

Indigenous Student Success Program 2024 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 2024 payments¹ - Scholarships

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ²	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ³	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Undergraduate ⁴	335,000	84	8,000	2	0	0	343,000	84
Post-graduate ⁵	12,000	3	0	0	0	0	12,000	3
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	347,000	87	8,000	2	0	0	355,000	87

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). Additionally, a range of online services and initiatives are offered to cater for online students to ensure they have access to a high level of support by the University.

UniSQ ensures culturally safe learning and support environments for First Nations students within the College for First Nations (CFN), while providing input into and delivery of culturally inclusive knowledges and support by First Nations staff.

Strategies, Activities & programs	Existing / New
The Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences (Medicine Pathway) (BBMP) is a developing program that has increased the number of ISSP strategies being embedded into the program. The BBMP requires input from four partners (i.e. UQ, UniSQ, Darling Downs Hospital and Health Services – DDHHS – and Southwest Qld Hospital and Health Services) and their subsidiaries. It was recognised by the partners of the BBMP, particularly UniSQ staff, that new	New

Strategies, Activities & programs	Existing / New
<p>strategies could enhance access and enrolment into the program by First Nations people. Further action and activities aim to impact and improve pre-entry, entry and success into the program. The key strategies included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - changing the name of the admission pathway from the Alternate Admission Pathway to a pathway for First Nations applicants. - relaxing the requirement of being a domestic, graduated high school student in the year before entry (no breaks) to must have completed Queensland Year 12 (or equivalent) and submit a resume, latest report card and personal statement via QTAC - naming of the semi-structured interview was altered to reduce the potential negative impact this may have had on potential students applying to the program, as well as ensuring mini multiple interviews (MMIs) incorporated a specific First Nations scenario/question that was written and/or developed by a First Nations person (or people). <p>These changes occurred in 2024, resulting in two First Nations applicants to the BBMP program and subsequent admission of the inaugural First Nations student into the program in 2025.</p>	
<p>Indigenous Higher Education Pathways Program (IHEPP)</p> <p>IHEPP is a fee-free pathway program for First Nations people that supports entry to UniSQ. The program prepares students to successfully transition into university studies upon successful completion. It is offered 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 First Nations academics, who work with students to enhance academic writing, establish study plans and support computing and literacy skills, while providing a culturally safe learning and socially supportive environment. The aim of this pathway program is to build the academic skills and self-confidence to support future success of First Nations students to seamlessly transition into degree programs and successfully engage in tertiary education.</p> <p>During 2024, nine students successfully completed the program and three of these students transitioned into Undergraduate study in Law, Arts and Business disciplines.</p>	Existing
<p>IHEPP Completion engagement</p> <p>Students that are on track to complete the IHEPP (Pathways Program) are supported to explore their post pathways program study options and are assisted by First Nations Student Success Officers to progress their applications to undergraduate studies.</p>	Existing
<p>Student Outreach</p> <p>To support First Nations students commencing at UniSQ, UniSQ First Nations Student Success (FNSS) Officers outreach to all new students to support their transition to study and the development of tailored support plans, based on individual student needs. Through this initiative, strong relationships are built</p>	Existing

Strategies, Activities & programs	Existing / New
<p>between First Nations students and FNSS Officers that enable a sense of trust and belonging, positively impacting further connection and support.</p> <p>Students transitioning to their second study period and/or nearing completion who may require extra support, remain supported through the student outreach initiative. This support is offered particularly if they have experienced some challenges with academic achievement, social connection or extenuating circumstances, including sorry business and/or natural disasters.</p>	
<p>Welcome Packs</p> <p>To support commencement and connection, Welcome Packs are posted to all commencing students living locally, regionally or remotely, at the beginning of each study period. These packs include information about the College for First Nations (CFN) 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 CFN, a notepad and pen, a USB, a UniSQ study period planner, a CFN student support postcard, and First Nations Learning Advisor support details and key contact details for support services.</p>	Existing
<p>Cultural Connections Orientation Program</p> <p>This Program continues to provide support for first year, first trimester students across the University. Identified students are invited to attend a one-day orientation program held at the Ipswich and Toowoomba campuses during the University orientation weeks.</p> <p>The College for First Nations collaborates with internal stakeholders to provide this opportunity for First Nations students to engage with key support staff and learn about services and systems to support their commencement. The students attend sessions about how to engage with their study desk and where to find key information, including support to apply for a tutor (ITAS). The students are also supported when applying for scholarships and advised of their support team and how and where they can access specialised support, including wellbeing, library, and academic supports. The program encourages peer-to-peer connection to build a sense of belonging and includes cultural sessions for students to engage with Country.</p>	Existing

In 2024, the College for First Nations (CFN) continued student Feed Ups (student lunches). The lunches provide an opportunity for social connection and networking. They are a retention strategy by creating opportunities to connect with CFN staff, and on some occasions, internal and external stakeholders. 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. Most importantly, the Feed Ups foster a comfortable and supported culturally safe space in the UniSQ setting.

Scholarships

A total of \$355,000 was distributed to UniSQ’s First Nations students in 2024 which was a 4% increase in the total allocation in 2023. Like 2023, payments were facilitated as individual lump sum

payments which were tiered in value based on the study period in which the student was receiving payment:

- \$4,000 for students applying in Study Period 1
- \$3,000 for students applying in Study Period 2

The implementation of lump sum payments continues to be well received and ensures our students can plan out their studies with more certainty following payment. This distribution model and the increase in overall funding allocation resulted in seven (7) additional students receiving financial support in 2024 compared to 2023.

Bridging/ Enabling and Outreach Services

The First Nations Engagement team worked collaboratively with UniSQ Career Education and the Department of Education Queensland to deliver the Solid Pathways STEM University Experience Day at UniSQ. The event supports and encourages Year 4-6 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, First Nations Academic staff and other non-Indigenous Discipline specific STEM related teaching staff. Eighty (80) First Nations students attended from thirteen (13) schools, in Toowoomba and surrounding areas.

Other key activities included school presentations and career expos to engage with First Nations Secondary School students. This included sharing information about tertiary study, entry options including IHEPP pathways, and outlining the support provided specifically through the College for First Nations. These engagements provide an opportunity to share information about financial, academic, social and cultural support at university, as well as the different student experiences from secondary to tertiary education. We also offered on campus activities such as campus tours, experience days, and immersive sessions to promote university life and develop comfort within the university environment.

A key engagement activity for the First Nations Engagement team in 2024 was with the Ipswich Murri Interagency group. The Murri Interagency group held monthly meetings, where representatives from a wide and diverse range of community organisations met to discuss their organisation's programs and supports for the Ipswich First Nations community. These meetings attract up to sixty (60) participants from a wide variety of sectors including education, health, justice, housing and the general community. The meetings were held on the UniSQ Ipswich campus several times throughout the year and promoted stronger connections with the university. The UniSQ First Nations Engagement Team took the opportunity to promote the IHEPP to the agencies which could be then fed back to First Nations community members and clients that access the services of those who attend these interagency meetings. Late in 2024, the First Nations Engagement team established relationships with the Toowoomba Community Network to extend the success of this engagement in 2025.

During 2024, new partnerships and relationships were established with various community organisations particularly in the Ipswich region, including Ya'Dajin Women's Collective, Kambu Social Health team, Yugara Dancers, Inala Elders community groups, and government organisations to support the University's strategy to build strong relationships with our First Nations community. In

turn, this enabled sharing opportunities with community groups and people about tertiary study options.

In 2024, UniSQ offered the First Medicine Pathway Experience Day which opened the doors to any person wishing to come and have an experience of UniSQ and the BBMP and UQ Medical Doctor (MD) programs. This student experience day included specific details relevant to supporting First Nations applicants to gain entry to these programs.

Widening Participation

Queensland's Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium takes a whole of consortium approach to increasing access to and participation in tertiary study for students underrepresented in higher education. This includes a focus on First Nations peoples, across regional and remote locations, and Queenslanders from low socioeconomic status (SES). The Consortium comprises seven (7) university partners and employs a partnership model that integrates school and community engagement, focusing on evidence-based practice.

Different teams within the University support the Consortium's initiatives, including the Career Education Team, which delivers educational outreach in schools, communities and on campus. In 2024, the team conducted sixty-six (66) in-school engagements, reaching over 3,000 students from primary to secondary years. Many participating schools had an ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) rating below 1,000, with First Nations students comprising between 8% and 60% of their student cohorts. Student feedback from these activities indicates an average of 73.57% of attending students reported an increased understanding of study and career options, 74.56% of students felt more confident in study and career decision-making, and 67.85% of students expressed confidence in one-day pursuing higher education.

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 hosted the 2024 New Recipients and Student Leaders Celebration at the beginning of the year with 149 year 11 and 12 students in attendance, and the Toowoomba Campus hosts the 2024 QATSIF Graduation Ceremony towards the end of the year with 89 year 12 students in attendance. The events provide an opportunity to increase participation in tertiary education, by encouraging students to feel celebrated, and confident in their ability to succeed. Senior First Nations staff and Student Ambassadors are included in the event program to share their study journeys, and the opportunities presented through obtaining a tertiary qualification, also highlighting significant achievements of First Nations people, as well as the support at the University to encourage further study.

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 Activity	Existing / New
<p>Offline Courses for incarcerated students</p> <p>Indigenous Academic staff in the College for First Nations have continued to develop specialised offline First Nations courses, allowing incarcerated students to complete the entire First Nations Australia major as part of their degree program.</p> <p>IHEPP is also offered in offline mode, to support access to higher education, through education pathways for incarcerated students.</p>	Existing
<p>Discovery Day Years 7 to 10</p> <p>These tailored, experiential, taster-style sessions are designed by academic and professional staff and delivered by First Nations staff and Student Ambassadors, to support student development of knowledge, skills, and mindsets that assist with making informed decisions about life, study, pathways, and career options with the overall goals of increasing access and participation in higher education.</p> <p>In 2024, the University expanded its on-campus events to include Year 7 and 8 students, in addition to Years 9 and 10. A total of 1,350 students attended these events, with 8.5% identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. Following their participation, 68.54% of students reported that the experience enhanced their knowledge of career and study options, 64.11% felt more confident in making study and career decisions, and 80.24% indicated they were more likely to consider pursuing higher education in the future.</p>	Existing and expanded
<p>Science and Engineering Challenge Years 5 & 6 and 9 & 10</p> <p>The UniSQ Career Education team deliver a STEM-oriented event, filled with a range of experiential, hands-on activities, designed to support the development of knowledge and awareness of STEM skills, STEM careers, the development of STEM skills, and experience of a university campus. Activities are also designed to incorporate First Nations perspectives and practices, such as “It’s a Trap” inspired by a local fish trap in Brewarrina, NSW. This activity was created in partnership with Deadly Science and was facilitated by First Nations staff and students.</p> <p>2024 brought 920 students to the event, with 4.2% of participants identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.</p>	Existing
<p>Community and Regional University Study Hub (RUSH) Outreach</p> <p>UniSQ provides a range of support to Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH) in the form of educational outreach for local schools, student support for local people engaged in tertiary study, and capacity building for RUSH staff, educators, influencers, and local community workers. Teams across UniSQ contribute which includes the First Nations Engagement team, Career Education, Student Sales and Recruitment, Student Success Advising, and Learning Advising and Support.</p> <p>In the context of schools, UniSQ are engaged in two Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program (RPPP) alongside Country University Centres (CUC), and university partners, working collaboratively to deliver community-led provisions. In the local areas (including Roma, Dirranbandi, St George, as examples), these projects include</p>	Existing

Initiative and Outline Activity	Existing / New
supporting a range of secondary schools with 28% to 57% of students identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.	
<p>UniSQ HeadStart</p> <p>UniSQ HeadStart is an academic extension program for high achieving Year 10, 11 or 12 students. This enables students to have experience of university study, studying one (or more) university courses 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> <p>In 2024, 496 Head Start courses were undertaken, with 3.4% of courses completed by students that identified as First Nations. Further, there has been an increase in enrolments of First Nations students in the first quarter of 2025, and the rate of enrolment is on course to double for the calendar year.</p>	Existing
<p>iconnect</p> <p>iconnect is the University’s multi-channel frontline student enquiry and response service. It is designed to efficiently resolve routine student enquiries and facilitate access to UniSQ’s student support services for all students. The iconnect team is responsible for addressing inbound queries from both current and prospective students. These queries can be handled in person at centrally located service centres on campus, or through various channels including phone, email, in-person chat, and social media. The service model is founded on the principle of ‘students helping students,’ with the iconnect team reflecting the diversity of the student cohort and possessing a deep understanding of the needs of equity cohorts.</p> <p>In 2024, iconnect engaged with 143,233 enquiries from current or future students, with 3.0% (4352) of enquiries from students that identified as First Nations. The increase in enrolment rate for First Nations students thus far in 2025, has seen an increase to the proportion of enquiries from students who have identified as First Nations.</p>	Existing

3. Progression (outcomes)

Table 2 Tutorial assistance provided in 2024

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	10	15.57	\$866.35
Undergraduate	97	848	3,690.00	\$239,785.98
Post-graduate	4	16	59.75	\$3,286.25
Other	4	1	3.50	\$192.50
Total	109	875	3,768.82	\$244,131.08

Initiative and Outline Activity	Existing / New
<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 schedule of contact with first year students during the year.</p>	Existing
<p>First Nations Learning Advisors Our culturally responsive First Nations Learning Advisors embed First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing through two-way learning, within curriculum and adjacent to curriculum. They deliver synchronous workshops and learning sessions, provide online resources, and offer individual and small group appointments to provide academic and study skills support. The advisors foster a culturally safe space for students to improve their academic skills in a culturally respectful way and support them in successfully completing their studies. To grow and maintain the University’s attribute in developing and growing Cultural Safety, responsive concepts are included in all student engagements and supports.</p>	Existing
<p>Deadly Academic Support Sessions (online) In Trimester 3 2024, the First Nations Student Success and First Nations Learning Advisor teams collaborated to pilot online academic support sessions for First Nations Students. The aim was to provide access to support outside normal business hours to develop academic and study skills including time management, study planning, understanding assessment and academic writing. Sessions were trialled at various times of the day to attract and support online and working students. 28 students registered with, 20 students attending these sessions in total. Based on the attendance numbers the session held later in the evening was most popular.</p> <p>Day session: 6 students Early evening session: 6 students Late session: 8 students</p>	New
<p>Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) - Personalised Learning Plans Students who engaged with the ITAS complete a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) with their tutor during their first session. Following the improved PLP goal setting process, which saw the implementation of setting SMART goals, the process was further refined in 2024. This involves the First Nations Success Officers reviewing student goals to identify other areas of support that sit outside the role of an ITAS Tutor and making referrals to specialised support, usually relating to wellbeing or general learning support rather than discipline specific support.</p>	Existing
<p>Ask Aunty The Ask Aunty online platform houses information about student supports, job opportunities, cadetships, scholarships, bursaries, and opportunities to connect with other First Nations students via yarning forums. The platform also includes a social aspect, to encourage online students to grow their support network at the university.</p> <p>During 2024, the College for First Nations collaborated with the Learning Teaching Futures Portfolio, to redesign Ask Aunty. The initial phases of the redevelopment were, to streamline information and create visual appeal to improve student usability and engagement with the site.</p>	Existing

<p>Student Leadership and Professional Development Students are provided leadership opportunities, such as Student Representative positions – including a First Nations Representative and an Equity Student Representative on the Student Senate, and in-turn an eligibility to apply for conference attendance for a broad suite of conferences across Australia, and even overseas. There are also leadership development and general student development programs (such as the UniSQ Graduate Excellence Award).</p> <p>Paid student positions are available to support both personal and professional growth, including roles such as Ambassadors, Mentors, and Casual Employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Existing</p>
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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 the study period. 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 College continues to monitor student outcomes to identify further opportunities for continuous improvement.

The University continues to implement a comprehensive approach to Student Academic Progress, in accordance with its Student Academic Progress Procedure. The College for First Nations staff assists 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.

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

Activity	Outline of Activity
<p>Career Wellbeing Services</p>	<p>Student transitions at each stage of the student learning journey is supported by a range of services provided by the Support for Learning Teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling and Wellbeing – including a range of services such as personal counselling, mental health nursing, and a suite of self-directed resources to support student wellbeing • Supporting student with disabilities – providing inclusive and equitable learning environments and support for students with a disability to participate in university study • Safer Communities – services and responses to safety concerns, that create a safer learning community

Activity	Outline of Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Counselling – the provision of one-on-one appointments, which included 846 student one-on-one appointments in 2024, with 4.14% identifying as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent • Career Education – the embedding of career development and employability learning into curriculum across the student learning journey to support academic motivation, progression, overall student success, and employability outcomes • Employability provisions – the delivery of career events, career newsletters, access to a UniSQ jobs board and direct applications to local employment opportunities, and a range of employability services including resume reviews, LinkedIn reviews, application support and co-curricular activities • Industry Partnerships – the opportunity to connect with employers across the UniSQ footprints and beyond – gaining direct access to work experience, mentoring, and professional opportunities.
Career Trackers	The College for First Nations continues its partnership with Career Trackers (a national program that creates internship opportunities for First Nations students). The First Nations Student Success team actively promote this opportunity via Ask Aunty and student communication.
Cultural Sashing and Completion Ceremony	In 2024, the University introduced a Cultural Sashing ceremony combined with the IHEPP Completion Ceremony. This event recognises and celebrates First Nations students’ excellence, celebrating their achievement at UniSQ. The event fosters a sense of pride amongst students across all levels of study and degree program to promote completion and progression of further study. Students completing an award program are presented with their First Nations stole to wear at Graduation ceremonies.

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 23% in rural and remote scholarship uptake from 2023, which is reflective of increased reach through refining scholarship criteria, successful engagement, and current student support mechanisms for rural and remote students. The allocation of overall ISSP Scholarship funding to First Nations Students located in regional and remote areas has increased by a total of \$59,200 since 2022.

Table 4 ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students¹⁰

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2023 Payments	176,000	43	19,000	5	0	0	195,000	43
B. 2024 Offers ¹¹	231,000	58	8,000	2	0	0	239,000	58
C. Percentage ¹² (C=B/A*100)							1.23%	
2024 Payments	231,000	58	8,000	2	0	0	239,000	58

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 community events across the UniSQ 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 informed pathway program aims to develop the academic skills needed for successful entry into award level university study.

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 access and participation in these programs with local students, allowing connection with First Nations staff, peers, and a program that is deeply embedded in the practice of connecting with Country which together create a greater sense of belonging.

During 2024, the College for First Nations continued the strong relationship and collaboration with Geraldton University Centre (GUC) in Western Australia, to support First Nations nursing students to access tutoring support in their own community. The College for First Nations and the GUC continue to attract and employ ITAS tutors based on the students’ local communities, improving access and success for these students.

The College for First Nations further worked with the School of Nursing and Midwifery to support First Nations Nursing students in Charleville, to provide access to much needed resources. A full set of up-to-date textbooks required for the Bachelor of Nursing was purchased and supplied. These are managed by the Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH) team based in the centre.

6. Eligibility criteria

6.1. Indigenous Education Strategy

UniSQ continues to adhere to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy and the UniSQ Education Plan 2022-2025 for reporting and operational requirements.

The UniSQ's Education Plan 2022-2025 was developed and implemented in alignment with the [First Nations Blueprint 2022-2025](#). The First Nations Blueprint 2022-2025 provides a high-level plan to guide and shape future directions in First Nations education, research, and engagement at UniSQ. The strategies include:

- Partnerships – create continuous collaboration with First Nations communities
- People – secure and invest in First Nations talent
- Places – provide a first nations perspective to all

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 First Nations Blueprint 2022-2025 will undergo a review in conjunction with a whole of university response in May 2025 for the implementation of a new strategy in 2026.

Excitingly the [UniSQ First Nations Education Strategy 2024-2028](#) was endorsed by University's Executive and Academic Governance bodies in December 2024. It 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 reflects industry demands. The Strategy sits across all disciplines at UniSQ and was created by an exceptionally robust and inclusive process in its development.

It is designed to support the priorities of the University's First Nations higher education students which emphasises excellence in First Nations education through five key pillars:

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

The commitment to Strategy development and implementation has had a positive impact increasing the number of First Nations students enrolled, progressing and completing courses over the past five years. The engagement and implementation of activities as detailed throughout the report, has led to this very positive outcome.

Enrolment and Cohort Trends

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total EFTSL	456.500	465.644	462.656	497.025	630.312
Total Headcount (with load)	886	900	898	1,026	1,229
Total Success Rate	62%	58%	65%	68%	73%
Total Completions	104	97	93	112	142

Comparing First Nations student enrolment data from 2020 to 2022 showed consistent numbers with minor fluctuations each year. However, in 2023 and again 2024 there was a significant increase in enrolment.

The University continues to engage in strategies and policies that support Indigenous knowledges in curricula, graduate attributes and teaching practices by implementing programs that are available across various disciplines.

Development of a Graduate Certificate of First Nations Culturally Safe Health Leadership (GFHL) mini module program is nearing completion as the first two modules will be available for enrolment in Block 3 and Block 4, 2025. This program addresses a critical need within Australia's healthcare system for culturally safe and effective leadership in the delivery of healthcare to First Nations people and communities. Despite significant efforts to close the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, disparities remain stark. This program is designed to provide all healthcare professionals (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) with the knowledge and skills required to lead initiatives that promote health equity and improve health outcomes for First Nations peoples and communities. This program was led by the First Nations Portfolio.

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 1204 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
- NUR 1203 Cultural Safety and Professional Practice

In 2024, core foundational 1st year courses, namely BIO1204 Introduction to Biomedical Science and BIO2119 Biochemistry of Nutrition included First Nations knowledge being delivered by First Nations people. An example of this was the Elder in Residence providing a discussion and subsequent recording of First Nations Medicine. This is incorporated early into the BBMP to ensure that any First Nations student get the opportunity to meet other First Nations people, thus establishing relationships with potential mentors and to also ensure the program's commitment to embedding traditional practices and/or knowledge into curriculum.

This also ensures that students are all aware that First Nations medicine and traditions are required to ensure progression of human health, disease and quality of life. The BBMP also includes core courses on cross-cultural practices and specific First Nations courses (i.e. FNA3002 First Nations Advocacy and Allies) to further ensure culturally safe and sensitive

knowledge is developed for aspiring/future medical doctors. The first BBMP students will undertake FNA3002 in 2025.

The University's investment in the cultural safety 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](#), the [First Nations Research Strategy 2024-2028](#), [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols](#) and the recently approved [First Nations Workforce Strategic Framework 2024-2025](#).

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".

The recruitment of all new staff includes a compulsory onboarding set of activities which includes a First Nations Inclusion module and The Understanding the Importance of Cultural Capabilities at UniSQ learning module.

6.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

UniSQ redeveloped its First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework in 2023 with an employment target of 3.6%. The Framework was endorsed on 6 December 2023 by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive after a process of wide consultation that included First Nations staff, all key stakeholders and the University's Executive.

In 2024, UniSQ did not reach the intended target of 3.6% staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. However, reaching 2.9%, is a 0.7% decrease from 2023.

UniSQ has been affected by the introduction of Ministerial Direction 107 (MD 107), with its restrictions on international student visa processing and admissions. This impact has affected the university's revenue and as a result the university has had to restructure and enact redundancies which has impacted the entire workforce, including those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Indigenous workforce data (2024 breakdown)

Level/Position	Permanent/Fixed Term		Casual	
	Academic	Professional	Academic	Professional
Executive	1	1		
Level E	1			
Level D				
Level C	3			
Level B	7			
Level A	2			
10				
9				
8		2		
7		3		
6		8		
5		10		
4		2		
Total Casual			15	17
Total Academic	14			
Total Professional		26		

Creating the pipeline:

In 2024 the Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor: First Nations Strategy, created First Nations HDR nests. Commencing in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the Nurses Nest was created through contacting all 300 UniSQ nursing alumni and through other First Nations nurses and midwives' networks. The school HDR co-ordinator in conjunction with Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations) held two information sessions on the HDR journey. The first session was provided as an on-line session in the early evening and was presented as a PowerPoint presentation outlining the differences between a Master of Research and a PhD, enrolment processes and procedures, supports available and briefly touched on potential research areas. The second information session then drilled down to discuss research in-depth. From these two sessions we have secured two PhD enrolments of Aboriginal nurses. The Nurses Nest format is now being replicated in all 12 Schools across the University and disciplines and will commence roll-out in April 2025. This is securing our future pipeline of First Nations academics and researchers at UniSQ.

Further, our focus remains on the five key areas of The Workforce Strategy, striving to reach the 3.6% target of Indigenous staff at UniSQ:

- Cultural Safety
- Attraction and recruitment
- Retention
- Development
- Community

Two identified positions that were vacated in 2024 will be advertised and filled in 2025 are:

- Senior Research Lead (First Nations Research Alliance Team)
- Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)

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 UniSQ's First Nations Strategies.

The Dean and Head of School (Nursing and Midwifery) also identifies as Aboriginal.

Both the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of School (Nursing and Midwifery) are members of the ISSP Committee and are First Nations representatives across executive, senior leadership groups and committees.

The [UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025](#) will be redeveloped in the latter part of 2025.

6.3. Indigenous Governance Mechanism

The UniSQ Indigenous Governance Mechanism is the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) Committee, which is responsible for advising, reviewing, making recommendations about, and monitoring the use of ISSP grants in accordance with the Indigenous Student Support Guidelines which is administered under Part 2-2A of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

The Committee's functions include:

- a) Providing advice and recommendations regarding the allocation and use of ISSP funding to the Associate Provost, including:
 - Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships
 - Academic and pastoral support for First Nations students
 - Engagement strategies for First Nations students
 - Cultural safety strategies
- b) Providing an annual report to relevant University committees through the Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Strategy) and Associate Provost as appropriate.
- c) Providing input into the annual ISSP Performance Report provided to the Federal Government.
- d) Providing feedback on other key First Nations strategies relevant to the Indigenous Student Support Guidelines.

The membership of the ISSP Committee consists of:

- Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Strategy) – Chair (Aboriginal)
- College Manager – College for First Nations (Aboriginal)
- Staff Member from the College for First Nations Student Support Team nominated by the College for First Nations College Manager (Aboriginal)
- Staff Member from the First Nations Engagement Team nominated by the College for First Nations College Manager (Aboriginal)
- Associate Provost (non-Indigenous)
- Director (People Strategy) (non-Indigenous)
- Indigenous Professional Staff Member external to the First Nations Portfolios nominated by the Associate Provost (Aboriginal)
- Elder in Residence (Aboriginal)

In 2024, the committee did not convene due to significant organisational changes, coupled with the departure of several key staff members from the First Nations College which made it challenging to maintain regular operations. The committee is now the responsibility of the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Strategy) and resumed operations in 2025. The Terms of Reference is currently under revision after being tabled at the first committee meeting held in February 2025.

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 Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Strategy) will now provide ongoing oversight and leadership direction with the ISSP Committee and listens to advice and make recommendations on the utilisation of ISSP funding which is then escalated to the Associate Provost for approval. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (FNS) participates in the university's top governance bodies, including the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Committee, key academic committees and senior forums, advocating for First Nations issues.

There is an Elder in Residence supported by the Vice-Chancellor's Office to contribute advice from a cultural lens as well as escalate community concerns on issues to the highest executive level within the university.

6.3.1. Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Complete this certification after reading the completed 2024 Performance Report and 2024 Financial Acquittal for the Indigenous Student Success Program.

I certify that:

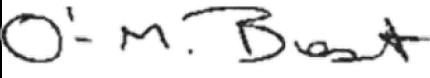
- i. the Institution has met the eligibility requirements of the Indigenous Student Success Program as set out in the Indigenous Student Success Program guidelines and the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*; and

- ii. the 2024 Indigenous Student Success Program Performance report presents an accurate summary of the Institution’s use of program funds and of other activities undertaken by the Institution to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student and staff outcomes; and
- iii. the 2024 Indigenous Student Success Program financial acquittal represents a complete, true and correct summary of transactions that took place during 2024 under the Indigenous Student Success Program; and
- iv. Indigenous Student Success Program funds, and any interest earned, or royalties/income derived from these funds, was expended on activities consistent with the Indigenous Student Success Program guidelines and the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.


I understand that:

- i. the Minister or the Minister’s delegate may seek further information to support this certification; and
- ii. the information contain in this report may be shared with Universities Australia; and
- iii. in the event that I have not remitted GST paid under the Agreement to the Australian Taxation Office, that it is my obligation to remit those amounts, as required under the *A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999*; and
- iv. it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

Certification recommended by the university’s Indigenous Governance Mechanism:

Name:	Professor Odette Best		
Title:	Pro Vice-Chancellor (First Nations Strategy), University of Southern Queensland		
Phone:	07 3812 6417	Email:	PVCFNS@unisq.edu.au
Signed:		Date:	28/04/2025

Certification made by Vice-Chancellor or equivalent delegate^{xxi}:

Name:	Professor Karen Nelson		
Title:	Vice-Chancellor, University of Southern Queensland		
Phone:	07 4631 1160	Email:	vc@unisq.edu.au
Signed:		Date:	29/04/2025

Additional information for completing the template

¹ This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2024. 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 2024 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 2024 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 2024 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2024 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2023 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships).

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