

Indigenous Student Success Program

2023 Performance Report

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1. Declaration

In providing this Performance Report, it is acknowledged that it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

2. Enrolments (Access)

Table 1 ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2023 payments¹

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ²	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ³	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Undergraduate ⁴	\$293,000	72	\$16,000	4	0	0	\$309,000	72
Post-graduate ⁵	\$30,000	8	\$3,000	0	0	0	\$33,000	8
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	\$323,000	80	\$19,000	4	0	0	\$342,000	80

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) provides a range of strategies, activities and programs designed to support and improve access for First Nations students across the three UniSQ main campuses (Toowoomba, Ipswich, and Springfield). UniSQ ensures culturally safe learning environments for First Nations students, while providing input into and delivery of culturally inclusive knowledges and support by First Nations staff.

Summary of Embedded Strategies and Programs

Strategies, Activities & Programs	Existing/New
Open Days Open day activities are undertaken as recruitment and enrolment activities tailored for supporting First Nations students. Students explore study options, campuses and engage in conversations regarding tertiary education opportunities. These events allow both professional and academic First Nations staff to engage with future students. Information about the Indigenous Higher Education Pathway Program (IHEPP) as a free bridging program, its courses, entry requirements, the application process, and supports available at UniSQ is shared at these events.	Existing

Further, discipline specific information is shared by Indigenous academics such as nursing, education, and engineering.	
<p>Indigenous Higher Education Pathways Program (IHEPP) IHEPP is a free First Nations people’s pathway program into Higher Education that prepares students to successfully transition into university studies. It is delivered via mixed mode delivery and is available to complete in one trimester full-time, or over multiple trimesters part-time. The program consists of Indigenous developed courses that are taught by Indigenous academics, that enhance academic writing, establish study plans and support computing skills and literacy, while providing a culturally safe academic and social support environment. The intention of this pathway program is to support retention and success of Indigenous students through developing the academic skills needed to seamlessly transition into tertiary education.</p>	Existing
<p>IHEPP Completion Ceremony The IHEPP Completion Ceremony is a formal acknowledgement for IHEPP participants to celebrate their achievement in completing the pathway program of study and to acknowledge students articulating into Award level studies.</p>	Existing
<p>Post IHEPP Completion engagement Students that successfully complete the IHEPP (Pathways Program) and are not enrolled into further study are contacted by the First Nations Student Success Officers (FNSSOs) to facilitate and support students to apply in the University’s undergraduate programs.</p>	Existing
<p>Scholarships All First Nations students are provided with access and are supported to apply for the wide range of scholarships and leadership opportunities at UniSQ.</p>	Existing
<p>Welcome Packs To support commencement Welcome Packs are posted to all new students at the beginning of each study period. These packs include information about the College for First Nations and other University support services, as well as a small kit of practical resources to support their commencement. The resources within the kit include information about the College for First Nations, notepad and pen, UniSQ study period planner, College First Nations student support postcard, First Nations Learning Advisor support and contact details and information about study skill sessions throughout the year.</p>	Existing
<p>Cultural Connections Online Orientation Program This Program continued to provide support for first year, first semester online students across the University. Identified students are invited to attend a two-day orientation program during the University orientation week. The students engage with Indigenous Lecturers, Student Relationship Officers, First Nations Advisory Staff, and College for First Nations staff and peers.</p>	Existing

In 2023, the College for First Nations (CFN) in collaboration with the First Nations Engagement Team introduced monthly Feed Ups (student lunches). The lunches are a retention strategy by creating opportunities to connect with other First Nations students, CFN staff and external stakeholders. The monthly Feed Ups provide networking opportunities and social support for students. Additionally, the event provides the chance for students to ask questions and seek support from staff, peers, and members of the community in an informal setting. Other Internal and external stakeholders (such as Centrelink, Career Trackers, or UniSQ Learning Advisors) have also attended offering information regarding their services. Most importantly, the Feeds Ups foster a comfortable and supported culturally safe space in the UniSQ setting.

Scholarships

In 2023 \$342,000 of funding was provided for scholarships for First Nations students. Scholarship payments moved from the previous model of paying students \$500 per enrolled course each semester, to a one-off payment for the year:

- \$4000 for applicants applying in the first study period
- \$3000 for applicants applying mid-year
- \$2000 for applicants applying in the final study period

Anecdotally, this was well-received by students, who spoke of the benefits of receiving a significant boost to their finances at the start of the year, citing the ability to pay for expensive study items.

Bridging/ Enabling and Outreach Services

First Nations staff worked collaboratively with the Department of Education Queensland to provide multiple outreach opportunities in 2023. The Solid Pathways STEM University Experience Day supported and encouraged Year 7 to 12 First Nation students, from regional and remote communities, to raise their career aspirations and consider higher education career paths in the STEM disciplines. This was achieved through providing First Nations students the opportunity to participate in interactive, hands-on activities, which were led by University First Nations Student Ambassadors, and First Nations Academic staff who are enrolled in Higher Degree by Research STEM programs such as Engineering.

The First Nations Engagement team commenced collaborations with the Ipswich Murri Interagency group. The Murri Interagency group holds monthly meetings, where representatives from a wide and diverse range of community organisations meet to discuss their organisation programs and supports for the Ipswich Indigenous community. The meetings were held on the UniSQ Ipswich campus several times throughout the year and promoted a network of support for students. The UniSQ Indigenous Engagement Team took the opportunity to promote the IHEPP to the agencies which could be then fed back to Indigenous community members that access the services who attend these interagency meetings.

Widening Participation

Queensland's Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium takes a whole of consortium approach to increasing participation in tertiary study for students under-represented in higher education. This includes a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, residents of regional and remote locations, and Queenslanders from low SES backgrounds.

A well-established partnership between UniSQ and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fund (QATSIF) has occurred since 2016. UniSQ hosts award ceremonies for First Nations secondary school students twice a year. The Springfield campus hosts the New Recipients and Student Leaders Celebration at the beginning of the year, and the Toowoomba Campus hosts the QATSIF Graduation Ceremony towards the end of the year. The events provide another opportunity to increase participation in tertiary education, by encouraging students to feel celebrated, and confident in their ability to succeed in higher education. Campus tours also occur as part of these events, to orient future and potential Indigenous students to the campuses, and the possibilities and opportunities for them at UniSQ.

Impact

The University's strategic use of scholarships, bridging programs, and support services has had a diverse range of positive impacts on students by enhancing access and fostering success in their academic pursuits. The scholarships provided financial support to cover fees, textbooks, and other educational costs, relieving students of financial burdens and enabling them to concentrate on their

studies. Scholarships, bridging programs and outreach services play a vital role in empowering students to pursue their educational and professional goals.

UniSQ has developed and funded several broad strategies to increase access and enrolments, including:

Summary of Broad Strategies to Increase Access and Enrolment

Initiative and Outline of Activity	Existing/New
<p>UniSQ Pathways College Tertiary Preparatory Pathway (TTP) UniSQ’s Pathways College (which is a separate college with the Academic Division) offers TPP, which supports the enrolment of all students including First Nations students. Indigenous Students have a choice of pathways for the First Nations specifically tailored program, IHEPP offered via the College for First Nations or TPP offered by the UniSQ Pathways College. TPP supports First Nations and non-First Nations students through preparatory courses that enable direct entry into undergraduate degrees. UniSQ College and the College for First Nations work closely to support and retain First Nations students from their respective programs, allowing flexibility across the courses to ensure students have the requisite skills needed for degree program entry. Both Colleges offer courses in offline mode for incarcerated students, inclusive of First Nations students in correctional facilities across Australia.</p>	Existing
<p>Offline Courses for incarcerated students Indigenous Academic staff in the College for First Nations have continued to develop offline specialised First Nations content courses, allowing incarcerated students to complete the entire First Nations Australia major as part of their degree program. Additionally, in 2023, Indigenous academic staff met with students in correctional facilities and their education officers in order to support their tertiary education journey.</p>	New and Existing
<p>UniSQ College UniPrep This pathway program prepares (non-ATAR track) students for entry into most UniSQ undergraduate degrees. Its target audience is year 11 and 12 secondary students, it has a focus on developing academic skills that prepare the student to transition to university and succeed in their chosen undergraduate degree, and successful completion of the two courses confers 2 points towards in the Queensland Certificate of Education.</p>	Existing
<p>Discovery Day Years 9 and 10 These tailored, taster-style sessions are designed by academics to help students find skills they excel in as well as identify a range of satisfying careers for their future. Students select their top three sessions from a range of activities (based on the courses on offer at the campus they are attending) and explore the selected campus. The students also meet UniSQ support staff, and Indigenous student ambassadors who share their experiences about university life.</p>	Existing
<p>UniSQ HeadStart UniSQ HeadStart is an academic extension program for high achieving Year 10, 11 or 12 students. This enables students to have experience of UniSQ through studying one university course over one semester while working towards their Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). If the student articulates into the degree program the undertaken course is accredited towards that degree program.</p>	Existing
<p>Diploma of Multidisciplinary Studies (DMS) DMS is an open entry diploma level pathway that offers a formal university qualification that articulates into a range of UniSQ undergraduate degrees. It is</p>	Existing

open to everyone over 18 years of age. DMS has eight specialisation pathways, they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Commerce • Creative Arts • Indigenous Community Development • Social Studies • Construction • Engineering • Science • Spatial Science 	
iConnect iConnect is UniSQ’s multi-channel frontline student enquiry and response service that resolves routine student enquiries and facilitates access to UniSQ student support services for all students throughout their degrees. It is located centrally and has a visible physical presence on each campus, and offers online services through chat, email and phone.	Existing
UniSQ Student Ambassador Program First Nations Student Ambassadors are utilised across a broad range of engagement activities that support and inspire future students to consider tertiary study.	Existing

First Nations Student Enrolment Trends

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total EFTSL	414.812	456.500	465.644	462.656	497.025
Total Headcount (with load)	808	886	900	898	1,026
Male	256	273	280	262	342
Female	551	610	616	631	677
Unspecified	1	3	4	5	7
Low Socio Economic Status	262	294	336	332	372
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	808	886	900	898	1,026
English as Additional Language			2	8	1
Disability	116	130	172	157	172
Incarcerated	23	26	31	40	74

Comparing First Nations student enrolment data over the past five years has shown consistent numbers with minor fluctuations each year. However, the comparison between 2022 and 2023 reveals a higher enrolment than usual in both headcount and EFTSL.

3. Progression (outcomes)

Table 2 Tutorial assistance provided in 2023

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted ⁶	Total number of tutorial sessions attended ⁷	Total hours of assistance ⁸	Expenditure ⁹ (\$)
Enabling	4	14	29	\$1580.26
Undergraduate	72	1589	4526.15	\$292,128.48
Post-graduate	8	133	346	\$22,325.83
Other	x	x	x	x
Total	84	1736	4901.15	\$316,034.57

Summary of Existing Strategies and Programs

Initiative and Outline of Activity	Existing/New
<p>First Nations Learning Advisors First Nations Learning Advisors embed First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing through two-way learning, within curriculum and adjacent to curriculum. The Advisors are culturally responsive and offer one-on-one academic and study skills support via appointments. To grow and maintain the University's attribute in developing and growing Cultural Safety, culturally responsive concepts are further included in all student engagements and supports.</p>	Existing
<p>First Nations Student Success Officers (FNSSOs) The FNSSOs undertook a comprehensive program of outreach to assist in retaining students across each study period. They provided supportive advice for students to facilitate the completion of courses. An assessment of the frequency of contact points with students was conducted methodically, which resulted in an increased scheduled of contact with first year students during the year.</p>	Existing
<p>Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) - Personalised Learning Plans (PLP) Students who engaged with the ITAS complete a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) with their tutor during their first session. After review of previous PLPs, it was found that student goals were vague and were not accompanied by any actions to achieve these goals. The PLP was re-developed and included a structure for students to create SMART goals and list strategies for attaining their goals.</p>	Existing
<p>Ask Aunty Students are provided a link and information about Ask Aunty in their welcome email and welcome pack. The Ask Aunty online platform houses information about student supports, job opportunities, cadetships, scholarships, bursaries, and opportunities to connect with other First Nations student forums. The platform also includes a social aspect, to encourage online students to grow their support network at the university.</p>	Existing
<p>College for First Nations Partnership with UniSQ Schools The First Nations Student Success Officers (FNSSOs) invited all UniSQ Schools to partner with the College for First Nations in further supporting First Nations students. FNSSOs collaborated with participating Schools seeking feedback on the progression of their First Nations students. An academic was identified in the schools and a number of these academics were Indigenous people. This allowed early identification and referral of students to the First Nations Student Success</p>	Existing

Officers for additional support, as well as allowing the College to celebrate with successful students.	
Student Leadership opportunities Engaging students in leadership opportunities, such as Student Ambassador roles, as well as facilitating participation in academic focussed conferences, contribute to the successful completion of academic studies.	Existing
First Nations Learning Advisor Increased Resourcing In 2023, UniSQ recruited a second First Nations Learning Advisor. The advisors provide academic assistance to students individually or in small groups, fostering a culturally safe space for students to improve their academic skills in a culturally respectful way and support them in successfully completing their studies.	New
Financial Wellbeing Sessions Free financial wellbeing sessions were provided to First Nations students through collaborations with external stakeholders UniSuper and TJS Accounting. These sessions were promoted through Ask Aunty and uConnect platforms to ensure maximum outreach and participation.	New

Throughout 2023, there has been a strong emphasis on maintaining service delivery for students amidst staffing changes. Additionally, new programs have been introduced to assist students in successfully completing their units, as outlined above. Programs and services will be evaluated during 2024 to identify any further initiatives and continuous improvement opportunities.

The University has a central data collection hub provided through the UniSQ Information Centre which contains University-wide verified student data. First Nations student data is available separately and is used to monitor student progression, success and completions. This data provides the platform for reviewing the impact of initiatives, as well as providing data for resource and initiative planning.

First Nations Student Success Trends

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Success (%)	2,049 (63%)	2,166 (62%)	2,106 (58%)	2,353 (65%)	2,752 (70%)
Ongoing (No grade outcome)	71	165	89	59	37
Male	628 (65%)	638 (62%)	577 (53%)	625 (61%)	846 (69%)
Female	1,421 (62%)	1,525 (62%)	1,521 (60%)	1,720 (66%)	1,891 (71%)
Unspecified	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	8 (50%)	8 (36%)	15 (45%)
Commencing	833 (55%)	839 (54%)	785 (52%)	993 (62%)	1,060 (66%)
Continuing	1,216 (70%)	1,327 (69%)	1,321 (62%)	1,360 (67%)	1,692 (72%)
Low Socio Economic Status	636 (59%)	663 (57%)	740 (55%)	865 (63%)	928 (67%)
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	2,049 (63%)	2,166 (62%)	2,106 (58%)	2,353 (65%)	2,752 (70%)
English as Additional Language			1 (10%)	32 (84%)	6 (60%)
Disability	249 (56%)	287 (57%)	337 (49%)	471 (68%)	449 (66%)
Incarcerated	21 (31%)	28 (42%)	28 (37%)	33 (42%)	115 (70%)

Note: Success rate = Units Passed / (Unit Enrolments - Ongoing Units - Invalid Units). Students with ongoing status are removed from success calculation until such time as they are classified as pass, fail, or withdrawal. Invalid data has been removed where no course outcome status is found in the TCSI data so as not to confound success calculations. Non-award and cross institutional data is not included in success calculations to align with UA reported data.

Between 2019 and 2023, the average success rate for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohort was 64%, with 2023 achieving the highest success rate (70%).

Tutorial and proactive and responsive learning advising are the key mechanisms contributing to student progression and success.

Cultural Safety

The University's investment in the cultural safety of its staff and students is evident in key strategic documents such as the [University of Southern Queensland Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#), [UniSQ Education Plan 2022-2025](#), the [Blueprint for First Nations Education, Research and Engagement at University of Southern Queensland 2022-2025](#), and the [First Nations Workforce Strategic Framework 2024-2025](#). The First Nations Research Strategy 2024-2027 was endorsed by the Vice Chancellor's Executive in May 2024 following extensive consultation.

Additionally, a revised First Nations Education Strategy (2024 - 2028) is in draft format and is currently out for consultation with key stakeholders. The First Nations Education Strategy will be launched in mid- 2024.

These key UniSQ strategic documents are designed to create the institutional conditions that empower First Nations peoples to take their rightful place and reach their full potential at UniSQ. The strategies encourage the development of innovative learning programs that embed First Nations perspectives and knowledges across the curriculum, and intentionally designed programs of study that are reflective and inclusive of First Nations community needs and industry demands.

Operationally, the Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations Strategy (PVC FNS) reports to the Provost and is a member of the Vice-Chancellor's and Academic Executives and the University's Senior Leaders Group. The PVC FNS is responsible for providing strategic advice on First Nations matters across the University, to drive forward the University's innovative First Nations Strategies and lead the development of initiatives to ensure a culturally safe and inclusive University-wide approach to communication and collaboration on Indigenous issues.

All UniSQ students are enabled to; be culturally safe individuals who are self-aware and sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives; be equitable thinkers and respectful of diversity and multiculturalism; and apply these capabilities in their professional practice. This is achieved through their participation in curricular learning activities, enriched by co-curricular learning experiences.

The PVC FNS portfolio has created a Cultural Safety Micro Credential Course that will be available for enrolment December 2024. This will be offered to internal staff, students and will also be available to external members of the community.

Student Progression

To support the progression of students, the Learning Advising team supports the following activities:

- Academic Success eBook (a UniSQ published Open Education resource) available from the course readings in each course Study Desk (UniSQ's learning management system).
- Academic Success Webinars (sessions offered in teaching weeks during the year).
- Incarcerated student resources (contextualised for the cohort).
- Embedding First Nations knowledges and experiences into curriculum:
 - SBE1001 - Foundations of Tertiary Study

- NUR 3030 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- SPY1100 - Introduction to the Speech Pathology Profession: Compassionate Care
- ENP1100 - Student Engineer Induction
- SWM5100 - First Nations People: Decolonisation and Cultural Safety Course
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) - Program specific assessment of RPL
- Developing Student Learning Advising Team cultural responsiveness (including Peer Assisted Study Session leaders)
 - Improved cultural responsiveness throughout student support services increases a student’s sense of belonging, and therefore their self-efficacy.
- First Nations ways of knowing are incorporated into the Student Learning Advising Feedback Framework.
- Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) embedded in courses, with a focus on first year courses and key transition courses.
- Peer Mentoring programs offered adjacent to curriculum.
- The online study service (Studiosity) is available 24/7 as an online service, offering writing and maths support. Additionally, students are able to submit written work for feedback or meet synchronously with a tutor online or by phone to discuss writing, studying, and foundational mathematics topics.
- There are also 7 First Nations academic staff with positions in UniSQ Schools as an ongoing part of UniSQ’s commitment to growing the Indigenous Academic workforce that focus on Indigenous student support.

4. Completions (outcomes)

The College for First Nations staff undertakes assessments of student support and success. Activities, such as student outreach, have been extended to students studying into their second year of university, as an identified retention strategy. A schedule of contact occurs three times per teaching period, commencing in the first week of Semester. The College for First Nations engaged with external stakeholders to deliver information sessions to First Nations students about employment opportunities within their organisations to create awareness and build career aspirations on completion of their degree program.

The University continues to implement a comprehensive approach to [Student Academic Progress](#), in accord with its [Student Academic Progress Procedure](#). The College for First Nations staff assist students facing challenges with study and work with individual students to develop a study plan, refer students to ITAS tutoring where indicated, and offer connections to other support services as necessary.

As detailed above, the focus has been on ensuring that continuity of service delivery for students, with significant staffing changes occurring throughout 2023, we will continue to monitor student outcomes during 2024 and identify further opportunities for continuous improvement.

UniSQ and the FNS portfolio acknowledges and actively support the different learning journeys First Nations students take that includes First Nations learning, support and services and the range of non-Indigenous services and supports provided by the University.

Seamless Transition Support for First Nations Students Finishing Study and Gaining Employment

Activity	Outline of Activity
Careers and Employability Services	Student transition at each stage of the student learning journey, supported by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Counselling and Wellbeing ● Supporting student with disabilities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Counselling • Career Education • Career and employability support including support to develop resumes • Industry Partnerships • Employability Services • Work experience, industry mentoring, and internships/cadetships.
Career Trackers	UniSQ continues its partnership with Career Trackers (a national program that creates internship opportunities for First Nations students).

Fist Nations Student Completion Trends

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Completions	69	104	97	93	138
Male	18	28	37	22	42
Female	51	76	59	71	96
Low Socio Economic Status	14	35	29	29	41
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	69	104	97	93	138
Disability	8	8	18	14	34
Incarcerated			1		2

Total completions between 2019 and 2023 were consistent with 2 years outside one standard deviation of the average number of completions.

5. Regional and remote students

The Scholarship Team continues to improve the effective allocation of scholarships so that rural and remote students can access financial support. The ISSP Scholarship Table indicates an increase of 108% in rural and remote scholarship uptake from 2022, which is reflective of increased reach through refining scholarship criteria, successful engagement, and current student support mechanisms for rural and remote students.

In 2022, the Scholarship Team allocated 95% of the total value of scholarships to First Nations Students in regional and remote locations, which equated to \$170,810. In 2023, This figure \$195,000 in scholarships was allocated to First Nations students living in regional and remote areas.

ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students¹⁰

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2022 Payments	\$160,800	41	\$ 4,000	2	\$15,000	15	\$179,800	41
B. 2023 Offers ¹¹	\$176,000	43	\$ 19,000	5	-	-	\$195,000	43
C. Percentage ¹² (C=B/A*100)							108%	102%
2023 Payments	\$176,000	43	\$19,000	5	-	-	\$195,000	43

UniSQ is a leading regional University with three campuses in Toowoomba, Ipswich and Springfield that collectively cover a large regional footprint. The First Nations Engagement Team participate in dozens of community events across the wide footprint and facilitate engagement visits to regional primary and secondary schools to inform students of access and enrolment pathways. The IHEPP program is offered through the College for First Nations to First Nations students seeking entry to university, with two intakes per year. This culturally relevant pathway program aims to develop the academic skills needed for successful entry into award level university study.

UniSQ Head Start is an academic extension program for high achieving Year 10, 11 or 12 students. In addition, the UniSQ Tertiary Preparatory Pathway (TPP) supports the enrolment of First Nations students into preparatory courses that enable direct entry into a UniSQ undergraduate degree

The College for First Nations supports regional and remote students enrolled in IHEPP to participate in the on-campus intensive learning workshops and the Cultural Connections Program, via Away-From-Base (AFB) funding. This includes supporting students travel, accommodation, and meal costs to facilitate participate in these programs with local students, allowing connection with Indigenous staff, peers, Indigenous Rangers, and a program that is deeply embedded in the practice of connecting with Country which together create a greater sense of belonging.

During 2023, the College improved collaboration with Geraldton University Centre (GUC) in Western Australia, to support First Nations Nursing students to access tutoring support in their own community. Working together CFN & GUC attracted and employed tutors based in students' local communities, improving the support and experience for these students.

The targeted implementation of scholarships and support programs for remote and rural students resulted in a variety of beneficial outcomes, improving access and nurturing academic success among the student population. The First Nations Engagement Team actively engages in numerous community events and conducts visits to regional primary and secondary schools to educate students on access and enrolment pathways.

6. Eligibility criteria

6.1. Indigenous Education Strategy

Throughout 2023, UniSQ continued to adhere to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Education Strategy 2019-2020 and the UniSQ Education Plan 2022-2025 for reporting and operational requirements.

UniSQ's Education Plan 2022-2025 was developed and implemented in alignment with the [First Nations Blueprint 2022-2025](#). Both the University's Education Plan 2022-2025 and the UniSQ Strategic Plan 2021-2025 support empowering First Nations peoples to take their rightful place and reach their full potential at UniSQ. The UniSQ Education Plan outlines actions to provide innovative learning programs that embed First Nations perspectives and knowledges across the curriculum and intentionally designed programs for First Nations students reflecting community needs and includes industry demands.

The First Nations Blueprint 2022-2025 encompasses education, research, and engagement. It is a high-level strategy document which is the roadmap to shaping future directions for First Nations education, research, and engagement at UniSQ. The Blueprint enables a more focused framework for engagement, retention, and support of all UniSQ student services working with First Nations students and staff.

The First Nations Portfolio developed Unit Operational Plans to operationalise the First Nations Blueprint.

A major redevelopment of the First Nations Education Strategy was commenced at the end of 2023, and this is currently undergoing stakeholder consultation. It is intended that the Strategy will be endorsed by the University's Executive and Academic Governance bodies in the coming months.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Education Strategy 2019-2020 milestones were created to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' engagement with participation and success at the University.

The University continued to engage in strategies and policies that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in the following key areas:

- Cultural Safety
- Teaching and Learning
- Research and Innovation
- Leadership
- People and Relationships

All UniSQ students (through their participation in curricular learning activities, enriched by co-curricular learning experiences) achieve UniSQ graduate capability of being "culturally safe individuals who are self-aware and sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives, be equitable thinkers and respectful of diversity and multiculturalism, and apply these capabilities in their professional practice".

Development of a Cultural Safety micro-credential that will be available for students enrolling from December 2024 for commencement in Trimester 1, 2025, was led by the First Nations Portfolio. This micro-credential will be available for all UniSQ students irrespective of enrolment mode.

The [First Nations Australia Major](#) and [First Nations Australia Minor](#) programs offered by the College for First Nations have been developed and are delivered by First Nations academics, and include specific cultural knowledge (ways of knowing) as well as Indigenous Research methodology and embedding historical perspectives. The Courses include:

- FNA1001 – First Nations Philosophy and Perspectives
- FNA1002 – First Nation Perspective of Australian History
- FNA1003 – Australian Politics and the First Nations' Experience
- FNA2001 – First Nation Identity, Diversity and Protocols
- FNA2002 – First Nations Expression and Representation in Arts and Media
- FNA2003 – First Nations Current Issues and Debates
- FNA3001 – Decolonisation and Indigenous Standpoint Theory
- FNA3002 – First Nation Advocacy and Allies

In addition, Schools across the University offer courses focused on Indigenous Perspectives or Indigenous Knowledges within a discipline context, for example:

- NUR 3030 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- NUR 3020 Cultural Safety

These courses were developed by an Indigenous nurse academic and are now included across multiple Allied Health Programs such as Social Work, Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy and Paramedicine.

The University's investment in the cultural competency of its staff and students is evidenced in key strategic documents such as the UniSQ Strategic Plan 2021-2025, UniSQ's Education Plan 2022-2025, the First Nations Blueprint 2022-2025, and the recently approved First Nations Workforce Strategic Framework 2024-2025.

These key UniSQ strategic documents support empowering First Nations peoples to take their rightful place and reach their full potential at UniSQ. These strategic documents are the drivers for incorporating First Nations perspectives and knowledge throughout the curriculum, offering innovative learning experiences. They are carefully crafted to meet the needs of students, First Nations communities, and align with industry demands.

Operationally, the University has in its executive leadership group the Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Strategy). This role is responsible for providing strategic advice on First Nations matters and oversight of the development of a culturally safe and inclusive University. This position also develops and leads implementation of UniSQs First Nations Strategies.

The recruitment of all new staff includes a compulsory onboarding set of activities, they are a First Nations Inclusion module and Understanding the Importance of First Nations Cultural Capability at UniSQ, which are also undertaken as a mandatory annual refresher.

UniSQ promoted the participation in the Supervising Indigenous Higher Degree Research Micro-credential course with University of Technology Sydney. With two (2) intakes for 2023, including First Nations and non-Indigenous academic and professional, sixteen staff successfully completing the course and another staff member was awarded an exit point short course certificate for partial completion.

Additionally, UniSQ provided financial assistance for academic staff to complete the Developing an Indigenised Curriculum with four staff successfully completing the course and another staff member awarded an exit point short course certificate for partial completion.

The First Nations Education Strategy 2024-2028 has been redeveloped and is currently out for consultation with key stakeholders. It is envisioned that the Strategy will be endorsed by the University's Executive in the coming months. On endorsement a link will provide access to the First Nations Education Strategy.

6.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

Building upon the [First Nations Blueprint 2022-2025](#), and the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025, UniSQ redeveloped its First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework in 2023 with an employment target of 3.6%. The redevelopment and dedicated consultation with First Nations staff provided an opportunity to refine align the [First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025](#) with University and sector imperatives to grow First Nations employment. The Framework was endorsed on 6 December 2023 by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive after a process of consultation that included First Nations staff, other key stakeholders and the University's Executive.

Throughout 2023, UniSQ continued to adhere to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Workforce Strategy 2018-2020 for reporting and operational requirements. The intended 3% employment target was reached by end of Quarter 3, with further increase to 3.15% at the end of Quarter 4. This is a 0.47% increase from 2.68% at end of Quarter 4, 2022.

The endorsement of UniSQ’s Enterprise Agreement on 22 December 2023 has lifted this target to 3.6% over the next 3 years. UniSQ recognises that it will take a concerted effort to achieve and maintain this figure.

UniSQ had an extensive recruitment in 2023 for positions across areas of the University that were both identified and non-identified positions with great success. The focus for recruitment was to enhance First Nations representative in academia and research with the following positions recruited:

- Level B Lecturer (First Nations and Law)
- Head of College (College for First Nations)
- Head of School and Dean (Nursing and Midwifery)
- First Nations Research Associate (Cultural Heritage)
- First Nations Research Associate (Climate Change)
- Lecturer (Occupational Therapy)
- Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Education and Research)

Professional staff recruitment saw the Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy), Learning Advisor (First Nations), First Nations Graduate position and the Business Manager Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office (First Nations Education and Research) positions filled.

Like many organisations, UniSQ faces ongoing challenges in attracting, promoting, and retaining First Nations talent, with several positions remaining vacant for extended periods, or being temporarily filled through acting appointments throughout the year. A multi-pronged approach was used to address these challenges. In 2023, a project was initiated to establish a First Nations Employee Value Proposition which assisted in understanding First Nations employees’ drivers for choosing UniSQ and identifying opportunities to embed cultural safety in attraction and recruitment. More information can be found on the [First Nations employment webpage](#).

The First Nations Coaching Program continued with engagement of new and existing professional staff. Seven (7) professional staff across the University engaged with their choice of external coach to focus on aspects that would enhance their retention and capability for discussions regarding their career plan.

UniSQ tracked its progress against its established targets. The advancements made in 2023 demonstrate proactive implementation efforts aimed at nurturing a skilled First Nations Workforce.

The University’s First Nations staff total head count consists of 47 permanent and fixed-term staff with an additional 28 casual staff. Below is the table providing the overview of the Indigenous workforce data for 2023 by level/position, appointment, and contract type.

Indigenous workforce data (2023 breakdown)

Level/Position	Permanent/Fixed Term		Casual	
	Academic	Professional	Academic	Professional
Executive	2			
Level E	1			
Level D	0			
Level C	3			
Level B	7			
Level A	2			
10		1		

9		0		
8		3		
7		4		
6		9		
5		11		
4		3		
3		1		
Total Casual			13	15
Total Academic	15			
Total Professional		32		

The [First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025](#) outlines the guiding principles for the University-wide approach to advance educational, employment, training, and career opportunities for First Nations people at the University with further information provided in Attachment B3 – ISSP Workforce Action Plan.

6.3. Indigenous Governance Mechanism

UniSQ’s governance mechanism is the Indigenous Student Success Committee. It is guided by a refreshed Terms of Reference (charter) that was developed in October 2023 and was provided to the Vice Chancellor’s Executive in November 2023 for noting.

The Indigenous Student Success Committee (ISSP) functions as a governance mechanism within the university to advise, review, recommend, and monitor the use of ISSP grants. The committee addresses matters related to ISSP at UniSQ, establishes sub-committees or working groups for specialized advice, and serves as a reference point for relevant matters to the Provost and Vice-Chancellor.

In 2023 the two Indigenous persons within the university who were ISSP Committee members were the Head of College for First Nations and the First Nations College Manager. They played key roles in providing Indigenous perspectives and expertise within the committee.

The committee consists of six members, with four being non-Indigenous and two Indigenous members. The committee met in August 2023 to discuss and address various key issues related to Indigenous student success. The frequency of meetings and specific key issues resolved in 2023 may vary based on the committee's agenda and priorities.

The governance mechanism of the ISSP Committee holds responsibility and authority for advising, recommending, and monitoring the use of ISSP grant funding to ensure its effective and equitable distribution for Indigenous student success initiatives.

The charter for the Governance Mechanism in accordance with Section 11 (d) of the ISSP Guidelines is titled UniSQ’s Indigenous Student Success Committee Terms of Reference. The university's website is currently undergoing a refresh, and it is planned that the Terms of Reference (TOR) will be included in the updated site

The University of Southern Queensland Council, led by the Chancellor, sets the strategic direction of the University and is empowered under the [University of Southern Queensland Act 1998](#) to do anything necessary or convenient in connection with its functions.

Of the five members appointed by the Governor in Council, the council has appointed a First Nations person, Aunty Lorraine Hatton OAM. Aunty Lorraine has a long history of similar board memberships that include positions such as President, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dedicated Memorial Committee and Director, Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor First Nations Strategy is a member of the University Executive.

There are identified positions on the Academic Governance bodies: Academic Board, Education Committee and Research Committee.

All First Nations staff members are invited to become members of the University's Forum for First Nations staff which is coordinated by the Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy) People Portfolio.

Additional information for completing the template

¹ This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2023. The figures for students should include the actual number (head count, not the EFTSL). Scholarship figures (head count and costs) should include the university award scholarships from the flexible finding pool as well as any preserved scholarships. Only payments made during 2023 should be included in this table. For multi-year scholarship agreements, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded in the performance reporting for the relevant future grant year.

² This figures provide for the total number of students receiving scholarships and expenditure for those scholarships. For the student count, in cases where a student receives more than one scholarship, the student would only be counted once in the total (consequently the total figure may not be the sum of the preceding columns). For the expenditure, the total should be the total of the preceding expenditure columns.

³ Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

⁴ Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁵ Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁶Total number of unique students supported by tutorial assistance (if students have attended multiple tutorial sessions, still count them as 1 student).

⁷ Record total number of tutorial sessions attended by students (each class a student attends counts as 1, the same student may attend multiple tutorial sessions throughout the year).

⁸ Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).

⁹ Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.

¹⁰ Only record amounts which required payment during the 2023 calendar year. For multi-year scholarship offers, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded against the reporting for the relevant future grant year. Note the data in this table is a subset of the scholarship data provided in Table 1.

¹¹ Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2023 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2023 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2022 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships).

¹² This data confirms the university's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.