

ACSES Awards for Innovation and Excellence in Impact on Higher Education Policy and Practice 2026

Application Pack

Universities For All

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) acknowledges Indigenous peoples across Australia as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the nation's campuses are situated. With a history spanning more than 60,000 years as the original educators, Indigenous peoples hold a unique place in our nation. We recognise the importance of their knowledge and culture, and reflect the principles of participation, equity, and cultural respect in our work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and future, and consider it an honour to learn from our Indigenous colleagues, partners, and friends.

1. The 2026 ACSES Awards

1.1 Introduction

The ACSES Awards for Innovation and Excellence in Impact on Higher Education Policy and Practice 2026 will recognise teams or individuals who have made significant contributions in shaping policy and/or transforming practices in ways that drive positive outcomes in student equity in Australian higher education.

This year's awards will honour **up to five recipients**, each excelling in different aspects of the award criteria. This approach acknowledges the wide-ranging and impactful work being undertaken across the sector, whether through innovation, advocacy, collaboration, or evidence-based practice.

This Awards celebrate those teams or individuals whose work has not only influenced decision-makers but has also led to tangible improvements in higher education outcomes for students from equity backgrounds. This work may span any stage of the student lifecycle, from pre-access and participation to university completion and post-graduation pathways.

Award recipients (or a nominated team member for team awards) will be supported by ACSES for their attendance at the 2026 Australian Student Equity Symposium in Brisbane, where they will be formally recognised for their contributions and presented with their awards.

1.2 Eligibility

Nominations are open to teams or individuals employed at a [Table A](#) or [Table B](#) provider or a [University Study Hub](#).

Both self-nominations and third-party nominations are welcome.

1.3 Key Dates

Milestone	Date
Request for Proposals	Friday, 13 February 2026
Closing date for Proposals	Tuesday, 30 June 2026 – 4pm (AWST)
Assessment by ACSES Awards Judging Panel	July to August 2026
Awards Presentation: The 2026 Australian Student Equity Symposium (Brisbane)	September 2026

2. The Selection Process

2.1 Selection Criteria

Up to five recipients will be recognised for demonstrating excellence in one of the following criteria:

1. **Innovation and Originality**
 - The extent to which the nominee has introduced new ideas or approaches in their work on Australian higher education student equity and outcomes
 - Creativity in addressing complex issues in Australian higher education student equity and in identifying unique solutions
2. **Impact and Effectiveness**
 - Demonstrated positive and measurable outcomes resulting from the nominee's work on Australian higher education equity policy or practice
 - Clear evidence of the lasting and sustainable impact on students from equity backgrounds
3. **Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement**
 - Evidence of effective collaboration with key stakeholders, including institutional leaders, policymakers, practitioners, students, and communities
 - Demonstration of the ability to build partnerships and foster support for policy change or practice transformation
4. **Advocacy and Leadership**
 - Strong leadership or advocacy for change in influencing decision-makers in policy or practice
5. **Evidence and Research-Based Approach**
 - Use of sound evidence, research, or data to inform decisions, policies, or practices
 - Commitment to applying rigorous methods in assessing impact and outcomes

As evidence for both design and impact, applicants are requested to address **at least three of these criteria** in their applications.

2.2 Judging panel

The winners of the 2026 Awards will be determined by a judging panel consisting of:

- A senior higher education leader (Chair)
- A senior equity and/or First Nations higher education leader
- A representative from Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA)
- An expert in higher education equity research and/or trials and evaluation
- The ACSES Executive Director

3. Applications

Applications should be completed using the template provided in Appendix A.

The main application should be between **three (3) to five (5) A4 pages only**, with up to **four (4) A4 pages** of supporting documentation, following the format outlined below, and in the specified order. Applications from teams can include **one A4 page** outlining the contributions of team members. Video presentations and related evidence should only be included in applications via links to publicly available platforms.

Applications should not exceed **ten (10) A4 pages** in total.

To assist applicants, redacted versions of applications to the 2025 ACSES Awards are available upon request to ACSES at the email address below.

3.1 Application format

Applications should follow the format outlined in the template, including:

1. A **synopsis** of the nominee's work, approach(es), methods and outcomes in Australian higher education student equity. The synopsis should be no more than 200 words. ACSES will draw on the synopsis in publicising the work of award winners.
2. A **statement addressing award criteria**, including evidence supporting the claims being made. Nominees are encouraged to draw on quotes from students, colleagues and other stakeholders, as well as measurable and tangible outcomes. Please address award criterion in the order specified.
3. A **statement of team nomination** (for team nominations only) outlining the contribution of each team member to the work described in the application. No more than one additional A4 page.
4. **Other supporting documentation** of up to **four (4) additional A4 pages**. This can include commendation and impact statements in relation to outcomes from the activities undertaken. It is recommended that supporting documents be referenced to in the statement addressing award criteria.
5. A **reference list** in APA 7 format. The reference list is not included in the page limit, but nominees should be judicious in their use of references.

All documents produced by the applicant must meet [accessibility guidelines](#).

Teams are encouraged to include a link to a **video presentation** outlining the activities and impact of their initiative. The video should be hosted in a way that **allows anyone with the link to view it** (for example, an unlisted YouTube video). Please include the link in the written application and ensure it is easily accessible to the judging panel.

3.2 Submission

Submission Date: Tuesday, 30 June 2026 (4pm AWST)

Email: acses@curtin.edu.au (**Subject:** 2026 ACSES Awards)

Appendix A: Application Form

ACSES Awards for Innovation and Excellence in Impact on Policy and Practice 2026 – Application Form

*Applications must follow the format presented below and be between **three (3)-5 A4 pages**, with an additional **one (1) A4 page** team statement (where applicable) which can be appended to the application. In addition, **up to four (4) A4 pages** of supporting documentation. A reference list can also be included, as required.*

*Applications should not exceed **10 A4 pages** in total.*

Applicant Details

Program Title	
Lead Title (e.g., Prof, A/Prof, Dr, Mr, Mrs, Ms,	
Name	
Position/Role	
Organisational Unit	
Institution	
Email Address	
Telephone Number	
Nominator Details	Self-Nomination (Details as above) <input type="checkbox"/>

	<p>Third Party Nomination (Details below) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Position/Role:</p> <p>Institution:</p> <p>Relationship to Applicant:</p> <p>Email:</p> <p>Phone:</p>
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(All responses must be in Arial 11)

1. Synopsis

The synopsis should outline the applicant's (nominee's) work, approaches, methods, and outcomes in shaping student equity in Australian higher education. A final form of this will be used in publicising the work of award winners (Maximum 200 words)

2. Statement of claim against at least three of the award criteria

Statements of claim are encouraged to cite evidence from the supporting documentation and include any links to video presentations in identifying measurable and tangible outcomes. Please address at least three award criteria (Maximum 2 to 3 pages)

3. Statement of team nomination (teams only)

Statements of team nomination should outline the contribution of each member to the work specified in the application. **(Maximum 1 page)**

Team Member	Contribution

(Please add rows as required)

4. Supporting documentation

Up to four (4) additional pages of supporting documentation can be included in the application. This can include commendation and impact statements. This material should be referenced in the Statement of Claim. (Maximum 4 pages)

5. Reference list

The reference list should be APA 7 format. It is not included in the page limit, but nominees should be judicious in their use of references. (Not included in the page limit)