MPA Feedback on first round of
Monash University Diversity and Inclusion DRAFT Action Plans
October 2018

The Monash Postgraduate Association (MPA) appreciates the opportunity to read and provide preliminary feedback regarding the above. The draft action plans were distributed to our network of students, stakeholders and representatives and the following comments were received.

Please find below the comments and the relevant section to which they refer under each of the Action Plans.

We have provided feedback on five action plans:

No feedback was received on the Staff and students diverse genders, sexes and sexualities action plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if further information is required.

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1) Priority Area: Staff and students with disability, ongoing medical or mental health condition

Category	Relevant Action / Success Indicator	Comment
1/1.1 Institutional Commitment to Cultural Inclusion	● Increase in positive responses to benchmark questions in Staff Engagement Survey about equal opportunity and fairness	Is there a target for the increase in positive responses to benchmark questions in the Staff Engagement Survey?
	Support staff and students participating in disability support services during work hours, such as training a seeing-eye dog.	
2/2.1 Increased demand from talented staff and students	● Scholarships are available and promoted to support students with disability, ongoing medical or mental health condition	It's important that the staff's interpretation of university instruments takes into account the non-static nature of many conditions, and how this impacts (often unexpectedly) on individuals AFTER enrolment. We feel it's important also that the university establish connections and partnerships with recruitment agencies specialising in disability employment (if such services exist).
	b. Ensure University Policy and Procedures are maintained and developed to remove barriers to participation	Professional staff who write policies often don't understand the impact of those policies on students with disabilities, in particular mental health illnesses. There are many examples of current policies that discriminate against students with mental health illnesses.
3/3.1 Accessibility	● Students with disability or medical condition can access the full curriculum	For some students their disability or ongoing issue might mean that they are unable to engage at all for a given period of time. This means they cannot engage with the campus or staff or respond to basic policy and procedural requirements. For example it could be sleep issues brought about by any number of physical or mental health concerns. These students need access to class recordings and other materials, however may not know it until it happens. Some faculties have seen a decrease in recorded lectures. Understandably this was with the intention of increasing class

		attendance, but what it also does is create an accessibility issue. How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?
	● Students and staff have a point of contact for accessibility issues Provide support for staff who are supervisors or managers to accommodate disability in their teams / research groups", e.g. provide access to a HR specialist/expert in disability support.	How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?
	● All new building works and refurbishments are designed with the aim of universal access	When considering 'universal access' in building works and refurbishments, postgraduates have requested 'quiet' spaces for individuals with mental health issues / exacerbations?
3/3.2 Education and Training	● Increasing number of students and staff across all areas of Monash participate in mental health and disability literacy training	Make this training mandatory for all staff members involved in Academic Progress and General Misconduct Committee decisions and hearings. Students with carer responsibilities are still omitted from explicit mention in many university materials. The recognition of these students in particular recognising the validity of the impact their situation has on their student responsibilities cannot be underestimated. Students need information campaigns around what a 'carer' is, help with self-recognition that this could be them, and community-wide support and knowledge that these students have circumstances that may not fit the confines of university support instruments (i.e. special consideration – may not be able to get a letter from the doctor of the person they are caring for in a defined timeframe). Of great benefit would be an information campaign run through DSS informing students of the ability to register as a Carer. How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?

	● Mental health and disability literacy content is incorporated into University induction programs and supervisor training	We recommend that this training emphasises that often conditions fluctuate, and are under-diagnosed or misdiagnosed.
3/3.2 Monash graduates are expert, engaged and in-demand	● Students with disability, ongoing medical or mental health condition receive individual case management as required	We often see students presenting with confusion regarding their DSS registration (in particular students who have come from other institutions). Clarity for all students about what registration with DSS means for them. For example: who informs faculty members of registration? What are the benefits of registration? What do students need to submit for extension and special consideration requests? Will their advisor keep in contact with them or is the onus on the student to maintain contact and keep channels open? How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?
	● Opportunities and support for career transition of students with disability and ongoing medical conditions are promoted	Could post-graduation career support, usually available for a year after leaving Monash, be extended in time for students with DMMH needs?
	● Monash student associations have a 'Disabilities and Carers' department As it stands this statement is not correct.	A university action plan cannot bind independent student associations . MSO's need to be consulted and agree to this before it can be included.
3/3.4 University culture where diversity is valued and supported	a. Continue to create an environment that builds resilience and facilitates social connections	Include education around what constitutes normal and abnormal stress events / education around help-seeking strategies / programs around high-stress times that are public and well-attended. It's important that this is not solely online; that it's not more websites, Moodle courses or long emails to read.
	● All first-year undergraduate students have access to a peer mentor This program is not being rolled out for postgraduates in the first instance.	The introduction of a yet another peer mentor program in the university needs to be reviewed in light of the large number of pre-existing programs. There has been no comprehensive inventory done on these programs. We don't want these programs to be competing against each other.

		How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?
	● External providers and services are promoted on all campuses	How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?
	● Students and staff with disability and ongoing medical condition have access to health services on campus	Access to staff with an awareness of university policy and procedure and knowledge of support available from independent advocates. The importance of the nexus between university health professionals and university procedure cannot be underestimated. It's important to consider that students (particularly ones stressed or in distress) assume that staff employed by or through the university are aware of policy and procedure, and that such staff give correct advice regarding these instruments. Health contractors must be fully trained in this area. How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?
	● Quality psychological counselling services available for students and staff	Is there any clear definition or benchmark for what 'quality' constitutes? How will this be evaluated? The waiting times for making an appointment is a concern, as is the wait time for making a follow-up appointment for timely support through university processes. Will these factor into this assessment? How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?
	● Mental health plan is in place for students and staff in crisis, including access to an on campus Mental Health Nurse	Would it be possible to create an informational program de-stigmatising MNCPs with personal stories? This is particularly important for the international cohort. We recommend that there is clear information available about privacy and confidentiality alongside. How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students?

2) Priority Area: Staff and students of cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Category	Relevant Action / Success Indicator	Comment
1/2.1 Increase demand from talented staff and students	b. Attract students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	Once students are enrolled, it's important to recognise that all students, in *particular* CALD students, may have different literacy needs (and these can include needing help with producing formal communications, learning how to ask for help, understanding university communications, policies and procedures (policy interpretation is not a universal literacy), how to talk with people from a different background / gender / age / hierarchy to you, etc..) There is an often an assumption regarding such and this should be considered. We also stress the importance of recognising the differing family structures and ties in our community, and how these do not necessarily fit into current university instruments . For example: -How does a student prove that their great aunt, who raised them, was an immediate and important family member and whose death has impacted them greatly? - with the death of a family member why does a student need to see a mental health specialist for a letter to support what is a normal grieving process? In attracting students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, we need to be able to understand and support them.
	● Increased number of international and asylum seeker scholarships offered	We need to ensure that more scholarships are provided for international GPG. This cohort has a rapidly expanding problem with poverty.
	● Increased number of students from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds submitting a SEAS application	It's important that this access to opportunity isn't hindered by inflexible policies and procedures surrounding progress and special consideration once students are enrolled. We would strongly support any increased access to subsidised accommodation on campus.

3/3.1 Inclusive Policies and Practices	a. Consider dates of cultural significance in planning	Consider including the less-recognised faiths and followings. For some students (as an example) travelling to see the family's guru (Baha'i faith), in Australia for the first time, is a compulsory event, but is deemed non-compulsory by the university.
3/3.2 Education and training	a. Deliver targeted and comprehensive training for staff and students to support an environment inclusive of cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds	How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students? The university needs to have more open discussions with the wider university community about racism and how to combat it on campus. No-one wants to speak openly about it.
3/3.3 Ensure Monash Graduates are expert, engaged and in demand	b. Provide comprehensive transition and orientation support for students of cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds	How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students? We believe the reduction of face-to-face enrolment and orientation sessions will adversely affect newly arrived international students.
	● Increase in percentage of students of cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds enrolled and continuing study post census date	It would be prudent to pay special attention to the CALD-identified cohort in the APC events at the end of each year (and EW in the middle) – are these students slipping through? Have students not understood where to get support? Are students struggling to keep up with readings and content due to their CALD status? Does this mean they have significantly less time to access services, seek support and make and maintain relationships?
	● Careers, Leadership and Volunteering provide targeted workshops and programs to support international students to secure employment	How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students? Overwhelmingly the feedback to MPA from international GPGs is that they want industry engagement and internships. They expect it to be part of the course for which they have paid a great deal of money.

		It would be helpful to increase the number of networking events and career expos for international postgraduates. Invite more companies and industry experts who are willing to employ international students to current career events. More than 60% of the employers who were invited to the Monash Career Expo won't even consider non-PR applicants. This issue won't be solved by training the students.
3/3.4 University culture where diversity is valued and supported	Provide family accommodation on campus.	Many postgraduates bring family members (partners and children) with them when they arrive to take up their studies – we need to offer family-sized accommodation on campus,.
	c. Provide individualised support for International students as required	How will this be delivered to off-campus and distance education students? Online enrolment, and the increasing cancellation of face-to-face orientation activities is concerning as it effectively removes the 'human' element of the university; enrolment and orientation compulsory activities provide the first 'friendly face' with whom students can form a connection. Re-establish the International student's support unit as a shop-front unit so that students can have direct access to the expertise of staff. This used to be the case and it was a very successful and heavily-used support unit.

3) Priority Area: Students from low socio-economic backgrounds

Category	Relevant Action / Success Indicator	Comment
1/1.1 Institutional commitment to widening participation	a. University wide commitment to institutional policies, strategies and practices to increase social mobility and inclusion through higher education b. Faculties are actively engaged in widening participation strategies to improve access, participation and success of student from LSES communities	Many of the university's programs in this area are focussed on or are solely run for undergraduates. Low SES programs in the HDR and GPG space would be welcome. The recent Universities Australia finance survey showed many postgraduates are living below the poverty line. The MPA advocacy service is seeing an increase in financial distress among postgraduates.
2/2.1 Increase demand from talented low SES students		Considerations need to be made regarding the needs and circumstances of this cohort once they are enrolled. Medicine placements (for example) can be an issue for LSES students. Students have little avenue to appeal rural and/or remote placements on LSES grounds. Students may not be able to afford a vehicle or to pay a dual rent when partners/children need to stay in the home. Some students may need to remain in a certain home for support or safety reasons, and others perhaps can't afford to pay daily road toll costs (etc.). Can LSES reasons to request particular placements be more subjective, across the WIL-board? The above is one example of the many internal issues LSES student may face when navigating the requirements of their qualification. We urge that when considering increasing enrolment numbers from students from LSES or CALD backgrounds (for example), that policies and procedures governing students during their studies are considered.
3/3.1 Provide financial and practical support	a. Reduce the financial barriers for students from LSES communities through scholarships	It's important to recognise that financial barriers are varied and can't all be resolved with scholarships. One enrolled LSES face ongoing expenses such as: - HDR students should in theory attend and present at one overseas conference during

| | | their candidature, for which they receive a grant from the university. However the reality is that this grant does not cover the full cost of the trip, so LSES students have had to turn down grants because they did not have the funds to cover the gap.

- inability of full-time postgraduate students to travel on Victorian public transport at student concession prices (and subsequently often needing to make attendance decisions based on this cost), and

- university instruments (special consideration, Allocate schedules needing to prioritise many LSES who may have to travel great distances to campus, for example) not recognising that a diverse student population comes with commitments (such as needing to financially support extended family members (among other personal obligations) are valid barriers to academic success.

We urge that the university strongly consider offering more part-time postgraduate scholarships to support students from LSES backgrounds who can *only* undertake part-time postgraduate research, due to parenting/caring commitments. |
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| | b. Reduce financial barriers to study through regular employment provided through Access Monash programs and on-campus employment | Employ a financial advisor and re-establish the financial advice unit so that students can access expert advice in a confidential setting – as opposed to applying for a hand-out at Monash Connect which is a very public setting with staff who are not trained in the subject.

Many students already have flexible and reliable off-campus employment, and we hope that the importance of secure employment *anywhere* is considered as valuable to the student experience and progress.

Also, there are many students that can't take up on-campus employment opportunities because they live far away and/or have home commitments that would prevent them from being able to access such opportunities. |

| 3/3.2 Ensure Monash Graduates are expert, engaged and in demand | • Students from LSES communities participate in extra-curricular activities and mobility experiences at the same rate as their peers | Many students who work or who have outside life obligations often have to be content with 'competency' in their grades, rather than achieving the high marks they may be capable of under different life circumstances. This can exclude them from accessing these programs.

Could there be opportunity for students to prove suitability for these experiences through an application process that includes not just grades, but takes into account their responsibilities (and that their LSES background *adds* to their responsibilities, as a rule)? |

4) Priority Area: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students

Category	Relevant Action / Success Indicator	Comment
2/1.1 Indigenous Student Access	d. Work in partnership with Indigenous businesses, not-for-profits and government to provide postgraduate study opportunities for Indigenous staff (students?) Provide financial incentives, tailored support and mentoring to ensure Indigenous undergraduates continue on to postgraduate study.	The stakeholder group is students but the action states staff. Assuming it is supposed to be students, not entirely sure what this actually means?
3/1.1 Provide Appropriate Support for our Indigenous Students	● Improved retention rates of Indigenous students Establish academic pathways to mentor, support and train postgraduates during their PhDs through to a guaranteed junior academic position	Ensure that this applies equally to GPG and HDR. We understand that funding for this type of initiative is available through government grants.
3/1.2 Build Academic Capacity	b. Develop Indigenous research capacity by providing an appropriate environment, support and resources to encourage Indigenous students to pursue careers in Indigenous research	We would not like to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDRs channelled into research in Indigenous-specific fields only. Monash should be encouraging Indigenous HDRs to graduate in all fields of research.
3/1.3 Advance Cultural Awareness	b. Ensure the University is a culturally safe place to work and study for Indigenous people free from discrimination and harassment	Monash could consider implementing "cultural leave" provisions for staff and students to attend Indigenous cultural events, or to renew their connection with country (in addition to regular leave provisions).
	c. Integrate Indigenous perspectives and knowledges into our buildings, gardens and landscaping works in prominent and visible positions to demonstrate the high value that	A commitment to support Indigenous businesses (via procurement, contractors etc.?. See: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/oct/12/indigenous-business-is-a-vital-part-of-australias-economy-so-how-can-you-help

	Monash places on Indigenous Peoples, cultures and histories	
	d. Celebrate Indigenous Peoples, cultures and histories	The responsibility for actioning this point lists the 'Monash Student Council President and Executive'. This is a reference to MSA which is a Clayton-based undergraduate representative body. All student associations should be included.
4/4.1	Build a program of high impact and meaningful Indigenous research with targeted investment to support recruitment in Indigenous research by Indigenous researchers	As per comment in 3/1.2 We would not like to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDRs channelled into research in Indigenous-specific fields only. Monash should be encouraging Indigenous HDRs to graduate in all fields of research.

5) Priority Area: Gender equality and gender equity

Category	Relevant Action / Success Indicator	Comment
1/1.2 Leadership and practice informed by data and evidence	Collect and analyse data to inform gender equity goals, programs and initiatives Commit to achieving 50% women in all leadership positions from Professor above, by 2025.	Current and potential female postgraduates need to see women in senior staff positions in their faculties.
3/3.1 Women in leadership	● Successful delivery of flagship gender equity programs with increased participation (e.g. Women's Mentoring Program, Senior Women's Shadowing Program)	
	Introduction of gender equity programs for women postgraduates	For HDRs a Women's academic shadowing program, For GPGs a Women's professional staff shadowing program
3/3.4 Support for parents and carers	a. Offer and promote flexible work options at Monash Offer and promote flexible study options for students at Monash	
	Offer and promote parental leave entitlements, caregiver policies and relevant programs (staff) Offer and promote parental leave entitlements in degree regulations and scholarships, caregiver policies and relevant programs for students	MPA currently has a proposal at Academic Board to include family violence leave in course regulations and scholarships for students.
	c. Deliver and promote tailored programs for staff with parental and caring responsibilities to help them to successfully integrate their professional and personal lives Deliver and promote facilities and programs for students with parental and caring responsibilities to help them to successfully integrate their student and personal lives	Develop oncampus accommodation for students with partners and children Establish a family-friendly study room on every campus. Establish an occasional childcare centre on campus.

		Run a school holiday program on every campus.
	e. Support breastfeeding and staff, students and on-campus visitors with young children through the provision of relevant policies, high standard parenting facilities and mobile mother's kits	Establish a 24/7 ABA approved parenting room on every campus.
	Reduce the impact of career breaks on academic success of staff with caregiving responsibilities Reduce the impact of career breaks on academic success of HDRs with caregiving responsibilities	