GUIDE to
Education Alliance
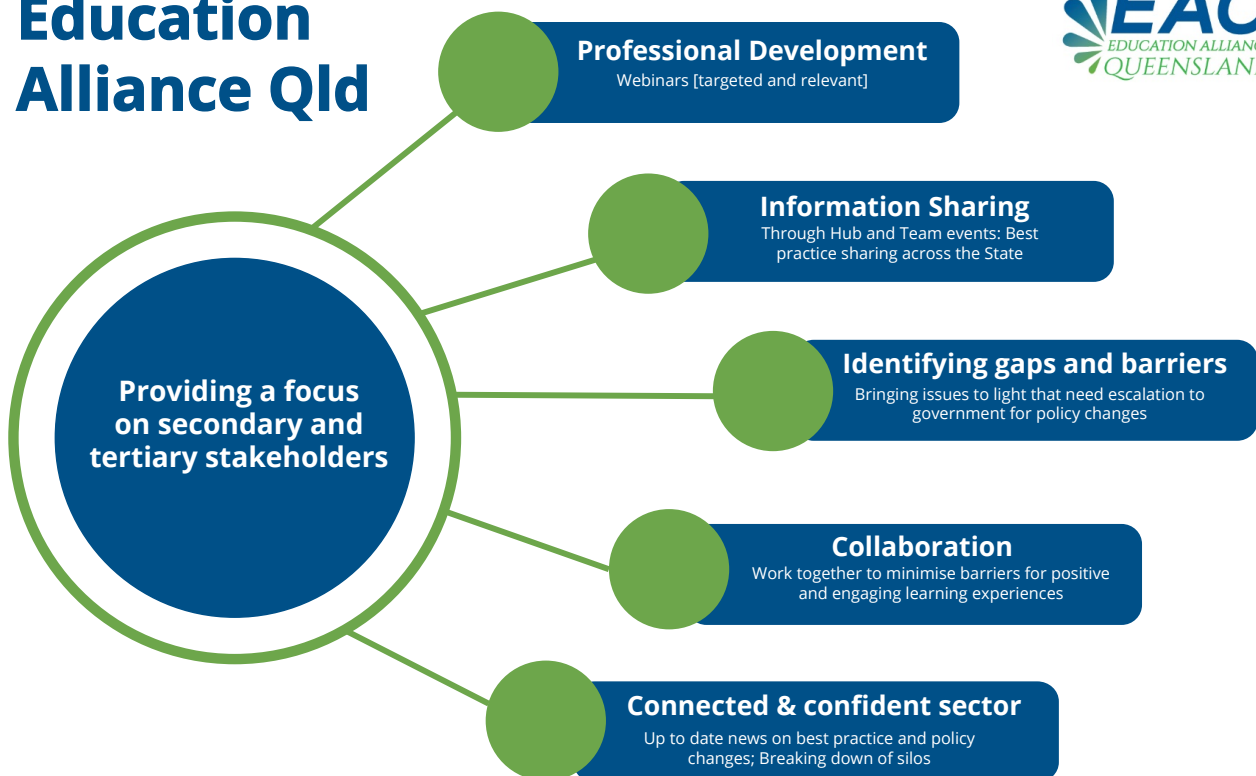
Establishment & Implementation

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Introduction

The concept for creating an alliance across the Education and Training sectors – encompassing Secondary Education, Tertiary Education (Universities, TAFEs, RTOs) and bridging programs (secondary to tertiary) was developed in 2017 by five (5) Queensland National Disability Coordination Officers*. The purpose of Education Alliance is to improve, increase and share inclusive practices, increase connectivity and identify gaps and barriers to tertiary education for secondary students with disability across Queensland, and eventually across all Australian States. Education Alliance also provides a platform for professional development and a forum to collaboratively strategise and work towards solutions to identified gaps/barriers. Education Alliance Queensland (EAQ) was launched virtually in early 2020.

The catalyst for the development of EAQ emanated from discussions with stakeholders from the five (5) Queensland NDCO regions, including schools, district education offices and tertiary providers. Stakeholders from these sectors identified the need for an informed and connected sector focusing on the transition journey to tertiary for students with disability. Various modes of communication were utilised to share ideas and review issues affecting the State, as well as enabling opportunities to have these issues addressed collaboratively. Modes of communication include face to face together with communication software platforms (Zoom/Teams) for statewide meetings and webinars along with electronic communication through newsletters and communiques.

Education Alliance Qld

EAQ EDUCATION ALLIANCE QUEENSLAND

Providing a focus on secondary and tertiary stakeholders

Professional Development
Webinars [targeted and relevant]

Information Sharing
Through Hub and Team events: Best practice sharing across the State

Identifying gaps and barriers
Bringing issues to light that need escalation to government for policy changes

Collaboration
Work together to minimise barriers for positive and engaging learning experiences

Connected & confident sector
Up to date news on best practice and policy changes; Breaking down of silos

Better tertiary outcomes for students with disability

Aims and Objectives

The aim of Education Alliance is to target systemic issues in the transition space for students with disability and address them as a collective. Collaboration is key. The focus is to enhance communications between education and tertiary education staff, thereby ensuring reasonable adjustments and supports are synchronised from secondary education to tertiary education.

- Secondary education staff will be more aware of the importance of building student advocacy skills in preparation for a more autonomous environment.
- Tertiary education staff will be more aware of the needs of students entering the tertiary space and how to accommodate their needs.
- Students will have a supported environment entering tertiary education and be prepared and familiar with the tertiary environment; this is a key component in enabling students to share information (disclosing) about their disability.

EAQ initial framework development

Much work was undertaken as a State in establishing the structured Education Alliance Queensland model along with infrastructure to support it. The varied geographical areas were taken into consideration along with the similarities and systemic issues identified across Queensland by NDCOs. Education Alliance covers metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations. The intent of EAQ was to initially deliver state-wide and then replicate this model on a national scale for maximum impact. Scaling up to a national roll-out of Education Alliance however, was unable to be achieved by NDCOs due to short term uncertainty of contracts.

The structure and documentation to enable Education Alliance to have maximum impact nationally, has been developed as follows:

Strategic Intent:

- clear understanding of the initiative, strategic focus and direction

Terms of Reference:

- defines the purpose and scope of EAQ, aims and aspirations, requirements of participation

Branding and templates:

- establish clear and recognisable branding for marketing purposes and a platform for credibility
- establishment of a website for ease of information retrieval and a platform for the promotion of events and resources

Events:

- state-wide hubs, webinars, communiques, launch

Personal Development:

- targeted to sector systemic issues
- professional development - identified through sector engagement

Annual Surveys:

- identification of current issues
- good practice examples
- dissemination of results to membership

Membership:

- identifying members within the education, VET and higher education sectors
- methods of connecting
- dissemination of relevant and timely information
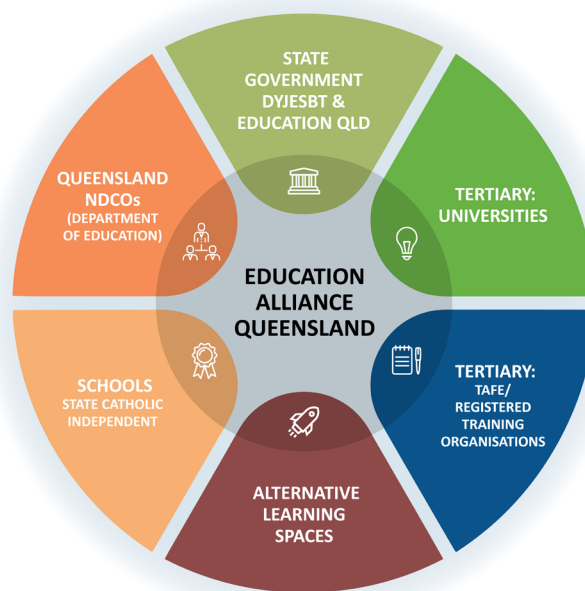
Connection, communication and collaboration are key factors encouraged through EAQ, to enable secondary and tertiary staff to assist students with disability to not only navigate the tertiary environment, but to confidently seek support and thrive. The importance of ensuring that this is a reality for students with disability cannot be under-estimated as, over the next five years, 90% of all new jobs created will require a tertiary qualification.

It is a fact, that positive experiences in tertiary education encourage life-long learning and increase the opportunity for individual contribution within communities and towards their economies. Education Alliance is one important part of this equation.

Commencement of EAQ

Key moments in the promotion and marketing of EAQ included:

- Identification of stakeholders in the sector who would benefit from participation in addition to being able to contribute to the purpose of EAQ.
- Ensure that stakeholders who were identified were influencers based locally, regionally and in the State of Queensland.
- The mailchimp platform has proved a useful tool for invitations and newsletters promotion initiatives, services and resources of value to the sectors. The survey platforms used were Survey Monkey and Qualtrics with the latter being preferred. Surveys were designed to draw on issues/topics important/relevant to stakeholders to aide in the development of responsive PD and to identify gaps/barriers needing to be addressed.
- Formalised EAQ with a website, introductory launch video and framework for operational roll-out
- Coordination of the launch
- Scheduled hub and webinar meetings allowing people to coordinate diaries for a synchronised state-wide connection.

Activities undertaken

State-wide hub meetings: connecting 5 hub locations (from Gold Coast to North Queensland) to:

- Discuss gaps/barriers and systemic issues across Queensland twice yearly.
- Review and confirm survey results highlighting key identified areas requiring a collaborative approach to solutions.
- Professional Development guest presentations on topics raised in the annual survey
- Webinars: professional development sessions with experts on a) topics raised in the annual survey or b) a recent development that influences and impacts the sector
- Communiques: quarterly - topical information sharing
- Covid-19 PD and sector connection and support

Outcomes

The development of the e-Learn training resource (as part of the Disability Awareness Suite): **Secondary School Staff (Qld)**. Designed for educators and secondary education staff with an aim to build disability confidence and increase knowledge in assisting students with disability in their transition from secondary school to tertiary education (VET and University).

Reflection

Positives

- Confirmed as an excellent initiative by a wide range of stakeholder groups
- Strong positive survey feedback on the initiative and identification and addressing of gaps
- Actions undertaken to address identified gaps and barriers with members of the Alliance
- Continuing growth of membership base
- National adaption

Challenges

- Covid lockdowns experienced as Education Alliance Queensland was launching and rolling out – required flexibility with launch, events and communication from 2020-2022.
- Suitable time appropriate for all members, different times were trialled.
- Negotiation of suitable platforms for communication to ensure ease of accessibility – MS Teams being the final and most accessible platform for stakeholders.

Checklist – Sector Relevance

- Identify the gaps and barriers experienced by students with disability leaving school and entering tertiary – through annual survey prior to Hub and MS Teams meetings.
- Suggest methods of addressing identified gaps/barriers with stakeholders
- Form a working group to discuss solutions and association activities
- Progress to project status and action activities in stages
- Review project status/stages for progress
- Finalise project and analyse impact

Top tips to start an Education Alliance

01	Establish a working group	Formalise a working group to drive the initiative Select task responsibility Identify stakeholders for membership Review framework and amend to suit State & Territory requirements
02	Preview templates provided	Amend templates to suit Review and amend branding Establish platform for promotion, communication and storage
03	Set timeframes	Develop an annual schedule of events and distribute to members Timeframes for delivery of activities Make appropriate bookings ie. venue, guest presenters, accessibility Communicate activities to members
04	Event prepartory	Review topics as per schedule and ensure timeframes are on target Schedule prepartory meetings for event planning and delivery Meet with guest presenters/captioners/interpreters in advance Communicate to members
05	Event delivery	Ensure final running sheet is distributed to guest presenters/captioners/interpreters in advance Ensure a seperate running sheet is distributed to members participating Deliver event as per running sheet
06	Post event delivery	Evaluate and review feedback Distribute follow up complementary material and any recordings of meetings/webinars

Summary:

Students with disability have embraced tertiary studies for some time and continue to be the fastest growing equity group entering tertiary studies.

Promoting equity with an informed, strong and connected secondary and tertiary education sector is a priority for the Australian Government. This is reflected in the collaborative and cross-sector model of EAQ which contributes to addressing systemic issues strategically across the state and potentially nationally.

Templates – editable

All these documents have the option of removing the EAQ logo and inserting your state or territory logo and can all be found on the ADCET website, Resources, Education Alliance.

Framework documents

- Strategic intent
- Terms of reference

Working documents

- Letterhead
- PowerPoint
- Alliance registration form
- Hub meeting agenda (sample)
- Hub meeting running sheet (sample)
- Stakeholder analysis survey

Promotional

- Postcard
- Education Alliance Qld newsletters

Appendix 1:

Education Alliance National - Future Potential of a connected State and Territory Education Alliance

The potential for Education Alliance rolled out on a national scale is highly significant in helping to address key areas within the Terms of Reference for the Australian Universities Accord Review of Australia's Higher Education System. Please see the relevant points referred to below.

Terms of Reference

2. Access and opportunity

- Improve access to higher education, across teaching, learning and research. This will include recommendations for new targets and reforms to support greater access and participation for students from underrepresented backgrounds (including First Nations Australians, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, people with disability, and regional and rural Australians).

5. The connection between the vocational education and training and higher education systems

- Explore possible opportunities to support greater engagement and alignment between the vocational education and training (VET) and higher education systems. In particular, the panel will have regard to the experience of students in navigating these systems and ensuring a cohesive and connected tertiary education system.

The diagram below are representative of the value of implementing Education Alliance across Australia. The potential for fundamental identification, analysis and addressing of systemic issues is significant, aligning with the aims and objectives of the University Accord and in particular Terms of Reference areas for review 2 & 5 above. The relationship between NDCOs, their stakeholders, national and state peak organisations and government agencies together with executive level support and oversight (Australian Department of Education) would have the potential for significant and positive progressive impact for the outcomes of students with disability.
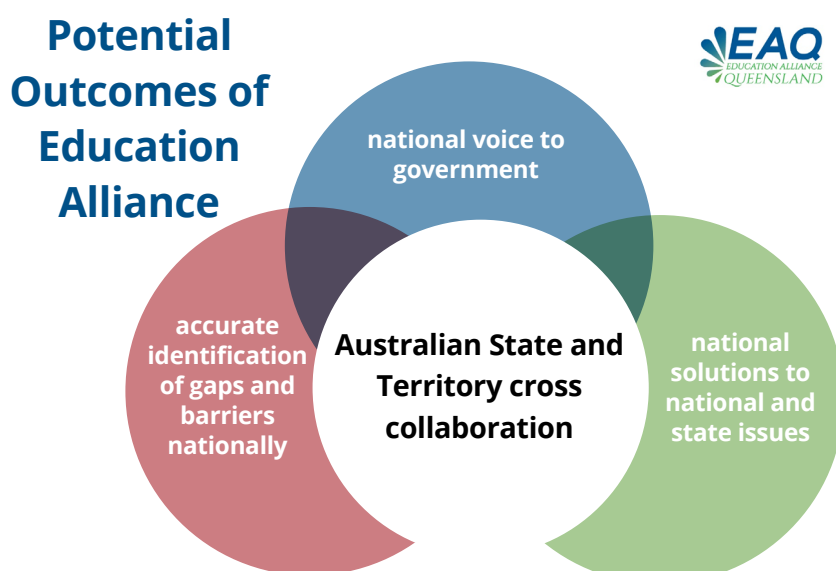
*National Disability Coordination Officer program (NDCO) an Australian Government initiative 2008-2023 to drive change so that people with disability have equitable opportunity to access, participate and achieve their goals in tertiary education and subsequent employment. NDCO Host providers facilitating EAQ: STEPS Group Australia, Community Solutions Group, TAFE Queensland, Busy at Work.