



E P H E A

EQUITY PRACTITIONERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AUSTRALASIA

Strategic Plan 2023 - 2025

www.ephea.org



Who are we?

Equity practitioners are passionate about equal opportunities for all and are dedicated to disrupting and challenging the systemic and institutional barriers that prevent both staff and students to thrive in the tertiary education sector. Equity practitioners value the rich knowledges, skills, experiences and cultures of a diverse staff workforce and student cohort, enriching the experience of tertiary education for all. Equity, diversity and inclusion is not the sole responsibility of equity practitioners within vocational education providers and universities, and as such equity practitioners advocate and work collaboratively with those within and across their institutions, often drawing on their own lived expertise and experiences, to achieve transformative and long-lasting change.

EPHEA (Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia) is the professional incorporated association for equity practitioners who work in tertiary education throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region. Equity practitioners play an essential role in tertiary education to develop and implement student and/or staff affirmative action programs, manage organisational responsibilities under anti-discrimination legislation, promote cultural change within institutions, and foster an environment which values and respects diversity. EPHEA is run by a committed volunteer Executive Committee made up of equity practitioners from across Australia and New Zealand. The committee structure is guided by the EPHEA Constitution.

Our values and commitment

EPHEA's work is to be guided and informed by our beliefs and commitment to:

Reconciliation and recognition

As an organisation working in Australasia, we recognise Indigenous and First Nations Peoples as tangata whenua (indigenous peoples) of Aotearoa, and traditional custodians of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands with deep connections to the custodianship of the land and sea. We have a collective commitment to Indigenous rights under the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous People and recognition of the relationship needed between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the First Peoples of Australia and seek to work alongside each other towards our shared goals. We recognise the tangata whenua (original peoples) of Aotearoa status of Māori and the country's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

Social justice, equity, fairness inclusion and safety

We are committed to respectful relationships with the diverse people that we work with. We value diversity and are committed to equality of opportunity and positive outcomes for all. We are committed to incorporating an anti-racism approach to pro-equity work and to disrupt the power dynamics within institutions that continue to oppress underrepresented groups in higher education.

A strengths-based approach

We want to empower people to achieve their employment and education goals from a place of strength and self-determination.

An evidence-based approach

Our work is based on best practice combining practitioner and community expertise, experience and sound research.

Collaboration and partnership

We value and recognise the expertise of equity practitioners across the sector and acknowledge that we can achieve more together than on our own.

Community

We acknowledge the experience and expertise that exist outside of our institutions, through collaborating and partnering with the communities we are trying to serve.

Longevity

We have a common sense of purpose and identity; we have a long standing reputation and endurance within the sector, continually empowering our members over time.

Our context

In 2020, COVID-19 had a significant impact on the Australian, New Zealand and Pacific higher education systems, institutional responses to the student and staff equity agenda and the complexities experienced by students and staff in navigating the tertiary education landscape.

Australia

The recent election of the Labor Government and the announcement of the Australian Universities Accord, presents a significant opportunity to reimagine the purpose and the role of tertiary education institutions and their role in society.

New Zealand

Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as the foundational document in New Zealand, plays a significant role in shaping tertiary education and New Zealand society. As a crown agent, tertiary education has the obligation and responsibility to reflect the values highlighted in the articles of Te Tiriti.

The introduction of free fees scheme in 2018 and the recent introduction of the Equity Index, focuses on reducing educational disparities across Aotearoa's education sector. This provides tertiary education in Aotearoa the exciting opportunity to increase responsive and inclusive educational practices that support communities, iwi, whānau and individuals within New Zealand society.

Pacific Islands

There is increasing focus in the Pacific Islands to improve their tertiary education development to increase access, participation and retention of their communities in higher education.

This Strategic Plan aims to be bold, in advocating for a tertiary education system that is equitable and meets the needs of student and staff populations. It also aims to position equity practitioners as experts in their institutions and as change agents, guiding their institutions to shift their structures in ways that are more inclusive and celebrate diverse student and staff cohorts.

Our mission

EPHEA has four goals that it will strive to achieve from 2023 to 2025:

1. Continue to build the capacity of equity practitioners as experts within their institutions and to be critically reflective of their own practice;
2. To champion systemic change through our collective resources, ensuring that equity is positioned at the forefront of institutional practice and national higher education policy;
3. To work collaboratively and develop partnerships that empower action and change across the tertiary education sector; and
4. To recognise and celebrate the work of equity practitioners across the sector.





Goal 1: Continue to build the capacity of equity practitioners as experts within their institutions.

In order to achieve this goal EPHEA will:

- 1.1 Develop an accredited Introduction to Equity qualification that institutions can embed into their staff induction and professional development programs.
- 1.2 Develop an early career initiative that advances the knowledge and skills of equity practitioners as experts in their institutions.
- 1.3 Convene an annual calendar of online and face-to-face professional development activities that are supported through state-based and country based networking opportunities.
- 1.4 Convene a bi-annual conference to contribute to the knowledge, research and practice of student and staff equity in tertiary education.
- 1.5 Continue with professional grants for EPHEA members to attend conferences and contribute to national conversations on staff and student equity.

Goal 2: To champion systemic change through our collective resources, ensuring that equity is positioned at the forefront of institutional practice and national tertiary education policy.

In order to achieve this goal EPHEA will:

- 2.1 Be positioned as the 'voice' and thought leader in national conversation around staff and student equity and will provide opportunities to bring equity practitioners across the sector, as well as community expertise, to contribute to the conversation.
- 2.2 Make regular submissions and recommendations on policy and best practice, drawing on key research, practitioner experience and institutional data sets.
- 2.3 Undertake advisory roles on relevant boards, national grants and key research projects that impact equity in tertiary education.



Goal 3: To work collaboratively and develop partnerships that empower action and change across the tertiary education sector.

In order to achieve this goal EPHEA will:

3.1 Increase the connectedness between relevant organisations to influence public policy. These will include but are not limited to; Universities Australia; Workplace Gender Equity Agency (WGEA); National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE); SAGE (Science in Australia Gender Equity); ATEND (Australian Tertiary Network on Disability); NCVET (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) and ADCET (Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training).

3.2 Increase connectedness with other tertiary providers across New Zealand including; Auckland University, The University of Waikato, Auckland Uni of Technology, Massey University, Te Pukenga and University of Canterbury.

Goal 4: To recognise and celebrate the work of equity practitioners across the sector.

In order to achieve this goal EPHEA will:

4.1 Continue to undertake peer-based recognition initiatives, including the continuation of the Champions of Change.

4.2 Expand the Lifetime Member awards to recognise the talent of our early career practitioners.

4.3 Work collaboratively with Engagement Australia to sponsor an Equity Award to recognise best practice across the sector and provide pathways and support to international award programs.

4.4 Showcase outstanding practice of equity practitioners through our communications channels.