

Equity Frontiers Trial Protocol

“Money plus support: Evaluating the impact of packaged equity scholarships: A regression discontinuity design”

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1. Trial overview

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| Trial Title: | Money plus support: evaluating the impact of packaged equity scholarships: a regression discontinuity design | | |
| Trial Start Date: | 28 April 2025 | Trial Finish Date: | 31 July 2026 |
| Principal Investigator Name: | <p>Elisa McGowan</p> <p><i>Authors: Elisa McGowan, Patricia Vermillion Peirce, Luke Chu, Nadine Zacharias, Katie Douglas, Cassy Allum & Christian Miller-Sabbioni.</i></p> | | |
| Principal Investigator Contact Details: | elisa.mcgowan@uwa.edu.au / (08) 6488 2133 | | |
| Sponsoring institution name(s) | The University of Western Australia (UWA) and the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) | | |
| Trial summary (<300 words) | <p>The UWA Connect Scholarship targets students commencing in their undergraduate studies at UWA, and is designed to prioritise students by need, as determined through an evaluative framework assessing cumulative disadvantage (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The scholarship is a “packaged” product and includes three components: a \$1500 bursary upon enrolment; \$5000 per year for up to four years of undergraduate students (delivered as \$2500 per semester post census); and inclusion in a wrap-around support program, “Broadway Connect”. That is, the scholarship package provides money plus tailored support.</p> <p>The UWA Connect scholarship seeks to increase priority students’ pass rates, grade point average, and retention rate into the subsequent semester.</p> <p>A Regression Discontinuity (RD) design is being used to estimate the effects of the UWA Connect Scholarship package on student success. The scholarship is awarded based on a ranking score (“the score”) calculated from a set of individual characteristics relevant to disadvantage. The RD design utilises the quasi-randomness at an arbitrary threshold and compares scholarship applicants who are just above the threshold and receiving the intervention (the treatment group) with a comparable “control group”; scholarship applicants who are otherwise similar but just below the threshold and thus not receiving the intervention. University administrative data will be used to test the effects of the initiative on student re-enrolment, pass rates, and Grade Point Average (GPA).</p> <p>The trial is being undertaken at the University of Western Australia during 2025.</p> | | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Funding (total, and funding sources) | \$86,320 |
| Ethics approval (grantor, date, reference ID) | The University of Western Australia – Human Ethics & Clinical Trials, Approved 21 August 2025, Reference: 2025/ET000162 |

2. Background and intervention

2.1 Background

Despite 15 years of dedicated policy and institutional efforts, gaps persist in access to and success in higher education among students from diverse backgrounds. The recently updated Critical Interventions Framework maintains financial support as an effective intervention type for student equity across the access and participation phases of the student lifecycle (Bennett et al., 2024).

Further, impact evaluations have estimated these positive effects of scholarships in terms of student success. Bettinger (2015) found benefits for an increase in financial awards of approximately 800 US Dollars resulted in a 2% reduction in students' drop-out rates and increased the first-year grades (0.04 GPA points) for American students.

Other descriptive research suggests that scholarship programs may be an effective retention tool when they are nested within further supports (Zacharias & Ryan, 2020) and prioritise need over academic achievement (Moores & Burgess, 2023). Supporting this claim regarding nested scholarships, one impact evaluation (Page et al. 2019) showed that a scholarship whose recipients were awarded up to \$20,000 US Dollars, a laptop computer, and textbook support, as well as whose scholars were provided monitoring and assistance, was successful at supporting student performance (higher grades, more credits), persistence, and success (greater likelihood to complete and attain a degree) within higher education.

2.2 Intervention

The intervention to be evaluated is the "UWA Connect Scholarship". The scholarship is targeted towards students commencing in their undergraduate studies at UWA. The scholarship is designed to prioritise students by need, as determined through an evaluative framework assessing cumulative disadvantage (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This framework is used to select eligible applicants, using a scoring framework to score scholarship applicants according to need.

Advertising and receiving applications

The scholarship is promoted through the University's social media channels, at key promotional events such as Open Day and the Career Advisors' Breakfast, and via the School Engagement Team's outreach programs in high schools across Western Australia. Whilst we cannot guarantee that all students know about the opportunity to apply, these are large scale events and broad channels ensuring maximum exposure of all incoming students to the opportunity.

Applicants can apply through the online application system after submitting their bachelor's degree application to the University. Selection is based on a comprehensive assessment of

multiple equity factors, with some candidates automatically awarded each year in alignment with the University’s strategic priorities or donor contributions. Indigenous students and those who have previously demonstrated need through participation in a dedicated support program for students with financial hardship, namely Fairway UWA, are automatically awarded the Scholarship in 2025.

Scoring for scholarship eligibility

Prior to Semester 1 and Semester 2, scholarship applicants are ranked upon application. The framework is set around eight aspects of known disadvantage: low socio-economic status, regional or remote location, Indigenous background, financial hardship, being first-in-family, language other than English, disability / medical condition, other circumstances. Each individual applicant receives a rating for each of these eight aspects of educational disadvantage, and the sum of these represents the applicant’s level of disadvantage. The framework and scores are provided in Table 1.

The final score is calculated as the sum across all categories. This total score represents each applicant’s relative disadvantage, from 0 (least disadvantaged) to 22 (most disadvantaged).

The Scholarships Team sets the eligibility threshold based on the distribution of applicants’ scores and the funding available. In 2025, scores of “7” or higher receive the scholarship, while those who score a “6” or lower do not. There are two exceptions to this scoring approach as indicated earlier: Indigenous students and those who have previously demonstrated need through participation in a dedicated support program, are automatically awarded the scholarship. These students will still be scored but will receive the scholarship regardless of their score. These applicants are managed within the statistical approach (c.f. Section 4). We include these automatic awardees in the analysis but control for their status in the regressions (c.f. Section 4). All other students are assessed against the scoring framework in Table 1.

Table 1: Money Plus Support Scholarship scoring framework

Socio-economic status

https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/32dcbb18c1d24f4aa89caf680413c741/#data_s=id%3Awidget_36_output_config_1%3A0

| SA1 | Score |
|------------------------|-------|
| 5 (most advantaged) | 0 |
| 4 | 0 |
| 3 | 1 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 1 (most disadvantaged) | 4 |

Regional and remote

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/health-workforce-locator/app?language=en>

| Regional and Remote Classification (ASGS Remoteness Area – 2021) | Score |
|--|-------|
| Major cities of Australia – RA Code 1 | 0 |
| Inner regional Australia – RA Code 2 | 2 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Outer regional Australia – RA Code 3 | 2 |
| Remote Australia – RA Code 4 | 4 |
| Very remote Australia – RA Code 5 | 4 |

Indigenous

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Indigenous | Score |
| Non-Indigenous | 0 |
| Indigenous | 4 |

Proof of financial hardship

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Financial hardship | Score |
| No financial hardship | 0 |
| Financial hardship (no documents) | 0 |
| Financial hardship | 3 |

First-in-Family

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| First-in-family | Score |
| No | 0 |
| Yes | 1 |

Language other than English

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Language other than English | Score |
| No | 0 |
| Yes | 1 |

Disability or medical condition that impacts study

| | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Disability/medical condition | Score |
| No | 0 |
| Yes | 2 |

Other circumstances, including but not limited to

| | |
|--|-------|
| | Score |
| Minor (e.g. experience disruption of education due to relocation; unsupportive study environment) | 1 |
| Moderate (e.g. extensive family responsibility that impacts negatively on your ability to study; requirement to work more than usual hours; experiencing family disruption such as a divorce) | 2 |
| Severe (e.g. experiencing family disruption, such as death; supporting family members with an illness / disability; experience disruption to my education due to migration or refugee passage to Australia; currently, or within the last two years, in the care of the state. | 3 |

Offers and requirements

Applicants who are awarded the scholarship receive an official UWA Scholarship offer letter outlining the conditions of the award, which must be formally accepted. Scholars are required to be enrolled full-time in an undergraduate degree at the University, unless the selection body determines that compelling circumstances justify a reduced study load. To retain the scholarship, recipients must continue to meet the eligibility requirements, including maintaining full-time enrolment (unless approved otherwise) and making satisfactory academic progress in accordance with the rules of their course.

The support provision

The scholarship is a “packaged” product and includes three components:

1. \$1500 bursary upon enrolment
2. \$2500 each semester following the Semester census date for the period of their degree (average total support will be \$16,500 for a three-year undergraduate degree)
3. Inclusion in a wrap-around support program, Broadway Connect (BC) as well as access to a dedicated Equity Scholarships Coordinator (ESC) from the Coursework Scholarships Office.

Each semester BC offers students a welcome event, two social events, three academic events, a welcome pack and end of semester care pack, as well as ongoing peer-to-peer support via the Chronus app. In addition, the ESC provides regular personalised email contact, assistance for scholarship matters, additional social and professional development events and catering, vouchers, and merchandise to incentivise engagement (see details in Appendix 1).

All events and engagements are opt-in and attendance is voluntary. Detailed participation data is collected for each engagement opportunity. A scale of relative engagement will be developed to score students’ level of participation to understand any perceivable differences in impact.

2.3 Objectives

Theory of change

The scholarship initiative at UWA is designed as a two-pronged approach to address the challenges that students may face in achieving success at university, combining financial support and wrap-around social and academic support through BC and the ESC.

First, the scholarship provides students with a \$1,500 bursary upon enrolment, followed by \$2,500 each semester for the duration of their degree, for up to four years. We expect that this initial and ongoing financial support reduces the need for students to engage in paid work and alleviates financial stress. By lessening the pressure to generate income, or at least providing greater freedom from financial stresses, we expect that students can dedicate more time and cognitive resources to their studies. This support also enables them to participate more fully in university activities, fostering engagement and a sense of belonging. Ultimately, the financial support is expected to directly enhance students’ focus, study participation and unit success (grades), as well as persistence in the subsequent semesters (retention), in particular amongst those that experience financial stress more profoundly (i.e. students from low SES backgrounds).

This financial support component of the scholarship echoes Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) (Sweller, 1988). In CLT, it is suggested that, when learners face unnecessary cognitive demands, their ability to process and retain information is compromised. For students from lower SES backgrounds, financial stress constitutes a significant cognitive load, given concerns about earning sufficient income to support themselves or managing expenses take up attention, leaving fewer resources for academic tasks. Studies have shown how financial stress reduces an individual's ability to solve problems and make better decisions, ultimately reducing their "cognitive capacity" (Mani et al., 2013). By providing financial support both initially and through ongoing payments, the UWA scholarship reduces financial pressure, freeing up attention for university study, enhancing focus and grades, supporting persistence in the first year of university, and beyond.

BC complements this financial component by providing structured social support during the students' transition to university. Each semester in their first year, students engage in a welcome event and networking opportunities that introduce them to relevant staff, support services, and the peer mentors who are also students from equity cohorts. These activities aim to foster a sense of belonging, normalise the challenges of university transition, and build social capital. These improved social connections are expected to directly affect students' desire to continue with university study, and therefore, enrolment in academic units and unit success (grades), as well as persistence in subsequent semesters (retention).

BC aligns closely with Tinto's Theory of Student Retention (Tinto, 1975) and Kahu and Nelson's concept of the "education interface" (Kahu & Nelson, 2017), which both suggest that students are more likely to persist in higher education when they are academically and socially integrated into the institution. Assuming the scholarship recipients attend, we expect BC to foster social integration through welcome events, peer mentoring, and co-designed social activities, helping students from equity cohorts form connections with their university peers and staff, and reducing feelings of isolation that many students from educationally disadvantaged communities may feel when at university. Simultaneously, BC supports academic integration through skills development sessions that equip students with study strategies and tools to succeed in their first-year units. By promoting both academic and social engagement, BC strengthens students' sense of belonging and commitment to the university, which Tinto identifies as critical mechanisms for enhancing persistence and retention.

Trial objectives

The trial estimates the impact of the Money Plus Support initiative, which includes the scoring assessment, distribution of fixed financial support by semester, and the academic and social support program, on student's short-term success and retention in higher education. By providing the most disadvantaged students with financial and wrap-around support, we aim to increase students' success, retention, and/or grades.

Hypotheses and Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

It is hypothesised that the scholarship, including financial support alongside engagement in wrap-around support, will have positive impacts on equity students' performance and persistence compared to similar students who missed out on a scholarship because their score was marginally below the cut-off. This quasi-experimental impact trial will address the following questions:

1. What effect does receipt of the scholarship package have on recipients' success rate, re-enrolment into the following semester (as a proxy for retention), and GPA compared to similar students who don't receive the scholarship?

2. What are the differential effects of the level of engagement in the BC support program?

3. Trial design

3.1 Outcomes

Primary outcomes

1. **Improvement in short-term retention**

Measure: Students' re-enrolment in the subsequent semester (Yes/No)

Instrument: University administrative data, captured directly from the UWA student management system.

Approach: The student enrolment data is extracted from the UWA student management system one week following the commencement of the successive term and cross-checked with unit information using the Student Identification Number.

2. **Improvement in short-term success rates**

Measure: Students' percentage of units passed for each semester (calculated as the numbers of units successfully completed, divided by the number of units enrolled after census date, in one term)

Instrument: University administrative data, captured directly from the UWA student management system.

Approach: The student completion data is extracted from the UWA student management system and cross-checked with unit information using the Student Identification Number.

3. **Improvement in short-term academic performance**

Measure: Students' overall GPA for the semester

Instrument: University administrative data, captured directly from the UWA student management system.

Approach: The student results data is extracted from the UWA student management system and cross-checked with unit information using the Student Identification Number.

3.2 Trial design

Type of trial

The evaluation investigates the effects of the Money Plus Support scholarship on several measures of student outcomes, including re-enrolment, pass rates, and GPA, using a RD design. The evaluation takes advantage of the cut-off generated through the scoring system and applies a regression discontinuity design. The scholarship is awarded based on "the score" calculated from a set of individual characteristics relevant to disadvantage. The RD design utilises the quasi-randomness at an arbitrary threshold and compares students who are just above the threshold and receiving the intervention (the treatment group) with a comparable "control group"; students who are otherwise similar but just below the threshold and thus not receiving the intervention.

Risk of bias

Administrative data will be used to estimate outcomes (i.e., success rate, grades, and retention) and to collate demographic information about individuals. As these data are collected independently of the trial and not for its purposes, the risk of bias is considered low.

Potential bias may arise in relation to the evaluation's running variable (applicant score), as scoring is undertaken by a single coordinator. To mitigate this, the scoring approach is guided by an established framework with clear categories. For categories that are less clearly defined, most notably the "other" category, scores are reviewed by the management team to ensure a second opinion and greater consistency in scoring.

The potential for bias that lecturers or markers may unconsciously adjust marks for students on a scholarship is mitigated by the fact that only students are notified of their scholarship award and this information is not shared beyond the Student Life teams that are administering the packaged scholarship.

Managing confounders

Student success is shaped by multiple factors beyond the initiative. Key potential confounders include age, admission pathway, Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) score, gender, Indigeneity, socio-economic status, regionality, disability status, broad field of education, campus, study load, first-in-family status, and prior participation in equity programs (e.g., Aspire or Fairway).

The RD design is well-suited to managing these influences because it assumes exchangeability: students just above and below the eligibility threshold are, on average, comparable. Focusing on those closest to the cut-off reduces the likelihood that confounding explains observed differences in outcomes. To strengthen this assumption, the evaluation will use triangular kernel weighting, which places more emphasis on observations near the threshold, where comparability is highest.

As RD is a quasi-experimental design, some variables could still introduce bias if they differ systematically between students just above and below the threshold. These variables identified above, in the first paragraph, will be examined and included directly in the regression models as controls to ensure robustness.

Nonetheless, other influences on student success are less likely to bias causal estimates in the RD framework but remain important for interpreting results. These include:

- Student-level factors: individual motivation, family responsibilities or external work commitments, and mental health or wellbeing unrelated to financial stress.
- Institutional-level factors: variation in teaching quality, assessment difficulty in different courses.
- External factors: employment opportunities, costs for rent, transport costs, or unforeseen disruptions to the individuals' lives.

3.3 Detailed trial process

The trial process follows a series of sequential steps, which are each undertaken in Semester 1 and Semester 2 2025.

Applications

The scholarship is promoted through the University's social media channels, at key promotional events such as Open Day and the Career Advisors' Breakfast, and via the School Engagement Team's outreach programs in high schools across Western Australia.

Scholarship applications are submitted via the UWA Apply online portal and require applicants to supply information about: personal details, regional or remote status, plans to live on campus at one of the UWA residential colleges, experiencing any educational disadvantages, level of study, course and major(s), applied via TISC (WA's Tertiary Admission Centre) or direct to UWA, and if they applied for Educational Access Scheme (EAS). The application form is provided in Appendix 2.

In Semester 1, all scholarship applicants are contacted retrospectively, asking for their consent to have their data included in the trial. In Semester 2, all scholarship applicants are asked for their consent within the application form. Only those applicants that provide this opt-in consent are included in the study and the dataset.

Application scoring and moderation (prior to semester commencement)

We estimate receiving 250–300 applications and awarding a total of 150–200 scholarships across 2025 (including auto-awardees). All applications are assessed by the ESC, who applies the established scoring framework to ensure a consistent and transparent process. The overall scores, and the "other" category, are reviewed by the Scholarships Team Manager. Following this assessment, applicants are notified of the outcome of their scholarship application via email.

Successful applicants are required to formally confirm acceptance of the scholarship award prior to semester commencement. Those who are not awarded (based on ineligibility or their ranking) and those who are offered the scholarship but decline the offer and still enrol are included in the sample. Those who apply for the scholarship but subsequently do not enrol that semester are omitted from the sample that semester (they may be included in the sample in subsequent semesters if they have deferred or enrol in the following semester).

Data extraction and collation

At the end of each semester, the ESC will extract and collate information from relevant university systems for each scholarship applicant into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet stored in line with an ethics-approved Data Management Plan. Student ID numbers will be used to merge records across sources. The dataset will include the following information for each applicant:

1. Total scholarship score (0–22).
2. Uptake of the scholarship (Yes/No)
3. Participation in BC and other wrap-around events (count)
4. Semester take up of scholarship (1, 2)
5. Age (birth year)
6. Broad Basis of Admission
7. ATAR (Yes/no)
8. ATAR (score)
9. Gender (M, F, Unknown, X)
10. Indigeneity (Yes/No)
11. Low SES (Yes/No)
12. Regional and Remote ranking (0–4)
13. Disability status (Yes/No)
14. Broad Field of Study (Management and Commerce, Natural and Physical Sciences, Information Technology, Engineering and Related Technologies, Architecture and

Building, Agriculture, Environmental, and Related Studies, Health, Education, Society and Culture, Creative Arts)

15. Campus (Perth, Albany)
16. Study load (full time, part-time)
17. First-in-family status (Yes/No)
18. Prior participation in equity programs (No, Aspire).
19. Prior participation in equity programs (No, Fairway)

Within the first three weeks of the following semester, the ESC will update the same spreadsheet to include outcome data for each scholarship applicant:

20. Re-enrolment in the following semester (Yes/No)
21. Numbers of units enrolled in previous semester (Count)
22. Numbers of units successfully completed (Count)
23. Weighted average mark
24. GPA

These data will be collated across university data systems using the individual student number as the unique identifier for record matching. The data will be cross-checked by a person other than the individual who extracted the information.

Sample cleaning

Ensuring data integrity is a critical component of the trial. Two team members work together throughout the extraction process, with one extracting the data and the other verifying the accuracy of the data. The following steps outline how the samples are cleaned, addressing missing, unused, and spurious data.

Handling missing data

All collected data are reviewed for missing entries at both individual and variable levels. Missing data points are identified through initial checks during data entry to flag incomplete records. If outcome data are missing for some participants, the primary analysis will assume data are “Missing At Random” (MAR), which is a reasonable assumption when working with administrative records. Sensitivity analyses will explore a complete-case analysis and imputation using linear regressions to account for potential biases due to missingness. The proportion and pattern of missing data will be described and reported.

Detecting spurious data

Spurious data, or entries that appear inaccurate, are identified through:

- logical consistency checks and identifying entries that do not align with expected ranges
- outlier analysis, using statistical tests such as Z-scores and interquartile range (IQR) methods to identify extreme outliers
- duplicate assessment, reviewing data to detect and remove duplicates that could arise from repeated submissions.

Data sharing

Once verified and deidentified, the collated dataset is shared with the RD specialist via a secure, encrypted transfer method (e.g., UWA-approved SharePoint workspace). Prior to transfer, the dataset is checked for completeness, coding consistency, and accuracy by a second analyst. A record of the transfer (including dataset version, date, and recipient) is logged to ensure auditability and accountability.

Assumption checking and analysis

The data are read into the statistical software program, STATA, and the robust package will be used. Prior to analysis, data assumptions are checked, line graphs generated to examine scholarship eligibility according to the scores, examining discontinuity across the eligibility threshold for each outcome variable. Distributions of the demographic characteristics / covariates will also be plotted around the threshold, to assess exchangeability around this value. For variables with more than two categories, each category will be assessed separately.

Finally, RD regression will be used to determine the impact of the scholarship program on the primary outcomes, using the approach outlined in Section 4.2.

Sense-making session

All recipients of the BC Scholarship (estimated n=200), and staff (estimated n=10) and students (estimated n=7) involved in its design, will be invited to separate “sense-making” sessions. Four results sense-making sessions will be facilitated:

- Two with UWA students who are recipients of the UWA Connect Scholarship (one face-to-face at Crawley campus and one online); one with UWA students who are part of the Broadway Connect Working Group (BCWG) (hybrid); and
- One with UWA staff who have been involved in its the design and delivery of BC (hybrid).

Each group will be presented with the results of the quantitative analysis and asked to assist with their interpretation. Each session will be approximately one hour in duration.

Students who are recipients of the intervention, and staff involved in its design and delivery, can help contextualise the findings, and support the ongoing co-design and refinement of packaged scholarships at UWA. The UWA staff who led the design and implementation of the intervention are being positioned as participants in the sense-making session. This is to gather their insights into the workings of the program and its possible influence on student outcomes while mitigating any real or perceived conflict of interest in relation to the findings of the evaluation. The draft session schedule is attached in Appendix 3.

Participants will be invited via direct email and will be asked to provide informed consent before the commencement of their session. Participants will be informed about the purpose and aims of the research, how their data will be used, that their participation is wholly voluntary, and that they can withdraw their participation at any time prior to the submission of the project report to ACSES.

The Recruitment email example for student scholarship recipients is attached in Appendix 4.

Students who prefer to contribute to sense-making via a one-on-one interview will be afforded that opportunity. An Indigenous researcher on the team, based at the School of Indigenous Studies will conduct interviews with Indigenous students. Another researcher external to the university, and not involved in program design and delivery, will conduct any other interviews. The interviews will follow the same semi-structured format as the collective sense-making sessions. All sessions and interviews will be recorded via MS Teams and transcribed using DeScript software.

Reporting

The results will be summarised in an ACSES Trial Report. If the report meets the ACSES trial quality standards, the report is published on the Trials Registry.

3.4 Participants

Research population (including settings and locations)

All UWA scholarship applicants from 2025 will be invited to take part in the study, irrespective of subject, or level of study, or mode of study (online or on campus).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

All scholarship applicants that are scored against the scoring framework, and opt-in to the study, are included in the study. Those that are awarded the scholarship, but do not take it up, will be included in the study, if they opt in, and the trial's analytical approach adapted to accommodate these "non-compliers" through fuzzy RDD.

Estimated required sample size

Previous research found positive effects of scholarships on various outcomes. We used the F^2 values as reflective of the magnitude of scholarship impacts on similar student outcomes and converted these to approximate f^2 using $f^2 = R^2 / (1-R^2)$ as a proxy for our sample size calculation. Bettinger et al. (2015) found benefits for students in terms of drop-out rates ($R^2 = 0.15$), while Castleman et al. (2018) found benefits in terms of enrolment into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) credit attempted ($R^2=0.19$) and credit completions ($R^2=0.21$), aligning to the intention of the scholarship. Page et al. (2019) found significant effects on the credits earned ($R^2=0.06$) and cumulative GPA (0.104) in the first year, and persistence into the second year ($R^2=0.05$).

Based on this literature, we expect the smallest relative effects from the scholarship will be on students' retention and the largest relative effects will be on student credit completions (units passed) and GPA. Using standard values ($p=0.05$, $1 - \beta = 0.80$) with the anticipated regression techniques, and integrating a design effect estimate relevant to RDD with a normal albeit uneven distribution around the threshold ($d_{eff} = 2.46$, c.f. Schochett 2008), we would require a sample size of between 118 to 744 to detect the range of these expected effect sizes.

3.5 Participant withdrawal criteria and procedures

Scholarship applicants are invited to opt in to the trial. During Semester 2, the Scholarships Team contacts applicants, provides information about the trial, and requests their consent to participate. Semester 2 applicants provide consent as part of the application process. Applicants who agree to participate, will have their information collated for the purposes of the trial.

Participation is voluntary, and applicants may opt out at any stage prior to publication, without giving an explanation and without prejudice, and their input will be excluded, unless otherwise agreed. Participants who have previously given consent to participate in the study can contact the research lead if they would like to withdraw.

4. Data management and statistical analysis

4.1 Statistical methods

Statistical approach and level of significance

The main analysis sample is all applicants; the treatment group is successful applicants while the control group is unsuccessful applicants. We use the ranking score as a running variable ($score_i$) and construct a binary variable ($treat_i$) to indicate treatment status:

$$\begin{aligned} treat_i &= 1 \text{ if } score_i \geq c \\ &= 0 \text{ if } score_i < c, \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

where a student i receives the scholarship if her score is greater than or equal to the threshold score c . The threshold score c is set at the half of the maximum score minus two (rank score = 7) to ensure sufficient observations on both sides of the threshold.

Student outcomes are studied using an RD regression with the following specification:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta \times treat_i + f(score_i) + \mathbf{X}_i \boldsymbol{\theta} + u_i, \quad (2)$$

where y_i represents the outcome variable for student i ; $f(score_i)$ is a smooth function that accounts for the relationship between the score and the outcome on either side of the threshold; \mathbf{X}_i is a vector of student characteristics described in Section 3.3, Step 3 “Data extraction and collation.” These control variables include: age, gender, indigenous status, ATAR score, low SES status, regional/remote ranking, disability status, first-in-family status, Fairway status, and study-load (fulltime-study) status. Note that we include indicators for Indigenous students and for students in the Fairway UWA program, as these students are automatically awarded the UWA Connect Scholarship irrespective of their rank score. However, because there is no comparable control group, we cannot estimate the causal effects of the UWA Connect Scholarship for these students but only control them. The coefficient β represents the difference in average outcomes between students with and without the scholarship near the awarding threshold, controlling for observed student characteristics.

To estimate equation (2), we define $f(score_i)$ as either linear or quadratic smooth functions of $score_i$ above and below the threshold:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Quadratic: } f(score_i) &= \delta_0 (score_i - c) + \delta_1 (score_i - c) \times treat_i \\ &\quad + \delta_2 (score_i - c)^2 + \delta_3 (score_i - c)^2 \times treat_i. \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

$$\text{Linear: } f(score_i) = \delta_0 (score_i - c) + \delta_1 (score_i - c) \times treat_i; \quad (4)$$

Our default specification will use the quadratic function in equation (3) with a global RD design, incorporating all scholarship applicants. If sample size allows, we will also experiment with the linear function in equation (4) using a local RD design under appropriate bandwidths (typically around one third to half of the sample). We will apply a triangular kernel, so that observations farther from the threshold receive smaller weights.

The RD design leverages the quasi-randomness at the score threshold, comparing students just above it to those just below. Given the function $f(score_i)$, we can estimate equation (2) by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and calculate robust standard errors. The OLS estimate of β represents the causal effect of the scholarship on student outcomes under the assumption that students cannot manipulate the threshold. Importantly, this assumption holds in our context, as the threshold is set by us and unknown to applicants.

4.2 Sample cleaning

As described above, descriptives will be summarised for all variables, helping to identify missingness, anomalies in coding consistency, data ranges, and point estimates. Count data will be summarised and tabled for each variable category for the full study population. The

source of any errors will be identified, and the source and reason for these errors will be discussed by the research team prior to any corrections being made.

Where spurious data has been identified, these will be corrected to an agreed coding structure if these are confirmed as likely coding errors or cross-system anomalies. When these confirmations could not be obtained, or reasonably assumed (as agreed by the team), these spurious data will be removed.

Where missing data have been identified, these will be retrospectively added to the dataset only in cases where relevant university officials, such as course coordinators or enrolment officers, can confirm accurate information.

Accuracy will be supported by the sense testing of the data with experienced colleagues and against available sources (for example internally reported UWA cohort monitoring statistics and publicly available Department of Education data).

4.3 Sample inclusion/exclusion

Those students who apply for the scholarship, and enter into study at UWA, will be included in the study. The scholarship was open until March 2025 and re-opened for a Semester 2 round.

With the use of the scoring framework, those applicants are above the threshold for award would be included as the intervention group. Those below this threshold, and ineligible for the scholarship would be included as the control.

4.4 Data management

UWA administrative data are used for this trial. Human research ethics approval has been sought prior to any data is drawn down for the first key milestone, which will outline the detailed provisions for the collection and retention of data for this project.

Data will be collected and collated from UWA Systems (primarily the Student Management System, Callista, and internal program participation data, including from Vygo) at specified key time points each semester. This existing data is collected and stored in these primary systems under the University's records management policy and privacy collection notices. Specific data sets collated for this project will be stored in a dedicated "Research Project" UWA Microsoft Teams and SharePoint workspace accessible only to named researchers. External researchers will be provided access to this site. Student names will be removed from stored data, but student numbers will be retained for analysis purposes.

Specific data collated for this project will be destroyed after seven years.

4.5 Additional analyses

The effects of UWA scholarship are investigated on low SES students, to test if the scholarship is more valuable to these students than others. If the sample size is sufficiently large, we will restrict the sample to low SES students and then estimate Equation (2) by RD as before. If the sample size is not enough, we will modify Equation (2) to include an interaction term as follows:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta \times \text{treat}_i + \lambda \times \text{treat}_i \times \text{lowSES}_i + f(\text{score}_s) + \mathbf{X}_i\boldsymbol{\theta} + u_i, \quad (5)$$

where lowSES_i is either a binary variable indicating low SES status, or the SES proxy variable (SEIFA RANKING) for student i ; and λ captures the effects of UWA scholarship on low SES students.

We also plan to study the effects of associated wrap-around service using a similar model:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta \times treat_i + \eta \times treat_i \times service_i + f(score_s) + \mathbf{X}_i\theta + u_i, \quad (6)$$

where $service_i$ is the number of wrap-around service attended by student i ; η represents the effects of associated wrap-around services.

4.6 Quality control and quality assurance

The process includes a range of quality controls across the delivery. These are:

- Scoring and moderation (c.f. Section 3.3): All applications are scored by the ESC using an established framework. Scores in ambiguous categories (e.g., "other") are reviewed by the Scholarships Team Manager to ensure consistency. A transparent record of the scoring framework is maintained to support auditability.
- Data extraction and collation: Data are collated using unique student IDs to ensure accurate record linkage. All extractions are double-checked: one team member extracts the data and a second reviews accuracy and completeness.
- Sample cleaning: Missing data are systematically identified, with handling approaches prespecified (MAR assumption, complete-case sensitivity analysis, imputation). Spurious data are detected through logical consistency checks, outlier analysis, and duplicate reviews. Corrections are only applied following confirmation of coding errors or anomalies; unresolved anomalies are removed.
- Statistical assumption checks: Prior to analysis, covariate distribution checks are conducted around the score threshold to confirm exchangeability; graphs and discontinuity plots are generated for key outcomes and covariates.
- Results sense-making sessions: Data will be presented back to scholarship recipients, student program designers and staff program designers to provide insights and contextual meaning to the results
- Reporting: Trial results are summarised in an ACSES Trial Report and only reports that meet ACSES quality standards are published in the Trials Registry.
- Data management: De-identified, password protected copies of final datasets are stored should they need examining after review.

5. Publication

5.1 Plans for publication and dissemination of trial results (including any limitations)

The plan to publish the trial results is as follows:

- Protocol and final report are made publicly available on the ACSES Trials Registry.
- Presentation and discussions of results at Student Success conference and/or other relevant student equity conferences and associated peer-reviewed journals.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Broadway Connect and Wrap-Around Support Overview

All Scholarship recipients are invited and prompted to engage in the Broadway Connect (BC) program. BC is designed for first-year students from priority cohorts, with the aim to establish a supportive network and feel more connected to UWA during their transition to university. This program provides:

- a welcome event: a social networking event with relevant staff showcasing support services, and introduction to the Broadway Connect Working Group (BCWG)
- a welcome pack collected at the welcome event (or posted if unable to attend)
- two social events, co-designed and facilitated by the BCWG
- three academic skills development sessions
- end of semester care packs delivered prior to exams
- peer-to-peer support provided by the BCWG, via the Chronus online app.

In addition to the BC program, UWA Connect Scholarship recipients receive the following support from a dedicated ESC:

- a welcome email and regular check-in emails with useful information and opportunities
- assistance with any matters related to the scholarship, such as payments and request to study part-time
- one social catch-up event per semester for scholars to meet each other and network (including an option to participate online via Microsoft Teams for students based in Albany)
- one professional development event or workshop per semester for scholars to hear from inspirational speakers and learn different skills to support their future career
- catering, vouchers, and merchandise.

| Activity | 2025 Delivery Overview |
|--|--|
| Broadway Connect Working Group (BCWG) | <p>The BCWG of UWA students who are in their second year of study or above, are from similar priority cohorts and have volunteered with the Student Equity Student Ambassador program.</p> <p>Key responsibilities of the BCWG include informal mentoring through the online peer-to-peer platform and assisting the Student Equity team with the planning, promoting, and facilitating of BC events.</p> <p>This is paid work and students are remunerated under a casual contract with the University.</p> |
| Broadway Connect - Online mentoring | <p>BCWG Ambassadors provide informal peer mentoring through the online peer-to-peer platform Chronus. Mentoring topics include:</p> |

-
- Navigating campus life
 - Accessing UWA support services
 - Joining student clubs and co-curricular activities
 - General questions and advice on student life relevant to first-year students

Note: Mentoring excludes academic tutoring or personal counseling

Broadway Connect - Start of semester invitation

At the beginning of each Semester, all new commencing students that meet the BC eligibility criteria receive a Welcome Email.

The Welcome Email contact list student data filters include Indigenous students, first-in-family, attended a high school or individual enrolment affiliated with a Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funded program (Aspire UWA or Fairway UWA), attended a Broadway* high school and low-SES status filtered by postcode.

Following the Welcome Email, the students receive an email from the online peer-to-peer mentoring platform, prompting them to sign up. The online component of Broadway Connect was delivered via Vygo in Semester 1, and Chronus in Semester 2.

Broadway Connect - Start of semester Welcome Lunch

The first event each semester, organised by the UWA Student Equity team, is the Welcome Lunch. Subsequent events throughout the year are co-designed and delivered by UWA students in the BCWG.

The Welcome Lunch is a social networking event with UWA staff from relevant areas, to showcase available support services and an introduction to Student Equity Student Ambassadors (second year students and above) including the BCWG.

UWA teams invited to attend and speak at the event include Scholarships, Academic Skills Centre (ASC), UniAccess, School of Indigenous Studies, First Year Experience, and Student Wellbeing.

Broadway Connect - Start of semester Welcome Gift

At the Welcome Lunch students received a Welcome Gift. In collaboration with the UWA Brand, Marketing and Recruitment (BMR) team, a notebook was created in a unique colour that is only available to BC students, which may serve to identify each other on campus and provide a conversation starter.

In addition to the notebook, the Welcome Gift contained promotional material for the UWA support services, such as academic and wellbeing support, and financial support in gift vouchers for the Coles/Myer group and UWA Guild venues such as cafes on campus.

Broadway Connect - Social events

Separate to the Welcome Lunch, BC offers students two on-campus social events per semester. These events are student-led, easy to engage, and always include catering and an opportunity to provide additional resources such as care packs.

The social events are co-designed and delivered by the BCWG and change each semester. 2025 events included a career “Brunch & Learn” event, featuring a panel of HEPPP funded program (Aspire UWA and Fairway UWA) alumni; a craft afternoon event making friendship bracelets, a “student life” photography competition facilitated via the online mentoring platform, and a pre-exam relaxation session featuring board games, pot planting, and painting.

Broadway Connect - Academic skills development sessions

UWA's ASC provide free advice, workshops, resources, and support for all students by a team of Academic Skills Advisers. In collaboration with the Student Equity team, ASC provide 3x academic development sessions for BC students each semester. Prior to each session BC students are surveyed on topics they would like to see delivered. In 2025 topics chosen included time management, managing procrastination, research skills, navigating library resources and an exam preparation workshop.

Connect Scholars email check-ins

ESC sent a welcome email to the UWA Connect scholars in the first week of semester 2, 2025 to introduce their role, build rapport, and share useful information about relevant UWA services. This included resources from the Careers and Employability team (e.g. First Year Undergraduate Employability Checklist), UWA Academic Skills Centre workshop dates, wellbeing services (e.g. Guild Student Assist, the Living Room, free comprehensive eye tests at the Eye Health Centre of WA).

Connect Scholars social catch-up event

One low-barrier social catch-up event to meet the UWA Connect scholars in person and get to know each other over some food. Students also had the opportunity to join online via Microsoft Teams, mainly to target those who are studying from the Albany campus.

Connect Scholars Professional Development event

One professional development event or workshop per semester for scholars to hear from inspirational speakers and learn different skills to support their future career.

On 16 October 2025, ESC collaborated with Auspire – Australia Day Council (WA) to host “[Thought Leadership Forum: Embracing Opportunities to the Max!](#)”. Students had the opportunity to hear from, ask questions, and network with two inspirational speakers, Paul Litherland (2022 WA Australian of the Year) and

Dr Ness Vaughan (Senior Lecturer Global Health, UWA Medical School).

Participants also receive a certificate of attendance, lunch, coffee vouchers for asking questions, and a \$50 voucher provided by Auspire for the best question asked.

There was also an option to join in online via Microsoft Teams.

Merchandise and resources

Free catering, vouchers, and merchandise (e.g. UWA branded water bottle, reusable coffee cups, notebooks) are provided at every engagement as an incentive for students to attend events, foster engagement, and support cost of living.

* The Broadway scheme allows eligible students from a Broadway-identified Western Australian school to receive an automated ATAR adjustment if the school at which they completed their final Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) examinations:

- Is identified as a Broadway school in their year of application or
- Was identified as a Broadway school in the year the student completed their WACE.

7.2 Appendix 2 – UWA connect scholarship application form

Section 1: Personal Details

Enter your personal details, citizenship, and address information.

Citizenship type (select from the following):

- Australian Citizen
- New Zealand Citizen
- Australian Permanent Resident
- Australian Temporary Resident
- Humanitarian Visa
- International Student Visa

Personal Details

Title: <Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Name order:

- Given Name, Family Name
- Family Name, Given Name

Given name: Family name: Preferred name:

Preferred email address: Preferred contact number:

Birth date: Birth month: Birth year:

Select gender:

- Female
- Male
- Gender X
- Unknown

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Descent
- Not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Descent
- Aboriginal Descent
- Torres Strait Islander Descent

Country of Citizenship: <Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Address details

Enter your home address details.

Country: <Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Address Line:

Suburb/Town: State: Postcode:

Section 2: Qualifications

Tell us about your education history.

Secondary education

Where did you complete secondary education?

- WA
- ACT
- NSW
- NT
- QLD
- SA
- TAS
- VIC
- Outside Australia

Select country: <Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Select school: <Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Year:

Attach your graduation certificate: <Attach button>

Post Secondary education

Where did you complete post-secondary education?

- UWA
- Other Institution

Select country: <Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Select institution: <Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Award level:

- Course attempt terminated/discontinued by institution
- Currently enrolled
- Enrolled – due to complete by the time of admission
- Not yet complete or withdrawn before completion
- Successfully completed course and obtained award
- Successfully completed course but not yet taken out award
- Withdrawn without result or academic penalty

Course: <Free-form text box>

What year did you complete and what was your final grade?

Year: Final grade: <Free-form text box>

Attach your graduation certificate: <Attach button>

Section 3: Eligibility

Tell us about yourself.

Select your application round: <Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Eligibility questions

Question 1/7

Welcome to The University of Western Australia's Coursework Scholarship Application Portal.

Please note, your answers won't impact or be considered as part of your course application, information will only be used for determining scholarship opportunity.

If you have previously provided evidence or documentation via your UWA course application or through the Educational Access Scheme (EAS) in your TISC application, you will not be required to supply the documentation as a part of this application process.

- Ok

Question 2/7

Are you from a regional or remote part of Australia and moving to study at uni?

Search the map selecting Australian Statistical Geographic Standard Remoteness Areas 2021 to confirm your school or address.

- Yes – please indicate your suburb and postcode in the box below.
<Free-form text box>
- No

Question 3/7

Will you be living on campus at one of the UWA residential colleges?

- No
- Yes <If ticked, another question with list of options will appear>
Which residential college will you be living at?
 - University Hall
 - St Catherine's College
 - Trinity College
 - St George's College
 - St Thomas More College

Question 4/7

Are you experiencing educational disadvantage?

Educational disadvantage may include, but is not limited to:

- living in a regional or remote area of Australia,
 - experiencing financial hardship,
 - having a disability or medical condition that affects your ability to study,
 - having caring responsibilities for children, the elderly, or someone who is unwell.
- No
 - Yes <If ticked, another set of questions will appear>

Are you facing financial hardship?

If you currently receive Centrelink payments, please provide a recent copy of your Income Statement or Payment Summary. If you do not receive any Centrelink payments, please provide a student and parental financial statement (you can access the financial statement template on our website – <https://www.uwa.edu.au/study/fees-and-scholarships/financial-status>)

All information will be treated with strict confidentiality.

- Yes (please provide evidence)
- No

Do you have an ongoing medical condition or disability that impacts your ability to study?

Please provide a medical certificate from your health professional (e.g. GP, psychologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, psychiatrist, etc) that outlines the impact your diagnosis will have on your studies. You are not required to provide extensive detail.

All information will be treated with strict confidentiality.

- Yes (please attach supporting documentation)
- No

Are you experiencing any other educational disadvantage?

Please read the criteria below carefully and tick any that apply to your situation. You can choose more than one. For each one you tick, please give more details in the text box provided. If you have already provided this information via EAS please just enter "EAS" into the text box.

- You are considered first in your family to attend university (siblings currently studying or planning to study at university does not exclude you from being considered first in family).
- A language other than English is the main language used at home and/or one or more of your parents/guardians are not fluent in English.
- Experienced disruption of education due to relocation.
<If ticked, a free-form text box will appear with the prompt: "Please provide the details for your current situation".>
- Working a part-time job to help with your family expenses (please enter the number of hours you work a week). <Free-form text box>
- Have extensive family responsibilities that impact negatively on your ability to study. <Free-form text box>
- Experiencing family disruption (e.g. bereavement of close family or friend, separation or divorce). <Free-form text box>
- Have an unsupportive study environment. <Free-form text box>
- Are currently supporting (or have supported) family member/s with an illness or disability. <Free-form text box>
- Experienced disruption of education due to migration or refugee passage to Australia. <Free-form text box>
- Are currently (or within the last two years) in the care of the state. <Free-form text box>
- None of the above criteria apply, but I have other circumstances impacting my education. <Free-form text box>
- I do not have any further circumstance impacting my education

Question 5/7

What level of study will you be undertaking

- Enabling/orientation
- Undergraduate
- Honours
- Postgraduate

Select the course you will be enrolling in.

For postgraduate and honours students, please select the closest to your undergraduate degree, this will not impact your eligibility for scholarships.

<Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Select up to two majors you will be studying.

<Drop down menu with a long list of options>

Question 6/7

What stage are you up to in your degree?

- Starting your first university degree after finishing Year 12.
- Starting your degree (you haven't done any study for it yet).
- Starting your degree with up to 48 points of conversion credit.
- Completed 6 – 42 points.
- Completed 48 – 90 points
- Completed 96 – 138 points.

- Completed 144 – 190 points.

Are you currently completing Year 12?

- Yes
- No

Have you accepted an Early Offer from UWA, or applied through TISC and listed a course at UWA as your first preference in the first round of offers?

- Yes
- No

Have you completed or are currently completing the Fairway UWA Program?

- Yes
- No

Question 7/7

Did you apply via TISC or direct to UWA?

- Direct to UWA
- TISC (Please enter your TISC application ID)
<Free-form text box>
Did you apply for the Educational Access Scheme (EAS)?
 - Yes
 - No

Section 4: Scholarships offerings

Based on the information we have collected so far, you are eligible to apply for the following scholarship(s). Please provide required evidence, review the information you have provided and submit the application in the next sections. Please note that submitting the application does not guarantee a scholarship award. All applications will be assessed as per UWA Coursework Scholarship Award Process. If you are successful, the Scholarships Team will contact on the email address you have provided.

< List of eligible scholarships based on the information provided by the applicant >

Additional information

Question 1/4

Are you in receipt of another scholarship? Please list all current and past scholarships (including the year awarded and end)

- Yes <Free-form text box>
- No

Question 2/4

The information you provide as part of the application process will be used to track your academic outcomes and enrolment status for the first year of your undergraduate degree. This is to assist the University in evaluating the impact of the scholarship on success and retention rates and GPA.

Do you consent to your information being used confidentially in research to evaluate the impact of the scholarship on academic outcomes?

- I consent to my information being used in research to evaluate the impact of the scholarship on academic outcomes.
- I do not consent to my information being used in research to evaluate the impact of the scholarship on academic outcomes

Question 3/4

You may be eligible for a scholarship requiring evidence of financial hardship. If you wish to be assessed for financial hardship, please upload supporting documentation if you haven't already.

If you currently receive Centrelink payments, please provide a recent copy of your Income Statement or Payment Summary. If you do not receive any Centrelink payments, please provide a student and parental financial statement (you can access the financial statement template on our website – <https://www.uwa.edu.au/study/fees-and-scholarships/financial-status>)

All information will be treated with strict confidentiality.

- I have uploaded evidence of financial hardship.
- I do not wish to be assessed based on financial hardship.

Question 4/4

Would you like to tell us anything else that you think would support your application?
<Free-form text box>

Section 5: Review

Review the details you have entered. If changes are required, click on the relevant tab and edit the information. If no changes are required, read the declaration and click the checkbox to accept, then click the "Submit" button to submit your application, or proceed to payment (international applicants).

<Information for applicants to review their responses and uploaded documents>

Section 6: Submit

Privacy and Confidentiality Statement

Information collected as part of this application is handled in accordance with the University Policy on: Privacy (<http://governance.uwa.edu.au/policy/UP14/10>).

The University will not disclose any information supplied in this application to external parties except for the purpose of undertaking a ranking and selection process for relevant scholarships and where the selection process includes an external party.

By submitting an application, you authorise the University to share the information provided to external parties, where relevant, solely for the purpose of undertaking a ranking and selection process.

Student Declaration

- I declare that the information I have provided in this application is true and correct.
- I understand that providing false or misleading information is a serious offence under the Criminal Code (Commonwealth).
- I understand that if I am awarded a scholarship based on false or misleading information that it may be terminated and I will be required to repay any monies or other financial benefit received from the scholarship program.

Acceptance

The University reserves the right to publish your name as a recipient of this award unless a written request is received by Coursework Scholarships and Prizes revoking this right.

For scholarships funded by a bequest or other forms of donation you authorise the University to share your name and general information relevant to the scholarship with the donor. You will be requested to send a note of thanks to the donor via the UWA office of Development and Alumni Relations.

Note: By accepting the scholarship, you are advised to verify any income tax implications with the Australian Taxations Office and any impact on any income support payments through Centrelink.

- I confirm that I have read and understood UWA Privacy Policy.
- I accept the scholarship application T&Cs as stated above.

< Submit My Application button >

7.3 Appendix 3 – Session schedule for sense-making session

Date/Time: Week of 30 March 2026 (TBC), 1 hour

Venue: Suitable room at UWA Crawley Campus and/or online

Attendees: Scholarship recipients; or Student members of BCWG; or Staff Participants

| Time | Activity | Goal |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 2.00–2.20pm | Welcome & introductions | To introduce ourselves to each other and review the purpose and agenda for this session |
| 2.20–2.50pm | Findings: Quantitative analysis of student record data | To share findings from the regression discontinuity analysis |
| 2.50–3.20pm | Discussion: Monetary support Key questions: How do you interpret these results considering your experience with the scholarships program? Why and how might financial support impact students' ability to successfully participate in higher education? | To interpret the findings as they relate to the monetary component of the program |
| 3.20–3.50pm | Discussion: Wrap-around support Key questions: How do you interpret these results considering your experience with the scholarships program? Why and how might wrap-around support impact students' ability to successfully participate in higher education? Especially when it is coupled with financial support? | To interpret the findings as they relate to the wrap-around component of the program, especially in combination with financial support |
| 3.50–4.00pm | Final reflections & wrap up | To invite final reflections from participants and share how the insights generated during the session will be used in the write-up of the research project |

7.4 Appendix 4 – Example recruitment email for sense-making session

To: Scholarship recipients

Subject: Invitation to help us evaluate the UWA Connect Scholarship and Broadway Connect support program

We need your help in evaluating the UWA Connect Scholarship! And we will recognise your support through a \$50 EFTPOS voucher.

What are we trying to achieve?

This evaluation project aims to understand the effect of the UWA Connect Scholarship and the Broadway Connect support program through a trial assessing impact on academic success and persistence of undergraduate students.

What does participation involve?

Joining this study will involve participating in a sense-making of approximately one hour with up to fifteen other students. Your group will be presented with data from the research and asked to help us understand your experiences and possible interpretations of the results. You also have the option of attending an individual interview instead of the group session.

Please let us know by reply email if you'd like to participate. We'd greatly appreciate your time and insights!

With best wishes,

Elisa (for the research team)

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by the University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time. In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of researchers may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Ethics office at UWA on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing to humanethics@uwa.edu.au. All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of any Participant Information Form and/or Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.