



Name: Regional Universities Network

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Improve school student outcomes with the best available tools and resources

What (if anything) needs to be done to improve the use of edtech tools (including GenAI) in schools?

EdTech tools, including Generative AI (GenAI), hold immense potential to enrich student learning and empower Australian students to succeed in an increasingly digital economy. However, the rapid rise in the adoption of EdTech tools is accompanied by the potential to fuel the widening gap between digitally-literate and less-digitally literate workforces, groups, or entire communities.

When harnessed effectively, these technologies can create more dynamic, inclusive learning environments that prepare students to adapt, innovate, and contribute to Australia's future prosperity. Embedding the utilisation and mastery of EdTech tools in schools will have a compounding impact on the capabilities of Australians in both the short and long term. Ensuring all young Australians have the opportunities, resources, and skilled guidance to achieve contemporary digital literacy will be essential to capturing the full potential of these tools.

Achieving this vision depends on ensuring that all students have equitable access to opportunities and resources throughout their schooling. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) reveals a 5.0-point gap in digital access, affordability, and ability between metropolitan (74.8) and regional areas (69.8). This gap becomes more distinct amongst First Nations Australians, which grows considerably in line with remoteness. This digital divide represents a disadvantage in terms of regional workforce development, and also represents a disadvantage upon the individual. It limits an individual's ability to manage major aspects of their health, education, finances, and a basic engagement with civic duties and processes in an increasingly digital world. Considering the exponential rise of EdTech/AI as the new foundation of global economic systems, and given regional Australia's immense contribution to ongoing prosperity, the potential of a widening digital divide between metropolitan and regional Australians represents an unacceptable sovereign risk. An effective policy response must therefore seek to accelerate the closure of this digital divide by enabling/supporting regional Australian students to access the same opportunities, facilities and resources as those enjoyed by metropolitan Australians.

Investing in digital equity between Australians is not just a matter of fairness; it is essential for building a strong, productive, and globally competitive economy. The Australian Universities Accord found that the skilled workforces required by the Australian economy in 2050 cannot be met without a parity of participation/attainment in post-schooling education between traditionally represented and underrepresented groups. The same approach to Australia's digital preparedness into the future must also be taken. Australia's prosperity is not assured via a two-tiered workforce based on traditionally entrenched geographic, socio-economic or cultural disparities in opportunity and access to digital learning opportunities.

RUN acknowledges the need to ensure that the benefits of EdTech tools (including AI) are accessible across all student cohorts, regardless of geography or background. It is also important that students interacting with EdTech tools are supported in their foundational understandings of matters related to ethics and integrity of technology.

RUN RECOMMENDS: The development of a comprehensive and nationally consistent policy approach to school-based utilisation of EdTech tools, and underpinned by a system of resource allocation, that is designed to narrow the digital divide that currently exists between regional/metropolitan Australians and other underrepresented groups.

What more (if anything) needs to be done to improve awareness and access to high quality lesson planning and curriculum materials in schools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Is there anything more you would like to say about edtech, GenAI or lesson planning and curriculum materials?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes you?

Peak Body

Are you currently using any edtech tools (including learning games and GenAI) to support teaching and learning in the classroom?

No

If yes, what has been your experience with using these tools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Are there things you would like to do with GenAI or edtech tools that you can't do currently? What's stopping you from doing these things?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you tell us why you are not using any edtech tools?

We are a peak body

Do you access lesson planning and curriculum materials online?

No

If yes, what has been your experience with using these tools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you tell us why you are not using online lesson planning and curriculum materials?

We are a peak body

Support the workforce through a flexible post-secondary education and training sector

Credit transfer and recognition of prior learning

In your experience, how well does the credit transfer and recognition of prior learning system operate in Australia? Does it adequately support students to move between courses or have their work experience recognised as part of a qualification? Are there ways it could be improved?

RUN acknowledges that credit transfer and RPL processes are important matters of equity, as they play a critical role in ensuring fair access to educational opportunities. However, RUN also acknowledges that at a national level, the current system for credit and RPL remains insufficiently supportive for the student and needs improvement. Practices across the sector can be inconsistent and often involve complex procedures, which can be difficult for students to navigate. Furthermore, awareness of credit and RPL opportunities among students is generally low, with many students unaware of their existence or how to access them. Establishing a nationally consistent framework would enhance consistency and accessibility; however, such a framework must operate within a system that respects the autonomy and academic integrity of higher education providers as self-accrediting bodies.

Many higher education providers have made strong progress in improving their respective credit and RPL processes. Examples of these include investments in institution-specific credit calculators, improved application processes, and credit precedent record systems. RUN acknowledges further work being undertaken at a sectoral level, such as the development of an Australian/New Zealand credit precedence database, data service, and applicant portal. This initiative seeks to help students understand the credit available to them across all institutions, while also providing an accessible and consistent interface for exploring, reviewing and evaluating potential RPL. However, despite recent and ongoing improvements in terms of how credit transfers and RPL are managed, there remains significant variance across the sector. These inconsistencies can become onerous for students, particularly for those seeking to move between institutions or between sectors. One significant barrier for students navigating the credit transfer and RPL system is the requirement to provide sufficient/extensive supporting documentation, including course outlines, to enable assessments of equivalency. The lack of seamless portability of prior learning across the sector, particularly between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) remains a key gap. A central sector solution that supported authenticated records of prior learning, with sufficient detail of volume of learning/learning outcomes could ease this burden. The response would reduce the onus on students to collect some of the required supporting documentation, and create efficiencies for both students and institutions.

The Australian Universities Accord noted the increasing importance of collaboration between universities and industry, as well as between universities and the VET sector. RUN supports a greater harmonisation of Australia's VET and HE sectors, recognising that enhanced collaboration can help strengthen pathways, improve skills recognition, and ensure that students gain the knowledge and experience they need to contribute to a productive economy. However, this ambition must also respect university autonomy.

Universities must retain the ability to determine their mission, course offerings, student mix, admission criteria, and research priorities. These elements are fundamental to the integrity and diversity of Australia's higher education system, and to ensuring that universities can respond to both local community needs (via their distinct respective social missions) and national economic priorities.

The Jobs and Skills Australia Tertiary Harmonisation Roadmap offers a useful framework for supporting this balance, pointing to national tools such as a credit transfer system, the National Skills Taxonomy, and shared frameworks that can support alignment. These system-level improvements, if designed and implemented effectively, can help students navigate the sector more effectively, reduce unnecessary duplication, and better match skills to workforce needs. However, these changes should not lead to a system where universities are required to recognise all prior learning automatically. The decision to grant credit must remain with autonomous, self-accrediting institutions, informed by academic standards, industry input, and research-informed teaching.

Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply.

Peak body

In the past 3 years, have you applied for credit recognition or recognition of prior learning (RPL)?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, what was your experience in applying for credit recognition or RPL like?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on why you didn't apply?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Work related training

What are the main reasons individuals and/or businesses do or do not participate in work-related training?

Work-related training is a key component of a flexible and responsive education system, and RUN universities embed authentic work-integrated-learning opportunities across a wide range of disciplines. However, there are several factors that may limit the uptake, availability and impact of work-integrated learning opportunities. Many of these factors are linked to regionality and are outlined below.

Compared to a typical metropolitan university student, a regional university student is considerably more likely to be older/mature age, already in the fulltime workforce, studying part-time and online, and is more likely to have parental/caregiver responsibilities. Regional university students are also more likely to come from an underrepresented background. Indeed, while the seven RUN universities enrol just 12 per cent of all domestic students in Australia, they collectively enrol approximately one-quarter of all students from a low SES background, one quarter of all Indigenous students, and one-third of students from Regional, Rural or Remote backgrounds. RUN universities also collectively enrol a proportionately higher rate of students living with disability. Such factors can have tremendous bearing upon a student's personal

circumstance. As such, many regional students face distinct challenges in utilising work-integrated-training opportunities, including limited time due to fulltime work obligations or caring responsibilities, financial constraints, and geography/remoteness. These barriers can disproportionately impact students experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage.

RUN welcomes the introduction of a system of Commonwealth Practicum Payments (CPP) as a means to suppress the impact of at least some of the aforementioned factors. However, RUN cautions against the CPP system being viewed as a comprehensive solution to the many complex barriers faced by regional and/or underrepresented students in their successful completion of compulsory practicum requirements.

Another factor impacting upon the uptake and impact of work-integrated learning opportunities for university students is the relative scarcity of placement opportunities in regional areas. Unlike metropolitan students, the students at regional universities typically do not reside within the densely populated urban centres surrounding their chosen campus. Domestic RUN students are highly dispersed across large geographic areas, with the majority (over 60 per cent in 2023) studying online. This creates tremendous complexity for regional universities in creating work-integrated-learning opportunities for a highly dispersed student cohort who live/study in areas with a scarcity of placement industries/employers/opportunities. With higher proportions of RUN students studying courses that involve embedded industry placements. Almost half of all domestic RUN students were studying to be teachers or healthcare workers in 2023, and with RUN universities lacking the economies of scale enjoyed by urban universities operating in dense population centres, it remains an ongoing challenge for regional universities to find and resource a constant supply of appropriate industry placement opportunities for a highly dispersed student body.

An effective, regional work integrated learning model worthy of further considering is Federation University's Co-operative Model. Federation University has embedded a minimum of 60 days of paid, credit-bearing placements into all undergraduate and TAFE programs. These placements are co-designed with industry partners and offer flexible delivery options, including full-time, part-time, or block formats, to accommodate students' diverse needs and commitments. By integrating paid placements into the curriculum, students can earn income while gaining practical experience, reducing the financial strain that often limits participation in traditional unpaid internships.

What role, if any, should businesses be playing to address any barriers and better support the offer of work-related training to employees?

The participant did not respond to this question.

What, if anything, could government do to address barriers and better support the offer of work-related training to employees?

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Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply.

I am a business owner; manager or sole trader

For business owners, managers and sole traders, how many employees do you have?

The participant did not respond to this question.

For employees/individuals, have you participated in any work-related training in the last 12 months that did not relate to general compliance (such as WHS)?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, can you elaborate on the reasons for the training and any benefits you received from doing it?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on any challenges or barriers you faced in attempting to undertake work-related training?

The participant did not respond to this question.

For business owners, managers or sole traders, have you provided or supported your employees to participate in work-related training in the past 12 months?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, can you elaborate on the reasons for the training and any benefits you or your employees received from doing it?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Can you describe whether you accessed any government assistance, what type, and the amount received? If you didn't access any financial assistance, please tell us the reasons why.

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on any challenges or barriers you faced in attempting to provide or support your employees to undertake work-related training, such as the time or cost, availability of relevant or high-quality courses, and level of interest from your employees?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Balance service availability and quality through fit-for-purpose occupational entry regulations

What are the effects of occupational entry regulations? Please describe your experience and name the specific occupations you are referring to.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Do you believe current occupational entry regulations are proportionate to the level of risk associated with different professions? Why or why not? If not, do you have any suggested improvements to regulations to better reflect risks? Please name the specific occupations you are referring to.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes your connection to occupational entry regulations? Please select all that apply.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which state or territory are you predominantly based in?

The participant did not respond to this question.