Educationally disadvantaged students get the chance to study at Curtin University with help from Census data

Thousands of educationally disadvantaged students are now getting a chance at tertiary education, thanks to a specialised ranking system created for a Curtin University enabling program that's based on Census data.

Curtin University's UniReady Enabling Program offers another pathway for students who want to go to university but didn't get the required marks.

The program is bursting with applicants wanting to get their foot in the door to attend university, and with limited places available, applicants are assessed on an equity and needs basis.

While UniReady staff would love to give all applicants a chance, they wanted to prioritise people who may have had limited opportunities.

"We considered a first-in, best-dressed system but realised not everyone has access to online systems or vital application information at the same time.

"We needed to find a more equitable way."

That's when the UniReady team came up with the idea of looking at the factors that contribute to educational disadvantage with help from Census data.

Census data coupled with applicant information like location, previous education, family circumstances, migrant or refugee background, internet access and rural or remote living helped the team assess their educational situation.

"With the help of Census data, we now have a more holistic approach to rank students based on their educational situation.

"We can see who may not have been given equal opportunities in the past and give them the best possible chance to pursue a degree.

"We see so many people who want to come to University but can't see how it's possible because of circumstances beyond their control or don't have families that can support them.

"We're now able to tell students we take that into account when assigning places. That really helps build aspiration and help people feel more confident about their situation."