

STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE

30 JUNE - 2 JULY 2025
CAIRNS PULLMAN INTERNATIONAL

HOSTED BY



NAEEA

PROCEEDINGS

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WELCOME

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Welcome!

On behalf of the Students Transitions Achievement Retention & Success (STARS) Conference team (STARS), the Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) and the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA) we are excited to welcome you to the 2025 Student Success Conference. This is STARS' third conference in collaboration with like-minded sector stakeholders, our first being in 2023 with the Australasian Mental Health and Higher Education Collaboration (AMHHEC), and our second in 2024 also with EPHEA and NAEEA.

On behalf of those of us who live and work across Australia's great geographical diversity, we acknowledge that we are on the lands of the oldest living cultures in the world. In the spirit of reconciliation, we pay our collective respects to the original custodians and First Nations people of Australia and to Elders past, present and future. Coming together in-person in Cairns, we acknowledge the lands and pay our respects to the Elders of the Djabugay and Yidinji peoples. We extend that respect to all First Nations people engaging with the Conference. We affirm our commitment to walking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and through our work in education we continue to support the key elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart (<https://ulurustatement.org/>).

We very much appreciate the privilege of having the opportunity to bring committed communities of interest and practice together. Our delegates range from DVCs/PVCs through to junior and casual academic and research staff as well as executive managers and professional staff involved in various aspects of student service provision and support. We are proud that we achieve a balance between 'professional' and 'academic' staff of roughly 55:45. We warmly welcome returning delegates and offer a special welcome to new delegates joining us for the first time this year - you are among friends.

The conference is not-for-profit and supports the publication of the open access fee-free Student Success Journal which publishes one issue annually associated with the Conference. Proceeds after the Conference and Journal costs are met are reinvested in the Conference through its Network Groups or used to seed fund the Conference for the following year.

It is our sincere hope that all delegates experience the 2025 Student Success Conference as a welcoming and collegial gathering of university staff, students and community members. As always, the Conference will provide us all with wonderful opportunities to learn together and share our diverse expertise, experiences and knowledge - all grounded and guided by our collective commitment to, and passion for, enhancing the student experience and student learning success. Our aim is to create a conference environment in which we can inspire and motivate each other to remain student-centred in all our endeavours and to foster a positive professional identity as professionals in the higher education sector internationally.

As always, we'd like to acknowledge the proud tradition of excellence established by our predecessor - the International First Year in Higher Education (FYHE) Conference - which ran between 1995 and 2014. In total, 27 events have been held primarily focused on higher education in Aotearoa and Australia. Predominantly, the same group has been involved in running these conferences for more than twelve years, and we are a well organised team.

We recognise and thank the many devoted colleagues who have contributed to leading the Australasian higher education sector over the past decades. In particular, we recognise the significant contribution to that endeavour of our inaugural STARS Fellows - Professor Sally Kift and Dr Ron Oliver - and also the immense collective contribution of all our Fellows. Special thanks to: Mary Kelly AM, Dr Linda Leach, Nick Zepke, Professor Kerri-Lee Krause, Dr Kathy Egea, Professor Sarah O'Shea, Dr Cathy Stone and Professor Ella Kahu.

In 2025, we are celebrating the 11th year of STARS and the 16th year of the related Student Success journal. It is our second consecutive year of collaboration with EPHEA and NAEAA to offer the conference. The new name - the Student Success Conference - recognises this collaboration and clarifies the focus of the conference to a broader audience.

Once again, our overarching Conference themes are: Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention, and Success. These themes provide the conceptual framework for our annual gatherings and guide our analysis of tertiary curriculum, programs, practices and culture. The themes are at the centre of our consideration of how our higher education institutions in Australia are creating environments that enable students, in all their diversity, to realise their potential through post-secondary education.

As always, the Conference Program is exciting and dynamic. The first day of the Conference (Monday 30 June) will be dedicated to meetings of the STARS Networks and the Student Equity forum. Following afternoon tea, there will be an opportunity for First Timers to Meet and Greet some of the Fellows and more experienced Conference delegates. The first day ends with a Welcome Reception sponsored by our Platinum Sponsor - Studiosity - which will provide an opportunity to catch-up and celebrate being together again. The second day of the conference (Monday 1 July) starts at 9am with a keynote address by Professor Peter Anderson entitled 'Recentering Student Success: From Access to Achievement to Rightful Success'. Peter has recently moved from his position as Director of the Indigenous Research Unit at Griffith University to take up the position of PVC Indigenous at UNE, and we are delighted he agreed to provide the opening address this year. On Tuesday, Studiosity will offer a Lunchtime Presentation entitled: 'Developing Human Skills at Scale in an AI Age: Case Studies from Australia and Beyond'. On Tuesday evening the Conference dinner will be held - always a joyful celebration of our common passions and commitment - and our collegiality. Delegates are encouraged to dress in something colourful, reflecting the vibrant environment of North Queensland.

The Conference concurrent sessions take place on Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd July. All the details can be found in the Conference Proceedings.

Tuesday morning commences with a Student Panel coordinated by Dr Kylie Austin highlighting the importance of amplifying student voices in shaping the future of higher education. The closing Keynote is the final highlight of the Conference with an inspiring address by Professor Claire Macken who is now fortunately back with us in Australia at Monash University. Claire will speak on The University of the Future. The Conference concludes with some important announcements about the papers accepted for the Conference edition of the Student Success journal and information about the 2026 Conference.

We all look forward to meeting everyone in person in Cairns.

The Student Success Team

Prof Karen Nelson, Prof Rachael Field, Tracy Creagh, Jason Thomas (STARS),
Dr Kylie Austin (EPHEA), Karen Seary (NAEAA), and the STARS Fellows

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CONFERENCE INFORMATION

STUDENT SUCCESSION TEAM



Dr Kylie Austin
Director, Student Life
Edith Cowan University
President, Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australia (EPHEA)



Tracy Creagh AFHEA
Coordinator – STARS Networks
Managing Editor, Student Success Journal



Dr Kathy Egea
STARS Fellow (2021)
Senior Lecturer and First & Further Year Experience (FFYE) Coordinator,
Institute for Interactive Media and Learning (IML), University of Technology Sydney



Professor Rachael Field SFHEA
Conference Co-Chair
Professor of Law, Bond University
Australian Learning and Teaching Fellow, WLAQ QLD Woman Lawyer of the Year 2013
Editor, Student Success Journal



Professor Ella Kahu
STARS Fellow (2024)



Mary Kelly
STARS Fellow (2017)



Professor Sally Kift PFHEA
Inaugural STARS Fellow (2015)
President, Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows (ALTF)
Chair, Student Success Journal Advisory Board



Professor Kerri-Lee Krause
STARS Fellow (2019)
Chief Commissioner
TEQSA



Dr Linda Leach
STARS Fellow (2018)
Honorary Research Associate
Massey University



Professor Karen Nelson PFHEA
Conference Co-Chair
Vice-Chancellor
UniSC
Chief Editor, Student Success Journal



Dr Ron Oliver
Inaugural STARS Fellow (2015)
Editor, Student Success Journal



Professor Sarah O'Shea PFHEA
STARS Fellow (2022)
Dean, Graduate Research
Charles Sturt University



Karen Seary
Associate Dean, School of Access Education
CQUniversity Australia
Chair, National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA)



Professor Cathy Stone
STARS Fellow (2023)



Jason Thomas
Event Director
Jason Thomas Events



Susan Thomas
Jason Thomas Events



Nick Zepke
STARS Fellow (2018)
Honorary Research Fellow
Massey University

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Welcome Reception

Date: Monday 30 June
Time: 5:00pm – 7:00pm
Venue: Conference Foyer, Pullman Cairns International

Conference Dinner

Immerse yourself in an enchanting evening where deep ocean blues meet lush emerald greens, complemented by splashes of coral pink and sunny yellows.

Join us for an unforgettable evening of fine dining, lively music and captivating conversation! We look forward to sharing this colourful experience with you.

Attendance at the Conference Dinner (Tuesday 1 July) is an additional cost to the registration fee. If you have purchased a ticket it will be included with your name tag.

Date: Tuesday 1 July
Time: 7:00pm – 11:00pm
Venue: Grand Ballroom, Pullman Cairns International
Dress: Colour

GENERAL INFORMATION

Mobile Phones

As a courtesy to fellow delegates and speakers, please ensure your phone is switched off or on silent during all conference sessions.

Internet Access

Wireless Internet is available throughout the venue.
Network Name: **Accor**
Password: **PCI2025**

Lost Property

All lost property can be handed in/collected from the registration desk.

OUR SPONSORS

We are excited to have the support of the following organisations for the 2025 Conference and for their valuable contribution towards the running of the Student Success Conference.

PLATINUM SPONSOR

Studiosity
AI for learning, not corrections.

What makes Artificial Intelligence a tool for learning, as opposed to a tool for productivity? University leaders realised last year that AI for learning requires several things. It must be about augmenting human capabilities, not offloading cognitive effort. It must be ethically developed, free of hallucinations and misinformation. It must be evidence-based, with proof of impact, learning gain, and student satisfaction. It must have the highest levels of data privacy and integrity. It must be equitably accessible by all students to level the playing field of learning. And it must come from a trusted source.

With history, experience, expertise, technological ability, and a credible reputation — Studiosity is trusted by over 80% of Australian universities to deliver an AI for learning solution that meets the expectations of university leaders, staff, and students.

Developed in Sydney and delivered over more than two decades, including six years of deep research into artificial intelligence, Studiosity is now the preferred provider — by both students and institutions — for academic literacy support. At the Student Success Conference 2025, chat to us about your current program or find out how immediate feedback and study help can transform the confidence and learning trajectory of your students.

studiosity.com/plus

OUR SPONSORS

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Student Pulse is a SaaS application that is primarily focused on optimising the student experience across all phases of their journey in education and training. By ingesting data from multiple transactional system every 30 minutes, Pulse is able to profile and analyse students in order to identify those in need of engagement and support. It includes a comprehensive omni-channel communications hub, adaptive, workflow-enabled forms and survey engine and a wide range of analytics functions to maximise the personalisation of engagements and automation of actions to meet student needs.

It's impact is to improve conversion, reduce attrition, raise student successful outcomes and massively streamline operational efficiency and effectiveness.

cenotesolutions.com



Vygo - Connecting Students. Empowering Institutions

Vygo empowers universities to deliver student support that is intuitive, impactful, and scalable. By connecting students to the services and communities they need most, Vygo simplifies access, reduces barriers, and streamlines workflows for staff. Our mission is to ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive, and we've built technology that sets a new standard for support.

Stop by our booth at the Student Success Conference 2025 to learn how Vygo can transform your student support ecosystem.

vygoapp.com



Developing human skills at scale, in an AI age

Tully 1 Room
Tuesday 1 July, 1:10pm

Join us to hear some of the 2025 YouGov survey insights into how genAI is affecting Australian students' wellbeing, and what many universities are doing to meet students' high expectations of AI while maintaining satisfaction, developing confidence and protecting student learning.

- **70%** of Australian students report some level of stress when using AI tools for study, with **female students** and **international students** more likely to report higher levels of stress
- 27% of students were 'Not at all' or only 'Slightly confident' that they **learn and improve their own skills** while using generative AI tools
- Access to a **peer mentor correlates with higher confidence** in learning with genAI tools

Come to the Tully 1 room at lunch on Day 1 of the Student Success Conference to hear more about AI for learning and scaling up critical thinking and communication skills.

studiosity.com/plus



FULL PROGRAM

Key

- RP - Refereed Paper
- GPR - Good Practice Report
- EI - Emerging Initiatives

MONDAY 30 JUNE 2025
NETWORK MEETING DAY

8:30am	Network Registration open		
ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY II & III
9:00am - 10:30am	First Year Experience Network	Student Partnership Network	Co-Curricular Recognition Network
10:30am - 11:00am	Morning Tea (Network participants only)		
ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	
11:00am - 12:30pm	Peer Programs Network	First in Family Network	
12:30pm - 1:30pm	Lunch (Network participants only)		
ROOM	GRAND BALLROOM		
1:15pm - 3:15pm	Student Equity Forum		
3:15pm - 3:45pm	Afternoon Tea (Network participants)		
3:30pm	Conference Registration open		
ROOM	GRAND BALLROOM		
3:45pm - 4:30pm	First Timers Meet & Greet		
ROOM	BALLROOM FOYER		
5:00pm - 7:00pm	Welcome Reception Sponsored by Studiosity		Studiosity

TUESDAY 1 JULY 2025

7:30am	Registration Opens
ROOM	GRAND BALLROOM
8:45am - 9:00am	Welcome & Conference Opening
9:00am - 10:00am	Keynote Presentation Recentring Student Success: From Access to Achievement to Rightful Success <i>Professor Peter Anderson, PhD, SFHEA, MAIATISIS, FQA</i> <i>Pro-Vice Chancellor Indigenous, University of New England</i>
ROOM	BALLROOM FOYER
10:00am - 10:50am	Morning Tea including Poster Viewing Session

TUESDAY 1 JULY 2025

PARALLEL SESSIONS

ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
11:00am - 11:30am	01A EI Transitions	01B EI Students	01C EI Achievement	01D EI Retention	01E EI Success	01F EI Students	01G EI Success
Parallel Session 01	Embedding Current Students into the Orientation Experience through Paid Representation — Rosie George — <i>The University of Adelaide</i>	Pathway to success: Reflections on mentoring in Teacher Education — Lily-claire Deenmamode, Jeremy Koay — <i>Australian Catholic University</i>	Developing AI Literacy: Equipping Students for the Digital Future — Jennifer Kemp-Smith, Margaret Hunn, Sandy Rae — <i>Griffith University</i>	Early Childhood Tertiary Partnerships (ECTP) Partnering for Workforce Retention -to improve the retention of pre-service teachers — Theresa Evans, Lenyssa Dunn, Anna Munari, Gracie Munari — <i>Victoria University, Department of Education Victoria</i>	From Barriers to Bridges: The Impact of Student Success and Wellbeing Advisors — Melissa Suckley, Tori Llewelyn, Helen Harrison — <i>Flinders University</i>	Connecting Futures: A Holistic Approach for CQUniversity Future Students — Kylie Ciocca — <i>CQUniversity</i>	Institutional assessment reform: Navigating the journey with staff, students, and data — Jessica Z. Marrington, Chris Zehntner, Geoff Slaughter, Lorelle Burton, Jo-Anne Ferreira — <i>UniSQ</i>
	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER

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ROOM	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
11:40am - 12:10pm	02A EI Transitions	02B GPR Retention	02C EI Students	02D EI Students	02E EI Retention	02F EI Students	02G EI Students
Parallel Session 02	Belonging events: fostering a supportive and connected academic community for students — Matthew Golotta, Amanda Richardson, Alex Agostini — <i>University of South Australia</i>	Empowering Collaboration: Practical Approaches to Student Equity Program Evaluation. A Practice Report — Nadine Zacharias, Elisa McGowan, Catie Gressier, Riett Kriel, Katie Douglas — <i>Swinburne University of Technology, The University of Western Australia</i>	Designing for "Accessibility": Evidence from a University-wide Unit — Lara Maia-Pike, Linda J. Graham, Jenna Gillett-Swan — <i>Queensland University of Technology</i>	Supporting Regional First Year Students — Shiron Kirkman, Maddison Ramponi — <i>CUC Western Riverina</i>	A framework for developing course-wide support of academic literacy skills for students at university — Udari Ekanayake, Christina Maurer-Smolder — <i>CQUniversity</i>	Promoting Higher Education Through a Multidimensional Approach: Effective Engagement Strategies for Diverse Student Cohorts — Sala Ana Setiu Tuala — <i>Western Sydney University</i>	Enhancing online student well-being: Developing a virtual wellness hub — Tracey Gooding, Tracey Ahern, Martina Mylrea, Pieta Shakes — <i>James Cook University</i>
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ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
12:20pm - 12:50pm	03A EI Students	03B EI Transitions	03C EI Achievement	03D EI Retention	03E EI Success	03F EI Students	03G EI Success
Parallel Session 03	Little Yarns, Big Dreams: Culture and identity in career education resources Kristina Sincock, Courtney Rubie, Leanne Fray, Sally Patfield University of Newcastle	"The pathway program made the university accessible for me": Building the evidence about links between pathway programs and Indigenous student university completion Bronwyn Fredericks, Katelyn Barney, Tracey Bunda, Ash Moor, Scott Parlett, Kirsten Hausia, Nisa Richy, Daniel Taylor-Griffiths The University of Queensland, UQ College, University of New South Wales, The University of Melbourne	From PASS to PALs: Developing a sustainable Peer Learning model Cristy Bartlett, Kate Derrington, Kacie Fahey, Ben Ingram, Rowena McGregor UniSQ	The Peregrination of Belonging: The role of pre-tertiary enabling programs in fostering inclusiveness, belonging and student agency Trixie James CQUniversity	Developing a Typology of Unit Failure to Improve Student Support Neil van der Ploeg, Kelly Linden, Sarah Teakel Charles Sturt University	An Open Alliance to build an Equity-capable Careers Service Lauren Hansen, David Eckstein, Danni Hamilton, Peter Oslewski Deakin University	The Role of Place in the Widening Participation Functions of Regional University Study Hubs Danielle Keenan, Joshua James University of Technology Sydney
	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER

12:50pm - 1:50pm

Lunch

Lunch

ROOMS	TULLY I
1:10pm - 1:40pm	<div> Studiosity Lunchtime Presentation Developing human skills at scale, in an AI age Case studies from Australia and beyond </div> <div> AI for learning, not corrections. </div>

ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
1:50pm - 2:20pm	04A EI Students	04B EI Transitions	04C EI Students	04D EI Success	04E EI Students	04F EI Success	04G EI Success
Parallel Session 04	"A pressure valve release for students": A case for university-wide flexible assessment submission dates Kelly Linden, Sarah Teakel, Jacquie Tinkler Charles Sturt University	A care model: a holistic initiative to enhance student wellbeing Katherine Nguyen, Leeanne D'Arville, Caroline Burrowes, Anna Vu, Meredith Biggs South Australian Institute of Business and Technology	Broadening Horizons and Connecting Communities Gemma Death, Evan Weller Taree Universities Campus	Libraries for Belonging: supporting student engagement through an inclusive library environment Michelle Collins Monash University	Online engagement strategies that support my learning: An exploration of higher education student perspectives Alice Brown, Jill Lawrence, Petrea Redmond, Jay Cohen, Stephanie M. Foote, Megan Kimber UniSQ, University of Adelaide, John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Higher Education, USA	Transforming student support: An emerging integrated approach Kylie Carige, Nick Van Peperstraten CQUniversity	Bridging the Gap: Aligning Student and Lecturer Expectations for First-Year Success Danny Green, Stephanie Rummel, Quyen Gia To RMIT University Vietnam
	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER

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*Program subject to minor change

ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
2:30pm - 3:00pm	05A EI Students	05B EI Transitions	05C GPR Students	05D EI Retention	05E EI Success	05F EI Students	05G EI Students
Parallel Session 05	<p>Opportunities to enhance success of students living with a disability: Insights from an Australian regional university</p> <p>—</p> <p>Samantha Tiernan, Sarah Teakel, Kelly Linden</p> <p>—</p> <p>Charles Sturt University</p>	<p>Understanding the drivers of success in secondary-to-tertiary transitions</p> <p>—</p> <p>Rowena Long, Felicity Moser, Doune Macdonald, Jason M. Lodge, Sarah Greco, Liz Woolcock, Tianyi Ma, Kimberley Anderson, Kate Shepherd</p> <p>—</p> <p>The University of Queensland, James Cook University</p>	<p>Place-based, community-led partnerships for improved access to higher education among equity groups in Regional Rural and Remote Australia: Preliminary insights from the evaluation of the Eastern Australia Regional University Centre Partnership</p> <p>—</p> <p>Jessica Hall, Bethany Ross, Erin Wrafter, Kylie Austin, Sonal Singh, Chris Ronan</p> <p>—</p> <p>University of Technology Sydney, CUC Central, Edith Cowan University</p>	<p>Data thresholds in learning analytics: Identifying priority students for proactive outreach</p> <p>—</p> <p>Natalie Oostergo, Megan Axelsen</p> <p>—</p> <p>UniSQ</p>	<p>Embedding student success: A coordinated curriculum approach</p> <p>—</p> <p>Cat Picton, Danay Baker-Andresen, Gail Crimmins</p> <p>—</p> <p>UniSC</p>	<p>Fostering Safety, Wellbeing, and Belonging: The University of Canberra's Support for International Students Amidst Global Challenges</p> <p>—</p> <p>Mikaela Dockrill</p> <p>—</p> <p>University of Canberra</p>	<p>Show me what you mean: Enhancing student engagement and comprehension through video feedback</p> <p>—</p> <p>Katrina Johnston, Michelle Gray, Hermine Conradie, Peppa Piacun, Chris Maurer-Smolder</p> <p>—</p> <p>CQUniversity</p>
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3:00pm - 3:30pm

Afternoon Tea

Afternoon Tea

ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
3:30pm - 4:00pm	06A EI Students	06B EI Students	06C EI Transitions	06D EI Retention	06E EI Transitions	06F EI Students	06G GPR Retention
Parallel Session 06	<p>Study or Starve? Evidence informed recommendations for improving the financial wellbeing of Australian university students</p> <p>—</p> <p>Kylie Austin, Yasmine Probst, Karen Walton, Anne McMahon, Joanna Russell, Karen Charlton, Kelly Lambert, Gabrielle O'Flynn, Ezinne Igwe</p> <p>—</p> <p>Edith Cowan University, University of Wollongong</p>	<p>Trauma Informed Teaching in the Liminal Spaces</p> <p>—</p> <p>Anita MacLaurin, Angela Jones, Ana Larsen, Susan Hopkins</p> <p>—</p> <p>Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University, CQUniversity, UniSC</p>	<p>When pathways stall: Using systems thinking to solve intractable challenges in academic credit</p> <p>—</p> <p>Aliya Steed, Kylie Carige</p> <p>—</p> <p>CQUniversity</p>	<p>From Emails to Engagement: The Role of Personalised Support in Academic Success</p> <p>—</p> <p>Rheny Pulungan, Bernedette Bonanno, Reanna Kissell</p> <p>—</p> <p>Monash College</p>	<p>Assumed Knowledge Project at UniSQ 2024/25</p> <p>—</p> <p>Melanie Downs, Anita Fredriks, Charlene Jackson</p> <p>—</p> <p>UniSQ</p>	<p>Supporting academics with inclusive & equitable curricula, teaching and learning: An institutional case study approach</p> <p>—</p> <p>Kieran Balloo, Chris Browne, Chi Baik, Sarah O'Shea</p> <p>—</p> <p>Southern Cross University, The Australian National University, The University of Melbourne, Charles Sturt University</p>	<p>Kicking goals in education: How an innovative AFL partnership prepares students for success on and off the field</p> <p>—</p> <p>Peter Komsta, Kirstin Hannah</p> <p>—</p> <p>RMIT University, Essendon Football Club</p>
	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER

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ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
4:10pm - 4:40pm	07A EI Students	07B EI Transitions	07C RP Students	07D EI Transitions	07E EI Success	07F EI Students	07G EI Success
Parallel Session 07	Considerations for integrating humour to support student engagement in online higher education learning environments: An emerging initiative Anja Pabel, Alice Brown, Josephine Pryce CQUniversity, UniSQ, James Cook University VIEW PAPER	Leveraging Social Media Trends to Deliver Key Unit Information: Helping New Students to "picture myself in their shoes" Renee L Rogers, Dylan M Fox, Andree S Gamble Monash University VIEW PAPER	Intended and actual involvement of commencing first-year undergraduate students in university activities Claudia A. Rivera Munoz, Chi Baik, Tracii Ryan, Raoul A. Mulder The University of Melbourne VIEW PAPER	AchieVeU- An Innovative Approach to Student Transition Support Robert Worrell Victoria University VIEW PAPER	Pedagogy, process and impact: A case study of improving student success and satisfaction through immersive block learning Elizabeth Goode, Thomas Roche, Erica Wilson Southern Cross University VIEW PAPER	So much data, so little connectivity: mapping administrative data for program targeting, monitoring and evaluation Geoffrey Mitchell Queensland Department of Education, Curtin University VIEW PAPER	Enhancing Student Support through AI: The PAC AI Agent Initiative Jules Page, Suliana Male Murdoch University VIEW PAPER

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ROOMS	BLUEWATER II
4:50pm - 5:30pm	EPHEA 2026 Planning Session

WEDNESDAY 2 JULY 2025

PARALLEL SESSIONS

ROOMS	GRAND BALLROOM						
9:00am - 10:00am	Keynote Session Student Panel : The importance of amplifying student voices in shaping the future of higher education						
10:00am - 10:30am	Morning Tea						
ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
10:30am - 11:00am	08A EI Transitions	08B EI Students	08C EI Retention	08D RP Success	08E EI Transitions	08F EI Students	
Parallel Session 08	Transforming First-Year Experiences: Embedding Innovative Peer Mentoring into the Curriculum to Enhance Student Transitions ——— Elizabeth Brogan, Jessica Durant, Jack Cornish, Lee Wallace, Rob Bower, Jacqui Pich, Lynn Sinclair ——— University of Technology Sydney VIEW PAPER	Indigenising absences in the tertiary curriculum: Piloting and evaluating teaching and learning innovation across diverse disciplines ——— Tracey Bunda, Katelyn Barney ——— The University of Queensland VIEW PAPER	University-Wide Nudge Pilot to Support Student Engagement and Retention ——— Ali Enright, Jeremy Chance, Matthew Christian ——— Flinders University VIEW PAPER	Enhancing student motivation and engagement: Exploring higher education students' experiences as co-creators of curriculum ——— Anna Ólafsdóttir, Sólveig Zophoniasdóttir ——— University of Akureyri, Iceland VIEW PAPER	Learning Without Limits: Extending Gifted Senior School Students Through Tertiary Education ——— Rebecca Curtin, Shannan Moir ——— Curtin University VIEW PAPER	Educators as connectors: Bridging the equivalence gap between online and face-to-face learning in tertiary education ——— Michelle Roberts, Steven Pace, Amy Johnson ——— CQUniversity VIEW PAPER	
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ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
11:10am - 11:40am	09A EI Success	09B EI Transitions	09C EI Transitions	09D EI Transitions	09E EI Students	09F GPR Students	09G EI Transitions
Parallel Session 09	Grit-ability: A practical toolkit to enable student success ——— Anne Braund, Trixie James, Katrina Johnston ——— CQUniversity VIEW PAPER	A Sense of Belonging: Strengthening Student Transition into the Accelerated Bachelor of Nursing Program ——— Elizabeth Brogan, Jack Cornish, Sonia Matiuk, Lucy Rosenberg, Melissa Barassi, Jacqui Pich ——— University of Technology Sydney VIEW PAPER	Connected through Transitions – From Transition Pedagogy to Affirmation Andragogy ——— Robin Ladwig, Naomi Dale, Mel Triantafyllou ——— University of Canberra VIEW PAPER	What Skills Do I Have and Who Values Them? Embedding Employability Skills into the Curriculum ——— Ali Enright, Taylor Swain, Rianna Lopez ——— Flinders University VIEW PAPER	The impact of online teaching and invigilated assessments on underrepresented students in accounting education ——— Anil Narayan ——— Auckland University of Technology VIEW PAPER	The impact of tailored student management practices on academically at-risk first year students' engagement and success: A randomised controlled trial ——— Ella Ewart, Emma Pelliccione, Callan Lavery Curtin University VIEW PAPER	Benchmarking of In-School Enabling Programs Across Australia ——— Angela Jones, Fiona Navin, Michael Howie, Anita Olds, Naomi Ryan, Johanna Nieuwoudt ——— Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University, UniSQ, Southern Cross University VIEW PAPER
10 minute change over				10 minute change over			

ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
11:50am - 12:20pm	10A EI Students	10B EI Transitions	10C EI Transitions	10D EI Transitions	10E EI Students	10F EI Students	10G GPR Success
Parallel Session 10	Forewarned or forearmed? Interrupting the impacts of 'placement poverty'	Towards a tailored support to foster the transition to higher education: The critical incidents of first-year students in Japan and Belgium	Strengthening Transitions to Higher Education: The Role and Impact of In-School University Enabling Programs	The role of physical campus spaces in shaping students' connection, sense of belonging, and success in higher education	Beyond Teaching / Ngaangaarran Ngamilma-li - a framework for third space professionals to effectively work at the cultural interface	Breathing Life into the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences	Student support, beyond empty signifiers: Insights and Challenges from Enabling Educators
	Ainslie Robinson, Lexi Rollins, Robbie Knox, Michelle Morrison <i>The University of Notre Dame Australia</i>	Kohei Tanaka <i>Hokkaido University</i> Vincent Donche <i>University of Antwerp</i>	Amanda Daly, Selena Dhonea-Tenakov, Helen Rogers, Cinzia Loddio, Johanna Nieuwoudt, Samara Gibson, Selina Darney, Rebekah Sturniolo-Baker <i>Griffith University, Edith Cowan University, The University of Notre Dame Australia, Southern Cross University, The University of Newcastle, Murdoch University</i>	Rina Dhillon, Kathy Egea, Simone Faulkner, Mihajla Gavin, James Wakefield, Suying Zhao <i>University of Technology Sydney</i>	Kacie Fahey <i>UniSQ</i>	Lucy Barnes <i>The University of Auckland</i>	Ana Larsen, Trixie James, Gemma Mann, Kieran Balloo, Susan Hopkins, Marguerite Westacott, Juliette Subramaniam <i>CQUniversity, Curtin University, University of Surrey, University of the Sunshine Coast, Western Sydney University</i>
	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER

12:20pm - 1:20pm

Lunch

Lunch

ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
1:20pm - 1:50pm	11A EI Students	11B GPR Success	11C EI Transitions	11D EI Retention	11E EI Success	11F EI Success	11G EI Students
Parallel Session 11	Taking the Longer Road with Open Foundation Extended	Evolution of an institution-wide program underpinned by Transition Pedagogy	The pathway to designing a new enabling program	"Who has the power?" - lifting retention as a whole-university change	Beyond academic misconduct: Developing students' generative AI literacy	From accommodations to Universal Design for Learning: Embedding assistive technology into a university academic writing enabling unit	UNSW's Gateway Admission Pathway and Program
	Michelle Mansfield, Kristen Allen, Cheryl Burgess, Nicole Garske <i>University of Newcastle</i>	Kathy Egea, Jo McKenzie <i>University of Technology Sydney</i>	Amanda Daly <i>Griffith University</i>	Jonathan Powles <i>CQUniversity</i>	Hayley Ryan <i>UniSC</i>	Kristy Stanwix <i>Edith Cowan University</i>	Mick Warren, Katie Osborne-Crowley, Mary Teague <i>University of New South Wales</i>
	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER

10 minute change over

10 minute change over

ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
2:00pm - 2:30pm	12A EI Success	12B EI Transitions	12C EI Transitions	12D EI Transitions	12E EI Success	12F EI Students	12G EI Success
Parallel Session 12	Supporting student diversity: Evaluation of an LGBTQ+ Ally training program at a regional Australian university — Gemma Mann, Ann-Marie Priest — <i>CQUniversity</i>	Inclusive Teaching: Empowering First-Year University Teachers to Support Equity Cohorts — Katie Osborne-Crowley, Mary Teague — <i>University of New South Wales</i>	Exploring alternative design and evaluation through the struggles and triumphs of a transition program and its team — Rizwan Khan — <i>The Australian National University</i>	A case-study pedagogy to transition first-year biochemistry students — Nirma A. Samarawickrema, Nathan Habila, April Tan, Ester Villvanathan, Christopher Thompson — <i>Monash University</i>	Co-constructing critical generative AI literacy: Enabling student agency through dialogic pedagogy — Tamra Ulpen, John Pike — <i>University of South Australia</i>	Australian military Veterans experiences of obtaining recognition of prior learning and credit attainment when transitioning to tertiary education: Measuring accessibility and equity — Deborah West, Jane A. Fischer, Ben Wadham, Matthew Wyatt-Smith — <i>Flinders University</i>	Transforming Residential Life: A Comprehensive Framework for Student Wellbeing at Union College — Reenah Jays, Kris Sargeant — <i>Union College, Diverse Leaders</i>
	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER

10 minute change over

10 minute change over

ROOMS	MOSSMAN BALLROOM	KURANDA BALLROOM	TULLY I	TULLY II	TULLY III	BLUEWATER I	BLUEWATER II
2:40pm - 3:10pm	13A GPR Transitions	13B EI Transitions	13C RP Transitions	13D RP Transitions	13E RP Transitions		
Parallel Session 13	A Model for Running Effective Educational Scavenger Hunts during Campus Orientation to Onboard new University Students — Zachary Fitz-Walter, Nicholas O'Donnell, Joshua Hall, Henry Sun, Justin Carter — <i>Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology</i>	Re-Imagining Orientation at ECU — Kathleen Balson, Elizabeth Beresford, Kylie Corbett, Loretta Dayman, Robyn Ekberg, Kim Gray, Aiden Hill, Kylie Austin — <i>Edith Cowan University</i>	Evaluation of an Embedded Transition Support: Bringing Academic Skills and Peers into First-Year Classrooms — Belinda McCarten, Amanda Richardson, Lauren Raschella, Alexandra Goodwin, Elissa Pearson — <i>University of South Australia</i>	Remediating the Remedial: Transforming Academic Language and Learning Practices to Advance Student Equity — Rachel Barber — <i>CQUniversity</i>	Peer mentoring for online, first-year Bachelor of Counseling students at a national, private institute of higher education — Peter T. Spradbrow — <i>Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors</i>		
	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER	VIEW PAPER		

3:10pm - 3:40pm

Afternoon Tea

Afternoon Tea

ROOMS
3:40pm - 4:40pm

GRAND BALLROOM
Keynote Presentation
Shaping the Future: The Role of Higher Education in a Changing World Professor Claire Macken, B.A., LL.B(Hons), GCHE, GCAIB, GCIR, MBA, PhD Senior Academic Director, Student Success <i>Monash University</i>

4:40pm - 5:00pm

Close / Journal Announcement / 2026 Announcement

TUESDAY

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

TUESDAY 1 JULY 2025

9:00AM – 10:00AM

GRAND BALLROOM

Recentring Student Success: From Access to Achievement to Rightful Success

Professor Peter Anderson, PhD, SFHEA, MAIATISIS, FQA

Pro-Vice Chancellor Indigenous

University of New England

The Australian Universities Accord marks a transformative shift in higher education, moving beyond access to ensure rightful success for all students through the Higher Education Success Factor (HESF) framework. This keynote explores how HESF operationalizes the Accord's vision by providing institutions with systematic approaches to implement and measure student success initiatives.

Central to this transformation is substantial government investment supporting integrating economic, social, and academic support systems. The HESF framework guides institutions in deploying these resources effectively through clear operational guidelines and measurable interventions. It enables universities to implement targeted initiatives, including enhanced HELP reforms, integrated student support networks, and comprehensive academic assistance programs.

The framework's significance lies in transforming policy directives into actionable institutional practices while maintaining flexibility for contextual adaptation. Through the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), Managed Growth Funding, and Needs-based Funding mechanisms, HESF creates pathways to achieve the ambitious target of 80% tertiary education attainment by 2050. This presentation examines how HESF's systematic approach redefines student success as an achievable right rather than a privilege, establishing a new paradigm for Australian higher education.

Biography

Professor Anderson is the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous at the University of New England, a distinguished academic and leader with exceptional experience in Indigenous education and research. He joins UNE from his position as Professor and Director of the Indigenous Research Unit at Griffith University.

At UNE, he champions the university's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities while implementing strategies to increase Indigenous employment, enhance Indigenous student success, embed Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum, and advance community-responsive research.

Throughout his career, he has demonstrated unwavering dedication to advancing Indigenous knowledges and student success in higher education and developing successful education programs through meaningful community partnerships.



10:00AM - 10:50AM
POSTER SESSION

POSTER PROGRAM

#	Title	Authors	Institution	
P01	Holistic, student centric academic integrity educative support	Margaret Hunn, Jennifer Kemp-Smith, Aameeta Prakash, Sandy Rae	Griffith University	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P02	Gen AI and post-entry language assessment (PELA): Where are we now?	Cameron Lydster	Bond University	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P03	Adapting Goal Attainment Scaling for Student Equity Evaluation	Kate Le Lacheur, Michael D'Rosario	CQUniversity	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P04	Shared language, shared impact: Cross program collaboration for equity evaluation through SEHEEF	Katie Douglas, Rielt Kriel	The University of Western Australia	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P05	Understanding Regionality as a Higher Education Equity Category	Jade Croft	James Cook University	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P06	You can't be what you can't see: VR in career education and outreach	Lexi Rollins, Michael Leahy, Hannah Batcock, Craig Bowler, Cam Martin	The University of Notre Dame Australia, Work Window	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P07	Evaluation of contextualised open educational resources in veterinary sciences	Sarah Teakel	Charles Sturt University	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P08	Curriculum of Success: A transformative learning journey	Cat Picton, Ali Jaquet	UniSC, UniSQ	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P09	Empowering equity: Implementing an Open Educational Resources micro-grants scheme for student success	Danielle Johnson	Deakin University	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P10	Readiness, Relationships, Results: Enhancing online students' success through early access to a bite-sized, self-paced module on the LMS	Olga Kerle, Ellie Keegan	Charles Darwin University	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER

#	Title	Authors	Institution	
P11	Pathway, Preparation and Partnerships: Dimensions of High School University Enabling Programs	Selena Dhondea-Tenakov, Amanda Daly	Edith Cowan University, Griffith University	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P12	Meme-ology: Can we unveil the student experience through humour?	Katrina Johnson, Ana Larsen, Byron Coonerty	CQUniversity	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P13	Supporting first year business students: a multi-faceted model for success	Lisa Rohanek, Kate McDonald	Macquarie University	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P14	Insights from U.S. Higher Education: Enhancing Student Success	Jane Skalicky, Andrea Carr	University of Tasmania	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P15	Dual Identity: High school/ Tertiary Student - who is ready?	Selina Darney, Samara Gibson	University of Newcastle	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P16	What matters for Student Satisfaction? Persistent and Changing Factors Across the First Year of University	Sarah Scholz, Abi Brooker	The University of Melbourne	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P17	Students and Teachers different Understanding of Success	Sarah Scholz, Abi Brooker	The University of Melbourne	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P18	"My dad was probably a bit disappointed": Narratives of male university students transitioning into in primary teacher education	Franziska Lessky, Michael Holzmayer, Marie Gitschthaler, Doris Lindner	University of Innsbruck, Christian Churches Austria	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P19	Higher Education Success Factor (HESF) Model: Supporting university leaders' data-led decision making for student success	Thu D Pham, Angela Baeza Pena, Peter J Anderson, Levon E Blue	Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology, University of New England, University of Queensland	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER
P20	Animating Knowledge: How Engaging and Fun Cartoons Can Teach Adults Positive Psychology Theories	Katrina Johnston, Trixie James, Sara Hof, Ruth O'Neill	CQUniversity	VIEW PAPER VIEW POSTER

POSTER 01

STUDENTS

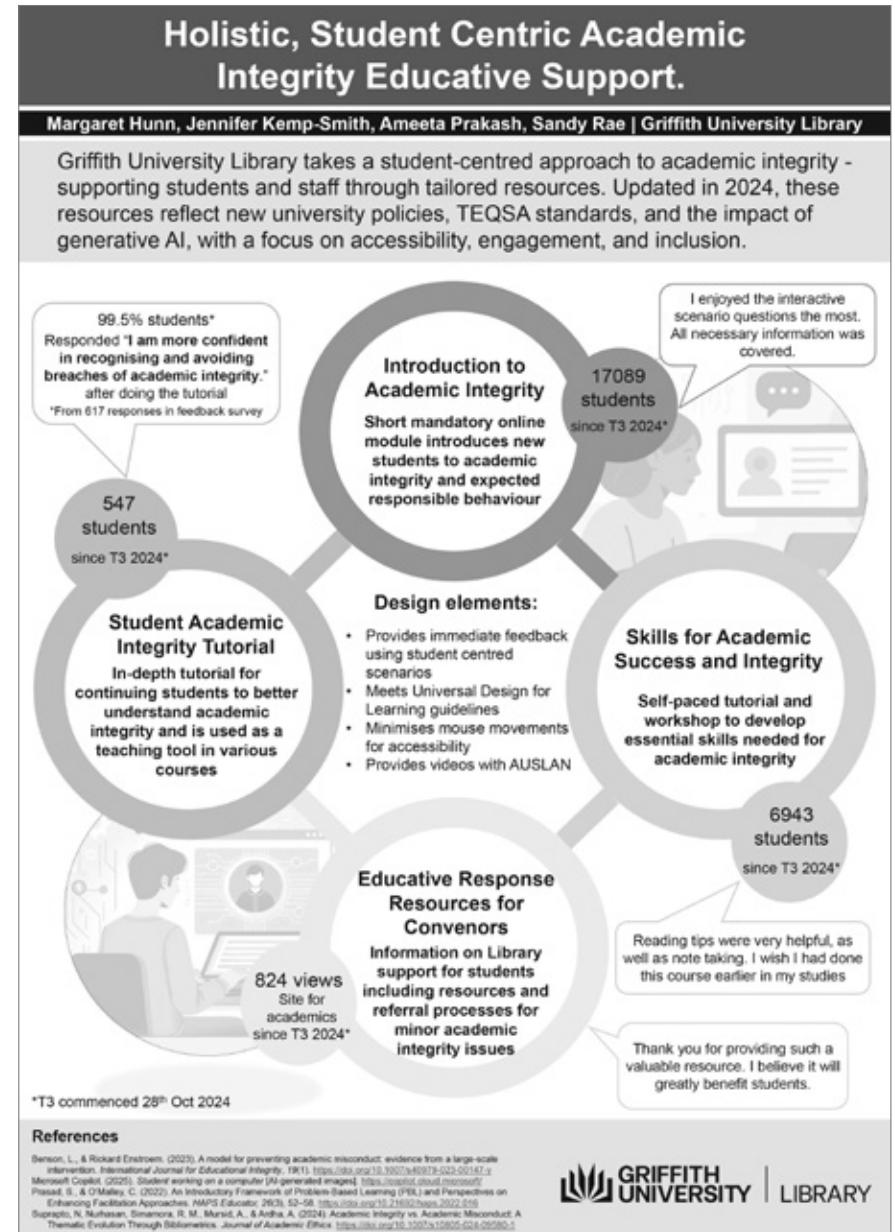
Holistic, student centric academic integrity educative support.

Margaret Hunn, Jennifer Kemp-Smith, Ameeta Prakash, Sandy Rae
Griffith University

This poster illustrates Griffith University Library's holistic, student-centric approach to academic integrity support comprising four components:

1. *Introduction to Academic Integrity: A brief, mandatory online module for new students.*
2. *Student Academic Integrity Tutorial: An in-depth online tutorial used in the academic integrity process or as a teaching tool.*
3. *Skills for Academic Success and Integrity: Self-paced tutorial and workshop to develop skills needed for academic integrity.*
4. *Educative Response Resources for Convenors: Information on resources and optional student referral process for minor academic misconduct.*

In 2024, these resources were updated to align with new University policies, TEQSA requirements, and generative AI influences. The updates aimed to make resources more engaging, inclusive, and accessible, enhancing student engagement and addressing diverse academic integrity challenges. Recent research highlights the importance of early, comprehensive academic integrity education to foster a culture of honesty and responsibility. A student-centred learning approach boosts critical thinking, motivation, and information retention.



POSTER 02
RETENTION

Gen AI and post-entry language assessment (PELA): Where are we now?

Dr Cameron Lydster
Bond University

Post-entry language assessments (PELAs) have been commonly used to identify students who may require academic language and literacies support (Read, 2015). However, several PELAs, including Bond English Language Assessment (BELA; Lydster, 2024), encompass a writing assessment self-administered online, raising academic integrity concerns.

This poster presents two iterations of PELAs created in response to the use of Gen AI, namely BELA-AI and Bond Essay Skills Task (BEST). BELA-AI, a formative assessment incorporating Gen AI, was developed for the Bachelor of Medicine program. The 60-minute assessment requires students to write an academic essay, generate an essay and, finally, write a brief critical reflection analysing the two essays. BEST, in contrast, is integrated into a core subject and requires students to write an academic essay with reference to at least one of two prompts on a controversial topic.

BEST Essays are written via Cadmus, a platform providing integrity assurance by allowing stakeholders to view integrity analytics and work behaviours of students. Although further research is necessary, initial discussions with stakeholders suggest preliminary evidence that the two PELAs have reduced academic integrity concerns regarding the original BELA, whilst continuing to be the initial “conversation starter” for students with advisors at the Academic Skills Centre.



Gen AI and Post-Entry Language Assessment (PELA): Where are we now?

Dr Cameron Lydster, Academic Skills Centre, Student Success and Wellbeing

PELA 101:

- Post-admission assessment
- Low stakes
- Identify students requiring support
- Early intervention
- Connected to support services



Bond English Language Assessment (BELA): Concerns

- Academic integrity
- Rater reliability (domain experts)
- Feedback for some, not all

BELA-AI for Medicine Students

Task 1

Students write a 300–400-word academic essay (30 minutes).

“Generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT, Copilot) should be used by all students at university – do you agree or disagree?”

Assessment criteria: task response, essay structure, academic language.

Task 2

Students use Gen AI to generate an academic essay on the same topic (15 minutes).

“Using Generative AI, generate an essay on the same topic.”

Task 3

Students write a short reflection critically analysing the two essays (15 minutes).

“Critically analyse the AI generated essay compared to your essay. Write a brief reflection (you can use personal language). Identify strengths and weaknesses of the two essays.”



“THIS TASK WAS QUITE INTERESTING BECAUSE IT WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TIMES I HAVE USED GENERATIVE AI TOOLS LIKE CHATGPT”
- MEDICINE STUDENT

“YOUR STRATEGY IS ALREADY SHOWING POSITIVE RESULTS, WITH STUDENTS BOOKING IN TO DISCUSS THEIR ASSESSMENTS AND WRITING”
- YEAR 1 MEDICINE EDUCATOR

Bond Essay Skills Task (BEST)

Why BEST?

- Captures all first-year students
- Similarity checks & learning assurance via Cadmus
- Rated by language assessment experts
- Incorporates research & referencing

Task Details:

- Write a formal academic essay responding to the prompt
- Don't use AI - we want to give you feedback on your writing
- Adhere to the word limit of 300 to 400 words
- Incorporate at least one reference from two optional texts

Student Details

☐ # Name

Learning Assurance

Confidence

☐ 1. Ethan High

There is **high** assurance that Ethan followed an authentic process. Their submission has:

- Low similarity score
- High editing and low pasting, indicating authentic working in Cadmus
- Average amount of time spent writing, with no resources accessed

References

Lydster, C. (2024). The odd couple? Gen AI and post-entry language assessment (PELA). Australian Academic Integrity Network Forum 2024.
Read, J. (2019). Postentry English language assessment in universities. In G. X. (Ed.), Second Handbook of English Language Teaching (pp. 395–414). Springer.

POSTER 03
RETENTION

Adapting Goal Attainment Scaling for Student Equity Evaluation

Kate Le Lacheur, Dr Michael D’Rosario
CQUniversity

Evaluating student equity programs is essential but often difficult due to the relational and qualitative nature of support work (De Vries, 2018). Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS), though well-established in health and social care (Piiirainen, 2015), can be too rigid for the diverse contexts of higher education equity. Adaptation is needed to reflect student and staff lived experiences (Tabak et al., 2015). This practitioner-led study adapts GAS for HEPPP funded programs, engaging staff through case studies and action research to improve relevance and usability.

It complements the SEHEEF, by providing a tool for goal setting and progress tracking at the individual level, supporting broader system-level evaluations. The work builds on De Vries (2018), “Indicators of Success” model based on practitioner insights, and responds to critiques of top-down evaluation (Cochran-Smith & Reagan, 2022), advocating for participatory and equity-centred approaches. Findings include the benefit of simplified language, greater flexibility, and the use of a Goal Aligned Toolkit, built upon the innovation of the Gaffney et al., (2019) approach but in an equity context. These adaptations operationalise equity principles and improve impact measurement at the practitioner level. Future work will refine the model, support practitioner training, and evaluate longer-term outcomes for initiatives.

Adapting Goal Attainment Scaling for Student Equity Evaluation

Kate Le Lacheur & Dr Michael D’Rosario - HEPPP Program Management, CQUniversity Australia



OBJECTIVES

- Adapt Goal Attainment Scaling to make it more accessible and easy to understand for student equity practitioners
- Enable equity teams to self-assess progress towards program, activity, and team development goals
- Foster an individual and practitioner-driven approach to program measurement that aligns with the values of student equity work (Cochran-Smith & Reagan, 2022)

METHODS

This study involves a participatory and practitioner-led adaptation process, drawing on elements of:

- Case Study Research** – Examining real-world adaptations to student equity teams
- Auto-ethnographic Methods** – Capturing practitioner self-reflections on their experience with adapting and applying GAS
- Action Research** – Involving equity practitioners in iterative cycles of adaptation, implementation, and reflection

The research involves equity practitioners co-designing the adaptation process for their peers, utilising insights from their own experiences and those of their colleagues. The adapted GAS model is tested within student equity programs to assess its usability and effectiveness given the challenges of equity measurement and goal setting (Cochran-Smith & Reagan, 2022; De Vries, 2018).

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

The adaptation of Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) by student equity practitioners highlights key insights into how program measurement tools can be made more relevant and accessible for those working directly with under-represented learners. Traditional GAS frameworks often rely on rigid, outcome-driven metrics that may not fully capture the narrative and relational nature of student equity work (De Vries, 2018; Piiirainen, 2015).

By allowing equity practitioners to modify the language and structure of GAS, the tool became less intimidating and more reflective of the relational progress equity teams observe in their work.

While GAS provides a structured way to quantify progress, significant model alterations were needed to accommodate the fluid and context-dependent nature of student support initiatives (Cooming, 2013; Tabak et al., 2015).

THE ADAPTED APPROACH

The adapted version introduced greater flexibility, allowing teams to define contextually appropriate goals while maintaining a structured measurement approach (Cochran-Smith & Reagan, 2022).

PRACTITIONER-LED INSTRUMENT ADAPTATION

Beyond their mapping to a defined framework, the adaptation of GAS was conducted by equity practitioners, for the benefit of equity practitioners.

The process:

- Identifying barriers to the original GAS model, including those related to language, complexity, and applicability to student equity work
- Collaboratively revising the language and structure of the GAS framework to better reflect the nature of student support activities and the contextual progress equity teams aim to measure
- Testing the revised tool in real-world settings, allowing practitioners to assess its usability and refine it further based on their experiences

CONCLUSION

This research highlights how participatory adaptation of measurement tools can lead to more meaningful, practitioner-friendly progress measurement frameworks.

THE PROCESS MODEL THAT EQUITY PRACTITIONERS PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN SHAPING THE GAS MODEL, MAKING IT MORE ACCESSIBLE, RELEVANT, AND USEFUL FOR STUDENT EQUITY WORK.

Future iterations of this approach could involve broader evaluation adaptation strategies, particularly in fields where qualitative and relationship-based outcomes need to be captured more effectively (Cochran-Smith & Reagan, 2022; Cooming, 2013).

NEXT STEPS

- Further refinement of the adapted GAS framework based on feedback and pilot implementations across different student equity programs
- Development of training resources to support wider adoption of the adapted GAS among equity practitioners
- Exploration of usability – adapting the model for forward student success initiatives within higher education
- Future research on long-term impact measurement, including how the adapted GAS continues to be embedded within existing or student equity work

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of those that supported this research, Dr Michael D’Rosario and the CQUniversity program teams.

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- Gaffney, A., Gaffney, A., & Piiirainen, J. (2019). Beyond “best practice”: Capturing equity in teacher preparation evaluation. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 30, 1-18.
- Gaffney, A., Gaffney, A., & Piiirainen, J. (2019). GAS: A model application for tracking goal progress using Goal Attainment Scaling. *Journal of Higher Education*, 100, 112-126.
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- Tabak, N., Lind, A., Hadden, J., & Gaffney, A. (2015). Goal Attainment Scaling: Tracking Goal Achievement in Community with Serious Mental Illness. *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, 18, 113-118.

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POSTER 04

STUDENTS

Shared language, shared impact: Cross program collaboration for equity evaluation through SEHEEF

Katie Douglas, Riett Kriel
The University of Western Australia

Many universities are turning to the SEHEEF and Program Logic Models (PLMs) as a shared language for program evaluation. UWA's Student Equity and Success team has adopted consistent PLMs across outreach and student support programs with diverse funding sources. Two such programs are the HEPPP funded *Aspire UWA* and industry-funded *Girls+ in Engineering (GiE)*. Our PLMs and our collaborative approach to regional school engagement enhancing the *GiE* Student Ambassador support program, is the focus of the poster.

We aim to highlight how resources are shared across programs to benefit students, using the example of an annual joint tour to Karratha in WA's Pilbara region.

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POSTER 05
STUDENTS

Understanding Regionality as a Higher Education Equity Category

Jade Croft
James Cook University

Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR) students remain underrepresented in Higher Education. The challenges faced by regional students that are easily identifiable are issues of cost and distance. However, narrative inquiry and the lived experiences of these students can reveal that their life journeys and identities are layered and complex.

These students know first-hand that regionality is not strictly spatial; it is a complex intersection of location, socioeconomic, familial and innumerable other factors. Further, how regional disadvantage compounds over time is poorly understood. This poster outlines my current master's research, which investigates how analysing published memoirs and realist novels can build our understanding of the richness and complexity of regional students' identities and experiences into, through and after university.

By highlighting the complex interplay of the circumstances impacting regional students we may better understand regionality as an equity category and how it intersects with gender, class, Indigeneity and disability, to explain the challenges RRR students encounter when pursuing university. This poster summarises my findings of the intersections and compounding nature of regional disadvantage, revealed through published memoirs and realist novels.

Jade Croft
MPhil Candidate at James Cook University

Understanding Regionality as a Equity Category

Reading Stories of Compounded Disadvantage: Regional Perspectives in Novels and Memoirs of Higher Education

01. My thesis.

Since the introduction of the widening participation agenda, students worldwide have increasingly been categorised into equity groups. These equity categories generally include socio-economic status, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, Indigenous status, regionality, and whether someone is first in family to attend university. Of these categories, 'regional' is perhaps among the least understood, and is often overlooked. Regional disadvantage is often passed as a merely geographical issue, however regional students can be more than just geographically disadvantaged; often, these students belong to multiple, overlapping equity groups, who may experience compounding disadvantage.

This dissertation aims to contribute new knowledge by drawing together literary studies and higher education (HE) research to explore the ways literary knowledge may offer new regional perspectives to the ongoing discourse of widening participation in higher education worldwide. By exploring memoir and realist narratives that provide insight into the experiences of regionally-based individuals, this research hopes to provide nuanced perspectives and examples of the complex and overlapping challenges regional students experience when they choose to pursue university. It also posits that these narratives provide insight into the various processes of identity formation and transformation that regional students experience during their journeys to and through these academic institutions.

The primary research questions that this thesis will investigate are:

- What equity is regionality, as a category of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in higher education, and how can we better understand the impact of regionality on a person's progression into and through university by studying novels and memoirs that centre their lived experience?
- To further specify what aspects of a regional person's academic journey this thesis focuses upon, two sub-questions emerge to approach:
- What is the nature of intersecting and compounded disadvantage for regional students, and how do these challenges manifest in regional students' lives and pursuits of HE, as revealed by the chosen narratives?
- What are the positive and negative processes of identity formation and transformation as they play in a regional student's life and educational journey as revealed by the chosen narratives?

02. Objectives

- Uncover new knowledge & add depth to existing research through published narratives
- Use published narratives to understand how regional disadvantage accumulates and compounds over time
- Represent and understand regional students better

03. Methodology

This research uses narrative inquiry and the textual analysis of published narratives. This thesis reads a diverse range of texts from Victorian Era Europe to contemporary America and Australia to examine regionality across different times and locations. It will draw on existing HE research and engages with sociology to complement the readings of the chosen texts.

04. Some Key Quotes

"His dreams were as gigantic as his surroundings were small" (Hardy, 1885, p. 243)

"I wanted the mind of a scholar, but saw in myself the mind of a roofer. The other students belonged to a library; I belonged to a crane." (Woolsthorpe, 2016, p. 274)

"These other students and I, we aren't the same. But I try to tell myself we all belong here, that I can be right for university and university can be right for me" (Chang, 2015, p. 148)

05. Thesis Chapters

Chapter 1, "That Was Then, This is Now: Barriers and Transitions from Jude the Obscure to Jude in A Little Life", examines two realist fictional texts that explore issues of access to and participation in higher education in different time periods: allowing a historical snapshot of conditions for regional students in higher education, and insight into the historical barriers that existed as well as those that remain.

Chapter 2, "Stories of Success and Sacrifice: Gendered Experiences of Higher Education in Educated and Highly Educated", the thesis begins to explore intersecting forms of disadvantage, comparing and contrasting gendered experiences in two American memoirs, and analysing the challenges faced by regional, first in family students from low SES backgrounds, and the changes education made in their lives.

Chapter 3 is "Fighting for a Better Future: Compounding Disadvantage in Three Indigenous Life Narratives". This allows us to see how regionality and Indigeneity intersect to both complicate and enrich the lives and educational pursuits of regional students. Additionally, this chapter explores how disadvantage accumulates and compounds over time through factors such as racism and intergenerational trauma.

06. Findings

Regional narratives are a useful source of information to build a better understanding of the strengths and challenges that regional students face when they pursue university. This compulsion relating research well. This chapter of memoirs and realist novels shows:

- The historical barriers that existed before an inclusion agenda.
- How students' innovative narratives of work/life and who has the right to education.
- How identity is shaped and transformed by regionality, habits, education and other internal and external influences.
- How regionality intersects with class, gender, Indigeneity, disability and regionality to complicate a person's journey to and through university.
- That despite the challenges, regional students have diverse aspirations and the determination and resilience to overcome these challenges.
- That Higher Education can transform the lives of regional students in both positive and negative ways.

From England's part of America's past
1885-1886
1885-1886

From Pilbara's memoir, in Sandberg's complicity, to the narrative Blue Mountains
2016-2017
2016-2017

POSTER 06
STUDENTS

You can't be what you can't see: VR in career education and outreach

Lexi Rollins, Michael Leahy, Hannah Batcock
The University of Notre Dame Australia

Craig Bowler, Cam Martin
Work Window

Comprehensive career education is a strong enabler of young people's successful post-school transition to work or study. However, access varies vastly across high schools, disproportionately disadvantaging low socioeconomic and regional and remote communities. This poster exhibits outreach workshops for low socio-educational high schools in Notre Dame's Future You program, which embed best-practice career education principles and provide students with an introduction to careers and university through virtual reality. The poster explores how VR can be used to address barriers to equitable careers education by exposing students to educational pathways and careers, and overcoming financial and geographical barriers.



YOU CAN'T BE WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE

Using virtual reality in career education and university outreach

The University of Notre Dame Australia - Michael Leahy, Lexi Rollins & Hannah Batcock
Work Window - Craig Bowler & Cam Martin

Career education and equity

Career education is a strong enabler of young people's successful post-school transition to work or study (The Smith Family, 2023). However, access to career education in Australia varies vastly across communities and schools, disproportionately disadvantaging high school students from low socioeconomic and regional and remote communities (Department of Education, 2024). For these students, the impacts of poverty, distance and educational disadvantage broadly translate to lower educational attainment, narrower views of career choices, and lower likelihoods of progressing to higher education (Raciti & Dale, 2019). The Australian Universities Accord recognises that uneven access to career education as a barrier to widening participation which should be remedied (Department of Education, 2024).

Young people's post-school career and education choices are typically aligned with the socioeconomic and cultural norms of their family and community (Raciti & Dale, 2019). Effective career education broadens and informs aspirations by increasing young peoples' exposure to a wide variety of jobs and education pathways.

You can't be what you can't see: VR careers education

Traditional career education methods—such as workplace visits, work experience, and career expos—are valuable but often time-consuming, costly, and reliant on the availability of staff and industry partners. For many schools these activities are difficult to organise and typically provide access to only a limited range of careers.

Virtual reality offers a practical and scalable alternative, removing barriers to location, cost, and professional role models. Students can explore a variety of workplaces in an immersive and accessible way, without the logistical and financial constraints of in-person visits. Through VR, students can observe diverse work environments and gain a clearer understanding of different roles, the skills they require, and the pathways that lead to them.

VR Career Quest

The VR Career Quest workshop uses Work Window's immersive 360-degree videos to help Year 9 students explore various post-school study options, workplaces and careers related to their skills and interests. By combining VR experiences with engaging small-group activities focused on career preferences and further education, the workshop encourages students to reflect on what makes a fulfilling job, learn about higher education opportunities, address potential barriers and see university as a viable and desirable option.

Learning outcomes

- Analyse qualities of a fulfilling job
- Demonstrate awareness of pathways to higher education
- Examine common concerns about higher education
- Evaluate career paths aligned with personal strengths and interests

Future You outreach program

Future You is The University of Notre Dame Australia's outreach program for low socio-educational high schools and comprises a series of interactive workshops for years 8-10, delivered by Student Ambassadors. Drawing on best-practice career education principles (Austin et al., 2022), including near-peer delivery, Future You workshops are designed to develop students:

- Knowledge of careers, educational pathways, and university study
- Self-awareness including strengths, interests, skills, and capabilities
- Skills to make informed decisions and navigate career and education pathways

Theory of Change

RESOURCES

- HEPPP funding
- Student Ambassadors
- VR hardware / software

OUTPUTS

- Interactive workshops delivered in high schools for Year 9 students

SUPPORTING OUTCOMES

- Increased knowledge and awareness of the benefits and relevance of higher education
- Increased knowledge of careers and pathways
- Informational aspirations and increased perception that uni is viable and desirable

PRIMARY OUTCOMES

- University applications
- Commencement of higher education studies



Results at a glance

Pre- and post-surveys demonstrate the VR Career Quest has positive impacts on supporting outcomes.

↑ 35%	↑ 29%	↑ 25%	↑ 98%	↑ 63%
Uni is for people like me	I believe I could afford to go to uni	I know about the area I would like to work/study in after school	I know about the area I would like to study if I want to	I know what degrees I would like to study if I want to



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notredame.edu.au/futureyou
workwindow.com.au

POSTER 07

STUDENTS

Evaluation of contextualised open educational resources in veterinary sciences

Dr Sarah Teakel

Charles Sturt University

Applying Universal Design for Learning principles creates inclusive, flexible, and accessible curricula (Rogers-Shaw, 2018). Open Educational Resources (OERs) for learning and teaching can be shared and adapted and enhance learning by providing equitable access to contextualised resources (Cheung, 2023).

Traditional textbooks have barriers to equitable access. Integrating OERs in first-year is an example of implementation of UDL to enhance success in the transition to university. This project involved introducing an OER that provided equitable access, multimedia content, and contextualised information on cell biology and reduced the need for four separate textbooks at an Australian regional university. An icon-based system of core concepts to be carried across units in the veterinary science program was introduced.

Case studies that connected learning outcomes to practical applications were embedded into the curriculum using the OER. This research offers insights into student experiences with OERs and demonstrates the positive impact of contextualised OERs in promoting inclusivity and engagement.

EVALUATION OF CONTEXTUALISED OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN VETERINARY SCIENCES

Presented by Sarah Teakel, School of Agricultural, Environmental and Veterinary Sciences, Charles Sturt University

WHAT IS UDL?
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles create inclusive, flexible, and accessible curricula (Rogers-Shaw, 2018)

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OERs)

OERs can be freely shared and adapted, helping to improve learning by offering equitable access to educational materials that are contextualised (Cheung, 2023)

INTENTIONAL AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

- Case studies that connected learning outcomes to practical applications were embedded
- Multimedia content, contextualised information and examples
- Connection to unit learning outcomes

LIMITATIONS OF TEXTBOOKS

Limitations of previously prescribed textbooks included:

- Texts on human anatomy & physiology
- Excessive detail & complexity
- Challenging language for first-year students
- Clinical examples that are not applicable or contextualised
- Cost
- Restrictive licensing

OUTCOMES

- 8 published chapters
- Of the 55 students, 36 students provided feedback in an anonymous survey
- Ethics approval from Charles Sturt HREC (no. H25084)

CORE CONCEPTS

An icon-based system was introduced to the OER:

EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

Students gave an accessibility rating of **8.5/10**

86% of students found the case studies helpful

69% of students agreed the textbook saved time

11% of students printed part of the textbook and **47%** would have liked a printed copy

What else did students like?

- ✓ Accessible
- ✓ Easy to read
- ✓ Relevant to content
- ✓ Interactive and engaging

“I liked how **relevant it was to the content** that we were learning in lectures, how **specific the case studies were to a concept**, and also how the ‘test yourself’ questions **helped students prepare for exams**”

“It was **free** and can be **accessed at anytime**”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Charles Sturt Library Team
Peer review: Aspro Kelly Linden, Prof Andrew Peters

Check it out here!

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Charles Sturt University

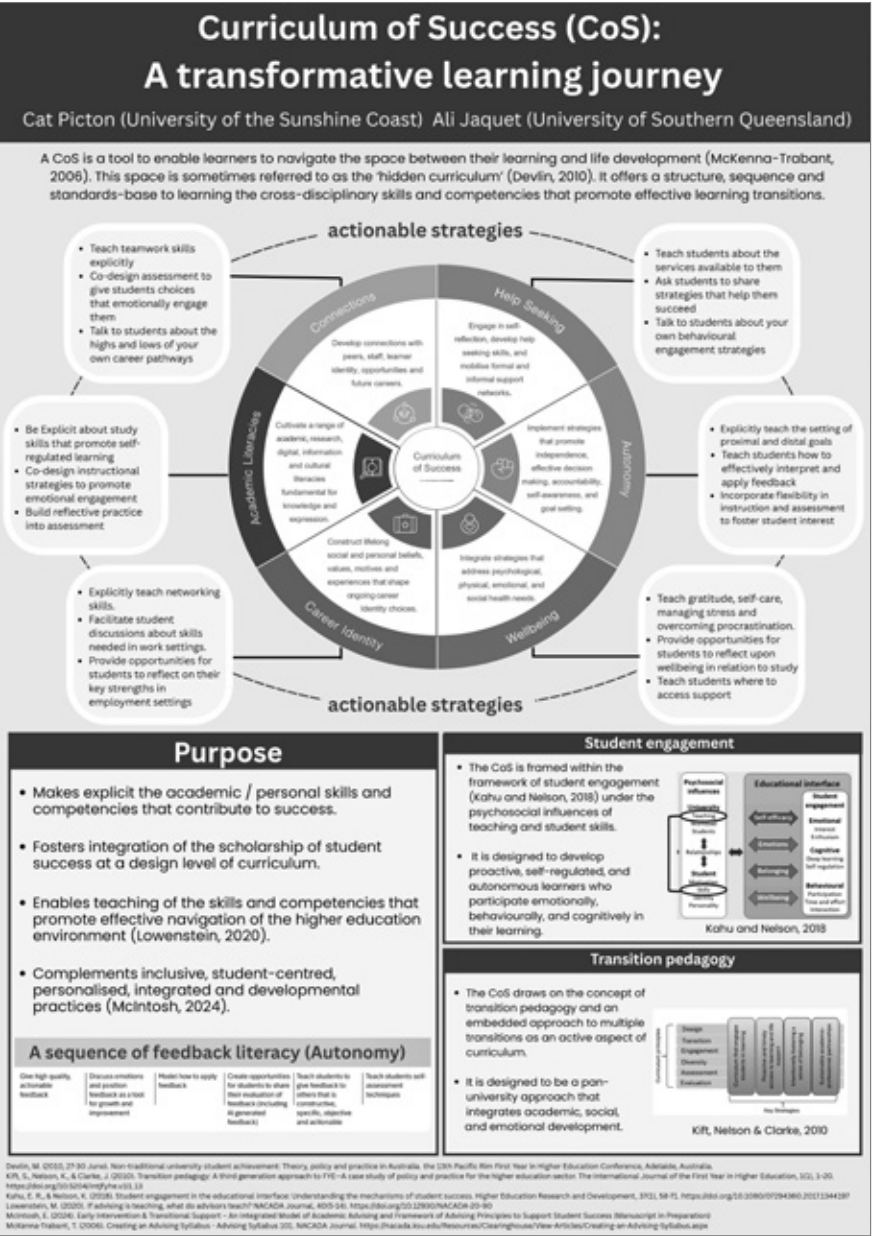
POSTER O8
SUCCESS

Curriculum of Success: A transformative learning journey

Cat Picton
UniSC

Ali Jaquet
UniSQ

The hidden curriculum in higher education can create barriers for student success (Devlin, 2010). To address this, the University of the Sunshine Coast and the University of Southern Queensland are implementing the Curriculum of Success (CoS), a framework supporting students to develop essential cross-disciplinary skills (McKenna-Trabant, 2006). Grounded in student engagement theory and transition pedagogy, the CoS fosters proactive, self-regulated learners (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Kift et al., 2010). It targets academic literacies, autonomy, wellbeing, connections, help seeking behaviours and career identity. Drawing on McIntosh's advising principles, the CoS integrates holistic competencies into curriculum design for more equitable student outcomes (Lowenstein, 2020).



POSTER 09
SUCCESS

Empowering equity: Implementing an Open Educational Resources
micro-grants scheme for student success

Danielle Johnson
Deakin University

Open Educational Resources (OER) are increasingly regarded by higher education institutions as important pathways to achieving more equitable access to education.

OER provide students with open and cost-free ways of accessing and engaging with educational materials, reducing barriers related to affordability and accessibility. Beyond this, OER can enable more equitable learning through co-creation, reuse and remixing of materials, enabling educators to incorporate diverse voices and perspectives.

Transitioning to OER presents challenges, notably time barriers for academics to shift from commercial resources. In 2020, Deakin University saw opportunity to create a grants scheme focussed on removing barriers to equity cohort success from within the curriculum itself by supporting academics to adopt, adapt or create their own course materials.

This poster examines Deakin University's journey from 2021-2024 to extend and embed the use of OER through its OER micro-grants scheme. The poster reflects on the life of the OER micro-grants scheme over a three-year period, and the opportunities OER affords for supporting student success, with a particular focus on equity student cohorts.



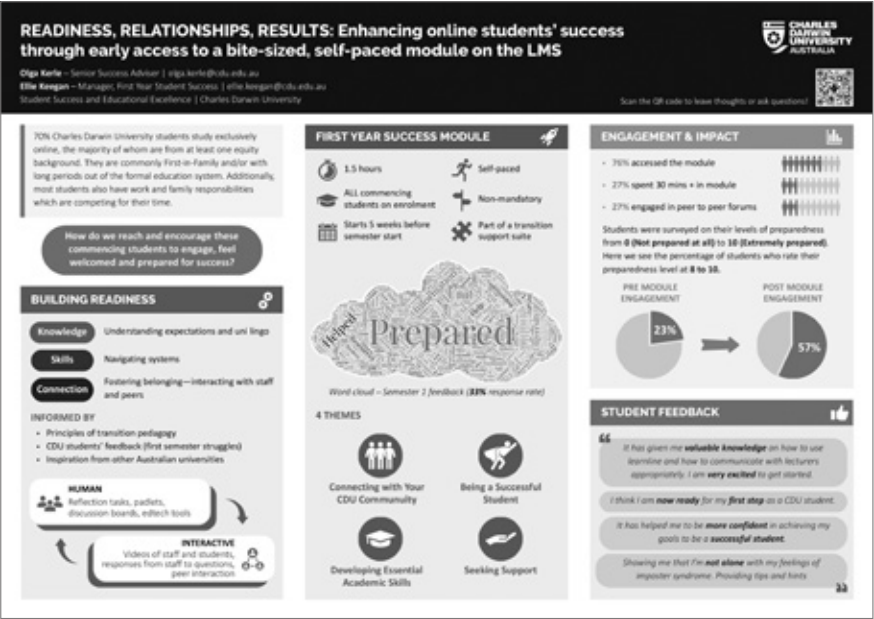
POSTER 10
SUCCESS

Radiness, Relationships, Results: Enhancing online students’ success through early access to a bite-sized, self-paced module on the LMS.

Ms Olga Kerle, Ms Ellie Keegan
Charles Darwin University

An institution-wide response to meet the needs of a highly diverse student cohort, including a high number of students studying fully externally and those from equity groups can contribute greatly to student success (Kift, 2015; Larsen et al., 2020; Stone & O’Shea, 2019). Charles Darwin University (CDU) has over 70% of students studying fully online, the majority of whom are from at least one equity category. A targeted pre-commencement support tool, online First Year Success Module, was developed in response; aiming to maximise online students’ preparedness for their first semester of study at CDU. This non-mandatory, self-paced module is one element in a suite of early intervention strategies to support success.

The module contains the essential information to start well and provides an early opportunity to connect with the university, its staff and peers through engagement in four key sections. Early results from the Sem 1 2025 pilot show that students felt better prepared and more confident to commence; thus, more likely to persist to experience success in their course.



POSTER 11
TRANSITIONS

Pathway, Preparation and Partnerships: Dimensions of High School University Enabling Programs

Selena Dhondea-Tenakov
Edith Cowan University

Associate Professor Amanda Daly
Griffith University

High School University Enabling Programs provide a pathway to higher education and prepare Year 11 and Year 12 students for their future studies. These programs are created by universities and delivered in partnership with local high schools. Students participate alongside or in addition to their senior school subjects, with assessments aligned to program content and mapped to university learning outcomes. Since November 2023, 13 universities across Australia have been meeting regularly online to share experiences and knowledge of their developing or established Programs. This special interest group (SIG) has developed a working definition to clarify the purpose of these programs among various university outreach activities. From this working definition, the SIG proposes three dimensions to shape the design elements of these programs by a university within their local context: (1) pathways to university, (2) preparation for university study, and (3) partnerships between universities and high schools. The poster visualises this working definition and dimensions, with links to university programs involved in the SIG.

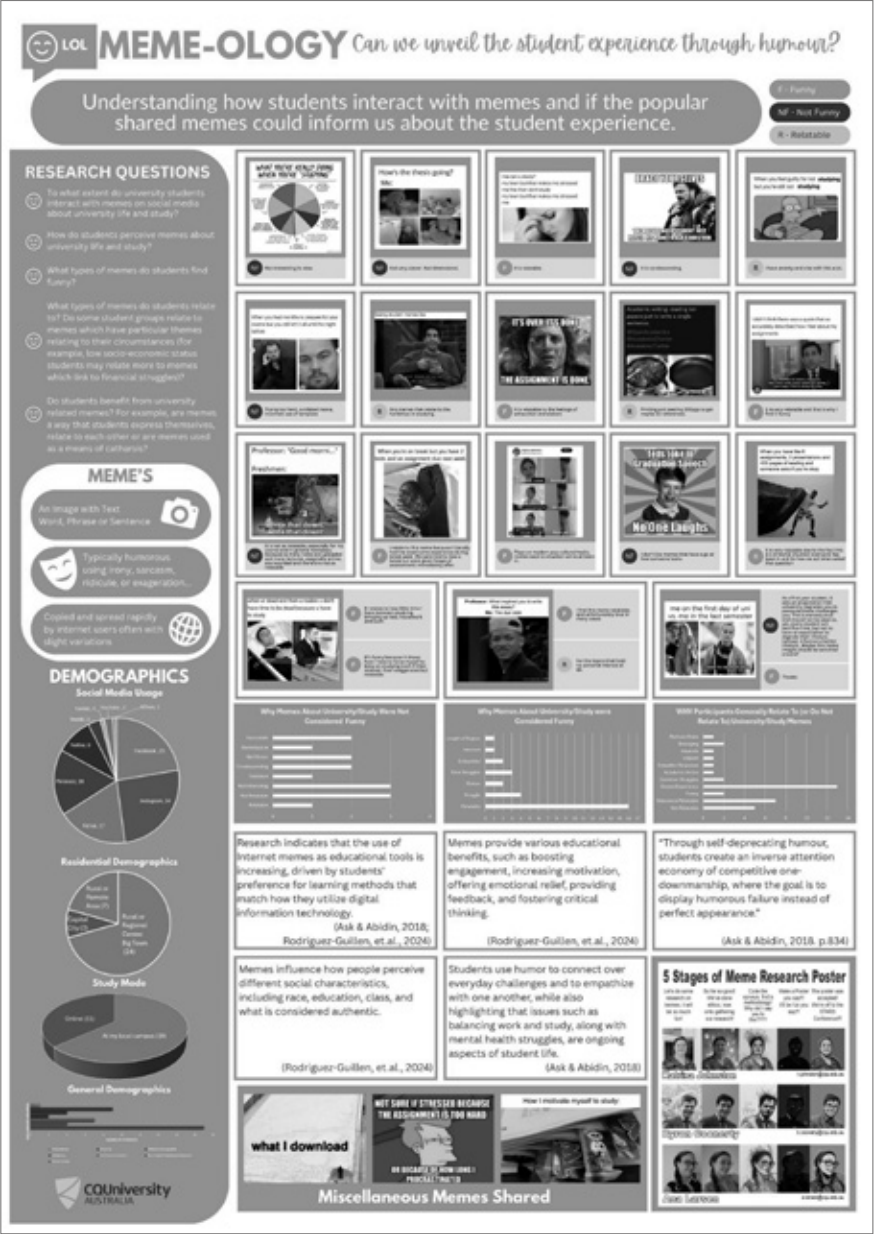


POSTER 12
STUDENTS

Meme-ology: Can we unveil the student experience through humour?

Katrina Johnson, Ana Larsen, Byron Coonerty
CQUniversity

This project aimed to understand how university students perceive and interact with university life memes. Key questions included: How often do students engage with memes on social media? How do students perceive memes about university life and study? What types of memes do students find funny or relatable? Do certain student groups, such as those from low socio-economic backgrounds, relate more to specific themes, for example financial struggles? Do university-related memes benefit students by providing a means of expression, connection, or catharsis? The poster highlights the project objectives, participant demographics, key findings, and shared memes. To gain insight to how students connect with memes, a survey was conducted inquiring about the frequency of students' experiences and evaluations of memes they encountered during their studies. Respondents shared and commented on memes they found funny, not funny, or relatable. Understanding how memes contribute to students' well-being can help universities to make a positive contribution to student well-being.



POSTER 13
SUCCESS

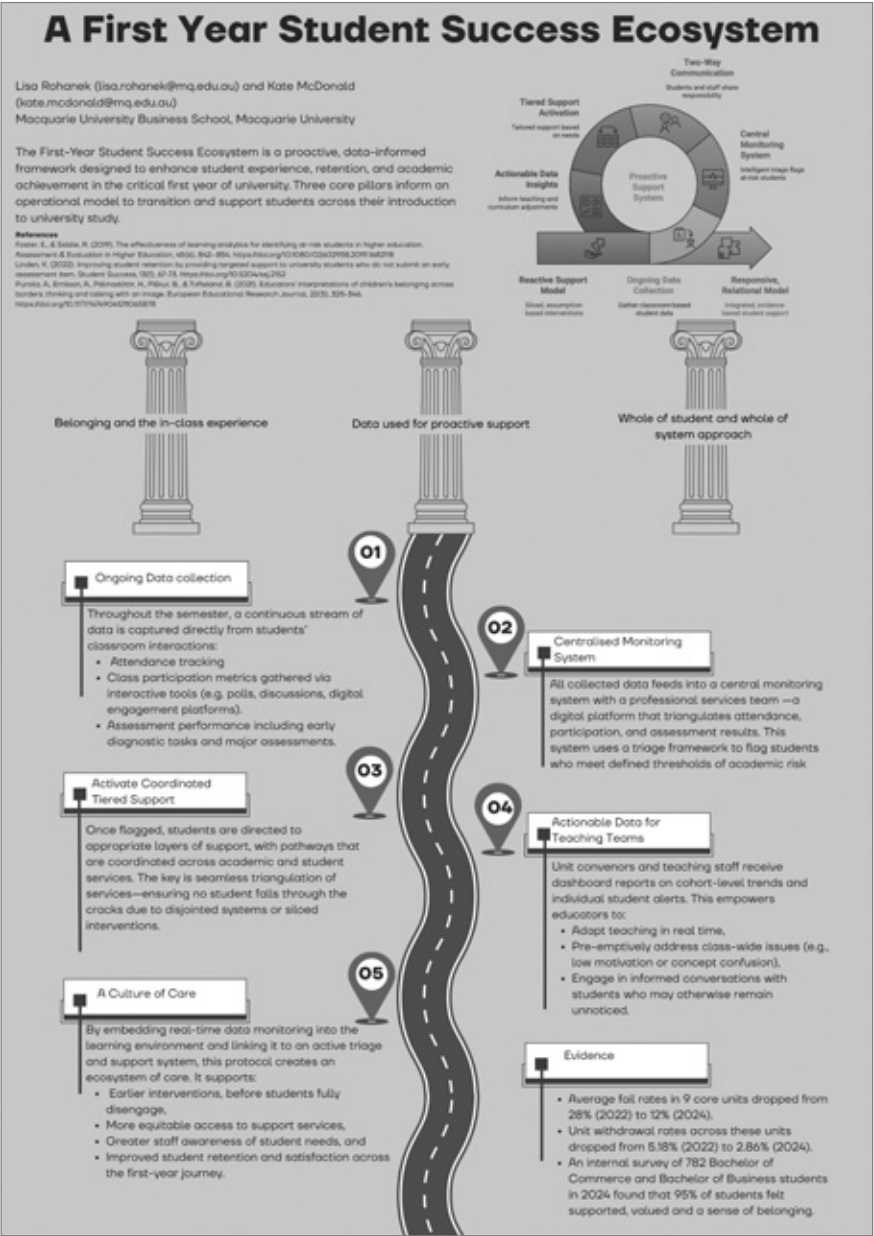
Supporting first year business students: a multi-faceted model for success

Lisa Rohanek, Kate McDonald
Macquarie University

The First Year Student Success Project at Macquarie Business School supports students transitioning into the Bachelor Commerce and Bachelor Business by embedding a holistic, data-informed, and emotionally responsive support ecosystem across nine first-year units.

While traditional transition programs often rely on static orientation models or siloed support services, this initiative integrates transitional pedagogy, real-time engagement data, and academic and professional staff collaboration to provide consistent, in-semester intervention. Three pillars underpin the approach: (1) embedding transitional pedagogy across the curriculum to improve clarity, reduce complexity, and foster belonging; (2) using weekly engagement data to identify students at academic risk and initiate timely, tailored interventions; and (3) operationalising an academic-professional partnership that enables a continuous feedback loop between in-class experience and student services.

This coordinated model offers a significant advancement over prior reactive or isolated support efforts. Early outcomes show marked improvements in student success: fail rates dropped from 28% (2022) to 12% (2024), and unit withdrawal rates declined from 5.18% to 2.86%. The project extends current practice by shifting the focus from end-point remediation to proactive, embedded, and adaptive support that enhances student retention, belonging, and academic confidence during a critical transition period.



POSTER 14
SUCCESS


Insights from U.S. Higher Education: Enhancing Student Success

Associate Professor Jane Skalicky, Associate Professor Andrea Carr
University of Tasmania

In the context of Australian Universities Accord and Support for Students policy requirements, universities must evidence structured proactive support services and ensure student wellbeing and success.

The poster highlights insights from a recent study tour across six U.S. universities and presents a thematic synthesis of key findings, identifying practical approaches and institutional strategies for student success. These include considerations for data-driven decision making, proactive student advising, peer mentoring and learning supports, first-year experience pedagogy and programs, equity and inclusion initiatives and an institutional commitment to student success. In order to achieve systemic changes to enhance student success, a whole-of-institution approach is necessary.


The challenge remains how to achieve this in a financially constrained environment and how to ensure intentional design for historically underrepresented groups. We ask delegates to consider the relevance of the approaches shared, for their own university and the Australasian context.



Insights from U.S. Higher Education: Enhancing Student Success

A/Prof Jane Skalicky¹ and A/Prof Andrea Carr²
¹Student Academic Success, ²University College, University of Tasmania, Australia

In this poster we highlight insights from a recent study tour of the US which included visits to Florida Atlantic University (FAU), the University of Georgia (UGA), Georgia State University (GSU), Georgia Institute of Technology (GIT), Southern Utah University (SUU) and Brigham Young University (BYU). We present our key findings as a thematic synthesis of the various practical approaches and institutional strategies for student success across the universities.



Data-driven Decision Making

Strategic use of data empowers institutions to anticipate needs, personalise support and drive equity-focused outcomes at scale.

GSU: Systematic redesigned support services and operationalised data have driven student success and over a decade has significantly closed equity gaps.

BYU: A students-as-partners approach has driven the development of a data dashboard ensuring student-informed insights for decision-making.

FAU: Team-based analytics drive and inform an advising case management outreach model for students.

Proactive and Holistic Student Advising

Academic advising is most impactful when it is proactive, student-centred, and built on a foundation of care – ensuring every student feels known, supported, and guided to succeed.

FAU: Advising is embedded across the institution, driven by the Office of Apprehensive Advising and their sector-leading practice.

GSU: Students receive individualised success plans, with a 1:300 advising ratio and graduation-focused advisors for timely degree completion.

BYU: A dedicated First Year Experience advising team supports student transition and academic planning from the outset.

Peer Learning and Mentoring

Peer leadership is a core strategy for fostering connection, academic success, and student confidence through shared experience and support.

SUU: Peer mentoring is embedded across student services – supporting transitions (ACES), family programs, IDE initiatives, leadership development, and tutoring.

FAU: Senior students are trained as academic coaches, guiding peers through Academic Progress Review and supporting academic recovery.

UGA: Peer Learning Assistants work alongside faculty in classrooms, modeling active learning and reinforcing academic engagement.

First-year Experience Pedagogy and Programs

First Year Experience (FYE) programs use intentional curriculum and transition pedagogy to foster belonging, engagement, and academic success from day one.

BYU: All first-year students complete a general education program, this includes University 101 – a course designed to support student success and transition.

GIT: A common first-year curriculum across key disciplines supports academic transition, cohort identity, and foundational skill development.

UGA: All first-year students live on campus, creating a shared residential experience that promotes community, connection, and student engagement.

Equity and Inclusion Initiatives

Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (IDE) are foundational to student success – ensuring all students feel seen, supported, and empowered to thrive.

UGA: Transition student leaders mentor students from minority backgrounds through DARING packs, supporting first-generation, transfer, and underrepresented students.

GSU: By designing systems for students at the margins, GSU has achieved the greatest gains in retention – demonstrating that supporting disadvantaged students benefits all.

SUU: IDE is integrated across student success initiatives, with visible support structures for LGBTQ+ students, families, Indigenous students, and non-traditional learners, including wellness and support centres.


Institutional Commitment to Student Success

University structures and systems are intentionally designed for student success and demonstrate a whole-of-institution commitment integrating academic and professional partnerships to support all students.

GSU: The Vice President Student Affairs leads an integrated portfolio, aligning academic and professional services to drive student engagement and success.

GSU & NISB: Evolving from a community college merger, GSU embraces an access agenda and leads a systems approach to equity and student achievement nationally and globally.

FAU's Office of Apprehensive Education, champions a holistic and strengths-based model for student support while providing staff professional development and a recognised professional pathway.




With the Australian Universities Accord (2023) highlighting the urgency of adopting systemic changes to enhance student success, a whole-of-institution approach is necessary.

Focusing on long-term reforms to enhance student success, equity, and institutional sustainability, attention needs to be paid to the participation of students from under-represented groups and high growth in order to meet the future needs of society. Furthermore, the Support for Students Policy (2023) underscores the necessity of embedding structured, proactive support services within universities to ensure student well-being and academic success.

These national drivers provide a critical foundation for understanding the importance of student engagement, transition pedagogy and support, and equity-driven initiatives.

U.S. examples challenge us to embed student success at the core of institutional practice – holistic, equity-driven, data-informed, and treated as a whole-of-institution responsibility. These universities demonstrate how systemic redesign, and predictive analysis can close equity gaps and scale support. Peer programs and inclusive approaches show that targeted efforts can lift outcomes for all students. The examples shared reflect a well-developed and integrated approach to student success. Student advising and support are not just services, they are an ethos of study and professional practice. This highlights an opportunity for Australasian Higher Education to invest holistically in student success, inclusive of programs, systems and structures, and by building professional opportunity and expertise.



We acknowledge with thanks our colleagues across the six universities:
Jennifer Bloom (Florida Atlantic University), Dalin George Young (University of Georgia), Tim Rennick (Georgia State University & National Institute for Student Success),
Craig Womack (Georgia Institute of Technology), Jared Tippett and Eric Kirby (Southern Utah University), Bryce Bunting (Brigham Young University)

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POSTER 15

TRANSITIONS

Dual Identity: High school/Tertiary Student - who is ready?

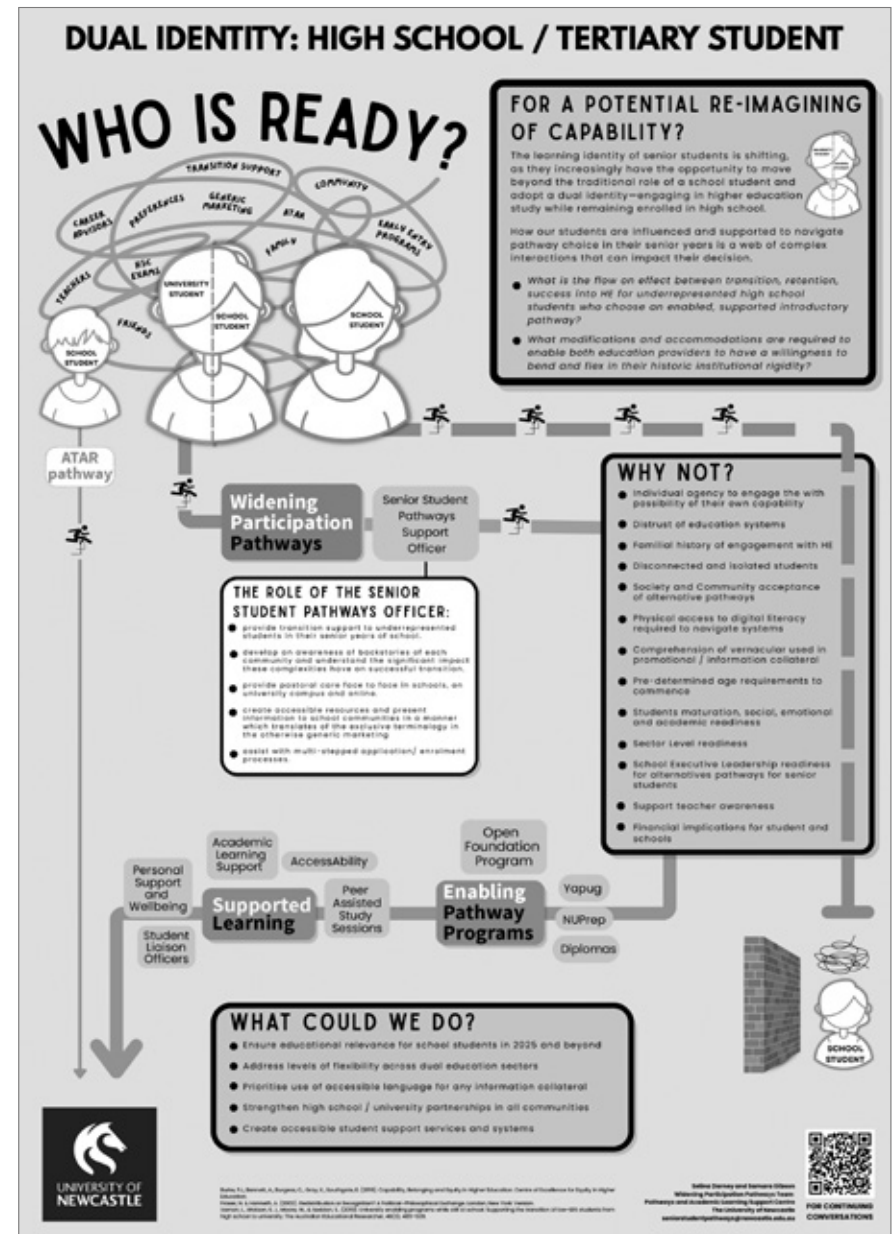
Selina Darney, Samara Gibson
University of Newcastle

Supporting senior high students in 2025, to concurrently enroll into a higher education pathway whilst remaining at school; can be complex with often unspoken biases regarding capability. Inclusive of individuals of influence directing students toward a vocational pathway; education institution's systemic rigidity and the overwhelming volume of entry schemes can often lead to capable learners questioning their confidence to navigate the often-inaccessible procedural requirements to enroll. (Vernon, 2019)

The University of Newcastle's Pathways and Academic Support Centre's, fee free Open Foundation program has across 50 years supported and created a space for individual learners regardless of their education background to reimagine their possibilities as a university.

This poster, challenges the reader to pause, identifying opportunities and challenges for related stakeholder groups when supporting the reimagining of individuals capability, holding dual identity: enrolled as a senior school student and university student concurrently. Additionally, the need for HE institutions to ensure the positive disruption to the status quo for our high school students wishing to access a supported self-paced pathway is accessible and successful.

Who is/ is not ready for this change in identity and/or re-imagining of capability?



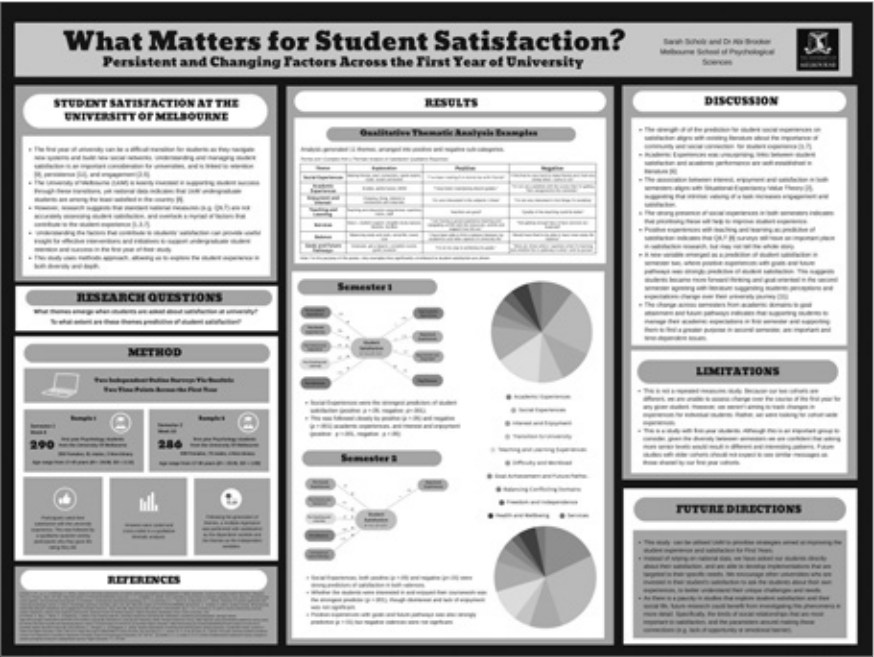
POSTER 16
SUCCESS

What matters for Student Satisfaction? Persistent and Changing Factors Across the First Year of University

Sarah Scholz, Dr Abi Brooker
The University of Melbourne

The first year of university can be a challenging transition, as students navigate new systems and build social networks. Although the University of Melbourne (UoM) is committed to supporting students through this transition, national data suggests that UoM undergraduates report among the lowest satisfaction rates in Australia (QILT, 2023). Understanding what contributes to student satisfaction can inform strategies to support retention and success. This study used a mixed-methods approach to investigate first-year students' satisfaction by collecting ratings and open-ended explanations of their university experience.

We analysed data from two time points: Week 10 of Semester 1 (290 students) and Week 8 of Semester 2 (286 students). Thematic analysis of student responses, along with regression analyses, identified both persistent and time-specific contributors to satisfaction. Across both semesters, students' academic, social, and intrinsic experiences were key to overall satisfaction, aligning with previous research (e.g., Li & Carroll, 2017; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Boyd et al., 2022). In Semester 1, support with transition and life balance were important; in Semester 2, goal achievement and purpose became more prominent. These findings underscore the need for flexible and targeted support strategies to enhance student satisfaction throughout the first year.



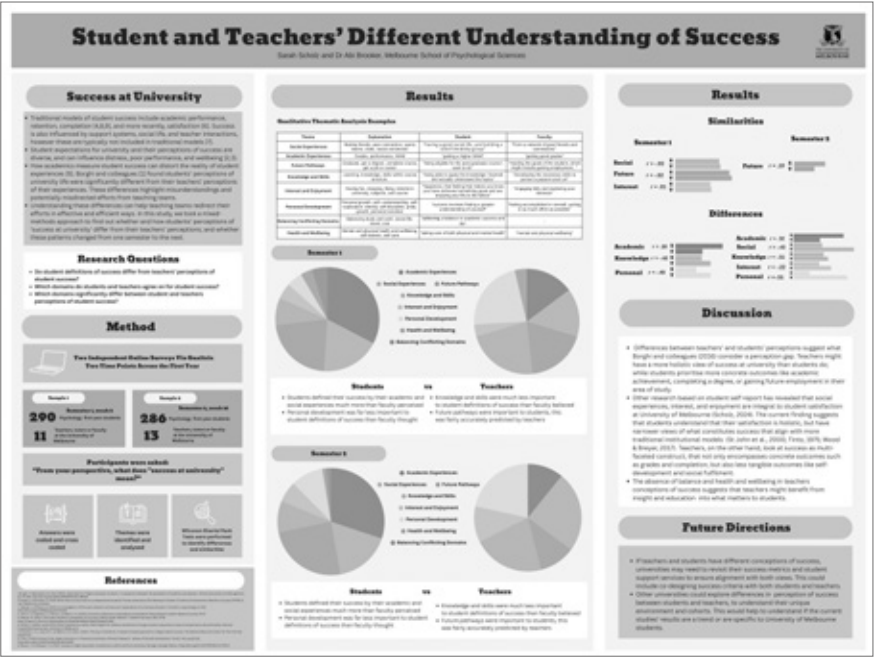
POSTER 17
SUCCESS

Students and Teachers different Understanding of Success

Sarah Scholz, Dr Abi Brooker
The University of Melbourne

The first year of university is a challenging transition, requiring students to navigate new systems and build social networks. Students' perceptions of success are diverse and can affect their wellbeing (Foyster & Brooker, 2019). However, academic definitions of 'success' may distort students' lived experiences (Naylor, 2017). Borghi et al. (2016) found significant discrepancies between students' and teachers' perceptions of university life, potentially leading to misdirected teaching efforts. This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine whether and how student and teacher definitions of 'success at university' differ, and whether these perceptions change across semesters.

Themes were identified from student and teacher responses at two time points: Week 8 of Semester 1 (290 students, 11 teachers) and Week 10 of Semester 2 (286 students, 13 teachers). Students consistently described success through both academic and social parameters; more than faculty assumed. Teachers overestimated students' emphasis on personal development, skills, and knowledge. Health and wellbeing were noted by students as factors but were absent from teachers' definitions. However, both groups aligned on the importance of future pathways. Addressing mismatches in perception will help to better understand the experiences of first-year students and aid in their transition.



POSTER 18

TRANSITIONS

“My dad was probably a bit disappointed”: Narratives of male university students transitioning into in primary teacher education

Franziska Lessky
University of Innsbruck

Michael Holzmayer, Marie Gitschthaler, Doris Lindner
University College of Teacher Education of Christian Churches Austria

The call for more male primary-school teachers has long been associated with the importance of positive male role models in schools and the disproportionate number of male and female primary-school teachers internationally. However, little is known about how men find their way into this highly gender-segregated profession.

Our research project addresses this gap by providing insights into the transitions of men into primary teacher education, which can be understood as a complex interplay between (male) habitus and (a female-dominated) field (Bourdieu, 2005). Based on eight in-depth qualitative interviews with male students at a university college of teacher education in Austria, the results show that none of our participants had the intention of becoming a primary school teacher from the outset. Rather, their decision was primarily driven by ‘Coping with disorientation’, ‘Overcoming professional identity crisis’, ‘Breaking out of parental expectations’, or ‘Navigating precarious academic placement’.

Our findings contribute to the understanding of transitions in gender-atypical occupations and offers starting points for designing more diverse and inclusive educational pathways.

Michael Holzmayer¹ | Doris Lindner¹ | Marie Gitschthaler¹ | Franziska Lessky²
 1) University College of Teacher Education of Christian Churches Austria | 2) University of Innsbruck




Theory and Methods:
 Habitus-field-fit, spaces of possibility (Bourdieu 1982; 1998); Masculinity (Connell 2021, Bourdieu 2005); Gender/class intersection (Lenz 2010, Busch 2013)

18 narrative-biographical interviews with male students of primary school teacher training (Schütze 1983)

Coding paradigm & conditional/ consequential matrix (Strauss/Corbin 2015); Interpretative paradigm (Keller 2012; Rosenthal 2015)

Findings:
 Although many participants mentioned social or altruistic motives for choosing primary teaching, our analysis suggests that these were not the primary reasons. Rather, their career choices were shaped by a perceived misfit between their personal interests or abilities and the demands of previously chosen educational or professional paths. In this context, primary teaching emerged as a constructive and meaningful alternative – but not as a clearly defined ‘Plan A’.

Dimensions for type formation:

- Were there educational and vocational aspirations after school?
- Did the training(s) correspond to the vocational expectations?
- Was there a habitus-field fit?
- Was the transition to the primary school teaching programme linear?



Project website

„My dad was probably a bit disappointed“

Narratives of male students transitioning into primary teacher education

Type	Strategies of establishing fit	Characteristics	Quotes
Type 1: Coping with disorientated	Discovery through trial and error	Biographies with fragments and experiments; fit is experienced as a chance discovery	“Finally, I found something”
Type 2: Overcoming professional identity crises	Re-evaluation after dissatisfaction in the original profession	Originally assigned profession felt alienating, prompting a reorientation toward a more fitting activity	“I began to think, it can’t go on like this”
Type 3: Breaking away from parental norms	Self-assertion and empowerment	Externally imposed fit gave way to self-chosen fit	“This entrepreneurship, it’s really not for me”
Type 4: Navigating precarious academic placement	Strategic re-coding	Fit arises less from vocation than from the need to ‘stay in’ higher education	“It turned out to be quite exhausting”

Discussion and Conclusion:
 These types make visible the gendered and classed field structure of teacher education. In a Bourdieusian sense, they reveal how different social positions and trajectories shape what counts as “thinkable” or “doable” at specific points in an individual biography.

Implications:

- diversity-sensitive teacher training (breaking down stereotypes; raising awareness of social influences on social careers)
- educational and career guidance at schools as early as possible (gendered information capital)
- intersectional research on career guidance

REFERENCES: Alexander, P. (2022). Shared discursive history, rethinking teachers as role models. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 30(4), 529–547; Baar, R. (2010). *Allein unter Frauen: Der berufliche Habitus männlicher Grundschullehrer*. Wiesbaden: VS; Bourdieu, P. (2005). *Die männliche Herrschaft*. Suhrkamp; OECD (2021). *Why is the gender ratio of teachers imbalanced? Education Indicators in Focus*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

POSTER 19
SUCCESS

Higher Education Success Factor (HESF) Model: Supporting university leaders' data-led decision making for student success

Thu D Pham
Griffith University

Angela Baeza Pena
Queensland University of Technology

Peter J Anderson
University of New England

Levon E Blue
University of Queensland

This study highlights the critical role of university leadership in improving student completion rates, with current data showing that only 61.8% of Australian university students complete their degree within six years. The research applies the Higher Education Success Factor (HESF) model to examine key social determinants that influence student outcomes: social environment, physical environment, economic conditions, health and wellbeing, and individual characteristics.

Drawing on survey data from 2,528 graduates (2018-2022), the findings identify health and wellbeing as the most significant factor influencing degree completion. Individual characteristics and economic conditions also strongly impact student success. Students reported that poor health affected their academic engagement, social involvement, and ability to manage other challenges.

The study also compares the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, revealing both shared and unique barriers. Importantly, the HESF model provides a practical, data-led tool that supports university leaders in making informed decisions about resource allocation and targeted interventions.

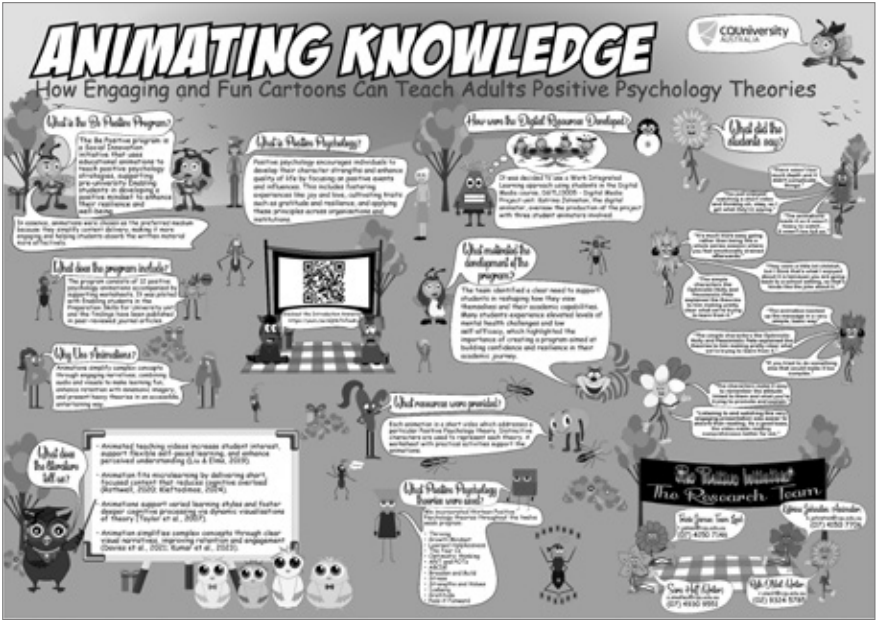


POSTER 20
STUDENTS

Animating Knowledge: How Engaging and Fun Cartoons Can Teach Adults Positive Psychology Theories

Katrina Johnston, Trixie James, Sara Hof, Ruth O'Neill
CQUniversity

This study explored the use of animated explainer videos to teach Positive Psychology concepts to adult learners in Australian Enabling programs. These students often face academic barriers due to past educational disadvantages, financial stress, and limited support. Promoting well-being, resilience, and a positive mindset is essential for their academic success. The Be Positive program was developed as an online, self-paced Positive Psychology intervention. It aimed to help students reframe negative thoughts, build optimism, and develop strategies for overcoming self-doubt. Central to the program were animated videos featuring original characters that embodied Positive Psychology theories. These animations used storytelling, humour, and relatable scenarios to make complex psychological concepts accessible and engaging. Students reported high levels of enjoyment and improved understanding, highlighting the effectiveness of this approach. The study found that animated explainer videos are a powerful tool for simplifying psychological theories and fostering emotional connection, comprehension, and retention. This approach proved especially effective for diverse adult learners in Enabling education. The poster will showcase the animation development process and demonstrate how character-driven storytelling helped bring Positive Psychology concepts to life in a meaningful and memorable way.



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11:00AM – 11:30AM
PARALLEL SESSION

O

01A EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Embedding Current Students into the Orientation Experience through Paid Representation

Rosie George
The University of Adelaide

In 2024, the University of Adelaide piloted a new approach to orientation by embedding current students into paid roles. This addressed challenges with relying on volunteers for high-responsibility tasks and aligned with the Students as Partners Framework. Key elements included paid Orientation Leaders overseeing logistics, rebranded student-led tours focusing on peer connection, and a co-designed "How to Uni" panel offering authentic insights into university life.

The impact was significant: Semester 2 2024 saw an increase in tours rated "excellent" (from 43% to 60%) and a drop in poor ratings (from 14% to 1.4%).

The presentation will explore the benefits of paid representation, lessons from the pilot, and plans including cohort-matched tours and further integration with Program Welcomes. Discussion will focus on scaling the model, boosting peer support, and solving logistical challenges.

This initiative demonstrates how paid student roles can elevate orientation experiences, delivering consistency, relevance, and stronger outcomes for new students.

01B EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Pathway to success: Reflections on mentoring in Teacher Education

Lily-claire Deenmamode, Jeremy Koay
Australian Catholic University

This paper presents the practices of mentoring as experienced by two academics leading a cohort of student teachers enrolled in a Pathway teaching program, offered on a multi-campus university in Australia. Effective mentoring involves offering academic and pastoral advice as well as sharing knowledge and skills which would support student teachers en route to Initial Teacher Education.

Our discussion aligns with Mackh's (2025) elaboration of six roles assumed by a teacher mentor: coach, guide, motivator, problem solver, role model, and teacher. We reflected on our experiences as course and unit coordinators respectively. From stories of building relationships founded upon regular communications and personal values to exploring the challenges experienced by both teacher mentors & mentees, we share some of our most effective mentoring approaches as we aim, not only to increase students' retention but also, enhance the students' lived experiences of being and becoming a caring and successful teacher.

01C EMERGING INITIATIVE ACHIEVEMENT

Developing AI Literacy: Equipping Students for the Digital Future

Jennifer Kemp-Smith, Margaret Hunn, Sandy Rae
Griffith University

The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) in early 2023 raised significant ethical and practical concerns within academic institutions. The technology spurred university students to explore Gen AI's potential for research and writing, prompting a need for guidance on its responsible use. In this paper, we introduce a resource "Using Generative AI Ethically and Responsibly," created collaboratively to support both staff and students. This module is designed to build AI literacy, equipping students with the skills to succeed in a rapidly changing digital world.

01D EMERGING INITIATIVE RETENTION

Early Childhood Tertiary Partnerships (ECTP) Partnering for Workforce Retention -to improve the retention of pre-service teachers

Theresa Evans, Lenyssa Dunn, Anna Munari, Gracie Munari
Victoria University, Department of Education, Victoria

In 2023 the Department of Education granted Victoria University \$1.3 million dollars for a project initiative which would intensify focus on additional placement supports for predominantly international students from the Graduate Diploma and Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (ECE).

Over a 2-year period this initiative will address the need for diversity and retention in the work force, bringing domestic and international students together to create networks and mutual respect. The project team of four Teaching Focused Academics aspires to create a more positive placement experience in an endeavour to prepare students for the workforce in Australia while simultaneously preparing the workplace for students.

The VU team are empowering participating students by conducting placement visits, mentoring and coaching sessions, and by implementing learning circles.

Pursuing goals has allowed students to experience more positive placement outcomes. Graduate teachers are entering the profession more confidently and are better equipped to become leaders committed to ECE programs.

01E EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

From Barriers to Bridges: The Impact of Student Success and Wellbeing Advisors

Melissa Suckley, Dr Tori Llewelyn, Dr Helen Harrison
Flinders University

There is increasing recognition that tertiary students face multiple challenges affecting their likelihood of success, including academic pressures, financial stress, social isolation, and mental health issues (Krause & Armitage, 2014). These challenges necessitate a holistic approach to student support to ensure effective management and success. The introduction of dedicated positions focused on student well-being and support has emerged as a promising initiative in higher education.

We present the initial findings and perspectives from a one-year implementation of this initiative at Flinders University, with a specific focus on staff and students in medicine, nursing, and health sciences. The initiative improved student progress and retention, and these dedicated roles are now recognized as essential by both leadership and academic staff.

01F EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Connecting Futures: A Holistic Approach for CQUniversity Future Students

Ms Kylie Ciocca
CQUniversity

At CQUniversity, a dedicated team of specialists has united to build higher education aspirations for students in regional, rural, and remote areas. The Future Students team at CQU employs a connected and holistic approach under the themes of 'connection' (to journey, industry, and community), and 'caring' (about the student, their challenges, and the community).

This approach spans from pre-access outreach activities through to those traditionally considered 'marketing and recruitment,' and supports students' transition into their first years of university. The team aims not only to foster students' aspirations for higher education but also to empower them to transform these aspirations into meaningful actions.

01G EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Institutional assessment reform: Navigating the journey with staff, students, and data

Jessica Z. Marrington, Chris Zehntner, Geoff Slaughter, Lorelle Burton, Jo-Anne Ferreira
UniSQ

The continued advancement of GenAI presents challenges and opportunities for higher education. As GenAI is increasingly embedded in everyday technologies, a significant challenge for the sector relates to the assurance of student learning.

This presentation explores one institution's assessment reform journey, which while prompted by GenAI advancements, has provided the opportunity for reflection, refinement, and redevelopment of assessment principles, policies, and practices.

The reform process facilitates the ethical integration of GenAI into assessment, while simultaneously ensuring robust mechanisms to assure student learning. This presentation describes the Assessment Heatmap Project (AHMP) which provided insights as to where more immediate assessment modification was required (Phase 1: Course level) and describes the plans and initial activities for more significant assessment transformation (Phase 2: Program level). Importantly, this presentation highlights the collaborative efforts and supports both commenced and planned for staff and students during this process.

NOTES



02A EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Belonging events: fostering a supportive and connected academiccommunity for students

Matthew Golotta, Amanda Richardson, Alex Agostini
University of South Australia

Feeling a sense of belonging at university is crucial for students (Strayhorn 2018), enhancing their academic performance, persistence, and overall satisfaction with their college or university experience. As emphasised in the recent Universities Accord (2024), universities have a duty of care and obligation to students to foster belonging, social inclusion and cohesion, “demystifying university culture and cultivating a sense of belonging”. This paper explores the successes and challenges of Belonging Events at the University of South Australia (UniSA) that started in 2023 and continue to grow and expand in impact. These events aim to support student transition in both the academic and social domains together, deliberately connecting new students with numerous staff who teach into their degree, and peers in later years of the same degree programs, within relaxed, semi-structured social settings. Feedback from these events suggest that not only are new students feeling more connected more quickly, but that existing students and staff also benefit.

02B GOOD PRACTICE REPORT RETENTION

Empowering Collaboration: Practical Approaches to Student Equity Program Evaluation. A Practice Report

Nadine Zacharias
Swinburne University of Technology

Elisa McGowan, Catie Gressier, Riett Kriel, Katie Douglas
The University of Western Australia

Student equity program evaluation is an emerging field of practice in the Australian higher education sector. Driven by reporting requirements from the Department of Education, it is incentivised through targeted funding provided by the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES). Currently, the evaluation capability of equity practitioners is highly variable. Universities have responded to this challenge by employing evaluation experts to work with their student equity teams, or by commissioning expert consultants to build evaluation capability and/or undertake evaluations of student equity programs.

This practice report focuses on a project that aimed to explore best practice in equity program evaluation, recognising that these are often collaborative endeavours. Through structured reflective activities, the diverse project team generated insights on factors that enable or challenge evaluation partnerships. The report concludes with a set of principles for implementing collaborative evaluation projects and outlines the key roles and responsibilities of an evaluation team.

02C EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Designing for “Accessibility”: Evidence from a University-wide Unit

Lara Maia-Pike, Linda J. Graham, Jenna Gillett-Swan
Queensland University of Technology

Whilst much progress has been made to support a diverse range of students in Higher Education (HE), students with disability continue to face many barriers. Supports for those students are predominately generic, retrospective and often involve onerous processes. Drawing on empirical evidence from a large ARC Linkage Project, we designed and piloted a university-wide unit using inclusive pedagogical principles. We discuss how improving accessibility of content and assessment is essential for students with disability but also benefits the inclusion and success of a diverse range of students in HE.

02D EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Supporting Regional First Year Students

Shiron Kirkman, Maddison Ramponi
CUC Western Riverina

The Country Universities Centre Western Riverina (CUCWR) piloted the First Year Advisor (FYA) Program to address barriers faced by regional and first-in-family students transitioning to higher education. Delivered across two regional sites, the program embeds proactive, structured support within the study hub environment, focusing on orientation, academic skills, and wellbeing. With 48% of CUCWR students identifying as first-in-family, the program provides tailored support to build confidence, improve retention, and foster success.

In its pilot year, 26% of first-year undergraduates engaged with the program, increasing to 42% in 2025. Retention among participants (71%) significantly exceeded the broader cohort (50%). Institution-neutral and adaptable, the model aligns with national strategies to close equity gaps in regional education and incorporates real-time tracking, feedback-driven refinement, and expanded referrals for students with complex needs.

This presentation also invites discussion on how embedded advisor models and collaborative frameworks between study hubs and institutions can better support diverse student cohorts and address regional student attrition.

02E EMERGING INITIATIVE

RETENTION

A framework for developing course-wide support of academic literacy skills for students at university

Udari Ekanayake, Christina Maurer-Smolder
CQUniversity

This investigation builds on previous work at other universities to develop an academic literacies framework for mapping skills required by assessment tasks within the units of a university course. It involved the development, application, and evaluation of a new framework based on the Academic Skills Model (ASM) of Griffith University (Charlton & Martin, 2018). Findings include insights about a lack of scaffolding for academic literacy skills development within the two degree pathways, and recommendations for further development, research, and implementation of the framework.

02F EMERGING INITIATIVE

STUDENTS

Promoting Higher Education Through a Multidimensional Approach: Effective Engagement Strategies for Diverse Student Cohorts

Sala Ana Setiu Tuala
Western Sydney University

Fostering a sense of belonging for diverse student cohorts in higher education is paramount to promoting and sustaining lifelong learning. Culturally responsive pedagogies, positive role modelling and community engagement are significant to supporting aspirations and access to higher education for students of diverse backgrounds (Price et al., 2020; Rana, 2024; Woollorton et al., 2022). The Future Student Engagement (FSE) Unit at Western Sydney University offer seven widening participation and aspiration enrichment programs that use a multidimensional intervention approach (Ni Chorcara et al., 2023) at various touchpoints of the student journey, to reinforce higher education as a viable and realistic option for participants from diverse backgrounds across Western Sydney.

02G EMERGING INITIATIVE

STUDENTS

Enhancing online student well-being: Developing a virtual wellness hub

Tracey Gooding, Dr Tracey Ahern, Dr Martina Mylrea and Pieta Shakes
James Cook University

With the expansion of online courses in higher education, challenges to student well-being are becoming increasingly pronounced. The Virtual Wellness Hub is an innovative initiative designed to support the mental health and well-being of online Master of Nursing students at James Cook University. Addressing the challenges of isolation and stress in online learning, this student-centred platform provides accessible resources, stress management tools, and self-care strategies. The Hub promotes engagement, resilience, and academic success by integrating insights from students, educators, and mental health professionals. This presentation will showcase the platform's development, expected impact, and strategies for enhancing student well-being in online education.

NOTES



12:20PM – 12:50PM
PARALLEL SESSION

03

03A EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Little Yarns, Big Dreams: Culture and identity in career education resources

Kristina Sincok, Courtney Rubie, Leanne Fray, Sally Patfield
University of Newcastle

In 2023, we received funding from the National Careers Institute to develop a series of resources to support the career education of First Nations primary school-aged children. The resources were to be informed by our longitudinal research investigating the educational and career aspirations of Australian school students.

We also consulted with a panel of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, co-designing eight resources to support young people to identify their interests and talents and develop their understanding of educational and career pathways. The resources are freely accessible on yourcareer.gov.au for teachers, parents, community members and other educational stakeholders to download.

03B EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

“The pathway program made the university accessible for me”: Building the evidence about links between pathway programs and Indigenous student university completion

Bronwyn Fredericks, Katelyn Barney, Tracey Bunda, Nisa Richy, Daniel Taylor-Griffiths
The University of Queensland

Ash Moor
UQ College

Scott Parlett
University of New South Wales

Kirsten Hausia
The University of Melbourne

University completion rates for Indigenous students remain significantly lower than non-Indigenous students (UA, 2023). Pathway/enabling programs are central to preparing and transitioning Indigenous students into university and are the primary strategies for improving the readiness of prospective Indigenous students. However, high-quality research-based evidence of the impact of these programs in relation to supporting university completion is limited.

In this presentation we will discuss findings from a recent ACSES funded research project which focused on exploring Indigenous students' experiences in pathway/enabling programs and potential correlations to university completion. Drawing on findings from interviews with Indigenous students, graduates and staff who work in pathway/enabling programs, we will discuss the benefits of pathway/enabling programs and the role of Indigenised curriculum and Indigenous units/centres to ensure a sense of belonging and connection.

We will also share strategies developed as part of the project for teaching staff and leaders working in pathway/enabling programs to support Indigenous student transition, success and completion of university.

03C EMERGING INITIATIVE ACHIEVEMENT

From PASS to PALs: Developing a sustainable Peer Learning model

Dr Cristy Bartlett, Kate Derrington, Kacie Fahey, Ben Ingram, Rowena McGregor
UniSQ

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) are an established and well-defined approach to providing peer mentoring to support students' learning in higher education. However, the structure of PASS does not always suit the operational needs of an institution. This emerging initiative discusses the reimagining of the PASS program into a Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program at a regional university.

PAL delivery takes a students as partners approach, with student leaders working with Support for Learning Staff, and is informed by transition pedagogy. This paper discusses the transition to PAL, including the impetus for change, the differences between PASS and PAL, the process undertaken to implement the PAL program, the first iteration of the program, and plans for future development.

03D EMERGING INITIATIVE RETENTION

The Peregrination of Belonging: The role of pre-tertiary enabling programs in fostering inclusiveness, belonging and student agency

Dr Trixie James
CQUniversity

Transitioning to higher education as an equity student presents multiple barriers and issues (James, 2024). This proposal presents the Peregrination of Belonging framework, grounded in Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction, to capture the transitional experiences of equity students as they navigate pre-tertiary programs and progress into higher education. The original paper is based on a case study conducted with Enabling students within an existing Enabling program at a regional university in Australia.

Drawing on in depth interviews with Enabling students, the paper explores how these students navigated the complexities of the HE context. Using Bourdieu's understandings of social and cultural capital and habitus the paper argues that five key transition points shaped students' academic identities and lead to the development of student agency and a sense of inclusiveness in the university environment. The framework, built around these five points of peregrination offers an interpretation of how these students came to reshape their habitus, develop a strong sense of agency, and ultimately feel a sense of belonging in the field of higher education.

03E EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Developing a Typology of Unit Failure to Improve Student Support

Neil van der Ploeg, Kelly Linden, Sarah Teakel

Charles Sturt University

The legislated Support for Students Policy and associated reporting requirements ask universities to monitor, track and iterate support systems to improve student outcomes. However, we lack a detailed framework to conceptualise and report on student failure. This emerging initiative addresses this deficit. A retrospective quantitative analysis of 88,828 student grades over 3 years, including individual assessment performance, uncovers the submission patterns and success of students en route to unit failure.

Unit failures of students are classified according to a novel, 4-category typology of unit failure, highlighting contrasting experiences: the most common category was students who “Submit then Stop” but achieved more than 60% of the available marks of the assessment/s in which they submitted (25%); zero-fails were the next common type at 21% while only 19% of students submitted all assessment items. These unit failures represent vastly different student experiences and targeted student support may vary accordingly.

03F EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

An Open Alliance to build an Equity-capable Careers Service

A/Prof Lauren Hansen, David Eckstein, Dr Danni Hamilton, Peter Oslewski

Deakin University

Equity represents a key priority for the higher education sector and graduate employment outcomes remain a key government focus (O’Kane et al, 2023). Recent research (Eckstein, 2022) indicates that systemic change is required if university careers services are to address the employability development needs of vulnerable students. In 2024, Deakin University’s Graduate Employment team commenced a tailored program of professional development activities to build an Equity-capable Career Service (ECCS) that meets the diverse and complex career development needs of all students. To achieve this goal, we formed an alliance based on Open Educational Practice principles (Hamilton & Hansen, 2024) with the Equity and Inclusion team to share expertise, resources, and ownership and establish Deakin’s Equity-capable Affordance Program to support a “whole-of-university approach to embedding diversity and inclusion” (Deakin University, 2020, p. 3).

03G EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

The Role of Place in the Widening Participation Functions of Regional University Study Hubs

Danielle Keenan, Joshua James

University of Technology Sydney

The Regional University Study Hub (RUSH) program enhances higher education participation for individuals from Regional, Rural, and Remote (RRR) areas in Australia. This study examines the role of place in the success of Regional Hubs, emphasising their function as an equity tool. Through mixed-method research, including interviews and ethnographic observations, findings indicate that dedicated study spaces, appropriate facilities, and extended access hours significantly contribute to widening participation. Furthermore, this study suggests that Regional Hubs function as ‘third places’—informal, community-oriented spaces that foster student success and engagement.

NOTES

1:50PM – 2:20PM
PARALLEL SESSION

04

04A EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

"A pressure valve release for students": A case for university-wide flexible assessment submission dates

Kelly Linden, Sarah Teakel, Jacquie Tinkler
Charles Sturt University

Providing students with extensions to assessment due dates is a relatively easy and flexible way of accommodating their various needs. In 2023 our large regional Australian university introduced an automatic 7-day extension for one assessment item per unit without the need for supporting documents or evidence. A total of 501 students, 93 academics and 8 support staff provided consent and completed an anonymous survey. Student feedback highlighted significant benefits, reporting that it helped manage stress (84%) and enabled students to complete the assessment or unit (80%).

Students also commented that the extension allows them to submit higher quality work. Academic feedback was less consistent, with some reporting it saved time while others noting increased administrative workload. Overall, the automatic 7-day extension reduced stress and anxiety, and provided flexibility in managing work, family and study commitments, without the need for students to disclose personal circumstances.

04B EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

A care model: a holistic initiative to enhance student wellbeing

Katherine Nguyen, Leeanne D'Arville, Caroline Burrowes, Anna Vu, Meredith Biggs
South Australian Institute of Business and Technology

University pathway students face unique challenges impacting their mental health and retention. Research highlights the need for holistic support models addressing both academic and non-academic factors. SAIPT's Wellbeing Team developed a CARE model with initiatives like early intervention, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training, and enhanced accommodation and engagement programs. These foster student belonging, mental well-being, and integration. The Student Experience program, including mentorship, career services, and social activities, boosts confidence and engagement. Collaborative intervention strategies target at-risk students, ensuring comprehensive support. This proposal aligns with research advocating a "whole student" approach and offers insights for institutions to improve student well-being, discussing emerging needs, potential improvements, and model adaptability.

04C EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Broadening Horizons and Connecting Communities

Mrs Gemma Death, Mr Evan Weller
Taree Universities Campus

Taree Universities Campus (TUC) leads the TUC Careers Project to connect students, parents/carers, and industry. Targeting Years 7-10 students in a low socio-economic status (SES) regional area, this initiative fosters career aspirations and confidence in post-school pathways. Informed by community consultation, the Eastern Australian Regional University Centre Partnerships (EARUCP) Project (2023-2025) and the National Career Education Strategy, the program facilitates industry partnerships, mentorship, and parental engagement to improve student outcomes.

The TUC Careers Project enhances Growth Mindset by broadening career awareness, Engagement by increasing student motivation, and Empowerment by equipping parents and students with career planning tools. Ultimately, it strengthens pathways between education and employment, for students to be more "work ready" to support regional workforce needs.

04D EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Libraries for Belonging: supporting student engagement through an inclusive library environment

Michelle Collins
Monash University

A student's sense of belonging impacts their wellbeing, engagement and academic success. The Libraries for Belonging Program aims to foster a sense of belonging by creating a welcoming and inclusive library environment through inclusive practices, displays and events run by frontline staff. The impact of the program is being tracked through a longitudinal study, statistics and anecdotal feedback.

04E EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Online engagement strategies that support my learning: An exploration of higher education student perspectives

**Associate Professor Alice Brown, Professor Jill Lawrence,
Professor Petrea Redmond, Dr Megan Kimber**
UniSQ

Associate Professor Jay Cohen
University of Adelaide

Dr Stephanie M. Foote
John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Higher Education, USA

A significant increase in scholarship has focused on student engagement and, more specifically, online student engagement, including the correlation between engagement and retention and student success. However, while literature documents increased efforts to employ strategies to support online student engagement, limited studies have encapsulated the 'student experience' or 'students' perspective' of the online engagement strategies they see as beneficial. Building on existing studies, this emerging initiative highlights the importance of the 'student voice', and gaining perspectives on matters related to their experience of online learning in higher education.

This session shares early findings of online strategies students, from multiple disciplines and study pathways in higher education across Australasia, found most useful in enhancing their online learning and engagement. Insights from the study offer instructors and learning designers a window into 'what students' value' from existing online strategies and help to shape and inform future online learning decision making and support.

04F EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Transforming student support: An emerging integrated approach

Kylie Carige, Nick Van Peperstraten
CQUniversity

CQUniversity is implementing a holistic student support framework to actively guide and support individual students throughout their learning journey. With a diverse student population of over 35,000 TAFE and Higher Education students, many of whom identify in one or more equity groups, a new integrated student advising model is central to CQUniversity's multi-year project aimed at enhancing student support, retention, and success. Student Advisers will be the primary contact for student support enquiries, and partnering with academic and specialist service teams, will provide personalised, timely and proactive support focused on student well-being and success.

04G EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Bridging the Gap: Aligning Student and Lecturer Expectations for First-Year Success.

Danny Green, Stephanie Rummel, Quyen Gia To
RMIT University Vietnam

The transition to university presents significant challenges for first-year students, particularly in an English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) context where academic histories are vastly different to the universities approach. While institutions offer various forms of support, a gap often exists between student-perceived needs and lecturer expectations. This study examines these differences, finding that lecturers view students as requiring more support than students themselves acknowledge, particularly in writing, time management, and communication. At the same time, students report feeling unprepared but prefer seeking help from peers rather than formal university services.

These findings highlight the need for structured autonomy-building strategies, a potential reimagining of peer-assisted learning models and the use of first language in support programs. By addressing these factors, the research aims to inform more effective, culturally responsive first-year support initiatives.

NOTES



2:30PM – 3:00PM
PARALLEL SESSION

05

05A EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Opportunities to enhance success of students living with a disability: Insights from an Australian regional university

Samantha Tiernan, Sarah Teakel, Kelly Linden
Charles Sturt University

This study provides insights into the academic outcomes of students living with a disability at a regional Australian university from 2021-2023 via surveys and grades analysis. Students living with a disability had lower success rates (69 vs 84%) and GPAs (4.17 vs 4.36). Both declined as the number of equity group factors increased, highlighting cumulative disadvantage.

The rising proportion of students with disabilities studying at higher education institutions necessitates sustainable support service models to ensure equitable access to education and opportunities for success. Students living with a disability were on average three times more likely to receive a zero-fail grade (10.2% vs 3.4%), irrespective of their study mode and accounted for 20.2% of all students who accessed academic skills support.

This analysis will inform future data-driven approaches, awareness, and targeted interventions. Challenges including underreporting, institutional differences in reporting, and incomplete data highlight the need for improved data quality.

05B EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Understanding the drivers of success in secondary-to-tertiary transitions

Rowena Long, Felicity Moser, Doune Macdonald, Jason M. Lodge, Sarah Greco, Liz Woolcock, Tianyi Ma
The University of Queensland

Kimberley Anderson, Kate Shepherd
James Cook University

Secondary schools invest heavily in programs and experiences designed to support students' tertiary transition and success, yet they typically receive minimal feedback on the efficacy of their strategies. Concomitantly, failure to thrive and attrition in tertiary settings confer substantial personal, institutional and productivity costs. Our research aims to provide evidence-informed insights and feedback to universities and secondary schools regarding the experiences and tertiary readiness of students transitioning to university from individual schools and regions. We have identified key risk and protective factors associated with transition success, with a focus on pre-entry and post-entry experiences, sense of belonging, student motivation and the development of self-regulated learning.

05C GOOD PRACTICE REPORT STUDENTS

Place-based, community-led partnerships for improved access to higher education among equity groups in Regional Rural and Remote Australia: Preliminary insights from the evaluation of the Eastern Australia Regional University Centre Partnership

Dr Jessica Hall, Bethany Ross, Sonal Singh
University of Technology Sydney

Erin Wrafter, Chris Ronan
CUC Central

Dr Kylie Austin
Edith Cowan University

The Eastern Australia Regional University Centre Partnership (EARUCP) is a collaboration of 23 universities and 15 Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH), funded by the Australian Department of Education (June 2023-December 2025) through phase two of the Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program (RPPPP).

The EARUCP program supports place-based, community-led, institution-neutral, and culturally responsive higher education outreach, while strengthening the capacity of partner organisations to develop and sustain partnerships aimed at improving equity in higher education. A mixed methods approach, including online surveys and key informant interviews, was used to explore the experiences, characteristics, and effectiveness of the partnership model at both program and sub-project levels. Continuous quality improvement is embedded throughout to refine the model and activities.

This report outlines the EARUCP model and presents early findings, offering insights for decision-makers and practitioners to inform future strategies that enhance access to higher education for students in regional, rural, and remote communities.

05D EMERGING INITIATIVE RETENTION

Data thresholds in learning analytics: Identifying priority students for proactive outreach

Natalie Oostergo, Dr Megan Axelsen
UniSQ

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) has developed a Student Success Advising strategy that uses learning analytics to identify students who could benefit from support via proactive outreach. This session describes the analysis and development of course Learning Management System (LMS) thresholds that measure the impact of student LMS activity on success. The establishment of these thresholds accurately identifies students at risk of failure and facilitates proactive outreach. These findings support targeted, data-informed interventions to improve student engagement, retention, and success.

05E EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Embedding student success: A coordinated curriculum approach

Cat Picton, Danay Baker-Andresen, Gail Crimmins
UniSC

The curriculum is a critical contact point of student engagement. The Advising Curriculum Resource (ACR) project is an initiative that proactively teaches the skills and competencies that facilitate student success through the curriculum, using program-level coordination. Delivered at the University of the Sunshine Coast in the School of Business and Creative Industries in partnership with Student Services, the initiative integrates holistic academic and personal development within discipline

05F EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Fostering Safety, Wellbeing, and Belonging: The University of Canberra's Support for International Students Amidst Global Challenges

Mikaela Dockrill
University of Canberra

Over the past five years, international students in Australia have navigated significant challenges, including, but not limited to, a global pandemic, natural disasters, global conflicts, displacement, legislative changes, and rising living costs. At the University of Canberra, our approach to supporting international students has evolved to centre wellbeing, belonging, and safety. This presentation outlines our strategy and the holistic wellbeing approaches to activity design and delivery for international student engagement.

By delivering targeted initiatives at key stages in the student lifecycle, we aim to foster connections with peers and support services, break down barriers to help-seeking, and provide opportunities for prevention and early intervention.

05G EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Show me what you mean: Enhancing student engagement and comprehension through video feedback

Katrina Johnston, Michelle Gray, Hermina Conradie, Peppa Piacun, Chris Maurer-Smolder
CQUniversity

This study investigates the impact of feedback format on student engagement and comprehension in a computing unit of an online enabling course of a regional university. Given the practical, skills-based nature of the unit, our diverse cohort of online students often struggle to fully understand text-based feedback. The flexible modes of study needed to be adopted by most students in this cohort also creates challenges for arranging times for individual one-on-one (synchronous) interaction between staff and students.

This study hypothesises that an individualised, visual style of feedback, in the form of video, may be more effective than traditional written feedback for students in this practical context, and that it also facilitates an asynchronous, yet personal interaction between staff and students. Data was collected over Terms 2 and 3 of 2023, tracking student submissions, grades, and survey responses regarding feedback preferences. The results show that 83% of students preferred video feedback to written feedback, suggesting that video feedback may offer significant benefits in terms of engagement, comprehension, and the overall learning experience.

NOTES

3:30PM – 4:00PM
PARALLEL SESSION

06

06A EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Study or Starve? Evidence informed recommendations for improving the financial wellbeing of Australian university students.

Dr Kylie Austin
Edith Cowan University

Professor Yasmine Probst, Professor Karen Walton, Dr Anne McMahon, Dr Joanna Russell, Professor Karen Charlton, Associate Professor Kelly Lambert, Dr Gabrielle O'Flynn, Ezinne Igwe
University of Wollongong

One in three university students are experiencing financial hardship, impacting their academic outcomes, their mental and physical wellbeing and overall university experience. This presentation will share early findings of a national study that conducted a national survey and interviews with over 900 university students about the prevalence and impact of their financial hardship. The findings, current research and practice were explored through a salutogenic lens, with recommendations to address the systemic challenges facing the financial wellbeing of Australian university students to be presented.

06B EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Trauma Informed Teaching in the Liminal Spaces

Anita Maclaurin
Murdoch University

Angela Jones
Edith Cowan University

Ana Larsen
CQUniversity

Susan Hopkins
UniSC

The Mental Health Special Interest Group in the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA) has historically focussed their research on the intersections between mental health, enabling students and practitioners. With the increasing prevalence of trauma in the enabling classroom, the group are curating an edited collection that explores the nuances of trauma in enabling classrooms.

This collection provides space for first person reflections of trauma in the classroom, qualitative and quantitative accounts of trauma in enabling, as well as strategies for supporting students and practitioners working in the field. This paper will set the scene for this collection by contextualising trauma and its impacts. It will share the methodology for the curated collection, as well as share initial autoethnographic reflections of the increasing prevalence in Australian enabling education.

06C EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

When pathways stall: Using systems thinking to solve intractable challenges in academic credit

Aliya Steed, Kylie Carige
CQUniversity

Managing student transitions requires more than pathway programs. Pathways only work if institutions solve the intractable implementation challenges preventing student access. At CQUniversity, we tackled a major barrier in academic credit - essential for recognising prior learning - but constrained by delays, inefficiencies and staff strain. Using systems thinking to map the credit system, we identified improvement opportunities. Delays stemmed from a capacity gap driven by misaligned priorities, historical process evolution, resource competition and rigid workflows, creating a disconnect between operations and strategy. We discuss how this approach helped clarify leadership responsibility, streamline workflows and align credit processes with university strategy. Finally, we reflect on how these insights can shape efforts to tackle other student administration challenges.

06D EMERGING INITIATIVE RETENTION

From Emails to Engagement: The Role of Personalised Support in Academic Success

Rheny Pulungan, Bernedette Bonanno, Reanna Kissell
Monash College

Monash College has a longstanding commitment to student success and retention. In response to rising attrition rates in its Diploma programs—exacerbated by the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic—the College developed and implemented targeted interventions aimed at improving student engagement and retention. The Student Academic Success Plan (ASP) was introduced as a structured intervention to encourage at-risk students to engage in self-reflection and academic planning. Initial uptake was low (20%), prompting the introduction of the Student Outreach Phone Call Program by Learning Skills Advisors (LSAs). This personalised approach boosted ASP completion and led to a 95% re-enrolment rate among failed students, highlighting the impact of targeted, human-centred support.

06E EMERGING INITIATIVE
TRANSITIONS

Assumed Knowledge Project at UniSQ 2024/25

Melanie Downs, Anita Fredriks, Charlene Jackson
UniSQ

From 2024, a review is being undertaken of the Learning Advisor-designed assumed knowledge test in its current form. This review is to assess whether the test is providing a purposeful experience that allows students to accurately determine if they possess the requisite literacy and numeracy skills to allow for a successful completion of their studies. Based on feedback, a decision was made to reimagine and reinvigorate the assumed knowledge test and to respond to some of the issues that Learning Advisors have been noticing during their student consultations. This emerging initiative discusses the process to review and adapt the current test, and plans for future implementation and revision.

06F EMERGING INITIATIVE
STUDENTS

Supporting academics with inclusive & equitable curricula, teaching and learning: An institutional case study approach

Kieran Balloo
Southern Cross University

Chris Browne
The Australian National University

Chi Baik
The University of Melbourne

Sarah O'Shea
Charles Sturt University

Addressing students' learning needs equitably and at scale requires more systematic inclusion in classrooms and curricula. This project aims to advance inclusive and equitable teaching and learning, curriculum, assessment practices and policies. Five case studies will be produced based on focus group and survey data about how academics perceive, implement, and evaluate equity and inclusion in their classrooms, disciplines, and institutions.

Each case study context will draw on the wealth of expertise carried by the project team, including transdisciplinary teaching, cultural and linguistic diversity, online or blended education, higher education professional development, assessment design in the age of GenAI, enabling education, and supporting mental health and neurodiversity. This paper will give an overview of the project approach and how the data will be used to provide insights into how academics understand and enact inclusive practices in their pedagogies, as well as consideration of the challenges they may face.

06G EMERGING INITIATIVE
RETENTION

Kicking goals in education: How an innovative AFL partnership prepares students for success on and off the field

Peter Komsta,
RMIT University

Dr Kirstin Hannah
Essendon Football Club

As Generation Z enters the workforce and Generation Alpha progresses through their schooling years into tertiary education, innovative industry-academia partnerships are key to enhancing student retention, success, and career readiness. The Essendon Education Academy (EEA), a collaboration between Essendon Football Club and RMIT University, demonstrates how embedding education within industry can drive student engagement and achievement.

By integrating structured industry placements, hands-on learning, and direct exposure to elite sports environments, the EEA fosters career-ready graduates with industry-specific skills, strong professional networks, and clear pathways to employment. The model's support structures ensure students remain engaged, confident, and prepared for multi-phase careers.

This paper explores the scalability of the EEA model beyond AFL, highlighting its potential to improve student retention and success across other sports and industries. By bridging education with real-world experience, the EEA presents a replicable, cost-effective model for enhancing student achievement and workforce integration.

NOTES

4:10PM – 4:40PM
PARALLEL SESSION

07

07A EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Considerations for integrating humour to support student engagement in online higher education learning environments: An emerging initiative

Anja Pabel
CQUniversity

Alice Brown
UniSQ

Josephine Pryce
James Cook University

Teachers in higher education (HE) are embracing 'tried and tested' as well as innovative strategies to heighten student online learning and engagement. In traditional educational settings, teachers have used humour for many years as a pedagogical technique to help build connection, break the ice, lighten a heavy topic or increase connection with content. However, there is limited evidence of this strategy being used in online HE environments. We have reviewed existing literature focused on the use and value of humour, and applications of humour across a range of fields and educational disciplines.

By adopting a strengths-based lens focused on 'what has worked for others' we have developed a framework of 'key considerations' for integrating humour as a strategy for enhancing student online engagement and learning in HE. We are keen to share our research findings that online teachers can add to their armoury of tools for supporting student success.

07B EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Leveraging Social Media Trends to Deliver Key Unit Information: Helping New Students to "picture myself in their shoes"

Renee L Rogers, Dylan M Fox, Andree S Gamble
Monash University

Students transitioning to tertiary education are faced with incredible amounts of new information and social experiences that can leave them feeling overwhelmed and unprepared. Recognising the link between successful transition and student academic success and retention, we collaborated with past students to develop a new approach to information delivery. Using popular social media styles, we co-created short, engaging videos covering key transition topics.

Thematic analysis of qualitative survey data from incoming students revealed that leveraging student-preferred media formats can enhance the effectiveness of information delivery and pave the way for more engaged and supportive student-educator relationships. This innovative approach not only aids in easing the transition for new students but also sets a foundation for their long-term academic success and retention.

07C REFEREED PAPER STUDENTS

Intended and actual involvement of commencing first-year undergraduate students in university activities

Claudia A. Rivera Munoz, Chi Baik, Tracii Ryan, Raoul A. Mulder
The University of Melbourne

Students' involvement in both curricular and extracurricular activities at university fosters a sense of belonging, and supports academic achievement and persistence, particularly during the first year. For over a decade, universities have observed diminishing student engagement patterns. These include declining attendance at face-to-face classes and reduced participation in extracurricular activities. We examined first-year undergraduate students' perceptions of university expectations, their initial intentions for involvement, and their engagement after one semester of study at a campus-based university.

A questionnaire was administered to 720 students in their first semester and readministered to 180 of these students in their second semester. While most respondents initially expressed strong intentions to attend classes and utilise campus facilities, actual attendance and involvement levels had declined by the second semester. Class scheduling, peer relationships, and the relative convenience of campus accessibility significantly influenced student involvement. This study provides insights for institutions to develop targeted strategies to enhance first-year student involvement.

07D EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

AchieVeU- An Innovative Approach to Student Transition Support

Robert Worrell
Victoria University

AchieVeU is an equity-focused program that supports university student transitions through the Vygo platform. By replacing the previous Success Planning service, it connects students with trained Success Coaches who offer personalised guidance based on lived experiences. AchieVeU enhances traditional mentoring by focusing on equity-based matching, digital accessibility, and holistic student support, aiming to improve engagement, retention, and access to resources while fostering a sense of belonging.

07E EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Pedagogy, process and impact: A case study of improving student success and satisfaction through immersive block learning

Elizabeth Goode, Thomas Roche, Erica Wilson
Southern Cross University

With greater diversity in student cohorts, higher education institutions are seeking innovative curriculum delivery forms which better serve students' learning needs. Immersive block models are one such innovation that can make a sustained, positive difference to student outcomes; yet they remain a non-traditional form of higher education. This presentation reports on the impact of a six-week, two-unit-at-a-time immersive block model on student success (N = 163,795) and satisfaction (N = 51,849) across all faculties and colleges at a public Australian university.

Results demonstrate a statistically significant uplift in success and satisfaction across the institution from 2019 to 2024. Student success rate increases exceeding 15 percentage points were observed in four faculties/colleges. We posit that these results reflect the benefits of greater focus, clearer time frames, and a refined pedagogy for blended and online learning. We also discuss challenges with implementing immersive block learning across varied disciplines and cohorts.

07F EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

So much data, so little connectivity: mapping administrative data for program targeting, monitoring and evaluation

Geoffrey Mitchell
Queensland Department of Education
Visiting Scholar, Curtin University

Evidence informed policy and practice relies on quality data to ensure programs are well targeted, monitored and effectively evaluated. In recent years there has been increasing requirements for student equity programs to demonstrate impact, however, much needed administrative data is often lacking or inadequate for the purpose, particularly at the pre-access stage of the student lifecycle. This presentation will outline a data mapping exercise undertaken by the author to improve understanding of administrative data collections at the national, state and territory level and their usefulness for program targeting, monitoring and evaluation. Key findings will be discussed including key data shortfalls and differences across jurisdictions.

07G EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Enhancing Student Support through AI: The PAC AI Agent Initiative

Jules Page, Suliana Male
Murdoch University

How can custom AI programs extend the reach of your peer-to-peer study support services? Murdoch University has created an out-of-hours AI agent to help students unable to access the Peer Academic Coach (PAC) program during designated 'office' hours. Using the Cogniti generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) system, the goal was to retain the original PAC 'coaching' format of asking probing questions to empower students to develop their own understanding, thereby providing immediate assistance while maintaining academic integrity. Co-designed by high-achieving PAC students, for students, a product is ready for release to students after numerous versions and hundreds of test conversations. This presentation will discuss the project design features as well as the real-world learning impact on PACs and the expected impact on students accessing the new service.

WEDNESDAY

STUDENT SUCCESS STUDENT PANEL

WEDNESDAY 2 JULY 2025

9:00AM – 10:00AM

GRAND BALLROOM

A group of students will be sharing their insights on the importance of amplifying student voices in shaping the future of higher education.

They will reflect on how their personal experiences and unique perspectives can influence the evolution of learning, teaching and student support.

NOTES

NOTES

10:30AM – 11:00AM
PARALLEL SESSION

08

08A EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Transforming First-Year Experiences: Embedding Innovative Peer Mentoring into the Curriculum to Enhance Student Transitions

Dr Elizabeth Brogan, Jessica Durant, Jack Cornish, Dr Lee Wallace, Dr Rob Bower, Associate Professor Jacqui Pich, Associate Professor Lynn Sinclair
University of Technology Sydney

Supporting students' transition to higher education is essential for academic success and retention. The Faculty of Health Peer Mentoring Program embeds peer mentors into foundational first-year subjects, applying transition principles and intentional curriculum design to promote belonging, engagement, and independent learning. Launched in 2024, the program supported over 550 Nursing and Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation students. The program expanded faculty-wide in 2025, with future cross-faculty collaboration. This initiative enhances student experiences by addressing transition challenges, fostering equity, and strengthening engagement through a structured, embedded peer mentoring model.

08B EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Indigenising absences in the tertiary curriculum: Piloting and evaluating teaching and learning innovation across diverse disciplines

Tracey Bunda, Katelyn Barney
The University of Queensland

While many academic staff are keen to include Indigenous perspectives in their curriculum, there is still the perception that some disciplinary areas are "difficult" to Indigenise. Drawing on findings from a University of Queensland Teaching Innovation grant, we explore the ways we have worked with academics in six university undergraduate courses (biomedical science, musicology, geography, engineering, vet science, and math/physics) at the beginning stages of integrating Indigenous perspectives into their curriculum to embed new Indigenised curriculum. We discuss how curriculum was developed and piloted in these courses and also explore initial findings from interviews with staff and students about their experiences of the new Indigenised curriculum. To conclude, we discuss the development of best practice case studies that can assist others to include Indigenous perspectives in their curriculum, particularly in disciplines where Indigenisation may seem difficult and contribute to strengthening the embedding of Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum.

08C EMERGING INITIATIVE RETENTION

University-Wide Nudge Pilot to Support Student Engagement and Retention

Ali Enright, Jeremy Chance, Matthew Christian
Flinders University

Nudge analytics provide an approach for encouraging student engagement by combining learning analytics with nudge theory. Nudge theory stipulates that human behaviour can be altered in predictable and favourable ways by improving decision-making using 'nudges', actions that are aimed to help reach sound judgements without inflicting harm, such as sending a message to students encouraging engagement with course content. Nudge analytics, then, is the intersection of accessing students' learning analytics on the learning management system to nudge students to make good choices regarding their engagement.

This approach enables institutions to target students of concern directly, providing timely support to those at risk of disengagement. When and how should we nudge students to support their engagement and retention? In this session, we present two university-wide nudge pilots sharing how nudges were executed across the University in a cross-institution collaboration and report on nudge effectiveness and lessons learned along the way.

08D REFEREED PAPER SUCCESS

Enhancing student motivation and engagement: Exploring higher education students' experiences as co-creators of curriculum.

Anna Ólafsdóttir, Sólveig Zophoníasdóttir
University of Akureyri, Iceland

This paper presents a study exploring students' experiences as co-creators of the curriculum in three master's level courses within a teacher education programme at a small state university, the University of Akureyri, Iceland. The authors, who also oversaw the courses, adopted the principles of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to guide the research. The MUSIC model of motivation served as the analytical framework, focusing on aspects of the learning environment that foster motivation and engagement.

Findings indicate that students experienced empowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and care—the core components of the MUSIC model—throughout the courses. These factors contributed to strong motivation, active engagement, and increased resilience when facing challenges. The results suggest that student involvement in curriculum design played a significant role in shaping these experiences. While based on a relatively small sample, the study provides valuable insights for higher education teaching practices both within the local context and on a global scale.

08E EMERGING INITIATIVE

TRANSITIONS

Learning Without Limits: Extending Gifted Senior School Students Through Tertiary Education

Rebecca Curtin, Shannan Moir
Curtin University

The Rising Scholar Program addresses the persistent issue of underachievement among gifted high school students. Research highlights that nearly 50% of gifted students fail to reach their full potential due to a lack of targeted extension strategies. RSP provides an opportunity for academically advanced students to undertake university-level units across various disciplines in both online and on-campus formats. The program has seen substantial growth and results indicate almost half of the students achieve 80% or higher, reinforcing the positive impact of acceleration on gifted learners. While no single intervention fully addresses gifted underachievement, the program shows promising outcomes in fostering academic excellence and preparing students for tertiary education.

08F EMERGING INITIATIVE

STUDENTS

Educators as connectors: Bridging the equivalence gap between online and face-to-face learning in tertiary education

Michelle Roberts, Steven Pace, Amy Johnson
CQUniversity

This emerging initiative examines which educator practices, as identified by students, support equivalent peer connections in online and face-to-face study modes. Our analysis establishes four essential elements for enabling equivalent peer connection experiences: informal conversations, initial connection opportunities, peer visibility, and educator presence. From this, we developed a student-informed framework that provides practical guidance for educators.

NOTES

11:10AM – 11:40AM
PARALLEL SESSION

09

09A EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Grit-ability: A practical toolkit to enable student success.

Anne Braund, Trixie James, Katrina Johnston
CQUniversity

For many students, their first experience at university can determine whether they persist or walk away from higher education entirely. A successful start is not just beneficial—it is transformative, shaping their confidence, motivation, and long-term engagement with learning. This study explores the key factors that empower student success in Enabling education. Using Merriam's (1998) Case Study methodology, bounded within an Enabling program, and guided by Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis, the research seeks to answer the question: What factors empower student success in Enabling education? Through the experiences shared by participants, four overarching themes are presented as the 'Grit-ability toolkit', encapsulating the psychological, behavioural, and social factors influencing students' ability to persist and thrive in Enabling education.

09B EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

A Sense of Belonging: Strengthening Student Transition into the Accelerated Bachelor of Nursing Program

Dr Elizabeth Brogan, Jack Cornish, Sonia Matiuk, Lucy Rosenburg, Melissa Barassi, Associate Professor Jacqui Pich
University of Technology Sydney

To support the transition of accelerated nursing students entering the second year of the Bachelor of Nursing, we have developed a two-phase transition program to enhance belonging, academic preparedness, and engagement. The program blends a targeted orientation program with core knowledge and activities embedded in the Foundations of Nursing Practice 2A curriculum. Using student interviews, intentional curriculum design, and principles of transition pedagogy, the program addresses challenges related to belonging and academic readiness while acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of accelerated students to support their transition into higher education.

09C EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Connected through Transitions – From Transition Pedagogy to Affirmation Andragogy

Dr Robin Ladwig, Professor Naomi Dale, Mel Triantafyllou
University of Canberra

The project seeks to investigate the essential support required for domestic students from Indigenous, Regional, and Low Socio-Economic Status backgrounds to feel connected during their transition from university. It examines the factors and initiatives that enable these students to have a positive experience as they navigate the changing circumstances and environments when moving from university back to their communities or into their professional lives. The aim is to help students maintain connections with themselves, the university, and their communities. For this purpose, we propose the development of affirmation andragogy build on transition pedagogy. Through focus groups and yarning circles with current students, as well as interviews with alumni, themes were identified to support the co-creation workshop in developing a leadership/transformation program.

09D EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

What Skills Do I Have and Who Values Them? Embedding Employability Skills into the Curriculum

Ali Enright, Taylor Swain, Rianna Lopez
Flinders University

Psychology fourth year (Honours) students possess a broad range of highly valued knowledge and skills. However, even after successfully entering their fourth year of training, psychology students remain unclear about which employable skills they possess and who values those skills. Integrating employability skills for diverse career outcomes poses challenges in the fourth-year psychology curriculum because much of the curriculum typically addresses the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council's pre-professional skills necessary for professional psychology pathways. In this session, we present the insights gained from three years of refining a unit in the fourth-year psychology curriculum focused on developing students' employability skills for various career pathways. Since the first iteration of the newly designed unit in 2022, students' postgraduation full-time employability rates have increased considerably and are on par with the national average and ahead of the other two South Australian universities.

09E EMERGING INITIATIVE
STUDENTS

The impact of online teaching and invigilated assessments on underrepresented students in accounting education

Professor Anil Narayan
Auckland University of Technology

The transition to online teaching and assessment in analytically demanding courses like accounting has created new challenges for underrepresented students. While online learning provides flexibility, it is often associated with low engagement and disproportionately high failure rates in invigilated final exams. This study explores innovative strategies to better support Pasifika students in an online university accounting program.

09F GOOD PRACTICE REPORT
STUDENTS

The impact of tailored student management practices on academically at-risk first year students’ engagement and success: A randomised controlled trial

Ella Ewart, Emma Pelliccione, Callan Lavery
Curtin University

Curtin University have systems to support disengaged students, but few programs specifically target first-year or equity students, and their effectiveness has not been tested. This randomised controlled trial aimed to assess the impact of a tailored support system on at-risk first-year students’ academic performance. Intervention students received up to three rounds of support, including emails and phone calls addressing challenges and promoting available services.

The study measured withdrawal rates, course engagement, submission rates, and grades. Results showed the intervention reduced withdrawal rates but had no impact on other outcomes. Baseline student engagement was a strong predictor of academic performance. Future studies could explore more intensive support or test the intervention with more engaged students.

09G EMERGING INITIATIVE
TRANSITIONS

Benchmarking of In-School Enabling Programs Across Australia

Dr Angela Jones, Dr Fiona Navin, Michael Howie
Edith Cowan University

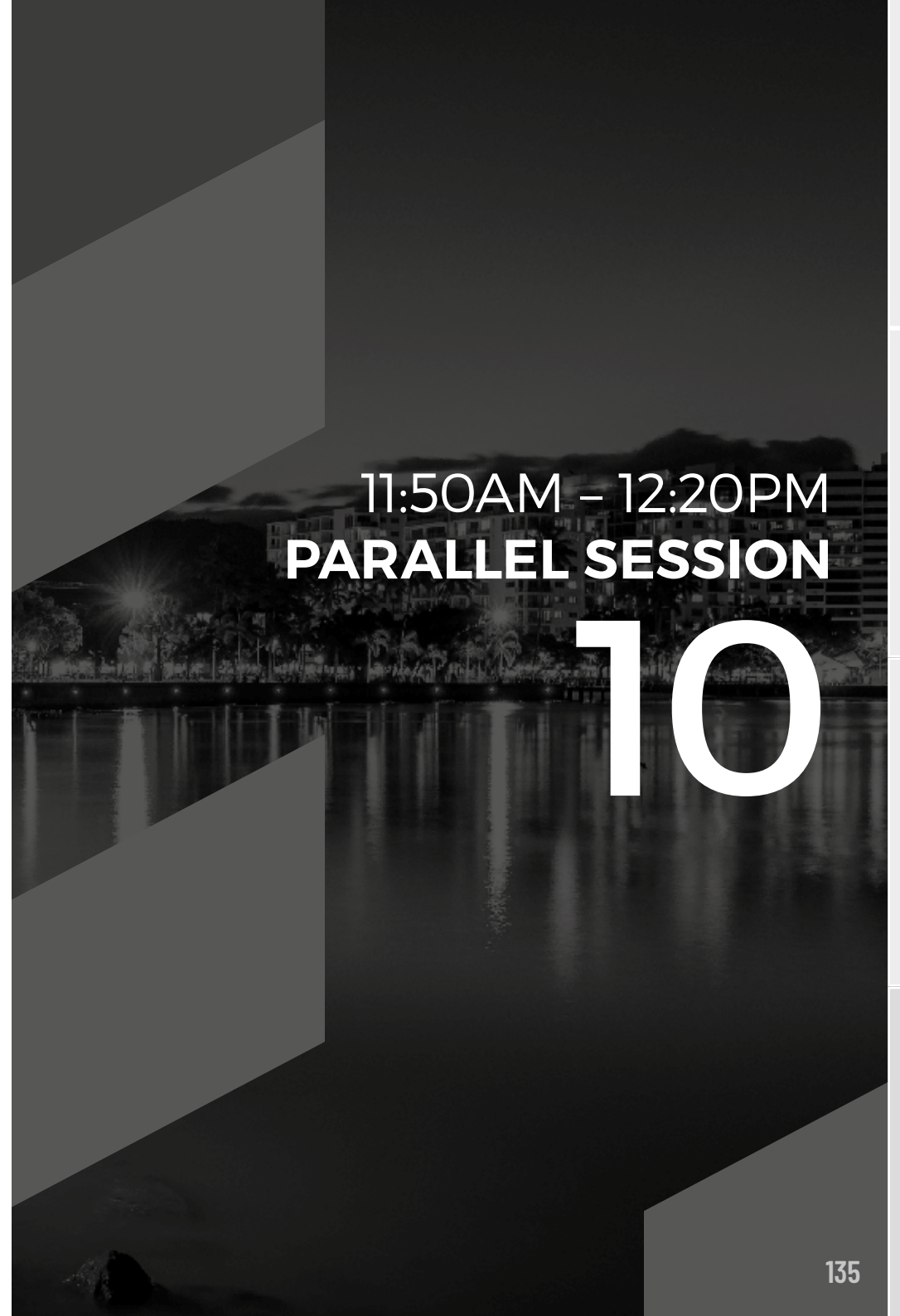
Anita Olds
Murdoch University

Dr Naomi Ryan
UniSQ

Dr Johanna Nieuwoudt
Southern Cross University

In early 2024 four universities offering in-school enabling courses embarked on a benchmarking project. Utilising NAEAA’s benchmarking framework as a guide, this was the first study of in-school enabling courses across Australia. The aim of this benchmarking project was to move closer to a standardisation of educational experience for in-school embedded enabling courses, including alignment in holistic outcomes and approaches to assessments and the grading of assessments. This project was created post-University’s Accord Final Report which stresses the importance of equitable higher education participation for under-represented groups (Department of Education, 2024) Benchmarking highlighted several key findings across the in-school enabling programs. All of these programs shared similar partnership models, visions, goals, and outcomes, with a high degree of alignment in topics, content, and learning outcomes. This Emerging Initiative shares findings from the benchmarking report which is part of a larger ACSES funded project exploring the efficacy of in-school enabling programs.

NOTES



10A EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Forewarned or forearmed? Interrupting the impacts of ‘placement poverty’

Associate Professor Ainslie Robinson, Lexi Rollins, Robbie Knox, Michelle Morrison
The University of Notre Dame Australia

For university students undertaking compulsory unpaid practicum placements, the impacts of ‘placement poverty’ are compounding and complex. This presentation explores the preliminary results of a quasi-experimental trial, funded by the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success, which compares the impacts of financial and non-financial aid on students’ experiences of unpaid placements, as well as exploring the effects of placement poverty on vulnerable student groups including students from equity cohorts.

10B EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Towards a tailored support to foster the transition to higher education: The critical incidents of first-year students in Japan and Belgium.

Kohei Tanaka
Hokkaido University

Vincent Donche
University of Antwerp

Although Japan and Belgium have diverse cultural backgrounds, the two countries face comparable challenges regarding the facilitation of the transition to higher education for first-year students. In this regard, conducting a more thorough cross-cultural validation of the similarities and differences in the transition to higher education within and between the two countries is important. Therefore, we aim to create a cross-cultural and tailored support model to enhance the transition in higher education by investigating first-year students’ critical incidents and their preferences for support in this transition in two distinct cultural educational contexts: Japan and Belgium. This paper presents preliminary research findings of this mission and outlines the roadmap for future collaborative research.

10C EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Strengthening Transitions to Higher Education: The Role and Impact of In-School University Enabling Programs

Amanda Daly
Griffith University

Selena Dhondea-Tenakov
Edith Cowan University

Helen Rogers, Cinzia Loddo
The University of Notre Dame Australia

Johanna Nieuwoudt
Southern Cross University

Samara Gibson, Selina Darney
The University of Newcastle

Rebekah Sturniolo-Baker
Murdoch University

In-School University Enabling Programs represent a critical initiative in addressing the inequities in access to higher education by high school students. By providing targeted university preparation and fostering strong school-university partnerships, these programs provide a pathway from high school to university for students from diverse backgrounds (MacLaurin., 2024). The ongoing development and evaluation of these programs, echoing the intentions of the Australian Universities Accord (2024), are essential to ensuring they continue to meet the evolving needs of students.

10D EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

The role of physical campus spaces in shaping students’ connection, sense of belonging, and success in higher education

Rina Dhillon, Kathy Egea, Simone Faulkner, Mihajla Gavin, James Wakefield, Suying Zhao
University of Technology Sydney

This initiative addresses how physical campus spaces influence student belonging in Australian universities. Our mixed-methods pilot study revealed decreasing campus connection despite intellectual engagement. We propose creating interdisciplinary connection hubs—flexible, centrally-located spaces hosting structured activities co-designed with students to foster collaboration. These spaces aim to enhance connection, social integration and student success by providing practical insights for university administrators on designing inclusive environments, with potential application across institutions.

10E EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Beyond Teaching / Ngaangaarran Ngamilma-li - a framework for third space professionals to effectively work at the cultural interface

Kacie Fahey
UniSQ

With a rapidly changing higher education sector landscape the requirement for roles to be versatile continues to grow, resulting in an increase in the 'third space professional'. As staff navigate the complexity linked with these roles, they must also manage institutional and sector requirements regarding inclusion, cultural responsiveness, and First Nations student success. As the number of 'third space' roles rise, managing the requirements of diversity and inclusion becomes increasingly complex as many current cultural frameworks are not designed to consider the academic and professional responsibilities of 'third space' roles. This emerging initiative seeks to provide 'third space professionals' with a culturally informed framework that is designed to cater to aspects of their roles. The framework goes beyond simply pedagogical approaches and provides a comprehensive approach to inclusion and cultural responsiveness by looking past Western colonialist thought processes

10F EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Breathing Life into the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences

Lucy Barnes
The University of Auckland

The Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences at the University of Auckland is committed to revitalising the student experience using a four-pillar framework developed from pastoral care observations. By implementing practical and sustainable initiatives, we aim to enhance student engagement, ensure equitable access to multiple support networks, provide various opportunities for personal and professional development, and amplify the student voice. This renewed focus on the student experience seeks to breathe life into the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, improving student wellbeing and boosting student success and retention rates.

10G GOOD PRACTICE REPORT SUCCESS

Student support, beyond empty signifiers: Insights and Challenges from Enabling Educators

Ana Larsen, Trixie James, Gemma Mann
CQUniversity

Kieran Balloo
Curtin University and University of Surrey

Susan Hopkins, Marguerite Westacott
UniSC

Juliette Subramaniam
Western Sydney University

Student support is a key focus within the widening participation agenda, as effective support enhances retention and success. However, student support is not well defined in higher education, which is problematic, as it is difficult to measure the success of support if stakeholders have different definitions. Without clear boundaries in student support, educators who work with marginalised students are at risk of 'over-supporting' students or possibly emulating a counselling role. This paper utilises autoethnography to draw on the lived experience of seven educators working in Enabling programs across four universities.

The study explores how student support was defined and enacted in their Enabling programs and what factors or resources can facilitate or frustrate effective support. The findings highlight the complexity of student support, arguing that the multifaceted needs of marginalised students require more nuanced and tailored approaches. The educators in this study collectively emphasised the need for a consistent definition, alongside clear workload allocation and additional training in order to effectively support marginalised students and increase retention and success.

NOTES

1:20PM – 1:50PM
PARALLEL SESSION

11

11A EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Taking the Longer Road with Open Foundation Extended

Dr Michelle Mansfield, Ms Kristen Allen, Mrs Cheryl Burgess, Ms Nicole Garske
University of Newcastle

Since 1994, the Open Foundation program has grown at the University of Newcastle to be the largest Enabling program of its kind in Australia. The program uses enabling pedagogy to educate and support students commencing Higher Education. In 2023, Open Foundation Extended (OFX) was introduced as a pilot, in response to growing demand for flexibility of study options. OFX offered the option to enrol in 60 units across 12 months, instead of the traditional 40 units in 6 months. Lengthening the duration and volume of learning in a preparatory program bucked the sector trend. Higher education reforms in much of the western world are increasingly shortening the length of time that students can take to complete degrees (Sarauw & Madsen, 2020). Despite this, OFX continues to grow in popularity, establishing it as an ongoing offering at the University of Newcastle. This project aims to understand the motivations, aspirations and trends of students 'taking the longer road'.

11B GOOD PRACTICE REPORT SUCCESS

Evolution of an institution-wide program underpinned by Transition Pedagogy

Dr Kathy Egea, Professor Jo McKenzie
University of Technology Sydney

This paper explores the evolution over 15 years of the UTS First and Further Year Experience (FFYE) program, aimed at supporting transition, retention, and success for diverse student cohorts. The case study illustrates a whole-of-curriculum, whole-of-institution approach underpinned by the Curriculum Principles of Transition Pedagogy. Through forums, grants, workshops, and committed central leadership, the program has fostered a strong community of practice of academic and professional staff.

This has supported collaboration and sharing of innovative practices to support student transition inside and outside the curriculum, adapting to changes in university strategic priorities and the higher education context. Emphasising scholarly, evidence-based strategies, approaches to humanising the learning environment, and encouraging student-as-partners in learning and teaching, the program has increased awareness of responses to transition challenges, supported students through the life cycle of transitioning into, through and out of university, improved pass rates and created opportunities for staff recognition and reward.

11C EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

The pathway to designing a new enabling program

Amanda Daly
Griffith University

In mid-2023, Griffith University initiated the development of a new enabling program, aligned with the institutional vision to Create a Future for All. This presented an exciting opportunity to collaborate with stakeholders across the university and to design a program that would support the identified need for increased tertiary education participation and attainment levels (Universities Accord). This paper provides insight into the processes of designing a new enabling program and identifies opportunities for intra- and inter-institution collaboration.

11D EMERGING INITIATIVE RETENTION

"Who has the power?" - lifting retention as a whole-university change

Jonathan Powles
CQUniversity

Student retention remains a persistent challenge in higher education, often addressed through fragmented and siloed interventions that fail to account for the complexity of student success. This paper argues for a whole-university approach to retention, informed by power dynamics and institutional decision-making. Drawing on Michel Foucault's analysis of power, it critiques the prevailing discourse that places responsibility for retention on students rather than institutional structures. Using CQUniversity's Retention Equity Programme as a case study, this paper demonstrates how data-driven, coordinated strategies can shift retention efforts from reactive to proactive. By prioritising structural change over deficit-based interventions, universities can rebalance power dynamics and truly lift retention.

11E EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Beyond academic misconduct: Developing students’ generative AI literacy

Hayley Ryan
UniSC

The rapid emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in higher education has sparked widespread concern, particularly regarding academic integrity (Gruenhagen et al., 2024). Recognising that punitive measures alone fail to address the root causes of misuse (Cullen, 2022), the Student Success team at the University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) implemented an educative approach to GenAI literacy. This emerging initiative comprises a detailed GenAI usage scale, a suite of accessible academic skills resources, interactive workshops, and an asynchronous online course. By equipping students with the knowledge to navigate GenAI responsibly, this approach not only reduces misconduct but also enhances academic autonomy and success.

11F EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

From accommodations to Universal Design for Learning: Embedding assistive technology into a university academic writing enabling unit.

Kristy Stanwix
Edith Cowan University

Edith Cowan University’s (ECU) UniPrep enabling pathway supports students transitioning to higher education, many from underrepresented equity groups. While Universal Design for Learning (UDL) promotes inclusive practices, Assistive Technologies (AT) remain underutilised and researched beyond students with disabilities. In line with the Disability Standards for Education (2005), students who disclose a disability should receive at the very least reasonable adjustments; however, this accommodation model may unintentionally exclude those without a formal or disclosed diagnosis. This emerging initiative presents an alternative to the accommodation model for AT, adopting a UDL approach to integrate AT, specifically designed to support reading and writing in an enabling Academic Writing unit at ECU. This initiative aims to normalise AT as a tool for academic communication and literacy development in enabling education, aligning with UDL principles.

11G EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

UNSW’s Gateway Admission Pathway and Program

Mick Warren, Katie Osborne-Crowley, Mary Teague
University of New South Wales

Key recommendations made by the Australian Universities Accord highlight the longstanding challenge of widening participation, particularly at Group of Eight (Go8) institutions. Identifying evaluation approaches that allow equity practitioners to understand not only what interventions work, but how they work has never been more important. However, there are limited cases of such evaluations presenting evidence of program impact. In addressing this gap, this paper will present data from the evaluation of UNSW’s Gateway Admission Pathway and Program (GAPP), drawing on in-depth student interviews and admission data. This paper will also explore the emergence of horizontal inequities in Australian higher education during periods of sector expansion and invite discussion on the challenges of widening participation in a Go8 context.

NOTES

2:00PM – 2:30PM
PARALLEL SESSION

12

12A EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Supporting student diversity: Evaluation of an LGBTQ+ Ally training program at a regional Australian university

Dr Gemma Mann, Dr Ann-Marie Priest
CQUniversity

Regional universities face unique challenges in promoting inclusiveness for minority student cohorts because they operate in less diverse social and cultural environments than metropolitan institutions. This study evaluates an LGBTQ+ Ally Program informed by Anzaldua's (1987) Borderlands theory to investigate the effectiveness of Ally training in meeting these challenges. Using the Kirkpatrick evaluation model, the study demonstrated the value of the Borderlands theoretical framework in delivering engaging training that increased participants' knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ+ issues and their capacity to share knowledge and actively counter discrimination. The program's effectiveness is particularly significant given the global divide between inclusivity advocates and those resistant to diversity. Although institutional impacts are difficult to measure in a small study, evidence suggests that having a strong network of allies has contributed to institutional change. This research confirms that training programs utilising Borderlands theory can be effective in fostering inclusive university environments for increasingly diverse student populations.

12B EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Inclusive Teaching: Empowering First-Year University Teachers to Support Equity Cohorts

Dr Katie Osborne-Crowley, Mary Teague
University of New South Wales

Universities must adopt inclusive teaching practices to increase participation and support for underrepresented students. Recognising that many first-year teachers may not fully understand their role in fostering an inclusive learning environment, Student Equity at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) led the development of an Inclusive Teaching Guide (ITG).

This initiative, part of the Start@Uni project and funded by the NSW Department of Education, was a collaborative effort with the University of Sydney and the University of Newcastle. The ITG equips teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to support equity. Our presentation will discuss the inclusive development process of the ITG, incorporating perspectives from students, teachers, and equity practitioners. We will outline our evidence-based theory of change and share open-access resources for first-year educators.

12C EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Exploring alternative design and evaluation through the struggles and triumphs of a transition program and its team

Rizwan Khan
The Australian National University

Alternative approaches of program design and evaluation are used to re/imagine a struggling transition program. Influences on program effectuality but also staff safety emerge. We come to the STARS community to share learnings about the alternatives and curiosity about their impacts.

The Australian National University (ANU) is pursuing equity, while aspiring for excellence in teaching and research as a Go8. This results in a unique context within which to pursue equity. There are low numbers of traditionally under-represented students, more hidden disadvantages, and limited scale of equity programs. These unintended consequences are common to similar universities (McLoughlin, 2012).

The program and its struggles

The ANU First Year Experience program was conceived in 2018 and launched only in 2022. At present, the program creates opportunities for HEPPP eligible students to form connections with peers, staff, and services. Through the program students gain access to skills and resources. Since launch, the program has seen very low numbers, both in registrations and ongoing engagement. Primarily due to factors mentioned above, it was challenging to demonstrate significant, quantitative impacts. At the end of 2023, the program team was at an emotional low with the prospect of discontinuing attempts at solving a problem made sticky because of the University's context.

12D EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

A case-study pedagogy to transition first-year biochemistry students

Nirma A. Samarawickrema, Nathan Habila, April Tan, Ester Villvanathan, Christopher Thompson
Monash University

Students often misperceive biochemistry as complex, difficult to understand, and challenging to connect with real-life contexts. To address this challenge, we applied case study learning as a pedagogical approach, from the inception when students commence at university. This paper focuses on our pedagogical approach for first-year Biochemistry students and illustrates how case study workshops were deliberately designed to connect theory to practice and embed transition pedagogies. The emerging data suggests that case studies helped students contextualise and connect concepts. The active learning design of our workshops combined with peer collaboration and educator support enhanced their skill development while fostering academic and social belonging. The design significantly impacts students' sense of belonging and integration within their academic community encouraging transitioning to university.

12E EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Co-constructing critical generative AI literacy: Enabling student agency through dialogic pedagogy

Tamra Ulpen, John Pike
University of South Australia

Amid diverse opinions on the acceptable uses of GenAI, students encounter a challenging dichotomy: viewing GenAI as either a threat to academic integrity or as a valuable learning tool. The appropriate use of GenAI is highly context-specific, making generic guidelines insufficient for understanding its application in specific circumstances. This presentation shares an action research project exploring how Dialogic Pedagogy enables equity group students in an Australian university Enabling Education program to co-construct knowledge about beneficial GenAI use.

Rather than dictating acceptable practices, our approach emphasises transparency and student agency through shared interpretations, questioning, and negotiation of ideas. Implemented across language, digital, and information literacy courses, this framework shifts from prohibition to empowerment, addressing the context-specific nature of appropriate GenAI use. By actively engaging students in decision-making about when and how to incorporate GenAI tools, this approach strengthens their agency and autonomy while developing critical AI literacy among vulnerable student populations.

12F EMERGING INITIATIVE STUDENTS

Australian military Veterans experiences of obtaining recognition of prior learning and credit attainment when transitioning to tertiary education: Measuring accessibility and equity

Professor Deborah West, Dr Jane A. Fischer, Professor Ben Wadham, Mr Matthew Wyatt-Smith
Flinders University

This paper reports on the outcomes of an online survey that was conducted with Veteran students who had applied for and/or enrolled at an Australian university in the past five years. It aimed to understand how Veteran students experience recognition of prior learning and credit attainment policies and procedures at Australian universities. Since no appropriate instrument was found to examine RPL and Credit Attainment, Australian Qualifications Framework Pathways Policy (AQF Council, 2013) were adapted into a ten-item suite of questions to reflect its underpinning principles. The survey results offer insights into Veterans' experiences with RPL and Credit Attainment and suggests there is considerable work to be done by the sector to achieve what is our legal requirement and arguably ethical responsibility to recognise the considerable and valuable skills and knowledge that veterans have relevant to a broad range of disciplines.

12G EMERGING INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Transforming Residential Life: A Comprehensive Framework for Student Wellbeing at Union College

Reenah Jays
Union College

Kris Sargeant
Diverse Leaders

Residential Colleges must offer personal support services which cater towards diverse student groups, while ensuring physically and psychologically safe environments. Colleges are also in a unique position to offer development opportunities that reach beyond traditional college programs. Union College has developed a wraparound Culture of Wellbeing - an innovative cultural shift created in partnership with residents. This presentation will explain methodology, approach, and share early results. It is intended that Union College will be a role model for the residential college experience across Australia.

NOTES



2:40PM – 3:10PM
PARALLEL SESSION

13

13A GOOD PRACTICE REPORT TRANSITIONS

A Model for Running Effective Educational Scavenger Hunts during Campus Orientation to Onboard new University Students

Zachary Fitz-Walter, Joshua Hall, Henry Sun, Justin Carter
Griffith University

Nicholas O'Donnell
Queensland University of Technology

University orientation plays a crucial role in fostering student engagement, social integration, and promoting retention. This practice report describes the development and refinement of a game-based orientation activity, a digital scavenger hunt, designed to enhance student engagement, social connectedness, and campus familiarisation. Over three years (2023–2025), the activity was iteratively improved based on participant feedback and evaluated using the MEEGA+ game evaluation framework.

The 2025 version incorporated design enhancements including clearer task instructions, a revised schedule, and improved navigation tools. Participant feedback highlighted strong outcomes in social interaction, campus exploration, and enjoyment. Importantly, the initiative demonstrates how game-based activities can be scaled across years with minimal staff input. This report shares lessons learned and offers a practical, low-effort and effective model that can be adapted for other institutions seeking to improve student transitions and success through engaging, game-based orientation experiences.

13B EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Re-Imagining Orientation at ECU

Kathleen Balson, Elizabeth Beresford, Kylie Corbett, Loretta Dayman, Robyn Ekberg, Kim Gray, Aiden Hill, Kylie Austin
Edith Cowan University

Edith Cowan University (ECU) is redesigning its orientation program using a program logic framework to ensure adaptability in a rapidly evolving higher education landscape. Prioritising needs-based segmentation over demographic-driven models, it re-evaluates data collection to enable personalised support. Informed by retention analysis and stakeholder consultation, the redesign integrates established transition frameworks and emphasises student co-design. A robust social impact measurement strategy will support continuous improvement, ensuring program effectiveness and future-proof student transition programs by embedding an agile, data-driven model.

13C REFEREED PAPER TRANSITIONS

Evaluation of an Embedded Transition Support: Bringing Academic Skills and Peers into First-Year Classrooms

Belinda McCarten, Amanda Richardson, Lauren Raschella, Alexandra Goodwin, Elissa Pearson
University of South Australia

The transition to university can be challenging, and while universities provide orientation support, many students still struggle. Extending orientation through embedded supports and skill building in first-year curricula provides students opportunities to develop the academic skills required for university while growing confidence. This study evaluated the My First Year Skills – Getting Started Module; a support embedded in a first-year psychology undergraduate course at the University of South Australia. In-class activities were delivered by tutors and peer mentors, supplemented by asynchronous online materials. Students completed questionnaires, in Week 1 (N=155) and Week 8 (N=69), before and after the module. Student's self-reported confidence for 9 out of 11 academic skills significantly increased, and the module was well received. These findings suggest embedded transition supports in the first-year curriculum, particularly with the involvement of peer leaders, can play an important role in building students' self-reported confidence with academic skills and support their transition.

13D REFEREED PAPER TRANSITIONS

Remediating the Remedial: Transforming Academic Language and Learning Practices to Advance Student Equity

Rachel Barber
CQUniversity

At STARS 2023, I facilitated a workshop 'Mapping the academic language and learning (ALL) demands of first-year units', which explored diverse approaches to ALL and their impact on the student experience. In this presentation, I continue this exploration by critically examining ALL practices at a regional university through focus groups with academic learning advisers (ALAs), conducted as part of a larger case study on first-year students' experiences of ALL. Findings reveal that ALL remains marginalised, with persistent remedial models that disadvantage students from equity backgrounds, despite efforts to embed ALL into core curricula. I argue that creating critical design spaces is essential to shift from remedial models and transform ALL practices to better support diverse student cohorts.

13E EMERGING INITIATIVE TRANSITIONS

Peer mentoring for online, first-year Bachelor of Counseling students at a national, private institute of higher education

Peter T. Spradbrow

Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors

The Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors established the Student Mentoring Program in 2025. This paper considers the challenges and opportunities of supporting non-traditional, online, first-year students, and undertaking this work at a private institute of higher education with structures and resources different to those at public universities. This paper also details the Program's aims and theoretical foundations, selection criteria, and training regime, and discusses plans for the future of the program.

NOTES

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

WEDNESDAY 2 JULY 2025
3:40PM – 4:40PM
GRAND BALLROOM



Shaping the Future: The Role of Higher Education in a Changing World

Professor Claire Macken, B.A., LL.B(Hons), GCHE, GCAIB, GCIR, MBA, PhD
Senior Academic Director, Student Success
 Monash University

In a time of rapid change, shifting global dynamics, and technological advancement, the university of the future must continue to serve as a vibrant hub for innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity. Join us in this closing keynote as we draw together the themes of this year's Student Success Conference, presenting a positive and inspiring vision for the future of higher education. Together, we will explore the transformative role that universities can play in shaping individual lives and society, addressing current challenges while embracing new opportunities for growth and inclusion.

Biography

Professor Claire Macken has recently joined Monash University Australia as the Senior Academic Director in the Student Experience Portfolio, where she oversees student academic success, disability support services and access, as well as equity and inclusion.

Her distinguished and varied career spans both higher education and industry, with previous positions at RMIT, Deakin, and La Trobe Universities, as well as at KPMG and Apple. She has also led higher education initiatives internationally, including serving as the Provost of Minerva University in San Francisco and as Pro-Vice-Chancellor and General Director at RMIT University in Vietnam, and served as a member of the Auscham Vietnam and ASEAN boards.

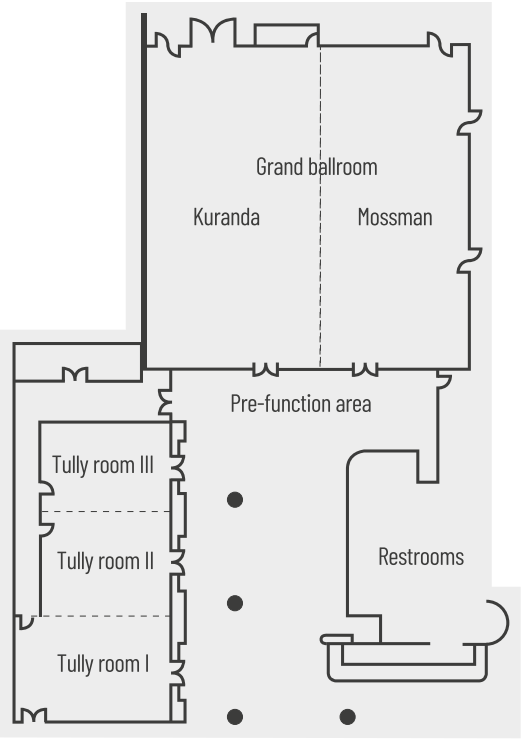
A nationally award-winning educator, Professor Macken has received an Australian Award for Teaching Excellence and a citation for her outstanding contributions to student engagement and the first-year student experience. She is a prolific author with 14 published books and numerous articles on higher education and law. Professor Macken holds seven degrees, including a PhD in Law, an MBA, and Graduate Certificates in Higher Education, International Relations, and Artificial Intelligence, along with Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law degrees with Honours.

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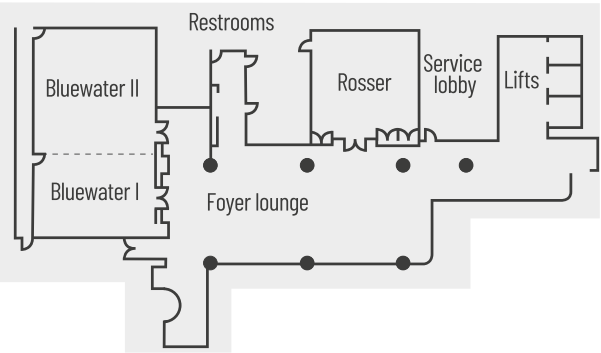
CONFERENCE VENUE

Pullman Cairns International
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Australia

Ground Floor
Grand ballroom
Kuranda ballroom
Mossman ballroom
Ballroom foyer
Tully I
Tully II
Tully III



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Bluewater I
Bluewater II
Rosser
Agincourt
Foyer lounge



*Program subject to minor change, current at time of printing.



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