); Mulligan (1998); Brochure: *Engineering and Science 1999 Bridging Program, VUT.*

Program: **Certificate of Tertiary Access to Griffith University**

Institution: Logan Institute of TAFE, Queensland.
Griffith University, Queensland.

Program Type: General Enabling-like preparatory program offered through cross-sectoral collaboration.

General Description: The program is a one-year course designed primarily to enable people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds to access a university education. The program was established in 1989 using Commonwealth Higher Education Equity Program seed funding. The program is collaboratively managed and funded by the two institutions.

Fee Structure: $720 for one year of study / $280 concession (1999). The course is approved for Austudy.

Program Size: Enrolments of around 70 students per annum.

Entry Criteria: The Access course has two main aims: to increase participation in tertiary education by people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (high proportion in the Logan catchment); and to increase participation by women in the fields of science and technology in higher education. Target groups fitting within these parameters include pre-Year 12 school leavers, women, and young adults requiring vocational retraining. Normally, applicants must have left high school at least two years previously.

Admission is based on a Skills Assessment which determines a minimum level of basic maths (which varies with each strand) and writing skills to allow a good chance of success. A three-week course in *Basic Mathematics and English* is available at a cost of $72 / $36 concession for prospective students who need to prepare for the Skills Assessment. Alternatively, texts, learning modules and study videos are recommended to assist private study.

Appropriate preparation into the Tertiary Access Course is considered as Year 10 or Certificate in General Education level.

Student Body Makeup:	Low SES: high	Disability: 5%	Women: nd
	Indigenous: 0.5%	Rural/Isol'd: 0.5%	NESB: 10%

Duration / Study Mode: One year (two semesters) full-time on campus at Logan Institute of TAFE, studying four subjects per semester, involving 24-26 contact hours per week through day classes only.

Part-time study is possible through completing the Certificate over two years.

Course Orientation: The course has three strands:

- Science strand undertaken for people wishing to pursue a degree in science, environmental science, engineering or secondary education (maths/science);
- Information Technology strand – leading into computing / information technology; and
- Social Science strand – leading into humanities, nursing, human services, business/commerce/administration or education (primary).

Content: Each strand involves eight subjects covering content and process.

Science strand: *Fundamentals of Mathematics I & II, Principle of Science I & II, Basic Study Skills, Research and Assignment Writing I & II, The Human Context of Learning, Mathematics for Scientists.*

IT strand: *Fundamentals of Mathematics I & II, Information Technology I & II, Basic Study Skills, Research and Assignment Writing I & II, The Human Context of Learning, Mathematics for Information Technology.*

Social Science strand: *Contemporary Society I & II, Introduction to Biological Sciences, Introduction to Human Behaviour, Basic Study Skills, Research and Assignment Writing I & II, The Human Context of Learning, Mathematics for Social Scientists.*

Other Features: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) takes into account previous studies as well as life and work experiences.

Intake: Annually for commencement in semester one (February). Skills Assessment is generally held in the preceding November-December.

Completion Qualification: VETEC accredited Certificate IV in Tertiary Access to Griffith University.

Eligibility for University Entry: Graduates of this course are encouraged to apply for direct entry into Griffith University. Students may apply for entry into a broad but set list of award courses.

Information Sources: Brochure: *Certificate IV in Tertiary Access to Griffith University CNVOC038, Logan Institute of TAFE;* Booklet: *CNVOC038: Certificate in Tertiary Access to Griffith University, 1999/2000,* Logan Institute of TAFE; Donna Pendergast (Course Coordinator, Logan Institute of TAFE, personal communication); Bond (1996); Griffin (1998); Mulligan (1998).

Program: Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC)

Institution: 11 New South Wales TAFE institutes (50 sites) State-wide.

Program Type: Enabling-like general preparatory program offered by the VET sector targeting adult learners.

General Description: A program which prepares students for further study at diploma and degree level. Considered Year 12 equivalent level but geared more specifically to the needs of the adult learner in terms of both the learning methods employed (fostering individual learning skills rather than 'cramming for exams') and assessment methods employed (being class-based on the skills the student is taught).

Fee Structure: There is an administrative charge of $105 per semester. People on benefits are eligible to apply for exemption. Austudy and Abstudy recipients are given a refund. The student normally pays for course materials and textbooks.

Program Size: Offered at 50 TAFE sites (involving 11 institutes) all across New South Wales. Annual enrolments of 2 500 and completions of 450 students.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: Aimed for people who: have left school; think they are too old "to go back to school"; would like to go on to tertiary study; would like an alternative way of studying at Matriculation level. Requires minimum Year 10 or equivalent with a level three (or better) English pass in the School Certificate or equivalent; or a pass in the General Education Certificate.

Student Body Makeup: Disability: 8.3% (6.7%) Women: 65% (65%)
Enrolment profile 1998 Indigenous: 4%[2] (0.9%[3]) NESB: 17.8% (19.8%)
(Graduate profile 1998)

- 75 per cent of TPC students are unemployed
- Almost half have completed a Year 10 qualification; while a quarter have completed HSC.

Duration / Study Mode: A minimum of 36 weeks full-time. From one to five modules can be studied each semester (involving between four to 20 contact hours). Although two-thirds of students enrol as part-time evening students, this group represents less than one third of completions.

[2] From 1998, most potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have enrolled in the Certificate III in Aboriginal Studies, which more specifically meets their needs.
[3] The result was stronger in 1997 at 2.2%.

Course Orientation: Entry to tertiary level study at TAFE or university. Qualifies students for a University Admissions Index (UAI).

Content: Two levels of modules are available. Group A modules introduce a wide range of research, information retrieval skills and the fundamentals of presentation skills. Group B modules put more emphasis on analysis, evaluation and presentation of research-resourced materials in assessments such as portfolios, essays, investigations, reports, projects and class tests. The course requires the successful study of 10 modules which each involve four hours of study per week, with at least three Group B general education modules included. There are two compulsory units – *Language and Learning Skills (LALS) A* and *B.*

Assessment: Group A modules assessment is locally marked, with the results entered locally. The Group B module assessment (which is used as a basis for the calculation of the Tertiary Entrance Score) is locally marked, then centrally verified.

Intake: Twice annually – although students enrolling at mid-year require a minimum of 18 months of study to complete the course (at SIT).

Completion Qualification: Certificate III in Tertiary Preparation. (Inexplicably, the Adult Tertiary Preparation Program offered by Queensland TAFE, which represents an equivalent qualification to TPC, is at Certificate IV level.)

Eligibility for University Entry: A Tertiary Entrance Score (TES) is calculated from *Language & Learning Skills B* plus the two next best B modules. This process is subject to central verification.

Related Programs: TAFE NSW market its TPC and Higher School Certificate (HSC) courses together as alternative pathways into further study for non-traditional students (TAFE NSW 1999). In practice, the HSC (high school completion) is offered at fewer sites than TPC (30 compared with 50) and caters to a younger clientele – in 2000 63 per cent of NSW TAFE's HSC students were aged 18 years or younger and 16 per cent were aged over 25 years; while for TPC the equivalent percentages were 30 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively. At least one TAFE institute (Sydney Institute of TAFE) now tends to direct mature aged students into TPC and younger students into HSC.

Information Sources: Brochure: *Tertiary Preparation, Sydney Institute of TAFE;* Brochure: *HSC in TAFE, Sydney Institute of TAFE;* Booklet and Video: *Tertiary Preparation Certificate: Assessment Verification, NSW TAFE;* Anne Finnane (Program Manager, Tertiary Pathways, NSW TAFE, personal communication); TAFE NSW (1999).

Program: Bachelor of Technology pathways

Institution: Western Sydney Institute of TAFE (Mt. Druitt College), NSW. University of Western Sydney Nepean (UWS-N), NSW.

Program Type: Pathway into university involving formal articulation with TAFE programs and additional Enabling-like mathematics preparation.

General Description: A pathway to a Bachelor of Technology has been developed involving initial study in an Associate Diploma at TAFE, additional technical mathematics subjects at UWS Nepean, and completion of Bachelors study at UWS Nepean. The pathway was introduced in 1996.

Fee Structure: TAFE fees apply to the components taught at TAFE while the award units taught at UWS-N are HECS-liable.

Entry Criteria: Entry requirements into a TAFE Engineering Associate Diploma are as follows:

- Year 12 completion with two Unit *Mathematics* and two Unit *Physics*; or
- completion of a recognised tertiary preparation course or have equivalent qualifications to Year 12; or
- Mature age with technical qualifications.

Duration / Study Mode: The pathway involves three semesters of full-time study (or part-time equivalent) in an associate diploma in either electrical or mechanical technology, or a diploma in civil engineering or structural engineering at TAFE, plus additional technical mathematics bridging subjects at UWS Nepean, and then transfer to UWS Nepean for another three semesters of full-time study (or part-time equivalent) to complete the Bachelor of Technology program.

Numerous potential pathways exist. Typical is a pathway involving four-days a week study at TAFE in Associate Diploma / Diploma subjects plus one-day a week of evening class at UWS-N in *Technical Maths* subjects for three semesters, followed by full-time study for three semesters at UWS-N to complete the B.Tech award – or part-time equivalents.

Course Orientation: Pathways leading to a Bachelor of Technology Award.

Content: The first three semesters of study involve TAFE subjects plus *Technical Mathematics I*, *Technical Mathematics II* and *Technical Mathematics III* offered by UWS-N. The three technical maths subjects cover the necessary maths content

needed to enable transfer into the Bachelor of Technology course. They cover advanced applied trigonometry, calculus and algebra.

The final three semesters of study involve units offered by the Faculty of Mechatronics, Computer and Electrical Engineering at UWS-N.

Features: The pathways are particularly flexible, articulating from a number of TAFE Associate Diploma courses and enabling transfer between institutions at different stages of study. All subjects are taught in modules allowing flexibility in attendance and delivery.

The three *Technical Mathematics* units are 'owned' by the Faculty of Mechatronics, Computer and Electrical Engineering who contract Faculty of Sciences casual staff to teach the units.

Intake: Annual.

Completion Qualifications: At the successful completion of the fourth semester at UWS-N, students are eligible for the award of a TAFE diploma. At the successful completion of the sixth semester, students are eligible for the award of Bachelor of Technology. Outstanding students have the opportunity to enter the appropriate stage of the Bachelor of Engineering course – with multiple potential entry points again being a feature.

Related Programs: UWS-N also offers two short mathematics bridging courses at no cost to students already accepted into programs but requiring some mathematics bridging - the four-day Maths For Science Students course and the five-day Maths for Engineering, Industrial Maths and Computer Science Students course. Both programs are offered in February by The Learning Centre. Mathematics Refresher courses are also held by The Learning Centre mid-year.

Information Sources: Brochure: *Bachelor of Technology: TAFE Diploma and Associate Diploma pathways to UWS Nepean degrees in Technology and Engineering;* Brochure: *The Learning Centre, University of Western Sydney, Nepean;* Tanya Hobson (Administration Officer, School of Engineering, UWS-N, personal communication).

Program: English Language Bridging Course.

Institution: Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia.

Program Type: Enabling program in English.

General Description: A preparatory course in general and academic English offered by the School of Languages and Intercultural Education (SOLIE) and taught at the main Bentley campus.

Fee Structure: This is the only English preparation program regularly reported as Enabling. (Also available at a $500 fee to international students.) Permanent residents qualify for Austudy.

Program Size: 79 students per semester in 1999 – 59 Enabling, 20 fee-paying. Annual enrolments 158; total load 29.5 EFTSU.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: NESB students requiring further English language development to enter undergraduate or postgraduate study. Students must meet normal academic entry requirements for entry to Curtin University. Minimum English language requirements are specified; for example, overall IELTS band of 5.0 and a minimum band of 5.0 in each skill (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

Student Body Makeup:

Low SES:	>50%	Disability:	1-2%	Women:	50%
Indigenous:	nil	Rural/Isol'd:	nil	NESB:	100%

Duration / Study Mode: The full-time program involves one semester (14 teaching weeks) of 16 student contact hours per week. Permanent residents may also study part-time.

Course Orientation: English preparation into all courses.

Content: Four units of study: *Academic Writing, English Communication, Tertiary Study Skills* and *English for Science and Technology*. All four units are undertaken in one semester for full-time students. For part-time students the first two units are undertaken in the first semester, and the latter two in the second semester of study.

Intake: Two per annum; for commencement in February and July.

Eligibility for University Entry: Successful completion guarantees a place at Curtin University - students are effectively already enrolled.

Information Sources: Course information available at http://www.solie.curtin.edu.au/courses/bridging/ accessed at 29 March 2000; Edith Wilson (English Language Bridging Course Coordinator, Curtin University, personal communication).

Program: **Academic Development Program: 'Enabling Subjects' and 'Developmental Subjects'**

Institution: University of Technology Sydney (UTS), New South Wales.

Program Type: Supplementary Enabling courses in language and study skills support offered by the English Language Study Skills Assistance (ELSSA) Centre, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The programs were introduced in 1992 and have been used as a basis for reporting supplementary Enabling students since 1996.

General Description: The ELSSA Centre offers courses of study conducted concurrently with an award program that enable non-traditional or under-prepared students to catch up on academic literacy skills. 'Enabling subjects' are offered during summer and winter vacations. 'Developmental subjects' are offered during semester.

Fee Structure: Supplementary Enabling.

Program Size: Approximately 1,500 students involved the programs at any one time.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: Students enrolled in an award program at UTS who require literacy and oracy development. Students are referred to the Centre from the faculties with high proportion of Low SES and NESB in student body.

Duration / Study Mode: All are offered by face-to-face class-based teaching.

'Enabling subjects' are all offered in intensive mode in summer and winter vacations and are 20-30 hours long. Students may complete one or two subjects during a two-week period in early February or July. Subjects related to writing are offered in the morning, subjects related to speaking in the afternoon, and shorter subjects are offered in evening classes.

'Developmental subjects' are structured courses ranging between six to 15 hours in length which are offered during semester. They are normally taken for two hours per week over four-to-six weeks.

Course Orientation: The courses represent strategies to prevent attrition and to promote student success. Students tend to be derived from the more technical courses plus from Business and Nursing.

Content: 'Enabling subjects' offered include: Academic Writing I, Essay Writing I, Report Writing I, and Grammar I - all 30 hour subjects; and

Academic Speaking I, Seminar Presentation I, Tutorial Participation I, and Pronunciation Correction I – 20 hour subjects.

'Developmental subjects' offered include:

- 15 hour subjects: Academic Writing II & III, Essay Writing II, Report Writing II, Job Seeking Skills, Writing at Postgraduate Level, Critical Reading, and Grammar II;
- 12 hour subjects: Academic Speaking II & III, Seminar Presentation II, Tutorial Participation II, Listening and Note-taking, and Pronunciation Correction II;
- six-hour subject: Introduction to Academic Writing.

Other Features: The structuring of academic learning support into scheduled classes (involving around 10-12 students) was initially developed as a strategy to enable UTS to cope with the provision of such services to its large numbers of part-time students after traditional 'drop-in' one-on-one teaching methods for academic learning support were overwhelmed by the sheer volume of demand

The program is reviewed regularly, including fortnightly staff meetings and a student survey conducted each year in May - which are used as a basis for continual improvement.

Eligibility for University Entry: Not applicable - courses are held concurrently with award study – students are already enrolled at UTS.

Related Programs: The ELSSA Centre also offers non-Enabling programs, including 'Enriching Subjects' – HECS-liable units offered by the Faculty enable students to gain credit points for subjects specifically designed to help them develop their English language skills – and 'Individual Tuition'.

Information Sources: Program information available at http://www.uts.edu.au/div/elssa/ accessed at 29 March 2000; Programs Outline: *English Language Study Skills Assistance (ELSSA) Centre, UTS;* Alex Barthel (Director ELSSA Centre, UTS, personal communication).

Program: Aboriginal Health Science Support Program

Institution: University of Sydney, New South Wales.

Program Type: Supplementary Enabling program closely integrated with award program for special entry students.

General Description: The CADIGAL program at the University of Sydney has operated since 1992. It is an access and support scheme that allows selected prospective indigenous students a differentially lower UAI (University Admission Index) score for HSC and considers other attributes as a basis for entry by mature aged applicants such as motivation, capacity to succeed, and work and life experience. The scheme also provides special support via a two-week Orientation Program, the option of a reduced load in the first two years of enrolment, a peer tutoring scheme, and special resources. For Health Science students in this program, the Aboriginal Health Science Support program offers students the option of a reduced load for award study accompanied by academic support subjects designed to match each of the students undergraduate award subject – representing structured, contextualised academic support within a reduced award load for students taking up this option.

Fee Structure: The supplementary Enabling provision is used to fund the support element. Award units are HECS-liable. Students with a reduced load may still be eligible for full-time Abstudy.

Program Size: In 1999 the CADIGAL Program had enrolments of 26 students in the Schools of Physiotherapy, Occupation and Leisure Studies, Communication and Speech Disorders, Nursing and Medical Radiation Technology within the Faculty of Health Science.

Target Groups / Entry Criteria: People who can apply for entry into the CADIGAL program must be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are under 21 years of age and have completed HSC or its equivalent (HSC applicants), or who are over 21 years of age (Mature Age Applicants).

Student Body Makeup: Indigenous: 100%

Duration / Study Mode: Academic support subjects can be taken concurrent with or preparatory to the matched award subjects.

Course Orientation: Health Studies

Content: Academic support subjects generally consist of special tutorial sessions specifically geared to the content and skills of specific undergraduate subjects. Some subjects are based on a

complementary curriculum to the undergraduate subject concerned.

Features: *"[Participants] … identified the reduced load option available to them within the Cadigal program as a significant factor in their success as it enabled them to enrol concurrently in the accompanying Aboriginal Health Science Support Program. The support tutorials provided an opportunity for the students to revise and consolidate the material in their undergraduate subjects and develop learning skills within the context of each subject"* (Farrington *et al.* 1999, pp. 19-20).

The Aboriginal Health Science Support program can add 50 per cent to the time taken for a student to complete a degree.

Eligibility for University Entry: Students in this program are already enrolled in award programs offered by the Faculty of Health Sciences – having accessed award study through the CADIGAL program.

Related programs: A variation on this 'reduced load' Enabling strategy has been used by Swinburne University. This involved identified students in particular subjects – such as Quantitative Analysis, Mathematics, Information Methods, Physics and Professional Studies English – studying the same subject content over two semesters instead of one in specially organised classes.

Information Sources: Information available through sites linked to the Yooroang Garang: School of Indigenous Health Studies Homepage available at: http://yg.cchs.usyd.au/; information available through sites linked to the Koori Centre Homepage available at: http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/centre/; Farrington *et al.* (1999); Sally Farrington (Student Support Coordinator, Yooroang Garang, University of Sydney, personal communication).

Chapter 6

Sectoral Input to Considerations of the Cost-Effectiveness of Enabling and Enabling-like Programs in Australian Tertiary Education

6.1 Background

Accessing expert and experiential input of tertiary education practitioners involved in the delivery and management of Enabling and Enabling-like programs was an essential component of the research team's layered multi-method approach to addressing the terms of reference of the project. Practitioner consultation sessions and submissions, in conjunction with the survey of commencing Enabling students in first semester 2000 (Chapter 7), were undertaken to enable the views and experiences of the full range of stakeholders to be incorporated into the project. These stakeholder views would enable the project team to review, verify and extend the results of the other facets of the study, particularly with regard to the development of qualitative indicators of program performance. Given the complexity and diversity of programs and students across the sector together with the limitations on the data collections available, it was recognised that the quantitative data alone would not be sufficient to gain an accurate understanding and picture of Enabling and Enabling-like programs, the costs associated, and the outcomes achieved.

6.2 Methodology

Practitioner seminars were conducted in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney (two sessions), Perth and Brisbane during October-November 1999[1]. The dates, times and venues for each session in each capital are displayed in Attachment 5.

A letter advertising the practitioner consultation sessions (see Attachment 4), including a call for submissions, was forwarded to:

- Vice-Chancellor of each Australian university;
- Directors of all TAFE Institutes throughout Australia;
- Heads of all Indigenous Units in the Australian tertiary education sector; and
- Relevant e-mail discussion and posting lists subscribed to by equity and student support program practitioners, including the equity practitioners

[1] The Project Team would like to sincerely thank all institutions and practitioners who facilitated the successful organisation of the practitioner seminars through providing appropriate space and administrative support: Gerri Box, Murdoch University; Penelope Griffin, University of Adelaide; Patricia McLean, University of Melbourne; Anne-Marie Payne, UTS; and Bernadette Roberts, TEPA.

listserver (equity@frodo.cc.flinders.edu.au), the unilearn listserver (unilearn@uws.edu.au), and the Indigenous equity research list server.

The letter was also included as a flyer in materials mailed out to potential attendees of the TAFE Training for Gold Conference and the Fourth Pacific Rim Conference on the First Year in Higher Education being conducted during the last half of 1999.

Following the distribution of these invitations to attend, practitioners and institutions expressed their intent in attending the relevant consultation session to the project team, initiated discussions with project team members on the possibility of site visits, and, in some cases, provided written submissions or indicated intent to provide submissions.

6.2.1 Practitioner consultation sessions

The practitioner consultation sessions held around the country were very well attended by a diversity of participants representing a range of different Enabling and Enabling-like programs across the Australian tertiary education sector. The 120 participants and 48 organisations represented at the consultation sessions are listed as Attachment 5.

At each of these consultation sessions, a member of the project team facilitated a discussion of issues concerning, broadly, the cost-effectiveness of Enabling and Enabling-like programs in Australian tertiary education. Initially a summary of the study being undertaken was distributed to participants and the purpose of the project, and specifically the consultation sessions, explained. The project summary document is attached as Attachment 6. Participants were then given the opportunity to ask questions to clarify the aims and conduct of the project. Participants' attention was drawn to the contact details for the project on the document should they have wished to elaborate any further on points raised in the session or wished to make subsequent written submissions.

Each consultation session addressed a similar set of questions and issues. These questions and issues included:

- practitioner's general reactions to the project, including desired outcomes from their perspective;
- practitioner's views on the provision of Enabling and Enabling-like programs in the tertiary education sector; relating to program aims, target groups, stakeholder motivations, features that make the programs successful, and the major challenges which must be overcome;
- perceptions of success and performance of Enabling and Enabling-like programs, including reporting requirements, from the perspective of those delivering the programs, and a consideration of the cost-effectiveness of the programs and how this could best be determined; and
- the funding of Enabling and Enabling-like programs.

Project team members noted major points of the discussion during the session and wrote up a summary of the session on completion. To ensure accurate representation of the views and opinions aired in these sessions, a feedback document based on findings and issues raised across all practitioner consultations was distributed to all participants for comment. Practitioners were given this opportunity to dispute or clarify the main points drawn from this process.

6.2.2 On-site visits

Project team members also conducted on-site visits to a range of tertiary institutions to meet with administrators, university staff, program staff, and former Enabling students. Many of these on-site visits coincided with the formal practitioner consultation sessions. In all, formal visits were conducted to 10 tertiary institutions. These on-site visits are outlined in Attachment 7.

On-site visits used a range of qualitative methodologies addressing the same broad questions and issues outlined for the consultation sessions. Most of the on-site visits involved face-to-face meetings with two or more practitioners. Others involved one-to-one discussions or focus groups. In each case, the project team member kept notes on the discussion and used these to write up a summary of the major points. These summaries were included in the overall feedback document discussed with regard to the consultation sessions. On-site visit participants were also sent the feedback document for comment to ensure accuracy and encouraged to contact the project team to further explore any issues of concern or errors.

6.2.3 Call for submissions

As stated above, the letter advertising the practitioner consultation sessions also included a call for submissions from stakeholders regarding the cost-effectiveness of Enabling and Enabling-like programs in Australian tertiary education. The call for submissions was reiterated in the consultation sessions and the on-site visits. Thirteen submissions were received from stakeholders in five institutions. The details of these submissions are included as Attachment 8.

A large number of equity practitioners also forwarded a range of other material relating to Enabling and Enabling-like programs; including program literature, published articles, conference papers, existing internal and public reports, and the results of internal reviews and analyses. This material has contributed to the development of other chapters in this report – particularly the literature review (Chapter 2), the discussion of programs (Chapter 4), and case studies (Chapter 5).

6.3 Findings

The consultation sessions, on-site visits, and submissions yielded diverse and broad data on Enabling and Enabling-like programs in Australian tertiary education that adds much to the quantitative and other elements of the investigation. The views of practitioners from throughout the country have been summarised and aggregated. The major points are grouped into thematic content areas. An attempt was made throughout the summaries, and the reporting of the findings, to use the words of the practitioners as much as possible. Some divergence was necessary to present aggregated arguments. Input has been grouped into five broad overlapping themes.

6.3.1 Enabling programs, target equity groups and definitions

Practitioners were generally frustrated by a lack of a common understanding of what constitutes an Enabling program, even in a generic sense. Equity practitioners were divided in terms of their knowledge of the Enabling Guidelines (Attachment 1) and how these operated in practice. There was uncertainty and a lack of understanding and information about Enabling reporting, even amongst otherwise well informed and highly experienced practitioners. Typical of the types of misunderstanding that occur was the belief by many practitioners that their program did not qualify under the Guidelines because it did not guarantee entry to an award program upon successful completion – in fact, the Guidelines only require Enabling programs to qualify students to apply for entry.

Practitioners were also frustrated by the lack of a common understanding of what constitutes a successful program outcome. It was pointed out that although a successful program should prepare students for tertiary entry, the act of transfer into an award program is under the control of the student and not the program. Hence, an emphasis on university transfer rates as a major performance indicator created a dilemma for program staff as the decision to transfer should rightly be left with the student. (As Devlin (1997, p.5) noted: *"There should be no compulsion or pressure on individuals, nor 'social engineering' to arrive at arbitrary targets imposed by central planners.*)

There was a degree of cynicism amongst practitioners generally as to the ability of official statistics to describe accurately the outcomes of Enabling programs. For example, the transfer rates being reported by DETYA at the time based on data from official statistics appeared to seriously underestimate the transfer rates observed by individual programs. There was also a general feeling that quantitative performance indicators served to devalue other outcomes – as discussed below.

Some practitioners suggested that the problems associated with definitions and reporting need to be addressed proactively by DETYA through providing a clearer indication of the government's expectations with regard to the outcomes of

Enabling programs and in providing models of good practice and supporting the collection of valid and meaningful data on program performance.

There was a general perception by stakeholders that there is a conflict between the official identifiers of equity groups as defined by Martin (1994) used to monitor sector performance and the criteria used by programs as a basis for entry into the programs, as based on the Enabling Guidelines (Attachment 1).

Practitioners identified socio-economic status disadvantage as an especially problematic group to define. The postcode-based method for identifying Low SES was not considered as relevant to a consideration of individual cases of disadvantage but, more fundamentally, Low-SES is not understood as a concept. For example, adult second chance learners were seen to overlap with people from Low-SES *backgrounds* as people who missed educational opportunities as teenagers, but may not be Low-SES in terms of their current socio-economic status. It was anticipated that this conflict would create a poor alignment between the target groups identified through official statistics and those recorded by Enabling programs, and that this should not be interpreted as necessarily reflecting poor or inappropriate targeting by the programs. It was pointed out that all stakeholders are in the position of needing to interpret the broad definitions set out in the Enabling Guidelines (Attachment 1) which are broadly based on those outlined in *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET 1990) and that differences in interpretation are inevitable. A particular flaw in the use of the Martin (1994) identifiers was that they failed to take account of individual circumstances – the often numerous and interacting causes which result in the experience of educational disadvantage in individual cases. The point was made that most Enabling programs require individuals to 'demonstrate disadvantage' on an individual basis.

Practitioners expressed a concern that the degree of multiple disadvantage (that is, membership of greater than one equity group) and the impact that this has on individual's needs is not sufficiently considered or accounted for in official statistics.

Of principal concern for many Enabling program providers was the level of educational disadvantage of their client groups. Educational disadvantage was seen as a more valid central indicator of the targets of Enabling programs than any officially defined equity groups – explaining the emphasis of these programs in targeting groups whose members are liable to experience educational disadvantage. In the case of indigenous students, the educational disadvantage is most often profound, with poor retention rates for secondary education and subsequently poor literacy and numeracy skills. Non-indigenous isolated students, for whom retention to completion of secondary school is also poor, experience similar levels of educational disadvantage. Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities, and students with particular ethnic backgrounds for whom English is not a native language also experience high levels of educational disadvantage.

There were general calls for a rethinking of the basis for targeting Enabling programs, taking account of the limitations of the 'identified equity groups' approach, particularly as implemented through official equity group identifiers as defined by Martin (1994).

> *The six equity target groups as defined by DETYA, being focussed on individuals, fail to encompass some individual people properly to be considered as equity targets (example, a dependent member of a dysfunctional family, or a person whose educational opportunity has been limited because of regional, rather than individual, socio-economic disadvantage). This statement is not a denial of the need to address the particular needs of those identified as belonging to the target groups. The University of Newcastle sees enabling programs in a wider context than offering individual assistance. These programs contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the region* (Enabling Programs Unit, University of Newcastle, personal communication in the form of a submission to the EIP project).

Practitioners emphasised that every issue raised for Enabling programs generally are magnified when considering programs targeting indigenous Australians, who typically overlap with Low-SES, rural and isolated groupings, and, in many cases, also speak a language other than English in the home.

6.3.2 Purpose and performance of Enabling programs

Practitioners expressed the view that although Enabling and Enabling-like programs service the disadvantaged they more generally provide pathways and options for those who need them. Many practitioners conceive their program as providing educational (and other) opportunities to those at-risk of not being able to access traditional pathways due to educational disadvantage. Programs are as much about supporting lifelong learning and community empowerment as specifically addressing low access and participation in tertiary education of particular groups in the community.

Practitioners noted that students often come to Enabling programs after a range of other educational experiences (for example, from community or adult education). Some practitioners indicated that for many students, especially those with poor English language literacy and numeracy, pre-Enabling courses were necessary prior to enrolment in Enabling programs (this situation was particularly notable for indigenous peoples).

Practitioners see a range of benefits for students and institutions derived from Enabling programs beyond those which are most obviously implied by official statistics (such as transfer into tertiary education following successful completion of the Enabling program):

- Improved future performance and access to expanded life opportunities for clients, including employment opportunities.
- A move from unemployment, casual or part-time work, typically in unskilled or low skilled occupations, to more diverse and improved employment

options, generally in more skilled occupational areas (not considered an official successful outcome).

- Early take up of undergraduate studies prior to Enabling program completion (yet counted as part of attrition figures).
- Empowerment given to the student to decide on whether to participate in tertiary education or not, rather than having circumstances determine this (it has been suggested that a student making a decision not to proceed in an Enabling program represents a cost-effective alternative to this decision being made during undergraduate study).
- Addressing the high cost and wastage of attrition from undergraduate degree studies (with reference made to the 'Sweet Report') and also contributing to wiser decisions about study that (potentially) cut the substantial costs to universities of students transferring, changing courses, changing course load, etc.

As reflected in the practitioner conceptions of success described, many practitioners are more concerned in their everyday practice about 'enabling' and 'empowering' their clients (that is, providing access to opportunities) than pushing for progression to degree studies within their own institution, over which they have no real control anyway.

The learning of a new culture (both academic and institutional) was seen as a major component of Enabling initiatives by a number of participants. This theme also appeared in a submission:

> *Orientation to the institutional culture is a significant factor in success rates of students in higher education. The great majority of Enabling course students have had no learning experiences relevant to developing appropriate orientation to university educational sub-culture in terms of the institutions' expectations regarding independence and self-directedness in learning processes, standards of achievement, and the use of learning resources. … Students who progress to a university undergraduate course via an enabling course offered by a non-university provider are significantly disadvantaged relative to those who progress via an enabling course offered within the general educational sub-culture of a university* (Tertiary Preparation Program Consultative Committee, University of Southern Queensland personal communication in the form of a submission to the EIP project).

Practitioners were of the view that enculturation for these students' needs to be part of both Enabling and some undergraduate units to effectively support successful participation in tertiary education.

Many benefits were seen to be derived by the institution from Enabling programs, such as the ability to tap into an alternative market of non-traditional students and provide a needed service to their community. As such, these programs often have strategic importance to the institution in terms of enhancing their relationship with the local community and in meeting broader community issues – most particularly helping to address community needs such as long-term unemployment, the

outcomes of poverty, the outcomes of physical and mental abuse, assisting with the re-integration of former prisoners into society, providing a basis for women to enter or re-enter the workforce, etc. (The role of Enabling provision and related strategies to empower individuals to take better control of their own futures was continually emphasised.) Programs can also be strategic in other ways. For example:

> *Enabling Programs have become a significant element in stabilising the intake patterns of this regional University, providing a reliable channel into undergraduate studies of people already known to the University, who can be relied on to deal competently with studies. They have also provided a training ground for young scholars entering into academic teaching by teaching in the Enabling Programs, and opportunities for research into such programs for an understanding of adult learning and teaching* (Enabling Programs Unit, University of Newcastle, personal communication in the form of a submission to the EIP project).

It was suggested that the skills and knowledge imparted during preparatory program study are not necessarily the things that make the biggest impression on students – a feature confirmed by group discussions with former Enabling students. For second chance learners a major benefit of Enabling programs is that they provide students with self-confidence and self-awareness. They also provide a 'test' for many students to see if they can study while balancing other commitments or carrying their own particular problems. Other perceived benefits of Enabling programs include:

- Access to and familiarisation with the resources within the University.
- An introduction to the self-directed nature of tertiary level research tasks and assignments.
- Familiarity with mainstream academic staff and their course-related expertise.
- An introduction to and familiarisation with academic language and writing conventions.
- An introduction to the range of knowledge assumed in mainstream subjects.
- Helping prospective students develop a support and social network, including learning partnerships that they can utilise during award studies.
- Making students aware of the culture of tertiary education in the context of a short-term commitment. That is to ensure that they are not jumping in the deep end of a three of four year undergraduate degree without first having an understanding of what tertiary study is like, what is required of them, whether they have appropriate skills, whether they can balance study with other commitments, etc.
- Making prospective students aware of the availability of services within the institution.
- Helping students to understand institutional processes, including the learning processes valued by the institutions.

Practitioners also emphasised that for the target groups, Enabling programs form part of a staged process of widening opportunities, where individuals move in and out of education and employment as their circumstances dictate. Progression (as assessed, for example, by degree completion times) cannot usefully be judged against more traditional models. Submissions provided case examples of factors such as health problems, legal proceedings and relationship issues preventing minimum time completion for former Enabling students.

Many practitioners noted that the target populations for Enabling programs are groups that are under-represented in higher education, and if these trends are to be reversed, then continued investment in relevant programs and strategies is necessary.

A strong point made was that any program's performance must be contextualised for the student body involved. An individual's current circumstances and the impact of past and continuing disadvantage all have a bearing on an individual's performance in the program and this must be taken into account. Those programs most at-risk of 'poor performance figures' are those addressing the needs of the most educationally at-risk. There was a risk that programs targeting the most needy would set themselves up to appear as failures by committing to groups with the least likelihood of achieving performance levels in line with traditional expectations of success. An emphasis on performance figures for programs could result in programs to high-risk groups being abandoned, resulting in lowered opportunities for these groups.

Many practitioners expressed concern that overemphasising a narrow set of performance outcomes would encourage more restrictive student selection for Enabling programs on grounds not related to disadvantage, thus serving to exclude opportunities to the most needy individuals.

It was generally recognised that insufficient data was available on the destination of Enabling students after they leave the program and that the reasons for program attrition, failure to transfer to undergraduate study or even the basis for students undertaking the programs was incompletely understood. (Practitioners pointed out that the programs generally lacked the funding and staffing resources to carry out detailed studies of this type in their own right; programs typically running on a shoestring budget.) Practitioners argued that a tracking study of all Enabling program participants was necessary to indicate the full range of outcomes derived from these programs.

Practitioners also suggested that a useful exercise would be to model the benefits of Enabling programs using a longitudinal, qualitative methodology to take account of changes in communities, families and individuals beyond immediate educational outcomes such as progression to undergraduate study.

It was suggested, based on the experiences of some participants, that students who successfully transfer from an Enabling program to undergraduate studies typically perform on a par with or better than those accessing via traditional means. Without the Enabling programs providing students with the confidence to enter

undergraduate study, it was argued, a significant proportion of these students would be unlikely to ever access tertiary education.

6.3.3 Long term outcomes and the broader context - Investing in communities

Practitioners identified a need for a long-term view of the outcomes of Enabling and Enabling-like programs. This was seen to facilitate the likelihood of a diverse range of positive outcomes for both the individual and the sector beyond the immediate future.

Some practitioners pointed to the potential 'ripple effect' of Enabling programs to affect broader changes in local (often disenfranchised) communities, including the impact on general levels of education and participation in education, health, mental health, etc. Enabling students spoke of their position as role models for their family or community in seeking and valuing further education. Specific mention was made of indigenous students being able to return to their families and communities after participation in Enabling programs and assist their own, and others', children with their homework and learning experiences; and introducing the notion that further education was potentially useful and worthwhile into these communities. The experiences of some practitioners indicated that, in many cases, those indigenous people who apply for places in Enabling programs are often major change agents in their communities and the most likely to make a difference once they return.

Practitioners also spoke about the interaction between Enabling programs and the welfare system, and the need for any cuts to spending on Enabling programs to be considered in terms of savings and costs to welfare.

6.3.4 Appropriate models of Enabling program delivery

The types of Enabling programs represented by practitioners indicated that various approaches are used to suit the particular clientele and context. Participants viewed the diversity of programs provided by a range of institutions from different educational sectors as a positive in terms of: (a) user choice and capacity to meet both individual needs and those specific to the local community; (b) spreading the costs; and (c) ensuring continued provision. Many practitioners expressed the view that the application of uniform cost-effectiveness measures to each program would be inadequate to account for the diversity of the types of programs that exist.

The accounts of many participants in the consultations showed that Enabling programs possess strong rationales for their existence and the reason they function as they do. The rationales and reasons provided by the practitioners related very strongly to the local community context and how institutions have set about addressing local community needs. A key factor in the reports of practitioners was the location of resources and infrastructure to support the program within a local area.

The issue of the appropriateness of different sectors offering tertiary preparatory programs was raised. It was noted that debate has existed in New South Wales and Queensland over the past decade as to the appropriateness of generalist preparatory programs which do not have an immediate vocational outcome being offered by TAFE. In Victoria this debate had already resulted in the scrapping of the generalist Tertiary Orientation Program as a TAFE offering.

It was noted that maintaining a diversity of programs provided for the varying needs of a diverse client group. TAFE-based programs and university preparatory programs were seen to be significantly different with regard to their duration, content, assessment and overall emphasis – serving different clientele. University-based programs provided university experiences not readily available to TAFE-based courses; TAFE-based courses provided an exposure to TAFE-based teaching methods and assessment not available through university-based courses; face-to-face classes provide exposure to on-campus experiences; while distance courses provide exposure to study at a distance. Some practitioners suggested that the receiving sector (i.e. the endpoint of student progression) was the most appropriate to provide programs designed for entry into that particular sector. (The differences inherent in university study compared with vocational study was noted by NBEET (1994a, p. 53).) Similar arguments were put forward supporting the need for programs that have different curriculum emphases, study modes, and course duration to enable potential students to choose the course which best fits their own needs. 'Familiarity' and the minimisation of culture shock on the transition from Enabling to award study were seen as particularly important features for the future success of students.

A point made strongly was the need for programs targeting adults to be designed specifically for that target group, taking into account appropriate andragogy and adult learning needs. Programs designed to service young adults did not provide an appropriate substitute for the education of mature age students.

The provision of Enabling programs by universities was seen as an important strategy for breaking down barriers within universities themselves by confronting faculty staff with the need to consider alternative entry mechanisms for non-traditional students, and highlighting the subsequent success of non-traditional students. Enabling program providers frequently cited an initial cynicism for their students from academic staff being replaced by enthusiasm once staff realised that the Enabling programs was a source of 'good students'. The presence of these programs in universities also served to highlight the fact that the university sector has responsibilities in assisting in the achievement of equity goals; with Enabling programs representing prominent, high profile equity programs in many institutions.

Several features of Enabling program delivery were seen as providing incentives to students to persist, to be successful and to transfer into further study. Desirable features included: a completion 'qualification' which may be a statement of completion or an approved qualification such as a Certificate; guaranteed entry into an award program upon successful completion; some degree of discipline-specific content or a targeted discipline focus to provide the basis for a more

defined future career focus for students; and the continuation of 'protected' status into an award program (such as continued monitoring of student performance, continued access to special support services or including the early stages of award study under the general umbrella of the preparatory program).

Note was made of the importance of the availability of academic learning support for Enabling students. It was argued that as Enabling students typically come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds they have special learning needs which must be addressed to assure the likelihood of persistence. It was noted that extensive academic learning support programs are more likely to be readily available to students in a university than in a non-university setting.

The existence of indigenous centres in many universities was reported by practitioners, and supported by submissions, as a factor that made university study, and Enabling programs in university, attractive for indigenous students. The following quote is not atypical of the arguments raised in this regard:

> *The subjects offered by Wilto Yerlo provide a secure space in which Indigenous students can explore their difficulties in a safe environment, including difficulties created by the unintended racism of students and staff in mainstream subjects. Based on the confidence they gain in this environment, I have seen Indigenous students make connections with non-Indigenous students, sharing ideas and information as well as socialising. Indigenous students gain the self-assurance to offer their reflections in tutorials and essays, not always an easy thing for any student to do. The Indigenous students learn how to use the actual resources that they will be using for the rest of their degree at Adelaide University – our library, our computer laboratories, for example. They are also guided in understanding the demands of tertiary level research and writing. There is a quantum leap from high school and TAFE to university requirements … University students in the social sciences must learn to give justifications (in terms of theoretical positions or evidence) for their opinions; they must learn to evaluate competing claims made by theorists in often abstract and specialist language; they must learn to make connections between concepts and hypotheses across a whole semester of work. The sooner students become aware of these academic requirements, the sooner they are launched on a successful academic learning career. Without the support offered by the dedicated and skilled staff of Wilto Yerlo, the university's success in recruiting and retaining Indigenous students would be very much reduced (Professor Chilla Bulbeck, Head of Department of Social Inquiry, University of Adelaide, personal communication in the form of a submission to the EIP project).*

For indigenous target groups, there was debate about delivering programs centrally (i.e. within the institution) or on-site in indigenous communities. Both models were seen to have benefits and disadvantages, but the point was made that whichever model was adopted the cost of delivery remained high.

6.3.5 Funding

Many practitioners saw Federal Government funding of Enabling programs as part of a responsibility to ensure education is available for all Australians. A view was expressed that the costs associated with Enabling programs and other strategies designed to empower disadvantaged individuals and improve their self-esteem and self-efficacy must take account of the costs associated with not providing such opportunities - poorer health status, poorer employment prospects, lower socio-economic status and the risk of negative social behaviours.

The degree to which individual institutions pass on the funding provided by the Commonwealth for Enabling provision on to the programs themselves arose as a potential area for concern. Many programs appeared to be allocated a small percentage – say 30 per cent - of the funds allocated by the Commonwealth.

Almost all practitioners consulted saw the HECS-free status of Enabling programs as a major incentive for disadvantaged students – particularly as major characteristics of the target group were a lack of confidence in, and degree of intimidation by, the prospect of further study. It was argued that students would be less likely to commit to debt until they were confident of their ability to achieve a successful outcome. There was a strong concern amongst practitioners that the imposition of any fee structures would interfere with the equity aims of programs.

Particular mention was made of the HECS disincentive for particular groups, such as mature aged women with family responsibilities and indigenous students. Practitioners indicated that as many indigenous families share income, HECS would not only create huge psychological pressures for indigenous students, but also mean that a failed attempt at an Enabling course would incur a debt that the whole family would share.

For many Enabling students, the associated costs of education (transport, childcare, textbooks, etc.) already impose a significant financial burden and require great sacrifice on the part of students and their families. Fees for Enabling-like programs are typically nominal implying significant subsidisation. Those in the VET sector reported continual resistance to institutional pressures to increase the cost to student of such courses.

There are broader funding and cost issues associated with the retention and progression of indigenous and other students from disadvantaged backgrounds in tertiary education, such as health, housing, access to services and providing for dependents. These broader issues need to form part of policies on access to and participation in tertiary education.

Practitioners expressed the need for funding to take account of the higher costs associated with delivery of programs for remote and isolated students, and presented arguments for differential funding models in relation to this group.

6.4 Summary

- The types of Enabling programs represented by practitioners indicated that various approaches are used to suit the particular clientele and context. Participants viewed the diversity of programs provided by a range of institutions from different educational sectors as a positive in terms of: (a) user choice and capacity to meet both individual needs and those specific to the local community; (b) spreading the costs; and (c) ensuring continued provision.
- Some practitioners suggested that the receiving sector (i.e. the endpoint of student progression) was the most appropriate to provide preparatory programs. Similar arguments were put forward supporting the need for programs that have different curriculum emphases, study modes, and course duration to enable potential students to choose the course which best fits their own needs.
- Practitioners were generally frustrated by a lack of a common understanding/agreement of what constitutes an 'enabling' program, even in a generic sense, and what constitutes a successful program outcome.
- There was a general perception by stakeholders that the official definitions of equity groups are not useful in practice. There is a need for improved methods to target Enabling programs that are agreed to and understood by all stakeholders. The concept of 'educational disadvantage' needs to be incorporated into any useful definition.
- There was a degree of cynicism amongst practitioners generally as to the ability of official statistics to accurately describe the outcomes of Enabling programs. For example, DETYA transfer rates appeared to underestimate the transfer rates developed by individual programs. Preparatory programs consistently report transfer rates into the home institution of 50-60 per cent or more.
- It is necessary for improved data collection on Enabling programs to more accurately reflect performance. Any assessment of the performance of individual programs must be contextualised for the student body involved.
- Practitioners see a range of benefits for students and institutions derived from Enabling programs beyond those able to be measured by official statistics. Practitioners expressed that although Enabling programs undoubtedly service the disadvantaged they more generally provide pathways and options for those who need them.
- The skills and knowledge imparted during preparatory program study are not necessarily considered by practitioners as the things that make the biggest impression on student. Practitioners cited confidence building, enculturation, and awareness of staff and services as important outcomes of Enabling study. Enabling programs also provide a 'test' for many students to see if they can study while balancing other commitments or carrying their own particular problems.

- Practitioners suggested elements of best practice that would enhance programs' capacity to improve their performance. Strategies suggested included: providing a completion ‘qualification’; providing students guaranteed entry into an award program upon successful completion; providing some degree of discipline-specific content or focus; and the continuation of ‘protected’ status into an award program say by continued access to special support services. The administration of programs could also be tightened, for example, by more rigorous management of ‘non-participating' students.
- Within the diversity of Enabling programs are differential costs of Enabling provision. Practitioners made particular mention of the high costs of Enabling provision to indigenous and geographically isolated students.
- The degree to which institutions pass on the Commonwealth’s Enabling provision funding to programs is a potential area of concern.
- The HECS-free status of Enabling programs was seen as a major incentive for disadvantaged students by almost all participants – particularly as major characteristics of the target group were a lack of confidence and intimidation by the prospect of further study.
- Practitioners overwhelmingly perceived that their programs contributed positively to achieving greater access to tertiary education and success within tertiary education for disadvantaged students. It was suggested that without such programs many of these students would be lost to the tertiary education sector and the individual and societal benefits associated with study at a tertiary institution forfeited.

Chapter 7

Characteristics and Views of Students in Enabling and Enabling-like Programs

7.1 Background and context

The many thousands of students who take advantage of Enabling and Enabling-Like programs annually likely represent the principal stakeholders of this project as they are the ones who seek to utilise the programs to pursue their own particular aims. Chapters 4 and 5 of this report describe the very wide range of Enabling-type programs available, the varied outcomes and objectives which these programs seek to achieve and the diversity of students which they seek to target. Chapter 6 summarises the perceptions, priorities and shared experiences of practitioners associated with these courses. This chapter, which reports on the outcomes of a student questionnaire activity, carries the consultation process further to gather and analyse the views of students commencing study in these programs and to generally provide them with a voice.

7.2 Purpose and objectives

In the early stages of this project the Advisory Committee specifically requested that a significant part of the study address the motivations, aims and concerns of commencing Enabling program students. As major stakeholders in the provision of these programs it was perceived to be essential to provide these students with a voice which spelt out the aspirations of participants and their perceived barriers to their own success and retention. The survey was also seen as an opportunity to gather more specific demographic data than is generally available in national datasets.

The student survey aimed to provide an opportunity for students to express their reasons for enrolling in these programs, the benefits they believed would accrue from their participation and the challenges they considered may have to be confronted during the course of their studies. It also provided the ability to compare and enhance the self-declared characteristics of Enabling and Enabling-like program students against the demographic characteristics obtained from analysis of the DETYA and AVETMISS data sets as detailed in Chapter 8. Further, as the students who participated in the survey represented the cohorts of a diverse range of both TAFE and higher education Enabling, Enabling-like and indigenous programs, the characteristics of these cohorts could be compared. Survey questions sought to reveal the past educational experiences of students with a particular interest in the pathways they were accessing to further their education and their plans for the future. They also sought to establish if there was a relationship between the educational level that each student and their parents had attained and their socio-economic status as determined by the postcode of

their home address. Questions related to their attraction to the course, the reasons for their enrolment, the benefits and pathways they hoped to attain, and barriers to their participation, which might challenge their ability to reach their goals, were posed. In addition, demographic data would provide a strong indication of the predominant social and cultural circumstances of the students.

7.3 Methodology

7.3.1 Pilot survey

The student survey exercise began with the development of a pilot survey designed to address the objectives and purpose outlined above. A survey instrument was developed for testing using students commencing a selected range of bridging programs in semester 2 1999. Due to the short time frame in which to survey students commencing a preparatory program mid-year, the project team accessed its most readily available and diverse cohorts of students. The final pilot survey sample had representation from both TAFE and higher education Enabling and Enabling-like programs but in the limited time available to prepare for the trial, only a relatively small cohort of indigenous students from both sectors was able to included in the pilot study. The instrument was designed to collect information of interest with allowance for open-ended responses to verify the adequacy of the question options provided. The characteristics of the survey sample are found in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Pilot Survey - Sample Characteristics and Response

Program	Approached	Returned			Response Rate
		Male	*Female*	*Total*	
Bremer Institute of TAFE Indigenous Program	23	12	3	15	65.2%
Gold Coast Institute of TAFE ATP Program	200	32	50	82	41.0%
USQ Indigenous Program (Kumbari Ngurpai Lag)	10	1	6	7	70.0%
USQ Tertiary Preparation Program					
Enabling		72	66	[a]139	
Enabling-like (fee-paying)		30	32	[a]63	
	---	---	---	---	---
	500	102	98	202	40.4%
Total	**733**	**147**	**157**	**306**	**41.7%**

[a] *student in each did not specify gender*

Data collected from this pilot survey was extensively analysed to ensure the objectives and purpose of the survey would be met in the final instrument. Item analysis was conducted from all items examining patterns of responses and responses from each program. Likert-type responses were tested for internal consistency and were explored using factor analysis. Correlations were computed

and a general exploration of inter-correlations of selected items was undertaken. The analysis provided valuable directions for the development of the final instrument.

7.3.2 The survey instrument

Other considerations were taken into account before finalising the survey instrument. Staff of TAFE/higher education indigenous and non-indigenous programs contributed their views on the issues that should be pursued and considered. In particular, the staff of several indigenous programs made valuable suggestions regarding indigenous cultural considerations. The questionnaire attempted to empathise with the social and cultural characteristics of the students in an effort to enrich the data.

The final instrument, "*Investigation of Programs Assisting Students to Access Tertiary Education"* (see Attachment 10) was provided to program cohorts with clear instructions that their responses would be treated in the strictest of confidence. The questionnaire comprised three components. The first section was concerned with determining the prior educational experiences of students and to gain insight into their pathways to further education through TAFE and higher education providers. Section B was made up entirely of five point, Likert scale items with an open-ended question for the provision of further information. These questions aimed to identify the principal reasons for study, the attractions to this particular program of study and the extent to which particular barriers might impose upon their ability to complete these programs successfully. The final section collected demographical information on each of the students. Aspects such as equity group membership and factors related to social and cultural background were included.

This component also concerned itself with assessing the socio-economic status of the student. It was determined, as a result of the pilot survey that socio-economic status data should be collected using both established post-code identification and data related to highest level of education achieved by self and respondent's parents. This information was one of the measures recommended by Western et al. (1998) for the assessment of socio-economic status and it was felt that this study might be able to contribute to verifying the criteria that had been proposed. Participants were also provided with the opportunity of requesting feedback about the results of the survey.

With the assistance of program providers, a user-friendly instrument was developed which was easily administered by facilitators with the aid of guidelines. The administration of the survey relied heavily on the support of practitioners at the program level. With the exception of the distance education programs that were delivered by mail, the survey was administered face to face.

7.3.3 The sample

The review of programs being offered (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) indicated that a wide range of programs needed to be considered by the project. While some of these programs targeted all persons, others were specifically concerned with addressing the needs of clearly identified under-represented groups or were obviously targeted at particular student needs. As it was impractical to sample the full range of programs, the larger programs, those representing the most typical bridging provision, were selected (refer Attachment 9). Some of the programs selected were external study programs, others, the vast majority, were on-campus, face to face. Both TAFE colleges and universities willingly participated, assisting with the identification of groups of subjects who met the criteria of being a commencing student in one of the groups defined by the project. Programs of interest to the project were identified early and a representative sample of programs from several states were approached to participate. In addition, where relevant, some programs from institutions which had actively approached the project with a view to ensuring that the opinions of their students would be considered, were included. The programs targeted for survey participation included:

- urban and regional Enabling courses;
- indigenous Enabling courses;
- fee-paying, Enabling-like courses offered by universities;
- TAFE certificates in tertiary preparation;
- TAFE vocational and tertiary preparation certificates for indigenous students; and
- TAFE-based matriculation (Higher School Certificate, HSC) courses.

Supplementary Enabling programs were not included in this study.

Several of the largest university based Enabling and Enabling-Like programs were selected to be included in the survey sample. The University of Newcastle, the largest Enabling provider, made available cohorts from both its Newstep (aged 17-21) program and its Open Foundation course (aged 20 years and over). Central Queensland University, a significant regional provider and the University of Western Sydney (Macarthur), a significant urban provider, were also sampled. The Tertiary Preparation Program, which is offered as a distance education program by the University of Southern Queensland as both an Enabling and an Enabling-like (fee-paying) program, also participated. The University of New South Wales provided a large on-campus Enabling-Like (fee-paying) program to the sample.

The TAFE programs included in the survey were drawn from tertiary preparation programs at Certificate Level 3 and 4. The Certificate III in Tertiary Preparation (TPC) program offered by NSW TAFE was deemed to be comparable to the Certificate IV in Adult Tertiary Preparation (ATP) program offered by the

Queensland TAFE sector. Both programs offer outcomes which aim to prepare students for further study, the programs are centrally administered by the respective State TAFE sector and statewide moderation of the programs occur. These two programs provide tertiary preparation courses that meet entrance requirements for specified award courses in most universities. Successful students gain admission to a university award program by application to the respective state tertiary admissions centre, where their performance in the preparatory program assists in determining a tertiary entrance rank.

The survey was targeted at both rural and urban TAFE colleges in both NSW and Queensland. Where possible, TAFE colleges that shared similar demographic populations with local universities, who were participating, also administered the survey. The demographic information gleaned from the TAFE and University sectors, which share catchment populations, was expected to provide some insight into the reasons why students choose to study these courses either at TAFE or with higher education. As several TAFE state sectors have tended to incorporate their bridging provision into their matriculation programs, the project decided that it would be beneficial to include some TAFE Higher School Certificate (HSC) cohorts in the survey sample. The demographic composition of these HSC programs could be examined and compared against TAFE Enabling-like provision.

Subjects from a range of both urban and rural, university and TAFE, indigenous programs were also sampled. Details of all participating institutions and programs and the survey response rate from their respective cohorts are provided in Table 7.2.

Survey participants were drawn from 26 programs offered in 19 institutions. Sixteen TAFE college programs participated and 10 programs at universities were sampled. In total this yielded a sample of 2 166 subjects, 1 222 were enrolled in higher education Enabling programs funded by DETYA, 188 were enrolled in higher education Enabling-like programs, 756 were enrolled in High School Certificate and preparatory programs provided by the TAFE sector. Within the total cohort of subjects, 169 identified themselves as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. This indigenous population was made up of 133 students enrolled in programs specifically designed for indigenous students while the remaining 36 indigenous students were enrolled in the various other programs that were sampled. Due to the size of some cohorts, in particular the indigenous cohorts and the higher education, Enabling-like programs, results of the survey should be treated with some caution, although the programs are generally representative of provision across both sectors.

Table 7.2: Student Survey Participating Institutions, Programs, Respondents and Response Rate, Grouped According to Higher Education, TAFE and Indigenous Program Status

Participating Institution	Program Name	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
HIGHER EDUCATION ENABLING			
University of Southern Queensland	Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP) - Enabling		
Central Queensland University	STEPS		
University of Newcastle	Open Foundation Course / Newstep		
University of Western Sydney (Macarthur)	Macstart		
	Sub-total	**1 130**	**79%**
HIGHER EDUCATION ENABLING-LIKE			
University of Southern Queensland	Tertiary Preparation Program – fee-paying		
University of New South Wales	University Preparation (UPP)		
	Sub-total	**188**	**51%**
HIGHER EDUCATION INDIGENOUS			
University of Adelaide	Wilto Yerlo Foundation Programs		
University of Tasmania	Murina Program		
Edith Cowan University	Aboriginal Foundation Studies		
University of Southern Queensland	Indigenous Preparatory Studies		
	Sub-total	**92**	**28%**
TAFE HSC			
Riverina Institute of TAFE	High School Certificate (HSC)		
Hunter Institute of TAFE	HSC		
Sydney Institute of Technology	HSC		
	Sub-total	**172**	**32%**
TAFE ENABLING-LIKE			
Riverina Institute of TAFE	Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC)		
Hunter Institute of TAFE	TPC		
Sydney Institute of Technology	TPC		
Western Sydney Institute of TAFE	TPC		
Bremer Institute of TAFE	Adult Tertiary Preparation (ATP)		
Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE	ATP		
Gold Coast Institute of TAFE	ATP		
Open Learning Institute of TAFE	ATP (distance)		
	Sub-total	**543**	**53%**
TAFE INDIGENOUS			
Southbank Institute of TAFE	Cert 3 & 4 in Tertiary and Vocational Preparation		
Riverina Institute of TAFE	Aboriginal Studies Group		
Western Sydney Institute of TAFE	Aboriginal Studies Group		
Illawarra Institute of TAFE	Aboriginal Studies Group		
North Coast Institute of TAFE	Aboriginal Studies Group		
	Sub-total	**41**	**33%**
	TOTAL	**2 166**	**57%**

7.4 Analysis of responses

7.4.1 Characteristics of students surveyed

Table 7.3 shows that, overall, there are a greater number of female students enrolled in these courses than males. A larger proportion of females to males exist in all programs surveyed. With the exception of the TAFE HSC group, which had a higher proportion of males than what would be expected from the overall distribution, the proportion of males to females within the other programs, did not differ significantly from the overall distribution. Indigenous programs in particular appear to have significantly more female than male students with TAFE HSC courses and university Enabling-like enrolments displaying a more balanced gender composition. An increased female presence in Enabling courses would be expected based on other sources of quantitative information (see Chapter 8).

Table 7.3: Gender by Respondent Group

	University Enabling		University Enabling-Like		University Indigenous		TAFE HSC		TAFE Enabling-Like		TAFE Indige-nous		Total	
		%		*%*		*%*		*%*		*%*		*%*		*%*
Female	730	65	107	57	65	71	91	53	327	61	26	65	62%	62
Male	396	35	81	43	26	29	81	47	213	39	14	35	38%	38
TOTAL	**1 126**		**188**		**91**		**172**		**540**		**40**		**2 157***	**100**

**9 missing cases*

More than half of the respondents indicated that they were aged between 15-24 years, as can be seen from Table 7.4. The age distribution differed by program type. Comparisons of the distribution of age within each program type against the total distribution indicated that virtually all programs differed in the type of student they attracted with respect to age. The TAFE programs tended to attract higher proportions of 15-24 year old students where as the university programs tended to attract a higher proportion of older students. Three quarters of the students enrolled in TAFE were aged between 15 and 24 with just under 50 per cent of the university and indigenous respondents in the same age group. This supports the notion that participants in University Enabling programs tend to be older than those participating in TAFE preparatory programs. Within the TAFE cohort, as might be anticipated, HSC students were almost exclusively in the 15-24 age group. University Enabling-like programs appeared to attract more students in the 25-34 year old age bracket when compared to University Enabling programs.

Table 7.4: Age by Respondent Group

	University Enabling		University Enabling-Like		University Indigenous Enabling		TAFE HSC		TAFE Enabling-Like		TAFE Indigenous Enabling		Total
		%		%		%		%		%		%	%
15 -24	524	47	71	38	42	46	167	97	364	67	23	59	55
25 - 34	310	27	76	40	31	34	2	1	100	18	7	18	24
35 - 49	244	22	34	18	14	15	3	2	69	13	7	18	17
50 +	46	4	7	4	4	4	0	0	8	2	2	5	3
TOTAL	**1 124**		**188**		**91**		**172**		**541**		**39**		**2 155***

**11 missing cases*

In response to a question relating to employment status, 764 (55 per cent) university students and 295 (40 per cent) TAFE students indicated that they were undertaking some employment while studying. The different program types tended to attract students with different employment characteristics. Comparisons of the distribution of type of employment within each program against the total distribution indicated that virtually all types of programs differed in the employment characteristics of the students they enrolled. From Table 7.5 it is evident that university Enabling and Enabling-like and university indigenous students are more likely to be employed full time, with TAFE students more likely to be engaged in casual work. This could be an indication that different demographic groups are attracted to different types of programs. It could also be argued that it is a function of both age group differences and the greater proportion of students enrolled in distance and part-time study modes with universities. Delivery by these modes tends to provide greater flexibility for mature students with wide ranging family, social and community commitments. A larger proportion of both higher education indigenous students (68 per cent) and TAFE indigenous students (93 per cent) are not employed. University Enabling-like students appear to be more likely than university Enabling program students to be employed full-time.

Table 7.5: Employment Status of Respondents

	University Enabling		University Enabling-Like		University Indigenous		TAFE HSC		TAFE Enabling-Like		TAFE Indigen-ous		Total	
		%		%		%		%		%		%		%
Full time	194	17	101	54	15	16	2	1	52	10	1	2	365	17
Part time	185	16	23	12	6	7	15	9	87	16	0	0	316	15
Casual	220	20	18	10	2	2	48	28	88	16	2	5	378	18
Not Employed	522	47	46	24	68	75	104	61	309	58	37	93	1 086	51
TOTAL	**1 121**		**188**		**91**		**169**		**536**		**40**		**2 145***	

** 21 missing cases*

7.4.2 Equity characteristics of respondents

The equity information was collected as part of the survey and analysed using the Martin (1994) equity group identifiers. Consequently, rural, isolated and socio-economic status was determined on the basis of postcode. Table 7.6 shows that a significant proportion of students enrolled in Enabling and Enabling-like programs both in universities and with TAFE, with the exception of HSC students, are mature age learners aged 25 years or more.

Both university and TAFE programs tended to service similar proportions of rural students however, universities had a larger share of isolated enrolments, probably because of the distance provisions of some of these programs. Students with disabilities were enrolled across all program types with the university sector tending to provide for marginally more. Almost one third of university Enabling program students and both university and TAFE indigenous program students are from Low SES backgrounds. In contrast, only 15 per cent of Enabling-like students were in this socio-economic grouping. It also appeared that TAFE indigenous programs were serving marginally more Low SES indigenous students than university indigenous programs.

Eighty five percent of subjects were born in Australia, with a further 2.5 per cent and three per cent born in New Zealand or the United Kingdom respectively. A relatively small proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds were sampled. The principal languages of the non-English speaking background students were Spanish (20), Cantonese (15), Arabic (10) and Korean (eight). Table 7.6 shows these students were primarily enrolled across the range of TAFE programs and in the university Enabling-like programs.

The Martin (1994) identifiers were developed for the higher education system as a basis for sector wide monitoring of general trends and are recognised as having limited application for practical selection at the program level (Western *et al.* 1998). Enabling program students are often selected by means of program specific "disadvantaged" criteria which are generally broader and more inclusive than the official definitions of the six targeted groups. This may help to explain the relatively high proportion of students, in both university and TAFE programs, who are not captured by the Martin (1994) identifiers.

Table 7.7 explores both the proportions of students in each program type, which were not identified as meeting the criteria of the Martin (1994) identifiers, 46 per cent in total; and the extent to which those students, who were identified, were members by definition of more than one equity group.

As might have been anticipated, higher education Enabling-like students were less likely to be identified as belonging to one or more of the equity groups. There were comparable proportions of TAFE and higher education Enabling students in the non-target proportions.

Table 7.6: Equity Group Membership within Program Type

Program Type	Count*	% *NESB*	% *Rural*	% *Remote*	% *ATSI*	% *Disab-ility*	% *>25 yrs*	% *Female*	LowSES[a] % *All*	*>25 yrs*	*< 25 yrs*
University Enabling	1 129	0.89	27.45	2.26	1.98	9.16	53.38	64.83	32.36	32.27	32.59
University Enabling-Like	188	7.98	15.17	2.81	0.54	5.88	62.23	56.91	15.73	18.02	11.94
University Indigenous	93	[b]0.00	35.80	20.99	98.92	7.69	53.85	71.43	28.40	25.58	31.58
TAFE HSC	172	3.49	20.39	0.00	3.57	6.55	2.91	52.91	24.34	50.00	23.65
TAFE Enabling-Like	543	4.24	23.32	0.21	3.75	6.68	32.72	60.56	23.32	22.42	23.87
TAFE Indigenous	41	7.32	22.86	0.00	68.29	5.41	41.03	65.00	34.29	31.25	36.84

**Percentages based on valid data only (i.e., Non-responses are not considered)*
[a] Aust Socio-economic Status Index (SES1)
[b] The definition for NESB used in the higher education sector (as per Martin (1994) necessarily excludes indigenous persons.

Indigenous students tended to demonstrate membership of more than one equity category, many being from rural and remote areas or of Low SES status. The Low SES proportion of indigenous students was however similar to the Low SES proportion in the other program types. One in every five higher education Enabling students qualified for membership of more than one equity group. While marginally higher proportions of TAFE HSC and TAFE Enabling-like qualified under one criteria, smaller proportions are observed to qualify on more than one criteria, than the higher education Enabling students. This would tend to suggest that higher education Enabling programs have been successful in their attempts to target students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

Students were also asked to indicate whether they intended or were currently obtaining financial support for their studies. Overall, 67.77 per cent of students indicated that they anticipated looking for financial support however there were significant differences depending on the program type. A comparison within program type using the overall distribution as a baseline indicated that higher-education Enabling-like students were less likely to look for financial support whereas higher education indigenous Enabling, TAFE HSC, and TAFE indigenous Enabling-like were more likely to anticipate looking for financial support.

Table 7.7: Multiple Equity Group Membership by Program Type

		Number of equity groups students qualify for[b]					
		Non-target[a]	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*Total*
Higher Education Enabling	***Count***	487	361	186	20		1 054
	%	46.20	34.25	17.65	1.90		100.0
Higher Education Enabling-Like	***Count***	117	42	19	1	1	180
	%	65.00	23.33	10.56	0.56	0.56	100.0
Higher Education Indigenous	***Count***	1	34	40	18		93
	%	1.08	36.56	43.01	19.35		100.0
TAFE HSC	***Count***	74	67	9	2		152
	%	48.68	44.08	5.92	1.32		100.0
TAFE Enabling	***Count***	239	177	58	3		477
	%	50.10	37.11	12.16	0.63		100.0
TAFE Indigenous	***Count***	5	17	15	2		39
	%	12.82	43.59	38.46	5.13		100.0
Total	***Count***	**923**	**698**	**327**	**46**	**1**	**1 995**
	%	**46.27**	**34.99**	**16.39**	**2.31**	**0.05**	**100.0**

[a] *"Non-target" is defined by students who indicated that they did not qualify for all of the six equity group classifications. It therefore does not include cases where a student did not respond to the appropriate questions to be able to derive a classification.*
[b] *Equity groups are: ATSI, NESB, Low SES, disability, rural, and remote.*

As shown in Table 7.8, the majority of university and TAFE students received financial assistance in the form of Austudy or Centrelink support with many also relying on family income. As would be expected based on the lower number of indigenous students who were employed, almost all indigenous students were Abstudy recipients with far fewer indicating that the family income supported their studies.

Table 7.8: Potential Source of Financial Support

Source of Financial Support	Count	% of Responses	% of Cases*
Employer funded	317	15.4	19.2
Family Income	404	19.6	24.4
Abstudy	113	5.5	6.8
Austudy	351	17.0	21.2
Other Scholarships	18	0.9	1.1
Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services	18	0.9	1.1
Centrelink	634	30.7	38.4
University Scholarship	208	10.1	12.6
Total	**2 063**	**100**	**124.8**

**Multi-response analysis*
513 missing cases; 1,653 valid cases

7.4.3 Educational pathways

A number of questions were asked relating to prior educational achievement, highest level of education, and future study plans.

7.4.3.1 Prior educational qualifications

Table 7.9 indicates that five percent of respondents had no further education than to primary school level. A further 41 per cent had completed secondary school to Year 10 and a further 32 per cent had completed Year 12. A lesser proportion (11 per cent) had achieved a vocational certificate or apprenticeship. Surprisingly, a small percentage of both university and TAFE students enrolled in preparatory courses stated they had already achieved a degree level qualification. The relatively high level of Year 12 completions and certainly the participation of graduates in these programs were not expected. Several factors could be operating here. Firstly, the preparatory programs may be being utilised by the growing proportion of students who complete Year 12 without a Tertiary Entrance Score (TES), thus lacking a tertiary entry qualification. It is also possible that students with a TES are using these preparatory programs to upgrade their TES to gain entry into more selective award courses. However, as far more effective upgrading options are generally promoted (particularly utilising the first year of study of an accessible award course) and since preparatory programs are not treated sympathetically by State Tertiary Admissions Centres (refer to section 2.4.4) this use for preparatory programs does not appear an overly attractive option. An alternative motivation for students with a TES to use preparatory programs relates to the perceived need by the student to require additional preparation, say after a significant period away from formal study or if particular additional skills, say in mathematics, are needed. In this regard the importance of the lack of confidence and knowledge of the requirements of further study which is reported by students as a major motivation for entering preparatory programs (discussed below - see Table 7.12) may have particular significance. It is noteworthy that the wording of the Enabling Guidelines (Attachment 1) emphasises the role of these programs in preparing students for entry, not only qualifying them.

An analysis of the prior educational qualifications of indigenous subjects revealed that two per cent had no formal schooling, 17 per cent had completed primary school, 43 per cent had completed secondary to Year 10, 22 per cent had completed Year 12 and 11 per cent had achieved a trade certificate or undertaken an apprenticeship. In general the prior educational experiences of indigenous students were less than that observed in the non-indigenous subjects.

An analysis of variance indicated a significant difference in self education level across program types. The contrasts indicate a significant difference between higher education and TAFE courses. Students enrolled in the higher education programs tended to have a higher level of education then those enrolled in TAFE courses. There were no differences overall in the level of education of students enrolled in the Enabling programs or the Enabling-like programs. This effect is marginal however, with the trend indicating that higher education Enabling-like

students have a higher mean level of education than those in Enabling programs. There is support for this trend when individual programs are considered, the higher education Enabling-like group had a higher mean level of education than all other program groups. Students in the non-indigenous programs also had a higher mean level of education than those in the indigenous programs.

Tables 7.9 and 7.10 also indicate the level of education achieved by the respondents' parents. There were significant differences in the level of education of both the student's father and mother between program types. The contrasts indicate no significant differences between the higher education programs and TAFE programs. There were however differences between Enabling and higher education Enabling-like programs; and between indigenous and non-indigenous programs. Parents of the students in the Enabling-like programs had higher mean level of education then the parents of students in the Enabling programs. Students in the non-indigenous programs reported that their parents had a higher level of education then students in the indigenous programs.

Table 7.9: Respondents' and Parents Highest Level of Educational Attainment

	Self		**Father's Level**		**Mother's Level**	
		%		*%*		*%*
No schooling	6	0.3	70	3.2	61	2.8
Completed Primary School	104	4.8	289	13.3	281	13.0
Completed Year 10	895	41.3	433	20.0	609	28.1
Completed High School	684	31.6	206	9.5	294	13.6
Trade certificate/Apprenticeship	239	11.0	338	15.6	82	3.8
Tertiary access	80	3.7	39	1.8	45	2.1
Diploma / Associate Diploma	91	4.2	93	4.3	123	5.7
Degree or higher	19	0.9	229	10.6	218	10.1
Unsure	9	0.4	257	11.9	253	11.7
Sub-Total	**2 127**	**98.2**	**1 954**	**90.2**	**1 966**	**90.8**
Missing Cases	39	1.8	212	9.8	200	9.2

It is of interest to consider the relationship between the SES identifier as defined by Martin (1994) using geographical location, and as defined by Western et al (1998) using highest parental education level. The analyses conducted showed consistently that a significant relationship between Martin and Western identifiers of SES is apparent across the full data set, but when individual program types are considered, the relationship between the measures of SES collapses for all but the higher-education Enabling group.

Using level of education as an interval measure, the analysis compared the mean level of education at each of the three levels of SES as defined by Martin (1994), using geographical location - postcode. When collapsed over all students and therefore all program types, there were consistent differences in the mean level of education for students identified as High/Medium/Low using postcode to define

SES. When the same basic analysis was considered within program type however, the effect disappeared for all but the higher education Enabling group.

In the higher education Enabling program, students categorised as High SES using postcode had a parental level of education significantly higher than students classified as Medium, who had a significantly higher mean level of highest parental education then the Low SES group. There were no significant differences between SES levels for any of the other program types.

These are interesting results when considering the use of postcode and parental level of education as indicators of extent of disadvantage. When the distribution of SES x level of education for the total sample is considered, a significant relationship exists between SES as defined by Martin and educational level as defined by Western. However, in this sample, SES is statistically related to education level for the higher-education Enabling programs only. There is generally no relationship between SES and education level for the other program types.

Table 7.10: Mean Level of Education

	Mean Level of Education		
	Self [a]	***Father*** [a]	***Mother*** [a]
Higher Education Enabling	3.84	3.71	3.53
Higher Education Enabling-Like	4.25	4.24	3.93
Higher Education Indigenous	3.19	1.91	2.21
TAFE HSC	3.17	4.05	4.30
TAFE Enabling-Like	3.64	3.65	3.43
TAFE Indigenous	3.44	1.40	1.47
Total	**3.74**	**3.65**	**3.51**
One-way ANOVA results (all p < .001)	F(5, 2151) = 17.36	F(5, 1903) = 16.11	F(5, 1907) = 13.82

7.4.3.2 Future study plans

Students were asked to specify their intended future plans after finishing the course in which they were enrolled. Almost all of the university students stated an intention to attend university on completion of the course (96.5 per cent). It was also the case that the majority of TAFE students stated an intention to undertake further study at university (73 per cent). Only four per cent of university students indicated an intention to undertake further studies at TAFE, while the equivalent figure for the TAFE cohort was 26 per cent.

Non-indigenous students were more likely to indicate that they planned to go to university than were indigenous students. Indigenous students however were more likely to indicate plans to attend TAFE or to have plans other than to attend university or TAFE. Sixty eight percent of the indigenous students intended to study at university in the future, with 29 per cent indicating that they wished to

undertake further studies at TAFE. Due to the relatively small indigenous sample however, caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions on the basis of these results.

Table 7.11: Respondents Plans to Attend University / TAFE / or Undertake Other Activities

		Higher Education Enabling	Higher Education Enabling-Like	Higher Education Indigenous	TAFE HSC	TAFE Enabling-Like	TAFE Indige-nous	Total
Plans to Attend University								
Yes		1076	179	72	92	422	10	1851
	%	97.29	96.24	85.71	55.42	81.94	27.78	88.44
No		30	7	12	74	93	26	242
	%	2.71	3.76	14.29	44.58	18.06	72.22	11.56
Plans to Attend TAFE								
Yes		30	4	7	40	89	19	189
	%	3.58	3.13	11.67	26.85	22.59	65.52	11.83
No		808	124	53	109	305	10	1409
	%	96.42	96.88	88.33	73.15	77.41	34.48	88.17
Other Plans								
Yes		68	20	23	65	85	9	270
	%	8.71	17.70	36.51	46.10	22.49	40.91	18.02
No		713	93	40	76	293	13	1228
	%	91.29	82.30	63.49	53.90	77.51	59.09	81.98

Of those students who plan to attend university 30 per cent indicate an interest in pursuing studies in an Arts area, this included Psychology, Communications and Indigenous Studies. A further 16 per cent plan to seek studies in Education, 12 per cent in each of Health and Science and nine per cent in Business. Seven percent were unsure of their intended field of study. Those students planning to attend TAFE primarily selected Arts (25 per cent), Business (22 per cent) and Science (17 per cent), with 10 per cent unsure of their intended field of study. There was no significant difference between indigenous and non-indigenous student choice of field of study. The principal plan of students indicating activities, other than attending university or TAFE, was related to work and employment opportunities (73 per cent).

7.4.4 Reasons for undertaking a preparatory course

7.4.4.1 Reasons for deciding to study

Students were asked to respond to a number of possible reasons for choosing to pursue a preparatory course of study. It should be noted that these students were commencing their preparatory programs of study and that this may have had a bearing on their responses. Table 7.12 details the percentage of respondents who either strongly agreed or agreed with a number of statements about course choice. It is apparent that the primary reason that commencing university and TAFE

students decide to undertake preparatory studies was to further their education. Students from all program groups tended to agree/strongly agree that a reason for choosing to study was to further their education (97.87 per cent agreed or strongly agreed). Students from higher education programs tended to rate this statement significantly more positively than TAFE students, although the effect size is small. There were no differences between Enabling and higher education Enabling-like programs, or indigenous and non-indigenous students in their endorsement of further education as the primary reason for deciding to study.

All groups of students were least likely to be studying in order to fill in spare time (62.21 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed). There were, however, differences between indigenous and non-indigenous students in regard to this statement. While generally disagreeing with the statement, students from the indigenous programs rated the statement less negatively then non-indigenous students.

There were some significant differences in university and TAFE students' reasons for choosing a preparatory program. Those studying at TAFE were significantly less likely to be studying to improve their self-esteem or their confidence in their academic ability. It might be argued that the higher proportion of mature aged persons in university Enabling courses reflects a longer absence from formal schooling and a need to re-establish a degree of confidence in their ability to undertake further education. TAFE students were also significantly less likely to want to test their skills and abilities or better understand the requirements of further study. While only approximately half of the university students intended to set an example for their family and children or contribute to the improvement of the community, they were significantly more likely to want to do so than those attending TAFE.

While indigenous students also reported that a main reason for choosing to enrol in a preparatory course was to further their education, the overwhelming majority also either agreed or strongly agreed with almost all the other potential motivating factors for undertaking such a program of study. The responses in Table 7.12 contrast markedly with those made by university and TAFE non-indigenous students especially in relation to contributing to community improvement and setting an example for their family and children. Overall, the indigenous response pattern appears to suggest high levels of motivation across a range of issues relating to preparatory studies with indigenous students strongly citing educational, economic, and personal development reasons for enrolling in the course.

Comparing the responses of Enabling and higher education Enabling-like programs shows a lesser concern by the Enabling-like group for gaining employment and improving their economic situation. This would tend to support the assertion that higher education Enabling-like students, who are fee-paying students in this study, are more secure in their social and financial circumstances. This group was also less concerned about setting an example for their families and children.

The TAFE HSC group, the youngest of the cohorts, responded significantly lower in agreement on several items relative to all other program types. These were testing skills and abilities, gaining a better understanding of the requirements of further study, improving self-esteem, improving economic situation, setting an example for family and friends and contributing to community improvement. They also rated filling in spare time higher than the other program types, with the exception of the indigenous programs.

Table 7.12: Respondents Reasons for Undertaking a Preparatory Course

	University Enabling	University Enabling-Like	University Indigenous	TAFE HSC	TAFE Enabling-Like	TAFE Indigenous	Total
Further education	98.6%	97.2%	98.9%	94.0%	97.7%	97.2%	**97.8%**
Improve confidence in academic ability	88.1%	88.9%	96.7%	64.5%	87.0%	73.5%	**86.2%**
Better understand the requirements of further study	86.9%	87.9%	95.6%	58.2%	83.6%	76.5%	**84.0%**
Increase employment prospects	85.7%	73.5%	92.3%	91.7%	85.2%	85.3%	**85.2%**
Help gain employment	77.8%	55.3%	90.2%	87.7%	74.1%	85.7%	**76.4%**
Test skills and abilities	71.1%	80.7%	83.6%	47.7%	64.7%	65.8%	**68.9%**
Improve self esteem	65.1%	62.9%	83.7%	30.0%	62.8%	61.8%	**62.2%**
Improve my economic situation	66.0%	49.2%	85.9%	51.4%	64.6%	48.5%	**63.6%**
Set example for family / children	54.5%	31.8%	93.5%	28.4%	48.1%	66.7%	**50.8%**
Contribute to community improvement	45.2%	42.5%	94.5%	15.2%	35.5%	43.7%	**41.3%**
Fill in spare time	12.5%	12.8%	34.8%	19.1%	13.2%	35.3%	**14.6%**

7.4.4.2 Reasons for enrolling in the course of choice

Specific questions were asked which related to reasons for enrolling in the student's course of choice. Table 7.13 indicates that while a significant proportion of university and TAFE students either strongly agreed or agreed that the course offered their preferred mode of study and was convenient, their responses differed on other items.

The most significant difference between the two groups related to future study plans. Higher education students tended to agree that they enrolled in the course because they intended to continue studying with the current institution. Students in the higher education programs, rated the question significantly more positively then students in the TAFE programs. This might be anticipated given that preparatory programs offered in the university sector tend to be geared for entry into the host institution while the TAFE programs surveyed do not have the same institutional focus (Chapter 4). Students in Enabling programs rated the question more positively than higher education Enabling-like students, and indigenous students tended to rate the question significantly more positively than non-indigenous students. These responses tie in with the relative frequency of features offered by these programs such as guaranteed award entry between the different program types (Chapter 4). The TAFE HSC group rated the question more negatively than all other groups (42.26 per cent disagreed/strongly disagreed).

Overall, students tended to agree that they enrolled in the course because it was recommended to them – 51.13 per cent agreed or strongly agreed (28.26 per cent were neutral). Students in the higher education programs rated the question significantly more positively then students in the TAFE programs. Students in Enabling programs rated the question more positively than higher education Enabling-like students, and indigenous students tended to rate the question significantly more positively than non-indigenous students. The TAFE HSC group tended to rate the question more neutrally (23.08 per cent disagree, 29.59 per cent neutral, 31.95 per cent agreed).

University students were also more likely than those from TAFE to respond that the information and advertisements convinced them to enrol in the program of study. Generally, students tended to respond neutrally that the information booklets and advertising was a reason for applying for enrolment in the current course (38.15 per cent neutral, M = 2.95). Higher education students tended to endorse the statement more positively than TAFE students. The TAFE HSC students tended to disagree/strongly disagree with the statement and their mean level of agreement was significantly lower than all other groups (M = 2.39).

Table 7.13: Respondents Reasons for Enrolling in a Particular Course

	University Enabling	University Enabling-Like	University Indigenous	TAFE HSC	TAFE Enabling-Like	TAFE Indigenous	Total
I plan to continue studying with this institution							
	87.4%	84.3%	80.0%	21.4%	26.1%	50.0%	**65.6%**
It was the most convenient way to study							
	76.9%	84.9%	71.6%	67.9%	80.8%	75.0%	**77.7%**
It offered my preferred mode of study							
	64.7%	57.9%	73.7%	57.4%	66.5%	64.6%	**64.4%**
The course was recommended to me							
	58.4%	43.3%	67.4%	39.7%	47.4%	54.3%	**53.1%**
The information and advertisements convinced me							
	34.9%	30.7%	44.0%	11.9%	23.1%	25.8%	**30.0%**

7.4.5 Threats to the completion of studies

Students were asked to indicate the extent to which a range of factors could pose a threat to their ability to satisfactorily complete the course in which they were enrolled. Table 7.14 shows that the greatest perceived threat related to financial problems, 38 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this may become an issue. This threat was followed by domestic/family and job commitments and shortage of time for study, which were expressed by approximately one in every four respondents. Overall however, it is apparent that commencing university and TAFE, both indigenous and non-indigenous students, believed that there were few obstacles that could limit their ability to complete the course in which they had enrolled. Less than 10 per cent of respondents expressed concern that the course not meeting their expectations could threaten the successful completion of their studies. They were more concerned with their motivation to study, that the work may be too difficult, that their access to computers and learning support may be inadequate or that health issues may intervene; although, none of these factors were stated by more than one in five respondents.

Generally, there were few differences in the responses to these perceived threats between program type groups. The only significant differences are between Enabling and university Enabling-like students. Enabling students rated financial problems a significantly more positive threat than university Enabling-like students, which again would support an assertion that Enabling students represented a less financially secure group overall than Enabling-like students. Job commitments, shortage of available study time, lack of motivation, high course workload and the course not meeting their expectations were each rated as a more significant threat by university Enabling-like students than by Enabling students.

The relatively high level of confidence that students have in both themselves and their courses when commencing Enabling and Enabling-like programs, runs counter to the significant attrition rates associated with these programs. Clearly a longitudinal study examining the changing fortunes of students as they progress through these courses would be of value.

Table 7.14: Respondents Perceived Threats to Course Completion

	University Enabling	University Enabling-Like	University Indigenous	TAFE HSC	TAFE Enabling-Like	TAFE Indigenous	Total
Financial problems	41.6%	27.9%	33.7%	34.9%	37.3%	33.4%	**38.4%**
Domestic / family commitments	28.8%	30.0%	36.2%	22.0%	27.5%	26.4%	**27.9%**
Shortage of time to study	22.7%	38.4%	17.0%	29.0%	27.2%	21.2%	**25.4%**
Course workload too great	18.5%	30.9%	14.9%	20.9%	22.4%	20.6%	**20.6%**
Level / type of work too difficult	16.7%	19.6%	10.1%	13.1%	16.1%	12.1%	**16.1%**
Computer needs / access	17.2%	18.2%	23.5%	21.0%	15.5%	15.7%	**17.4%**
Job commitments	24.2%	44.1%	17.2%	21.7%	22.8%	12.2%	**24.9%**
Health problems	13.9%	14.5%	13.7%	21.3%	18.2%	12.1%	**15.6%**
Lack of learning and / or social support	12.8%	14.7%	11.3%	13.7%	12.9%	9.4%	**13.0%**
Lack of motivation to study	11.7%	16.3%	11.4%	26.7%	18.0%	6.1%	**14.8%**
Course not meeting expectations	6.4%	13.9%	10.2%	7.7%	7.9%	21.9%	**7.9%**

7.5 Summary of program type responses

Overall, the survey responses suggested that each of the six different program types considered served student groups with particular characteristics. The principal features of the students from each program type are summarised below.

7.5.1 Enabling students

Two thirds of Enabling respondents are female. Almost half are in the 15-24 age group and are employed in either full time, part time or casual work. Those who receive financial support mainly rely on Centrelink, Austudy or the family income. Based upon postcode, a third of these students are from Low SES, 30 per cent are also identified as living in rural or isolated areas. Twenty percent of Enabling students met more than one equity group membership criteria. The mean level of educational attainment of the students and their parents is marginally higher than the TAFE Enabling-like respondents but lower than university Enabling-like students.

In relation to undertaking their courses, commencing Enabling students:

- Decide to study to improve their self esteem while testing their skills to gain a better understanding of university study so that they can further their education.
- Select their course primarily because they want to continue their studies at the host institution but also because it is convenient and offers a preferred study mode.
- Believe that there are relatively few threats to the completion of the Enabling course with the exception of possible financial problems.

Commencing Enabling students also overwhelmingly state that their intention is to continue their studies on completion of the preparatory course. The preparatory course allows them to build their confidence and determine whether their skills and understanding of tertiary study requirements are compatible with the institution where they intend to further their education in the future.

7.5.2 University Enabling-like students

The characteristics of the Enabling-like university students indicate that they are more likely to be older with 40 per cent in the 25 to 34 age group. They are also significantly more likely to be in full time employment (54 per cent compared with only 17 per cent of Enabling students) were employed full time. Those fee paying, Enabling-like students who indicated that they were receiving some form of financial support overwhelmingly tended to obtain assistance from employers or family income. While the percentage of Enabling students who were not captured by the Martin (1994) identifiers was 46 per cent, this figure increased to more than 65 per cent for those paying fees.

Students in higher education Enabling-like courses also appear, for the most part, to have achieved higher levels of educational attainment. They had higher mean levels of educational attainment than university students in Enabling courses. The mean level of education of their parents was also higher than for Enabling students.

Higher education Enabling-like students:

- Choose Enabling-like programs for reasons other than improving financial or employment prospects and primarily want to further their education.

- Enrol in their course of choice for similar reasons to Enabling students but are less likely to have had the course recommended to them.

- Are significantly more likely to agree that factors relating to work commitments and decreased time for study may impact on their ability to complete the preparatory course.

While higher education Enabling-like students chose a preparatory course for reasons similar to Enabling students, such as furthering their education, better understanding the requirements of further study, and improving confidence in their academic ability, some significant differences between the groups were also evident. Students in fee-paying courses were significantly less likely than Enabling students to have chosen preparatory studies to help gain employment, to increase their employment prospects, to improve their economic situation, or set an example for their family

Further significant differences between the two groups were evident in relation to perceived threats to course completion. As would be expected given the tendency for a greater level of employment commitments of fee-paying students, they were significantly more likely to indicate that job commitments, time for study, and the course workload could limit their ability to complete the program of study. Fee-paying students were also significantly more likely to agree that additional threats could relate to the course failing to meet their expectations (possibly implying a better informed or more discerning clientele) or a lack of motivation to study.

Similar responses to Enabling students were obtained in relation to future study intentions. Some 96 per cent of fee paying preparatory students indicated that they planned to enrol in a university course after finishing their studies. Notably however, 18 per cent of these students also had plans other than further study at university or TAFE, this was significantly higher than for Enabling program students (nine per cent).

7.5.3 TAFE Enabling-like students

TAFE respondents undertaking preparatory courses were markedly younger than the university cohorts. Approximately 40 per cent were engaged in some form of employment, generally part time or casually, and those receiving financial supported tended to be obtaining assistance from Centrelink or Austudy. As was the case with university students, nearly half were not captured by the Martin (1994) identifiers, with those who were identified were more likely to be from rural or socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The majority of TAFE students undertaking preparatory award courses:

- Choose these studies to further their education but are less likely to have selected the course to improve their confidence or better understand the requirements of further study.
- Enrol with the aim of attending university in the future but are less likely to have had the course recommended to them or have been influenced by information or advertising material relevant to the program.
- Perceive few potential threats to course completion, with the exception of possible financial problems, but indicate that they are less motivated to finish the program than university students.

Apart from age, there are considerable similarities between the demographics of students in TAFE preparatory programs and higher education Enabling programs. With some exceptions, they also hold similar views on their reasons for choosing and enrolling in a preparatory program and the possible barriers to their successful completion of the course.

While three-quarters indicated an intention to attend university at the completion of their preparatory course, 23 per cent indicated plans to undertake further studies with TAFE. They were also much more likely than Enabling students to have plans other than attending university or TAFE, 22 per cent as opposed to nine per cent.

7.5.4 TAFE HSC students

TAFE HSC programs service the youngest students of the program types studied. They have similar proportions of male to female students. Students are for the most part not employed and are significantly less likely to have completed Year 10. Within this sample, half of the HSC students belong to one of the equity group categories identified by the Martin (1994) identifiers but are significantly less likely to be a member of more than one equity group.

As might be anticipated given their age, the mean level of education of this group is lower than for all other program types however, their parents generally had a higher mean level of education than parents of students from the other program types.

There were also significant differences between TAFE HSC and other program-type students in relation to future education plans. TAFE HSC students were significantly less likely than TAFE and university Enabling and Enabling-like students to indicate that they intended to enrol in a university course in the future and significantly more likely to have an alternative plan or attend TAFE

TAFE HSC students:

- Choose these studies to further their education with a view to enhancing their employment prospects but were less concerned with improving their

confidence and self esteem or understanding the requirements of further study. They were also significantly less likely to wish to set an example for their children / family or contribute to improving the community.

- They enrolled in the HSC program because it was convenient and offered their preferred mode of study but not because it was recommended to them or because they were convinced by advertisements or program information.

- Were similarly concerned about financial problems threatening completion of their course but were more likely than other program type students to identify a lack of motivation to study.

These findings indicate that there are substantial differences between TAFE HSC students and other program-type students. They differ significantly with regard to aspirations and current motivations. The results appear to indicate that, within this sample, while there is some overlap in terms of provision, TAFE HSC courses are catering for different groups of students reflecting different needs and future plans than university and TAFE preparatory programs.

7.5.5 Higher education and TAFE indigenous students

It was apparent that those students from an indigenous background displayed some unique characteristics when compared with other students.

Indigenous students were less likely to be employed than other student groups. Those receiving financial support were likely to be eligible for Abstudy and unlikely to be obtaining monetary assistance from the family income. As well as belonging to the identified disadvantaged group based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, many also belonging to rural, isolated and Low SES groups.

Indigenous students in preparatory programs:

- Choose enabling courses to further their education and for a range of altruistic reasons, such as contributing to their community and setting an example for their families, and perceive a wide range of positive benefits from studying.
- Enrol in their course of choice as they plan to continue studying at the institution in the future but also because it was convenient and recommended to them.
- Believe that few problems could prevent them from completing the course but a third acknowledge potential financial difficulties and domestic and family commitments as possible threats.

Overall, the commitment of the indigenous students to their current course and future university studies was evident throughout the survey responses. These students indicated that they strongly believed that the positive benefits accrued from the preparatory course and further educational opportunities would extend into their families and wider communities. It was also revealed that indigenous

students are embarking on their studies from a background of educational disadvantage that is greater than that of other students. Their mean level and, in particular, the mean level of educational attainment of their parents was substantially lower than all other program groups. This observation tends to support the assertion that a significant proportion of indigenous students may benefit from additional preparation before enrolling in a preparatory program which leads directly to undergraduate studies.

7.6 Summary

- The six program types that were sampled by this survey service students who exhibit differences in their general characteristics and in the views they hold with regard to undertaking their chosen course.
- Commencing TAFE HSC students, are particularly distinctive as a group which is younger, have not yet attained a comparable level of education and in general have not yet made firm decisions regarding their future study plans.
- Commencing TAFE Enabling-like students display many demographic characteristics and views similar to their university based Enabling and Enabling-like counterparts. They are generally younger however and although overwhelmingly state an intention to enrol in a university course after completing their studies, are more likely to have plans to study further at TAFE or have alternative plans which are generally related to employment opportunities.
- Generally, indigenous students enrol in their TAFE and higher education preparatory programs from a position of much greater educational and social need. They hold strong views about the value of further education and the wider benefits that might accrue to their communities and families as a result of an enhanced education.
- Enabling programs appear to be serving a distinct clientele when compared to Enabling-like programs offered by both universities and TAFE colleges. Enabling students tend to be older, more motivated, more focussed on continuing study in the host institution and have greater family and work commitments than their TAFE Enabling-like counterparts. They present as more obviously disadvantaged and less financially secure than their university Enabling-like counterparts. They choose to study at university because it is convenient and offers their preferred mode of study.
- One-in-three Enabling and Enabling-like students report as having completed Year 12, and some students present with experience in university study. This suggests that the role of these programs to prepare students for university study may remain attractive to students who otherwise already qualify for entry; particularly for a proportion of those who have experienced a significant absence from formal study.

Chapter 8

Profile, performance and cost-effectiveness of Enabling and Enabling-like programs

Chapter Removed

Chapter 9

Overview, Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter brings together the various threads of the range of studies employed, as described in the previous chapters, and develops conclusions based on a discussion of the outcomes of these analyses. After overviewing the background of the Commonwealth's Enabling provision (section 9.1) and the programs that it has served to support (9.2), the chapter discusses how well the sector has utilised the provision (9.3), considers the current status of Enabling reporting and data collection (9.4), discusses the performance and cost of Enabling and Enabling-like programs (9.5), considers the significance of the HECS-free status of Enabling students (9.6), and addresses the issue of from where preparatory programs should be offered (9.7). The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research (9.8).

9.1 Background

The Commonwealth's Enabling provision was introduced in 1988. It has allowed universities to report certain students in bridging and academic learning support programs as 'Enabling' in official statistics, thus securing for them a HECS-free (since 1989) Commonwealth funded place while undertaking their Enabling study. The provision was intended to encourage and support universities offering bridging and academic learning support programs that empowered members of disadvantaged groups to access and be successful in higher education, thus seeking to improve participation by groups identified as under-represented in the student body of the university sector. As such, the provision has been seen mainly as an equity strategy, although it has also represented part of the overall activities which have arisen as a consequence of the massification of higher education and which serve to support the agenda for lifelong learning.

Enabling-type programs are perceived and treated differently in different national contexts. For example, in the United Kingdom the focus of these programs is more specifically on adult 'second chance' learners – with an emphasis given to both widening participation and lifelong learning. In the USA equivalent programs are common in universities but are stated as targeting 'under-prepared students' – a 'deficit term' by Australian standards but reflecting a focus based on an inherent acceptance of the need for and reality of broad educational participation in the more inclusive US higher education system. Compared with the situation in countries where social justice is a primary consideration for offering Enabling-type programs similar to those offered in Australia - such as in New Zealand, Canada and the Republic of South Africa - there is little doubt that Australia's national framework for equity in higher education, as documented in *A Fair Chance For All* (DEET 1990), has provided a particularly sound basis for a more nationally coordinated and effective pursuit of equity goals.

Still, Australia's success in improving higher education opportunities for disadvantaged groups has been mixed. The situation for women in non-traditional areas (WINTA) has improved significantly during the 1990s in all areas of study, although female participation in particular areas such as architecture, computer and information sciences, mathematics, physical sciences and particularly engineering remain a concern (Gallagher 1998). Improvements have also been noted in participation by people from NESB overall, people with disabilities and indigenous Australians, although the latter two groups and specific identified language-speaking groups remain under-represented in the sector (Dobson *et al.* 1998; Gallagher 1998). Despite some evidence that the socioeconomic composition of the sector is moving towards equalisation with the general population as a long-term trend (Murphy 1997), the general perception is that Low SES, together with people from rural and geographically isolated areas have made little headway and appear actually to have declined in terms of their participation levels in higher education during the 1990s (Skuja 1997; Dobson *et al.* 1998; Gallagher 1998). These trends are occurring within the context of a rising level of poverty in Australian society and an increase in the gap between 'rich' and 'poor' (Kelly 1998). There is clearly a continuing need for strategies to promote access and successful participation by members of disadvantaged groups in Australian higher education.

This study has sought to review the way in which the Commonwealth's Enabling provision has been utilised to provide opportunities for access with success to university study for members of disadvantaged groups. In pursuing this goal it has been necessary to identify and characterise the programs used as a basis for reporting Enabling students, as well as programs that parallel these in practice (referred to in this study as 'Enabling-like' programs) – the latter group providing a basis for comparing and contrasting the nature, performance and cost of Enabling programs (Chapters 4 and 5). The study has sought input from various stakeholders in Enabling provision, particularly the staff involved in the delivery of Enabling and Enabling-like programs in the higher education and VET sectors (Chapter 6), the students enrolled in these programs (Chapter 7), and the staff of universities responsible for reporting against this provision (Chapter 4). The study has also involved a quantitative analysis involving large national datasets and a consideration of the cost to the taxpayer of each type of program (Chapter 8). Finally, the various inputs have been assessed in the context of the current level of knowledge of equity theory and practice (Chapter 2), including a consideration of how similar strategies operate in selected overseas models (Chapter 3). The ultimate aims of the study have been to determine if the Enabling provision has been utilised effectively by the university sector, if the concept remains worthwhile, if improvements to the provision are possible and worthwhile or whether more efficacious alternatives exist to achieve the same overall ends.

9.2 Profile of Enabling and Enabling-like programs

Through the various stages of the project a consistent story has emerged. Enabling and Enabling-like programs, representing as they do bridging

preparatory and academic learning support strategies, are now well-established throughout the tertiary sector as a means of providing an access route to higher education for 'non-traditional' students and for supporting their subsequent persistence and success in award study. The largest programs of these types being offered are represented by fee-paying 50-60 hour preparatory courses, longer-duration Enabling bridging programs and structured academic learning support programs. However, a diverse range of programs has developed, based mainly on universities reacting to local needs. Different course durations, study modes, targeting and content of programs reflect differences in the degree of educational disadvantage and other key characteristics of the particular student constituencies involved (Chapter 4). Major target groups for these programs include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Low SES, and rural and isolated students – those disadvantaged groups afforded a high priority by government (Gallagher 1998; Kemp 2000a) - with particular consideration being given to the educationally disadvantaged and students who have been absent from formal education for some period. The programs are used more by women than by men (Chapters 4 and 8).

Programs specifically targeting indigenous students are present in the majority of universities, ranging across universities of all types. The great majority of universities in Australia very consciously utilise Enabling and/or Enabling-like programs as significant indigenous education strategies, with the Enabling reporting provision being used as a basis for funding over 70 per cent of these programs; particularly in Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland (Chapter 4). Some 38 per cent of Enabling enrolments in 1999 were made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Chapter 8), similar to the proportions of Low SES and rural/isolated groupings involved (with significant overlap between groups apparent).

For programs principally targeting other groups, Enabling provision has tended to be utilised by those universities which serve the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society with Enabling programs typically becoming an integral part of these institution's equity profiles. Some two-thirds of Enabling enrolments are accounted for by regional universities, with a few very large programs present. The remainder of enrolments are accounted for largely by universities serving unique urban constituencies – such as University of Technology Sydney with a high proportions of part-time students, Victorian University of Technology which serves the residents of the poorer areas of Melbourne, and University of Sydney which serves the outer suburbs of Sydney. All-in-all the major players in Enabling provision are generally logical candidates based on the student constituencies they serve (Chapters 4 and 8).

Programs used as a basis for reporting Enabling students (termed Enabling programs), which by their nature specifically target disadvantaged groups and which offer largely fee-free study to the students concerned, have a distinct student body from their Enabling-like counterparts. Compared with alternative ('Enabling-like') programs offered in universities, Enabling programs tend to attract students who are more likely to be a member of an 'official' equity group as defined using the Martin (1994) identifiers, are less well educated, have experienced a degree of educational disadvantage which requires more extensive

preparation or support, and who appear more vulnerable financially (Chapters 4 and 7). Compared with alternative programs provided in the VET sector, Enabling programs attract students who are older, are more likely to carry concomitant responsibilities and are more likely to require more flexible study options and higher levels of individualised support (Chapter 7). When considering programs to non-indigenous groups, there is a tendency for the different types of programs to be of different duration, which is related to differences in the extent of preparation required by the client groups. On the whole VET preparatory programs tend to require more contact hours than Enabling programs, which in turn tend to be longer than university-based Enabling-like programs, which themselves tend to be longer in duration than supplementary programs (Chapter 4). As a general rule, prospective students requiring significant levels of preparation have been thought of as being best served by bridging programs prior to award enrolment. This is mainly because attempting to provide significant levels of additional coursework concurrently with award study for students requiring additional skills and knowledge development can tend to overburden and overwhelm students to a degree that may result in attrition. An alternative model, and a logical extension to the generic skills / discipline-specific mix becoming increasing common as the a curriculum element of preparatory programs, is represented by the model used by Yooroang Garang at the University of Sydney where supplementary Enabling subjects are provided to enrolled students with a reduced award load Chapter 5). Other models for more closely integrating enabling provision with award study have been identified – such as the Certificate / Diploma in University Studies offered by the University of South Australia – and represent excellent case studies in the innovative use of this provision (Chapters 4 and 5).

Overall, university bridging programs are geared closely to preparation for entry into the host institution, as compared with the more general preparation provided from the VET sector which provides a broad qualification which often incorporates employment as well as further study in their aims and which typically require a longer period of study when targeting non-indigenous groups (Chapter 4). Students appear to undertake bridging programs offered by universities because they perceive the need for appropriate preparation for further study; heightened awareness, self-esteem and confidence building; and assimilation into the higher education culture before formally commencing award studies. Students self-select into these programs on the basis of individual need and circumstances. Some one-in-three of the commencing bridging students surveyed for Chapter 7 had completed high school, emphasising the importance given to the preparation provided by these programs to the target groups, not only to their role in providing an entry qualification.

On the whole, having a diversity of programs available to students is seen as highly desirable by equity practitioners in terms of providing the basis for diverse needs to be met (Chapter 6). The diverse range of programs and modes of delivery available provide a range of educational opportunities from which prospective students can choose (Chapters 4 and 7). Student-program fit has implications for retention, attrition and success. The popularity of bridging / preparatory programs, particularly in States like New South Wales where criteria-

based alternative entry arrangements are well developed, reflects positively on their perceived value and utility by prospective students. (It is assumed that prospective students would not voluntarily undertake an additional course of study unless they perceive a need to do so, even in situations where these programs are of low cost to the student.) The massification of the higher education sector has been associated with a continued, and to some degree increasing demand for these programs.

9.3 The utilisation of Enabling provision by the higher education sector

The university sector has generally used the Commonwealth's Enabling provision well, although some misuse of the provision has occurred. The major forms of misuse are generally attributable to a breakdown in administrative processes and insufficient scrutiny of the detail of the provision. Most common has been a failure for programs to effectively manage enrolments, particularly in failing to adequately ensure that 'non-participating / inactive' students are eliminated from reported statistics, a practice facilitated by the tendency for early withdrawing Enabling students not to notify the university of their intention to withdraw because of a lack of any financial (HECS) incentive to do so. Such practices have resulted in 'non-participating' students being included in official statistics and have thus tended to lower the level of program performance apparent from these statistics, as well as lowering the impact of the Commonwealth funding of Enabling places. However, more stringent administrative practices to identify and 'cull' non-participating / inactive students could be readily introduced to eliminate this.

Other forms of misuse which appear to have occurred infrequently include the reporting of students in award study as Enabling and the flawed targeting of programs – with the latter being manifested particularly in supplementary Enabling programs targeting principally on the basis of poor student performance rather than on the basis of identified disadvantage.

There is a need, however, to distinguish between misuse of the provision and issues arising as a result of the nature of Enabling provision in practice. For example, the failure of the Martin (1994) identifiers to capture a proportion of the student body in Enabling bridging programs – with some third of Enabling students not being captured by the Martin identifiers (Chapter 8) - may not reflect misuse but rather reflects a mismatch in the methods used to identify individual disadvantage in a practical way for the selection of students into programs and the indicators used to monitor equity performance at the sector level using the Martin (1994) identifiers. Options for addressing this dilemma could include a consideration of refining the Enabling Guidelines to provide greater guidance to programs on appropriate means of targeting programs. Such advice could take account of the types of selection methods used in practice, for example, UAC (1999); could include a broadening of the range of descriptors used to identify disadvantage, for example as defined by the Queensland government for the State VET sector in DTIR (1999); or, as in the United Kingdom model, base the

programs on principles which embrace lifelong learning as well as social justice, which would suggest a more explicit acceptance of mature age re-entry students as a target group (refer to Chapter 3).

Another issue relates to the existence of legitimate reasons for students needing to repeat Enabling study or to withdraw from Enabling study which do not necessarily reflect poorly on the programs themselves but rather reflect explainable outcomes of the impact of the disadvantage experienced by the groups being targeted.

There is clearly a greater need for dialogue between the stakeholders in Enabling provision to ensure that these issues are widely understood and allowed for in any consideration of program performance.

Another concern is the high level of ignorance and confusion over the details of the Enabling Guidelines across the sector, even amongst otherwise well informed equity practitioners. The chasm between Enabling provision as a reporting requirement linked with official statistics collections and Enabling provision as a government initiative to promote equity programs needs to be bridged through a greater awareness of Enabling Guidelines by all stakeholders, and more rigorous reporting on the details of Enabling offerings (including the basis for student selection, the safeguards to prevent misuse of the provision, and program performance across a range of outcomes).

In summary, there is significant scope and need to improve the administration of the university programs and their reporting – particularly in eliminating non-participating / inactive students. It would also be worthwhile for the Enabling Guidelines to be refined to enable a better common understanding of aims and requirements, establishing more serviceable definitions of the groups to be targeted by Enabling programs, and better promoting the Guidelines to stakeholders.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a potential concern for government relates to the means by which Enabling funding is distributed within institutions. It is possible that in some instances institutions are removing an overly generous level of overheads from the funds included in their operating grants for Enabling load before passing these funds on to the programs concerned. However, limitations in the information on the funding of individual programs able to be collected as a part of this study does not permit definite conclusions to be drawn with regard to this issue.

More generally, this study has served to highlight the need for an appreciation that lifelong learning requires a change in attitude from exclusionary models of higher education provision to more open and inclusive models that value and embrace diversity – shifting the focus from the nature of the selection systems employed to: *"... preparation for, and social and academic integration into, higher education"* (Power *et al.* 1987, p. 7). The structural barriers that perpetuate under-representation of many equity groups despite large increases in the availability of higher education places need to be addressed.

Elements of best practice identified that would enhance the capacity of bridging programs to improve their performance include: providing a completion 'qualification' which serves as an incentive to students to complete Enabling study; providing students guaranteed entry into an award program upon successful completion of Enabling study; providing some degree of discipline-specific content or focus to provide students with a clear career focus and stronger links with particular disciplines; the continuation of 'protected' status into an award program say by continued access to special support services; and the adoption of strategies that more closely integrate enabling provision with award study (Chapters, 4, 5 and 6). It is interesting to note that the awarding of a formal qualification for completion of an Enabling bridging program is currently not possible because of the stipulation in the Guidelines; however, a 'completion certificate' is often granted in these circumstances.

Overall, supplementary Enabling provision has been underutilised by the sector. This is partly due to the way in which academic learning support has been conducted in universities – frequently involving *ad hoc* support rather than being offered as the 'systematic and structured' programs required by the Enabling Guidelines. However, this situation is rapidly changing and considerable scope exists for the Enabling provision to serve to support the development and operation of increasingly sophisticated, structured academic learning support programs – with Charles Sturt University's on-line Study Link units serving as one example of how the Enabling provision can be utilised in this regard. The provision could also have application in supporting the students support programs that are increasingly being associated with special entry schemes into universities; particularly where the special entry criteria is associated with a consideration of disadvantage, thus helping to overcome the targeting problems that have occurred with some supplementary Enabling courses.

9.4 Reporting and data collection

During the course of this study, several issues have been identified as being potentially beneficial to improving Enabling reporting. These include the introduction of processes by universities to 'cull' non-participating' students prior to the census date, introducing a formal exit point for Enabling study, improving the reporting of the basis for student selection into Enabling programs, improving the reporting of program performance, encouraging the reporting of non-award courses that meet the definition of Enabling programs in the statistical collections (thus providing a basis for collecting information on Enabling-like programs), and including an additional data element relating to Prior Qualification designated as 'Enabling' in the statistical collection to facilitate the tracking of prior-Enabling students through the sector (Chapter 8). Note has also been made of the difficulties inherent in comparing program performance across sectors based on the differences in the large national datasets currently maintained by the higher education and VET sectors (Chapter 8).

Also identified has been the desirability of considering some form of accreditation system for Enabling programs to facilitate the transportability of the qualification obtained as a result of successful completions of these programs and to ensure due recognition for the student for the qualification so obtained (Chapter 8). Formal accreditation systems for what are termed 'access' programs in the United Kingdom are well established (Chapter 3). Calls for a formalisation of equity strategies for supporting access by under-represented groups have also come from local sources. For example, Beasley (1998, pp. 14-15) stated:

> *Imagine that the universities in each state were willing to establish coordinating committees, the role of which was to encourage the development and implementation of a series of coordinated entry procedures specifically designed to produce equitable access for socio-economically disadvantaged people. Imagine that it proceeded to adopt a network of equity initiatives which*
>
> - *specifically targeted socio-economically disadvantaged persons*
> - *recognised that in the past equity initiatives were often used mainly by the more affluent*
> - *acknowledged that socio-economically disadvantaged people who were seeking to obtain a TER score in order to gain entry to higher education would need to have their scores moderated in order to be given a fair chance of admission*
> - *recognised that many of these people had been denied the opportunity to obtain TER scores at all, and that many would be the first in their families ever to attempt university study*
> - *developed methods of explaining the nature of university education, of teaching these students learning strategies appropriate to successful university study, and of assessing their academic potential*
> - *ensured that across each State the teaching of these strategies was done in both external and in face-to-face modes*
> - *adopted appropriate but flexible methods of selection and admission.*

9.5 The performance and cost of Enabling programs

Programs targeting disadvantaged groups, particularly in cases where the disadvantage concerned overlaps heavily with financial disadvantage, inevitably require some form of government subsidisation if they are to be readily available. As a case in point, when considering general bridging preparatory programs, in the absence of the targeted government funding provided by the Commonwealth's Enabling provision, universities, by and large, only provide relatively short-duration (50-60 total contact hour) bridging programs for which a reasonable fee can be charged to the students while still covering costs. Frequently, these fee-paying Enabling-like programs are offered by the larger and better resourced universities (for example, University of New South Wales and Australian National University) which are also better positioned to subsidise programs than are the

types of universities that rely on the Enabling provision (two-thirds of Enabling load being accounted for by regional universities).

Alternatively, the funding of some programs is supported by the Commonwealth's Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) grants to universities, representing yet another form of government subsidisation – although the size of HEEP grants afforded institutions (in the order of $150 000 per annum) limits the size of programs that could be funded from this source, particularly given that other equity initiatives typically compete for these funds. Without the support of the Enabling provision, universities would be unlikely to be in a position to provide the longer preparation programs needed to address the needs of the educationally disadvantaged groups currently utilising Enabling programs, at least on a significant scale. In a similar way, the Enabling-like provision provided through TAFE is subsidised by the government to the tune of seven dollars for every one dollar paid by the student, ensuring that the fee to the student can be kept to a reasonably affordable level.

Overall, the total cost to government for the provision of Enabling programs is small in relation to total expenditure of the university sector and there is no evidence supporting the view that alternatives to Enabling provision represent less expensive options to achieve the same ends. In fact, the cost to the taxpayer of Enabling-like provision through TAFE is marginally (approximately fifteen per cent) higher than the cost of Enabling provision in the higher education sector (Chapter 8). However, the determination of the cost-effectiveness of programs of this type is necessarily complex and values-laden.

Any consideration of the 'performance' of Enabling programs carries with it a number of stipulations and caveats. For example, as Enabling programs commonly cater to mature age students, there is a need to consider the performance of Enabling students against the normal performance of adult learners, which as Hester (1994) describes is well documented as reflecting good pass rates but high drop-out rates and low completions. This performance profile reflects the difficulties of studying as an adult – attempting to balance study with concomitant responsibilities over a period extended by the need to study part-time and under circumstances which prevent the close contact with the institution that promotes mutual understanding and commitment. Disadvantaged adults also carry the baggage of their disadvantage, be it expressed as a lowered self-esteem and confidence, a lowered awareness of higher education culture and processes through being the first in the family to attend university, the lack of certainty about the value of further education, the physical manifestations of educational disadvantage, or the impact of past or continuing financial problems. With respect to the latter point, it is notable that Enabling students rated 'financial problems' as a perceived threat to course completion higher than any other student group surveyed (Chapter 7). The special needs of indigenous students, another major target of Enabling programs, are also well documented.

The diversity of clientele serviced by Enabling programs presents another challenge to measures of cost-effectiveness. Students accessing various Enabling programs differ in their life circumstances and educational disadvantage. Many

Enabling programs intentionally target highly at-risk groups. Any consideration of outcomes and success needs to be appropriately contextualised and have some relationship to the starting point of the student. As well, within the diversity of Enabling programs are differential costs of Enabling provision. Practitioners made particular mention of the high costs of Enabling provision to indigenous and geographically isolated students (Chapter 6). Enabling programs possess the unfortunate characteristic that the servicing of those groups most 'at risk' of poor performance often require the greatest outlay of costs – risking the perception of poor cost-effectiveness. For this reason, practitioners expressed concern that an emphasis on narrow measures of success would simply lead to 'more restrictive student selection', excluding those most disadvantaged and in need of the programs in favour of student groups with higher probability of success for lower financial expenditure (Chapter 6).

However, even more fundamental difficulties exist in assessing the performance of Enabling programs. Program performance is naturally measured against the stated objectives of the program concerned. A clear finding of this study has been an appreciation of the impact of a lack of agreement or common understanding of the outcomes which the Enabling provision is intended to achieve. Such a situation is not uncommon with equity programs but it has been found to be particularly pronounced with Enabling provision where there has been a decided lack of dialogue between the stakeholders over the provision's 13-year history. The Commonwealth naturally sees the provision as serving to support strategies that improve participation in higher education by under-represented groups. From this perspective the performance of these programs is readily assessed by how well the provision achieves these ends - with an emphasis on performance indicators for Enabling bridging programs such as course completion, transfer rates into award study and the subsequent performance of former Enabling students (which have formed the basis for the analysis in Chapter 8). Equity practitioners, on the other hand, who deal with the individual students involved on a day-to-day basis, are naturally concerned with the impact of the provision on those individuals. Hence the range of valuable outcomes identified by equity practitioners and students is much broader than that readily accepted by government, particular concerning the ability of these programs to empower previously disempowered individuals to make decisions about their further education (Chapter 6). Hence, an individual who discontinues Enabling study based on an informed decision that further education really wasn't what they wanted could be considered as either a success or a failure depending on the particular perspective being taken. In short, in the absence of agreed criteria of what is expected to come from these programs, the assessment of their performance is necessarily values-laden. The divergence of views between stakeholders has been exacerbated by the scant scrutiny which has been given to the provision by government since its introduction in 1988, and the absence of significant dialogue between stakeholders over the same period.

Equity practitioners also pointed out that the rate of student transfer into award programs, an important indicator from the Commonwealth's perspective, is largely beyond their control. Under the Enabling Guidelines the definition for a bridging Enabling program states that: *"... it is offered to students to* ***enable*** *them*

*subsequently, **if they so choose,** to commence an award course in a student place …"* (Attachment 1). Clearly, universities have a commitment to ensure that Enabling students are appropriately qualified for tertiary entry but the decision to subsequently transfer on to award study rests with the student. This is consistent with the government's stance that social engineering is not an appropriate consideration (Devlin 1997). By way of contrast, the outcomes of the student survey reported in Chapter 7 highlighted the stated commitment by the majority of students commencing Enabling and Enabling-like programs to continue on with study which runs counter to the significant attrition rates that these programs experience. Clearly, a longitudinal study tracking the changing fortunes of students as they progress through these courses would be valuable in determining the factors at play here.

Another feature impacting on the perceived performance of these programs has been the irregularities that have existed in terms of the ways in that some universities have managed the provision (as described in Chapter 4). As discussed earlier, the counting of 'non-participant / inactive' students by some programs in significant numbers has served to dilute the impact of the Commonwealth's funding in this area and has had a real impact on the perceived performance of Enabling programs. The analysis on Chapter 8 found that while aggregated success rates suggest substantially poorer performance in Enabling courses, removal of 'non-participants' from the calculations results in a success rate which is not significantly different overall from students in Bachelor level courses. (Although, after adjustment, significant differences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, rural, Low-SES and non-'Target' students in bridging Enabling courses compared to those in supplementary Enabling and Enabling-like programs are still evident.) The same analysis indicated that while at least half of the students in bridging courses subsequently enrol in an award course, when 'non-participation' and delayed transition are taken into account this figure increases to nearly 70 per cent (Chapter 8).

However, it is clear that in all respects, whatever the current performance of Enabling programs may be, these programs are currently not performing to their maximum potential. There is a significant capacity to improve the performance of Enabling programs through more rigorous administrative practices, a stronger orientation towards the achievement of universally accepted and understood objectives, and improved reporting; each of which are readily implemented.

Assessing the performance of these programs creates its own challenges. Even more challenging is the task of objectively determining the 'value' of these programs. Practitioners overwhelmingly perceived that their programs contributed positively to achieving greater access to tertiary education and success within tertiary education for disadvantaged students. It was argued that without such programs many of these students would be lost to the tertiary education sector and the individual and societal benefits associated with study at a tertiary institution forfeited (Chapter 6).

Outcomes from Enabling programs are diverse and it has been suggested that in many cases need to be measured in the longer term. The full range of outcomes of

Enabling programs are not universally recognised and valued. However, beneficial outcomes, other than transfer to further study, clearly exist for many Enabling program students. For example, it is widely argued that a legitimate function of bridging programs is to empower people to make decisions of whether to continue on with further study or not, a decision that may have previously been made for them by their individual circumstances; that bridging programs provide a basis for informed decision making in this area; that it may well be more cost-effective for government if students were to withdraw during or following a bridging program than if they made this decision at some time into an undergraduate program; and that withdrawal is not necessarily a negative option for a student to take – using partially completed study as a basis for securing employment, for example (Chapter 6). An important consideration here is the goals of Enabling students.

The student survey included in this study demonstrated that while the vast majority of commencing Enabling bridging students stated an intention to study at university or TAFE, alternative plans, particularly associated with improving an individual's economic situation and employment, also figured largely as a basis for undertaking the courses (Chapter 7). In fact, improved employment prospects, generally improved levels of education, individual growth in self-esteem and confidence, the impact on other family members and the broader community are all positive outcomes from Enabling program participation. The question is whether these outcomes have value to government and whether they can or should be included in a consideration of the value of Enabling provision. Ramsay et al. (1996, pp. 9-10) refer to withdrawal on the basis of goal fulfilment as being:

> *... particularly relevant for indigenous students. For example, it is argued at this University that a number of students withdraw from courses at the University of South Australia following offers of employment on the basis of subjects already completed. ...Studies into attrition thus need to take into account that not all withdrawals should necessarily be treated as negative outcomes for either the students or the institution.*

Still other factors may be used to assess a program's value. Codling (1997)'s *Program Viability Model* considers such factors as demand, establishment (that is, length of time in operation) and strategic value as appropriate criteria for assessing program viability. According to this model most well-established bridging programs in the sector will rate well in terms of their program viability with regard to each of these factors. In particular, the constant demand for these programs by students indicates a perceived importance and need for them. Students self-select into Enabling bridging programs even in situations such as in New South Wales where significant numbers of special entry places exist based on criteria of disadvantage, clearly indicating a perception by the student that additional preparation, not simply the provision of access pathways, is needed by them to ensure successful award study. As well as having high demand, Enabling programs often generate significant student load, involve a wide participation of students, and have developed an increasingly reputable profile and significant strategic importance in the institutions that offer them. These courses are often well established long-running programs that are seen as having significant strategic importance to the institution's concerned as major equity and community

service strategies – particularly remembering that institutions which have utilised Enabling provision are dominated by regional universities and universities serving particularly disadvantaged student constituencies. Programs which specifically target particular groups – such as, University of Technology Sydney (UTS)'s former Street Kids Access to Tertiary Education (SKATE) Program and University of Southern Queensland (USQ)'s Tertiary Preparation Prisons' Program offered to inmates of correctional centres through external study - serve to highlight the degree to which these programs can reflect local concerns and can represent institutions employing their strengths in service to their community. Programs may also contribute important outcomes in more subtle ways – for example, Cooper *et al.* (2000b) note that the passage of male students from the Whyalla bridging Program into nursing and social work courses at the University of South Australia contributes to improving the gender balance of these courses.

It should also be appreciated that Enabling and Enabling-like programs have value in terms of their potential to address issues associated with student transition into tertiary study such as transfer shock and award course attrition for groups other than disadvantaged students – an area afforded considerable priority by government (Kemp 2000b), particularly with the cost of student wastage in Australian higher education estimated at $360 million per annum (Dobson & Sharma 1998). Also critical are how Enabling and Enabling-like programs articulate with other strategies seeking to address educational disadvantage, particularly the university special entry schemes which are growing in popularity and becoming increasingly associated with multiple strategies involving 'taster' programs and targeted support; and pre-Enabling provision, which is a particular concern for indigenous Australians.

Finally, an important aspect of the value of these programs that is difficult to convey in a report of this type relates to the major impact that the programs have with regard to changing individual's lives. This point was reinforced throughout the study when speaking with 'front-line' staff and with present and former Enabling students; as well as through the submissions received, particularly those from students and former students; and through numerous newspaper clippings made available to the study which describe the story of individuals and the impact that these programs have had on them. Stories of former Enabling students moving on to win university medals, undertake successful PhDs, or become successful practicing professionals are not uncommon. However, just as profound are the innumerable stories of the role that these programs have had with students who have achieved more humble levels of success but who have been empowered by these programs to take greater control of their own lives and to more fully reach their potential after a background of disadvantage.

9.6 The significance of the HECS-free status in Enabling provision

A significant concession granted to Enabling students is that, unlike virtually all other Commonwealth funded students, they are not required to pay the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) charge for their period of study in an

Enabling course. As noted in Chapter 2 this concession was introduced at the time of the introduction of HECS in 1989 in the belief that HECS may serve to deter disadvantaged students from approaching Enabling study and in recognition for the fact that Enabling students were not receiving an award for their period of Enabling study.

The potential for HECS to serve as a deterrent to university study by disadvantaged groups remains a contentious issue but the literature contains few firm analyses of the impact of HECS in this regard. One recent report by Andrews (1999) considered the potential for HECS to deter study by the socioeconomically disadvantaged was reviewed in an attempt to cast some light on this issue. However, arguments are developed in Chapter 2 which question Andrews' conclusion that HECS does not serve as a deterrent to Low SES people to undertake higher education study. In any case, there are questions concerning the relevance of Andrews' study to Enabling students which include other disadvantaged groups – including rural and isolated residents who are generally accepted as having a tendency for debt aversion – and who, as educationally disadvantaged individuals are likely to be more 'tentative' to higher education study anyway that students seeking direct entry to award programs. The importance of this latter point for disadvantaged students was highlighted by a study of indigenous students reported by Farrington *et al.* (1999, p. 17):

> *Participants' comments about the factors that affected their decision to study at University suggests that they stood very tentatively at the threshold of higher education. On one hand they had a real desire to gain a degree and the support and encouragement of their family. Opposing this were negative 'messages' sent by high school staff and their own doubts about their capability because of their low UAI or TER. The preliminary findings from this research demonstrates the critical importance of providing a 'doorway' to higher education through which tentative Indigenous students like these may enter.*

Equity practitioners expressed strong support for the need for the continuation of the HECS-free status of Enabling programs. It was argued that any imposition of charges would serve as a deterrent to many potential students from the target equity groups, particularly those from indigenous, Low socio-economic and rural and isolated backgrounds (Chapter 6). Given the circumstances of the students involved, it is concluded that the imposition of HECS on Enabling students would likely have some impact in deterring potential students from approaching study, although it is difficult to assess the degree of impact that such moves would have if introduced. This consideration highlights the need for improved data on students' financial situations and the impact that financial issues have on student decision making to be collected for the sector.

A further argument suggested that the imposition of HECS on Enabling programs would result in prior-Enabling student graduates incurring a higher overall HECS debt than would be incurred by advantaged students entering through the traditional entry pathway for study towards an equivalent qualification. Such a situation, it was argued, would be unfair, serving to further disadvantage the disadvantaged.

9.7 The responsibility for providing preparatory pathways for non-traditional students

As stated earlier in this chapter, one of the ultimate aims of this study was to consider if the Commonwealth's Enabling provision remained a worthwhile initiative or whether more cost-effective alternatives existed to achieve the same ends. In particular, it was anticipated that an expected outcome of the study would be: 'An assessment of relative costs, effectiveness and benefits of having enabling courses delivered outside the higher education sector – by TAFE or private providers'.

As discussed above, and detailed in the analysis of Chapter 8, there is no evidence to suggest that alternatives to Enabling programs represent more cost-effective options for government. Moreover, it appears that the various types of programs available actually serve different client groups, albeit with a fair degree of overlap (refer to Chapters 7 and 8, and to section 9.2 above). Hence, it appears that the Enabling provision provides the basis for the offering of specific types of programs offered to a specific clientele for which directly applicable alternatives do not necessarily exist.

Still, there is currently a significant debate in further education circles concerning who should be offering enabling programs and whether the preparation undertaken should be general or narrowly focused. This debate is most evident in Victoria and the Northern Territory where there is a trend within dual-sector universities to transfer responsibility for preparatory programs to the TAFE divisions and to become increasingly dependent on TAFE offerings for such provision. This debate is particularly intense in indigenous education circles where there is a strong feeling amongst many that indigenous enabling programs should be targeted specifically to the needs of indigenous students and associated closely with indigenous departments and/or enclave units to ensure clear aims, cultural appropriateness and appropriate student support. Hence, the recent decision by Northern Territory University to move its successful indigenous Pre-Law Program from the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to the Faculty of Foundation Studies has generated considerable debate.

In fact, a major conclusion of the current study is an appreciation that both the VET and higher education sectors play an important role in provision of preparatory education to disadvantaged groups and that there is an on-going need for an approach which actively involves both tertiary education sectors in ensuring that appropriate pathways exist into further study for the diverse group represented by 'non-traditional' students.

Basic business principles dictate that the key to servicing a diverse clientele is to ensure an appropriate range of options that ensure that diverse needs are met. Such a situation appears to exist for enabling provision in New South Wales and Queensland where a wide range of strong Enabling and Enabling-like programs are offered from both the higher education and TAFE sectors – including well-established general bridging programs for both adults and younger students available in each sector, a wide range of provision with a stronger focus on

specific disciplines/professions or target groups, and programs that offer flexibility in their study modes. These programs typically co-exist with strong, well-utilised equity programs of other types available in these States, including university special entry schemes which are particularly well developed in New South Wales higher education (UAC 2000).

This situation contrasts with the situation in Victoria where the range of options available has been reduced through dual-mode universities tending to pass responsibility for enabling programs on to their TAFE divisions and where the TAFE general bridging program for adults (the Tertiary Orientation Program) has been discontinued in favour of a reliance on adult matriculation, a course not well suited to the needs of adult learners (see the discussion on andragogy and the special needs of adult learners in section 2.6.1). Although some excellent bridging programs exist in Victorian higher education which tailor provision to the needs of individual students, these tend to be small in scale which diminishes their overall impact. The overall situation in Victoria reflects a less vibrant and dynamic environment than exists in New South Wales and Queensland in which prospective students have a much more limited range of course options and so have less likelihood of entering a program that best suit their own particular needs (Chapters 4 and 5). In this context, it is perhaps significant that Dobson *et al.* (1998) found that the only State where the performance of Low SES higher education students was significantly lower than for Middle and High SES students (as based on 'student progress units' or 'SPU' means) was Victoria. The situation in South Australia and Western Australia, where a large number of well established university-based Enabling and Enabling-like programs are offered – often as part of an impressive suite of equity programs - serves to further demonstrate the impact that well-focussed university activity in this area can have in providing preparatory, access and support options for non-traditional students.

There are two basic groups of arguments that are relevant to a consideration of from where enabling provision should be offered. These are:

1. there are strong arguments supporting the desirability of a continued involvement of Australian universities in enabling provision; and
2. there are dangers associated with relying on a single educational sector for providing educational pathways for disadvantaged people into further study, including into higher education.

Each of these groups of arguments will be discussed in turn.

9.7.1 The desirability of continued university involvement in enabling provision

The diversity inherent in the Australian higher education system is seen as representing a major strength. AVCC (1999a, p. 9) states:

> *The publicly funded universities in Australia belong to a national system of universities, of which diversity and autonomy are central features. Each institution has the freedom to specify its own mission and purpose, modes of*

> *teaching and research, constitution of the student body and the range of educational programs.*

Further, AVCC (2000, p. 4) states:

> *The wide variety of needs and expectations from employers and students is reflected in the range of institutional goals and objectives, staff profiles, and the emphasis placed on particular courses. This plurality of approach is one of the most important strengths of the Australian system, and is essential to its long-term vigour.*

In contrast to the situation in England, where preparatory provision has always tended to reside in the further education sector, there is a long history of Enabling and Enabling-like provision being offered by Australian higher education institutions. The analysis in Chapters 4 highlighted the concentration of non-indigenous Enabling provision in particular types of universities in Australia – specifically, regional universities and other institutions particularly serving disadvantaged student constituencies. Frequently these programs are included in the offerings of organisational units that also offer other equity strategies. Hence, there is a considerable infrastructure in place in many Australian universities for offering enabling programs within the context of a broader range of equity offerings. In these institutions, Enabling provision can often represent a significant strategy in pursuing their mission to serve their own community. The high regard in which the University of Newcastle's long-running Open Foundation Course is held in the local community is well recognised and serves to illustrate this point. Hence, the utilisation of the Commonwealth's Enabling provision provides an excellent example of how the *"plurality of approach"* present in the Australian higher education system functions in practice. It is significant that a number of Australian universities have developed a culture that has embraced diversity and social justice as core institutional concerns. There is value in supporting these trends in the institutions involved (Kemmis *et al.* 1999).

The Australian university sector, arising as it did from the exclusionary models of the British higher education systems, has a tendency for elitism (Power *et al.* 1987; NBEET 1994a; Ramsay *et al.* 1996). The tendencies are always there for universities to resist moves to make them more liberal. As pointed out by NBEET (1994a), there is certainly not unanimous support for the concept of lifelong learning amongst those working in the university sector. Maintaining a strong equity presence within universities themselves provides one means of ensuring that such reversion to elitist models – favouring the 'traditional' student recruitment base of school-leavers above 'non-traditional' students - does not occur. An argument raised by practitioners (Chapter 6) related to the fact that: 'as universities are part of the problem, they need to be part of the solution'. Achieving progress in the pursuit of student diversity requires more than simply the creation of educational pathways for non-traditional students; it requires cultural and systemic change within universities themselves. This has been appreciated for a long time. Power *et al.* (1987, p. 3) stated:

> *There seems little point in developing detailed and sophisticated policies to encourage access to universities … if what they offer, both in terms of*

> *courses and teaching, remains unchanged. Admitting disadvantaged students under Mature Age and Special Entry Schemes has no point, indeed is unethical, unless those admitted have a reasonable chance of success.*

Having educational access pathways for adults operating effectively within universities provides a key focus for universities around which issues associated with student diversity can be discussed, where an understanding of the benefits of diversity can be encouraged, and where the creation of an environment that promotes and supports diversity can be achieved. These pathways will become increasingly important over the next decade as demographic trends indicate that the 17-19 year old age group will increase by some six per cent between 2000 to 2010 (Australian Bureau of Statistics as cited in AVCC 1999b). This trend will result in an increased demand for higher education by school-leavers, the source of 'traditional students' for university entry. Within the context of an operating environment that will see only limited Commonwealth-funded growth this will inevitably result in universities becoming less open to entry by non-traditional students. Such trends have historical precedents – for example when one considers that adult entry into higher education has only received boosts during times of low demand by school-leavers as occurred in the late 1960s and late 1970s or during the massive growth of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Indications of a return to elitist models also re-appear regularly under circumstances where competition for places increase. For example, in 2000 a particular (un-named) Victorian university reduced commencement load targets to compensate for past overenrolment and this has been accompanied by a significant tightening of entry pathways for non-traditional students compared with school-leaver entry. Maintaining strong preparatory programs for disadvantaged students within universities themselves will assist in resisting this trend.

Maintaining Enabling programs in universities also has positive influences on supporting lifelong learning, which is a major national priority. The importance of moves in this direction are clear from the observation by NBEET (1994a, p. 87) that:

> *Australia has been slow to embrace lifelong learning as a major policy goal at the national level. Unlike other comparable countries, we do not have a unified ministry of Lifelong Learning. Nor do we have a policy context that supports lifelong learning; indeed many major policymakers and opinion leaders seem to regard the whole concept as something of an indulgence, and certainly as marginal to their major concerns.*

Ensuring a broad range of effective entry pathways to tertiary education is a major element of supporting lifelong learning.

Universities currently bring a lot to enabling provision. In particular, as relatively well-resourced institutions they make available a wealth of infrastructure and resources to disadvantaged Enabling students – including the full range of student support services, library and study facilities, and advisory services that impact directly on the students study in their Enabling program. By contrast, the VET sector is poorer resourced overall and generally less well positioned to provide the full range of services needed by students coming from a history of disadvantage.

The TAFE system is under increasing pressure to base its delivery on user-pays, and there is evidence that student support is coming to be seen as a 'non-core' activity. Anderson (1998, p. 10) has noted that:

> *Student services and learner support have not fared well under the new regime of corporate managerialism, marketisation and deinstitutionalisation in TAFE. Qualitative data suggests that student services have been redefined as 'non-core' activities as they are (mistakenly) perceived by TAFE management to make no direct contribution to improved productivity or outputs – specifically, more 'bums on seats'. Moreover, the creation of the 'training market' has involved the allocation of public VET funds to TAFE and private VET providers on a competitive basis, placing TAFE institute management under considerable pressure to cut back 'non-core' activities to compete effectively on price with low-cost private providers. Student services and learner support appear to have suffered substantial budget reductions. ... [Further,] The new national VET strategy for 1998-2003, 'A bridge to the future', does not include any explicit acknowledgment of the need for student services and learner support, other than passing references to career advice and numeracy and literacy support, even though the goals of participation, efficiency, effectiveness and equity remain prominent. Since student services and learner support have the potential to contribute in significant ways to the realisation of these goals, it is necessary to begin identifying and documenting how they do so in a more rigorous fashion than has been the case to date. The relationship between support provision and educational outcomes particularly must be established. The long-term future of student services and learner support in TAFE will depend to a large extent on whether policy makers and institute managers can be convinced that reductions in service provision contribute to higher attrition rates and unnecessary resource wastage, and vice versa*.

Economic stringency in the sector has clearly impacted on issues such as student services and the resources available to students – there is hence an issue of whether TAFE can offer support structures at the same scale as can currently be offered in universities.

Finally, universities are uniquely placed to provide students with a distinctly 'university experience' as an integrated part of their preparatory course. Such experiences are important in ensuring appropriate enculturation and in improving the awareness of disadvantaged Enabling students, who are frequently the first in their family to attend university and for which a lack of familiarity with university culture and process represent significant barriers – factors recognised by students themselves as indicated by the outcomes of the student survey presented in Chapter 7. Having preparatory courses operating in the same institution that students plan to undertake award study also serves to lessen the impact of 'transfer shock' that can represent another significant barrier to student success (Chapter 2). The importance of these factors was highlighted during the review of the indigenous support funding program conducted by DEETYA in 1998. In the *Report of Consultation Meetings* held during that process it was noted that:

> *Many participants expressed the view that enabling courses should continue to be provided by universities because the students need exposure*

> *to that environment, and because TAFE cannot prepare them adequately for higher education. It was contended that generally, Indigenous students did not consider the nature of TAFE courses an adequate foundation for successful university participation* (Adams 1998, p. 12).

9.7.2 Dangers associated with single sector enabling provision

A key point highlighted by the analyses discussed in Chapters 4 and 7 relates to the diversity of needs of disadvantaged students in particular, and non-traditional students in general, and the desirability of encouraging an educational system which is sufficiently diverse to enable individuals to access a program that best suits their individual needs. The coexistence of strong and diverse programs operating in both the university and VET sectors in New South Wales and Queensland has been highlighted as an extremely desirable model which provides prospective students with choice and a wide range of opportunity. The following discussion considers the impact that would result if a scenario was pursued which saw the university sector at the national level significantly diminish its role in Enabling and Enabling-like provision.

With a few notable exceptions, TAFE programs tend to provide a general preparation and embrace broader aims than their university counterparts, particularly including employment/vocational objectives, thus diluting their role in preparation for further study in general and higher education in particular. Equity practitioners queried the capacity and ability of TAFE to provide the range of specialist courses currently included in the diverse range of Enabling programs. For example, the capacity of the TAFE sector to conduct an effective program preparing women for entry into university science, or preparing students specifically for award courses such as Law and Medicine was questioned (Chapter 6). However, it has been suggested that the VET, and adult and community education sectors may be better placed than higher education to provide pre-enabling programs and pathways. At present, pre-enabling programs and articulated pathways which take account of severe educational disadvantage exist in some areas but are neither well coordinated nor comprehensive. The need for comprehensive articulated pathways into further study is particularly pressing in indigenous education. Meeting the needs in this area represents a particularly vexing issue. It is significant that the NCVER is conducting considerable research in the general area of alternative VET pathways to indigenous development, including a consideration of enhancing the role of the community-controlled sector – for example, Teasedale & Teasedale (1996); Boughton (1998); and Durnan (2000).

It was also noted by practitioner during the consultation process (Chapter 6) that as TAFE programs are longer in duration than their university counterparts (specifically referring to non-indigenous programs), there is an increasing risk of attrition by part-time students. This is apparent in the student performance data of TAFE New South Wales' Tertiary Preparation Course (TPC) which clearly favours study by full-time students; as indicated by the observation that although 70 per cent of TPC commencing students study part-time, only 30 per cent of its

completions are represented by part-time students (Anne Finnane, Program Manager, Tertiary Pathways, TAFE New South Wales, personal communication).

TAFE also lacks the flexibility of fee options available to universities – an important consideration when dealing with students who are financially disadvantaged.

Another major factor is that tertiary preparation provision in TAFE is extremely inconsistent between States. While the Tertiary Preparation Certificate (TPC) offered by TAFE New South Wales, the Certificate in Pre-Tertiary Studies in the Australian Capital Territory and the Certificate in Adult Tertiary Preparation (ATP) in Queensland provide centrally administered and moderated tertiary preparatory programs geared to the needs of young adult learners, other states have tended to rely on their universities for adult tertiary preparation, while Victoria and the Northern Territory place a greater reliance on adult matriculation through the TAFE sector. It is unlikely that this situation will change in the near future. In fact, it would be almost impossible to achieve a coordinated response of provision nationwide through TAFE in the foreseeable future. As Wiltshire (1996, p. 86) noted about the VET system in Australia:

> *... we do not really have a national approach to vocational education and training in this country. We have instead a loose confederation of interests whose collective will is still not producing overall leadership in the sector. ... There are eight separate and very diverse VET systems in Australia. That diversity is particularly marked in terms of course offerings, participation rates, college location, and articulation and accreditation arrangements. There are eight very diverse models of governance in existence driving each of these systems.*

The pervasive elitist culture of universities could again play a role here. It is questionable that a sole preparatory route from TAFE to university would remain viable and effective based purely on universities natural tendency to remain elite. Ramsay *et al.* (1996, p. xv) note that despite the massive effort put in by government to make universities put in place fair credit transfer arrangements: *"Analysis revealed that, generally, students were not finding the process of credit transfer easy",* particularly for students with TAFE qualifications. This supported similar findings in New South Wales by Alaba *et al.* (1993). Against expectations, it appears that dual mode institution models do not guarantee improved articulation as in these institutions articulation arrangements still need to be negotiated between the university and TAFE wings. In fact, in terms of cooperative arrangements involving preparatory provision between sectors, the most spectacular successes have occurred in situations where individual universities and TAFE institutes have come together to address a common need, such as the case with the Certificate in Tertiary Access to Griffith University offered through the Logan Institute of TAFE (Bond 1996), rather than in situations where cooperation between the sectors is more rigorously legislated.

Sobski (1998) noted several risks associated with an increasing competitive tertiary education environment – including an undermining of collaborative arrangements, an undue emphasis being placed on cost rather than effectiveness,

and an emphasis on attracting learners who require fewest resources at the expense of equity considerations. There is also a tendency in a 'free-market' education system that as competition tightens, institutions and sectors try to 'hang on' to students, with institutional needs potentially over-riding the best interests of students. There are Australian precedents for this occurring. For example, *TAFE HSC Pathways in NSW*, a scheme intended to promote cooperation between the VET and school systems in the inclusion of TAFE subjects in the senior school curriculum, has not been as successful a scheme as had been originally hoped largely because individual schools have positioned themselves to retain the funding that is associated with teaching students rather than seeking to participate in collaborative arrangements with TAFE (Anne Finnane, personal communication).

Finally, the failure of the community college sector in the USA to provide a consistent general pathway into university for 'poor' students provides a significant case study of the range of factors that can play a role in preventing effective intersectoral transfer despite the presence of legislative frameworks and best intentions (Chapter 3).

However, perhaps the most fundamental reason for the need to maintain a dual sector approach to preparatory provision into further study lies in the detail of the current mission of the VET sector which is heavily geared to preparing students for the world of work (ANTA 1998b). TAFE's charter quite naturally does not suggest any form of commitment by the sector to providing access pathways to university study – in fact precedents occur suggesting a resentment of suggestions for this kind of role for TAFE. For example, the Acting Chief Executive of the Australian National Training Agency (ANTA) stated in 1998 that: *"[there is a need] to ensure that VET outcomes are recognised in their own right, and not as stepping stones to a university degree"* (Osmond 1998, p. 6) and statements reported about the *"expressions of concern by ANTA …about the dangers of blurring the distinctions between the higher education and TAFE sectors"* (Osmond 1998, p. 6). The strength of feeling on these issues amongst TAFE practitioners was confirmed during the practitioner consultations exercise reported in Chapter 6.

Further, as tertiary preparation programs do not have an immediate vocational outcome, the appropriateness of their presence in TAFE is continually being questioned within that sector, with a strongly stated view favouring the offering of adult matriculation only through TAFE. Discussions along these lines have occurred recently at senior levels in both the New South Wales and Queensland TAFE systems, with this argument actually succeeding in Victoria with the disestablishment of the Tertiary Orientation Program (TOP) in 1997 in favour of a reliance on adult matriculation only. There is a genuine risk in the future of significantly reduced large-scale bridging provision specifically geared for young adult learners in the Australian TAFE sector if these views gain further purchase.

In conclusion, there is a need for the maintenance of a multi-sectoral approach to enabling provision. Basing bridging provision in a single sector would carry with it major disadvantages and risks with regard to the provision of bridging programs

into university study. Having available a diversity of programs across both sectors serves to better ensure that the varied needs of all individuals in the diverse student population are met – with the current situation in New South Wales and Queensland illustrating the benefits of such arrangements. It is highly desirable for a diversity in program type to be embraced and promoted, facilitating choice for all students. Any moves to rationalise enabling provision by regulating the responsibilities of individual sectors would almost certainly prove to be counterproductive.

9.8 Implications for future research

During the course of this study, the need for additional research in a number of areas became apparent. These areas include the following:

- A number of studies could usefully develop as direct off-shoots of the current study:
    - There is a general need for improved Enabling reporting and data collection. Although some suggestions are included in this report, the situation could benefit from more concerted study.
    - The study of the performance of Enabling students could be extended; for example, to develop more rigorous comparisons between the performance of Enabling students with matched groups entering higher education through other pathways, including through Special Entry Schemes. In this regard, it is noted that consistently collected data will soon be available on the performance of Special Entry students from all New South Wales universities through the implementation of a UAC initiative (Sonia Nitchell, University of New South Wales, personal communication).
    - There is a need for a study to track former Enabling students to identify the full range of outcomes that result from Enabling study.
    - There is a need to build on the survey of commencing Enabling and Enabling-like students described in Chapter 7 to survey students at different stages of their enrolment to identify if student aims change and to determine the basis for student loss from these programs and during subsequent further study.
    - It would be desirable to investigate the extent to which universities pass on Enabling funding to the operational areas concerned with developing and offering the programs.
    - There is a continuing need for improved methods to identify disadvantage which relate more directly to the methods used to identify disadvantage as a basis for student selection in practice. Note is made of the work in defining improved methods of identifying students from socioeconomically disadvantaged, rural and isolated groups published by Western *et al* (1998). Note is also made of alternative methods for identifying disadvantage as described in UAC (1999) and DTIR (1999).

- Pre-enabling programs and articulated pathways which take account of severe educational disadvantage exist in some areas but are neither well coordinated nor comprehensive. It would be desirable to investigate the need for comprehensive articulated pathways into further study for educationally disadvantaged students as a basis for developing strategies to ensure that these needs are met. This issue is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- There is a need for a comprehensive study of the financial issues affecting student participation in higher education. In this context, it is noted that the Department for Education and Employment, DENI and the Scottish Awards Agency have commissioned Professor Claire Callender of South Bank University to undertake a study of the income and expenditure of undergraduate students attending Higher Education Institutions in the UK (Michael Osborne, personal communication).
- It would be beneficial to study the extent to which students enrol in undergraduate degree courses to gain the benefits of HECS-liable students but with the principal goal of accessing only a small number of units for professional development purposes. In many instances this route provides a basis for a cheaper and more convenient means for students to obtain professional development than seeking fee-paying units for credit. However, the practice serves to artificially elevate attrition rates when students withdraw after fulfilling their own goal of a few units of study. It is likely that this behaviour is significantly inflating student withdrawal statistics in many institutions.