

Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: a 5Ps approach



RESEARCH REPORT

Professor Denise Wood, CQUniversity Australia

Ms Mary McLeod, CQUniversity Australia

Ms Robyn Bailey, CQUniversity Australia

Ms Gillian Gray-Ganter, CQUniversity Australia

Mr Liam Downing, Charles Sturt University

Ms Amy Barnhouse, Federation University Australia

Ms Fiona Sunderland, Federation University Australia

Ms Kate Sheppard, James Cook University

Ms Debbie Flashman, University of the Sunshine Coast

Ms Veronica Sanmarco, University of the Sunshine Coast

This report was funded by the Australian Government through the Higher Education and Partnerships Program National Priorities Pool.

Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: a 5Ps approach is published by CQUniversity Australia.

Email: d.wood@cqu.edu.au

Phone: +61 7 4930 9270

Web: cqu.edu.au

June 2018

Print Version: ISBN 978-1-925067-26-2

Online Version: ISBN 978-1-921047-65-7

Written by

Professor Denise Wood, CQUniversity Australia

Ms Mary McLeod, CQUniversity Australia

Ms Robyn Bailey, CQUniversity Australia

Ms Gillian Gray-Ganter, CQUniversity Australia

Mr Liam Downing, Charles Sturt University

Ms Amy Barnhouse, Federation University Australia

Ms Fiona Sunderland, Federation University Australia

Ms Kate Sheppard, James Cook University

Ms Debbie Flashman, University of the Sunshine Coast

Ms Veronica Sanmarco, University of the Sunshine Coast

Report design by CQUniversity Australia

Acknowledgements

The project team who were responsible for oversight of this research include:

- Professor Denise Wood, CQUniversity (project lead).
- Professor Julia Coyle, formerly Charles Sturt University.
- Professor Marcia Devlin, formerly from the Federation University Australia.
- Professor Karen Nelson, the University of the Sunshine Coast.
- Ms Kate Sheppard, James Cook University.

The project team thanks the Australian Government, Department of Education and Training for their support of this project through the National Priority Pool funding.

The project team also gratefully acknowledges the ninety-nine university students who agreed to be involved in the interviews for this study.

The team would also like to thank the following people who played a key role in supporting this project:

- Ms Mary McLeod, CQUniversity, for her assistance in coordinating the project, providing support with the research design and data analysis.
- Ms Robyn Bailey, CQUniversity, for assisting with research design, collation of relevant policy documentation, conducting student participant interviews, and contributing to the analysis of data at CQUniversity.
- Ms Gillian Gray-Ganter, CQUniversity, for contributing to the analysis of data at CQUniversity.
- Mr Liam Downing, for his assistance in collating relevant policy documentation, conducting the staff student participant interviews and assisting with the preparation of the case study at Charles Sturt University.
- Ms Fiona Sunderland and Ms Amy Barnhouse, Federation University Australia, for their assistance in collating relevant policy documentation, conducting the staff student participant interviews and assisting with the preparation of the case study at Federation University Australia.
- Ms Debbie Flashman, Ms Veronica Sanmarco and Ms Sarah Glencross for collating relevant policy documentation, conducting staff and student participant interviews and preparing the University of the Sunshine Coast case study.
- Professor Rhonda Leece, University of the Sunshine Coast for her contribution on the panel at the National forum and sharing experiences of applying strategy and practice at USC.

- Ms Pauline Lawrey and Mr Daniel Baird, Software Developers, from James Cook University, for their hard work in developing the online prototype student self-assessment tool.
- Mr Jason Bell, from CQUniversity, for his hard work in arranging the domain to host this project and liaising with developers to transfer hosting of the site to the new domain for the student self-assessment tool.

Finally, the project team acknowledges the following reference group members who provided valuable guidance throughout the project:

- Professor Helen Huntly, Provost, CQUniversity.
- Associate Professor James Smith, formerly Charles Darwin University.
- Ms Karen Hunt, University of South Australia.
- Professor Sue Trinidad, the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education.

Acronyms

ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CQU	CQUniversity
CSU	Charles Sturt University
FUA	Federation University Australia
HEPPP	Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program
JCU	James Cook University
LSES	Low socio-economic status
NPP	National Priorities Pool
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
RUN	Regional Universities Network
SAF	Student Amenities Fee
SES	Socio-economic status
USC	University of the Sunshine Coast
UniSA	University of South Australia

Executive Summary

This project identified strategies that could better support regional students from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds during their transition into university to address the persistently high levels of attrition of LSES students, especially those at regionally based universities (Department of Education, 2014). The project trialled a pre-commencement intervention strategy aimed at supporting the transition, participation, retention and success of commencing LSES students across five regional universities (CQUniversity, James Cook University; University of the Sunshine Coast; Federation University Australia and Charles Sturt University).

The project aimed to build the evidence regarding strategies that could improve the success and outcomes of students of LSES background by: 1) investigating the extent to which universities have strategies in place to support LSES students; 2) exploring whether LSES students are prepared for and have a realistic understanding of the requirements of the program into which they are enrolling; 3) identifying the factors that contribute to LSES students being unable to meet these requirements; 4) flowcharting the process involved in supporting and advising students of the appropriate steps to follow if they are concerned about their ability to meet their program's requirements; 5) developing a framework and online system based on the findings that enables transitioning students to self-assess their readiness for undertaking study in their chosen program, while also alerting them to the actions that can be taken to be better prepared for study, and who to contact if they have concerns about their capacity to meet the requirements of their chosen program of studies; and 6) using the evidence from trialling this approach across the partner universities to inform institutional policy and the implementation of the approach at other higher education institutions.

The '5Ps' approach adopted in this project was informed by Kalsbeek's (2013a) framework for student retention, which identifies student 'profile', 'progress' through their studies, university 'processes' and alignment between a university's 'promises' and the student experience of its delivery on those promises as critical components of an all-of-institution approach to improving student retention and success. The project also built on the findings of a small scale pilot undertaken at CQUniversity involving 124 commencing Bachelor of Nursing students (55% of whom were identified as regional or remote, and LSES), which demonstrated the potential and identified the fifth 'P', 'preparedness' for study, as a vital component of an effective transition and retention strategy (Wood, Gray-Ganter & Bailey, 2016).

Project aims

The aims of the project were to:

1. Build an evidence base demonstrating effective strategies that can improve the transition, participation, retention and success of students from LSES backgrounds, particularly in regional contexts.
2. Provide guidance to universities on the strategies they can adopt to review their policies and strategies against the '5Ps' framework informed by the findings of the efficacy of the model arising from this project.

3. Demonstrate the potential of the 5Ps framework and online system for enabling transitioning students to self-assess their readiness for study and triage students identified at risk to ensure they are supported through their studies to succeed.
4. Inform future policy and practice concerning strategies for improving the transition, participation, retention and success of students from LSES backgrounds

Research questions

The research questions this project sought to address are as follows:

5. What strategies can universities adopt that can assist students from LSES backgrounds to transition to, progress through and succeed in their studies?
6. What is the student experience of the pre-commencement interview in terms of how well it assists students to prepare for their studies, transition into university and succeed?
7. What is the potential of the 5Ps framework and online system for assisting universities to prepare transitioning students for their studies, triage students identified as at-risk and support them throughout their studies to succeed?
8. How can universities adopt a similar approach within their own institutions to improve the transition, retention and success of students from LSES backgrounds?
9. How can the findings of this project influence policy and practice across the sector in the longer term?

Project Approach

This project addressed the persistently high levels of attrition of regional students from LSES backgrounds through a four staged project aimed at: 1) building the evidence about the efficacy of the strategies employed by universities to support transitioning students from LSES backgrounds; 2) building on that evidence to identify strategies for better preparing regional, LSES students for transition into the university and identify students who are at risk of not meeting the requirements; 3) developing a framework and online system for universities to enable them to review their own strategies for supporting transitioning students focusing on the critical components of the '5Ps' framework and implementing the strategies found to be effective through this project; and 4) using the evidence to inform policy and practices relating to supporting students from LSES backgrounds. The project was undertaken across five disciplinary fields at five regional universities and human research ethics approval was obtained prior to commencement of the initiative. The four stages involved the following methods:

Building the evidence

There were two components to the first phase of the research: 1) reviewing policies and procedures and documentation relating to the programs/courses relevant to the study at each of the participating universities; and 2) developing inherent and program specific requirements by each university partner across the five disciplinary areas (Business, Education, Engineering, Nursing, and Social Work) addressed in this study.

Strategies for preparing regional, LSES students for transition

Semi-structured phone interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of first-year students from LSES backgrounds enrolled in each of the nominated programs to identify the extent to which those students felt prepared for their studies, understood the inherent and program requirements and were supported during their transition into university and during their first year. A total of 50 undergraduates from the nominated programs across the five universities were recruited and interviewed.

A second cohort of commencing students from LSES backgrounds (n=49) at each partner institution were contacted prior to census date and invited to participate in the second stage of the project, which involved involve semi-structured interviews during which the students were made aware of the inherent and program requirements and supported to make informed decisions regarding their ability to meet those requirements. Students were referred to appropriate student support services in situations where they are identified as at risk of not being able to meet the requirements. These students were followed up at the end of term one to identify the extent to which they felt prepared for their studies, the advice they received had been useful and to determine how many have re-enrolled to continue their studies into the next term. Thirty-three of the second cohort agreed to participate in the follow-up interviews.

Development of a framework and online system to support transitioning students

The 5Ps framework was developed based on a rigorous evidence-based approach informed by the findings of the research. The framework was designed to embed strategies that can empower transitioning students to be better prepared and help them to make informed decisions regarding their capacity to meet inherent and program requirements, while also supporting those students who are identified as 'at risk'. An online student self-assessment tool was developed, informed by the findings of the research and based on the 5Ps framework.

Using the evidence to inform policy and practices

The findings from the research provided an evidence base that can inform policy and practices relating to supporting regional, LSES students. Good practice guidelines and recommendations based on the findings were developed collaboratively and discussed at a national roundtable held on the 21st November, 2017. The draft guidelines and recommendations were presented to key stakeholders who attended a national forum in Brisbane on the 9th February, 2018. Attendees at the forum were invited to provide feedback on these documents at the forum and via an anonymous online evaluation circulated to participants following the event.

Key findings

Results of the research concluded that, overwhelmingly, the participating students were positive about the interview process timed prior to commencement of study. It was evident that the interview discussion raised questions for participants about their actual understanding of all aspects of the requirement of their degree. Addressing the inherent requirements and essential attributes of the student's degree program in the interview were key elements for the participants. Participants indicated that the discussion had made things

clearer, helped them understand the expectations of university life and study and how prepared they were to undertake study.

The feedback provided through the project interview process guided the project team in the implementation trial of an online self-assessment tool for commencing students. The online tool, with access to personalised help, is designed to provide a scalable approach that can enable large numbers of students to self-assess their knowledge and preparedness for their studies and link them directly to services that can help them to succeed.

Participants at the national forum were positive about the potential of the framework and indicated support for the self-assessment tool as a complement to other personalised strategies for supporting transitioning students. A number of universities have approached the team indicating their intention to implement the approach at their own institutions. The open source online self-assessment tool has been designed to be readily transferrable for use in any other university context.

Guidelines

The collective evidence gained from this project has implications for the higher education sector about the types of strategies that can better prepare students to be successful at university. The findings have informed the following good practice guidelines, which can be used to guide institutions in applying similar approaches to their practices within their own organisational contexts.

Guidelines for staff

Guideline S1. Staff should take steps to familiarise themselves with the *profile* of their students and be aware of those students who may need particular support throughout their studies.

Guideline S2: Staff should engage with prospective students prior to enrolment to help them to be better *prepared* for the transition into higher education. This will help students to understand the requirements of their study, the services available to support them and will help to create a sense of belonging for students, while also setting them up well to successfully progress through their studies once enrolled. Even though some students will require continuing support to manage their circumstances, early preparation enables those students to know where to get assistance during times of difficulty.

Guideline: S3. Staff should be aware of their students who are challenged by university *processes* and ensure that students feel supported in navigating systems. Students who are new to distance study and/or first in family are often challenged by the online systems and processes required to navigate the range of services and resources available online, including the online learning environment. Distance study is reported to be one of the major factors contributing to high levels of student attrition, additional personalised supports are required to assist them in navigating and accessing university systems.

Guideline S4. Staff should be proactive in providing timely feedback and following-up enquiries from students. Academic staff in particular are well placed to identify students who are disengaging from their studies or not coping. Lecturers and tutors have an awareness of support services as they are the first line of contact for students and best placed to support the *progress* of their students.

Guideline S5: Staff should ensure that their interactions with students are sensitive to the profile of the students and consistent with the values and mission of the university. Students may be attracted to universities by the ***promises*** they perceive the university makes through its recruitment processes, but their continuation and progression in their studies will be impacted by their lived experiences as a student.

Guidelines for universities

Guideline U1. Universities should tailor their services to the ***profile*** of their students to create a greater sense of belonging and a stronger link between supporting students' individual circumstances and their academic study.

Guideline U2: Universities should be proactive in ensuring that future students are ***prepared*** for their studies. Given the transition process occurs long before prospective students enrol at university, universities should convey realistic information about university study through their widening participation initiatives, recruitment campaigns and assisting with preparedness of future students (ie. Student Ambassadors doing school talks) and have strategies in place to connect with commencing students prior to enrolment to assist them in the transition process and ensure that students are connected with the services they may need to enable them to succeed in their studies.

Guideline U3: Universities should regularly review their systems and ***processes*** and be proactive in responding to identified limitations to ensure students from diverse backgrounds can participate and progress with their studies.

Guideline U4: Universities need to monitor student progress in a timely and supportive manner, rather than a punitive approach. Ensure students who fail to re-enrol are contacted and supported; this is a lost opportunity for re-engaging with students at the point at which they are most likely to attrite.

Guideline U5: Universities should ensure that the ***promises*** they make align with the student experience. This requires scrutiny of university mission statements, values, strategic plans, policies and procedures, and marketing material to ensure consistent and realistic messages are conveyed to prospective and commencing students.

Recommendations

The collective findings from this research provide strong support for the personalised approach to communicating inherent program requirements to commencing students and supporting them to make informed decisions regarding their planned study. The findings have informed the institutional guidelines.

Recommendations for universities

Recommendation U1. Universities should consider adopting a personalised approach to supporting commencing students to help students prepare for their studies, identify those students likely to experience difficulties in meeting the requirements of their program and link students to the services available that can support them.

Recommendation U2. Universities should ensure that the strategies they adopt in implementing the 5Ps-based approach to transition, retention and success are culturally

appropriate and that staff implementing personalised support have appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

Recommendation U3: Universities should provide students with clear information about the program and university expectations prior to commencement. This requires the development of relevant inherent requirements and using these to inform pre-commencement discussions. Such an approach can foster a shared language between staff and students about what is required for successful participation.

Recommendation U4: Universities need to ensure that the processes they have in place to support students during transition to university helps prepare them for their studies and assists their progression in a way that aligns with their needs.

Recommendation U5. Universities should ensure that systems are in place to monitor student progress and support students long before they fail subjects. The use of learning analytics can assist universities in the timely identification of risk. Processes should also be in place to follow-up students who defer their studies, take leave or fail to re-enrol to ensure they are supported to continue their studies.

Recommendation U6: Universities should regularly review their communications to students to ensure the services and processes they have in place to support student progress enable the university to deliver on the promises it makes to students through mission statements, policies and procedures and marketing material.

Recommendation U7: Consideration should be given to implementing an online tool that can provide a scalable approach to assisting students to self-assess their readiness for study and inform them of the services they can access to help them to succeed. Such an approach should complement more individualised support for those students who are identified as at-risk due to their individual circumstances.

Recommendation U8: Universities should undertake rigorous evaluation of the strategies they have in place to support the transition, participation and success of their students, informed by the 5Ps framework. Universities should use the findings to inform future decisions concerning policies and processes aimed at maximising the opportunities for students to succeed in their studies.

Recommendations for the Commonwealth Government

Recommendation G1. Funding of equity initiatives should take into account the diversity of institutions and the cumulative impact of disadvantage and the complexity of the lives of students who belong to multiple equity groups as reflected in the institutional and student profiles of higher education institutions.

Recommendation G2: The Commonwealth Government should continue to support HEPPP initiatives that help to bridge sociocultural incongruity through engagement with schools and communities, preparatory programs and transition strategies recognising that transition into higher education is not a single event but part of a continuum that needs to begin long before students are ready to enrol in a program of study.

Recommendation G3: Evaluation of the impact of equity funded initiatives needs to take into account the diversity of universities across the sector and the profiles of higher education providers and their students.

Project deliverables

The deliverables from this project included:

1. Evidence of the efficacy of the approach drawn from the findings conducted across the five partner universities in five disciplinary areas.
2. Case studies of how different institutions adopted the approach within their own institutional contexts.
3. Guidelines developed by the partners reflecting on the approaches employed by each partner institution, which can guide other institutions in applying similar approaches to their practices within their own contexts.
4. An online system that enables students to self-assess their readiness for undertaking university study, prepare for their studies, and access the services available to help them meet the requirements of their chosen program.
5. Seven webinars based on the trials of the approach in each of the disciplinary areas in which each partner shared their practices enabling members of the wider sector to participate and contribute to the discussions.
6. A national forum hosted by the lead institution in which the partners shared their experiences of applying their strategies in practice. The forum provided participants with the opportunity to provide feedback on the guidelines prior to final revisions and publication of the good-practice guide to the project website.
7. Final report submitted to the funding body and published to the project website.
8. Minimum of three peer reviewed publications (including at least one conference presentation and two peer reviewed high impact journal publications) forthcoming.

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	1
Acronyms	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Project aims	4
Research questions	5
Project Approach	5
Building the evidence	5
Strategies for preparing regional, LSES students for transition	6
Development of a framework and online system to support transitioning students	6
Using the evidence to inform policy and practices	6
Key findings.....	6
Guidelines	7
Guidelines for staff	7
Guidelines for universities.....	8
Recommendations	8
Recommendations for universities	8
Recommendations for the Commonwealth Government	9
Project deliverables	10
Contents.....	11
List of tables	15
List of figures.....	15
1. Introduction	16
1.1 Project rationale	16
1.1.1 Profile	17
1.1.2 Preparedness.....	17
1.1.3 Progress	18
1.1.4 Process.....	20
1.1.5 Promise.....	21
1.1.6 The 5Ps approach to the study.....	22
1.2 Project aims.....	23
1.3 Research questions	23
1.4 Project governance	23
1.5 Reference Group.....	24

2. Project approach.....	24
2.1 Recruitment	24
2.1 Building the evidence.....	24
2.11 Review of existing policies and relevant programs.....	24
2.12 Development of inherent and program specific requirements	25
2.2 Strategies for preparing regional, LSES students for transition	27
2.3 Development of a framework and online system to support transitioning students....	27
2.4 Using the evidence to inform policy and practice	28
3. Findings	29
3.1 Demographic characteristics of participants	29
3.2 Mapping of relevant university documentation.....	30
3.21 CQUniversity profile and documentation	30
3.22 Charles Sturt University profile and documentation	31
3.23 Federation University Australia profile and documentation	33
3.24 James Cook University profile and documentation	34
3.25 University of the Sunshine Coast profile and documentation	35
3.3 Mapping inherent requirements	37
3.4 Findings from student interviews	38
3.4.1 CQUniversity interviews	38
3.4.2 Charles Sturt University interviews	53
3.4.3 Federation University Australia (FUA).....	54
3.4.4 James Cook University.....	56
3.4.5 University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) Social Work students, no pre-commencement interview participants.	63
4. Case studies	70
4.1 Central Queensland University	70
University Profile	70
Transition and Retention Initiatives at CQUniversity.....	70
Transition and Retention Initiatives and the 5Ps framework	70
Overview of the NPP project within which this Case Study is embedded	72
Research Design underpinning the Case Study:.....	73
Method 74	
Discussion 74	
Conclusion and recommendations.....	82
4.2 Charles Sturt University	83
Profile of Charles Sturt University	83

Overview of the NPP project within which the Case Study is framed	84
Research Design underpinning the Case Study.....	84
Method	85
Discussion	85
Profile	86
Preparedness.....	88
Progress	88
Process	89
Promise	90
Study Coach researcher observation	91
Recommendations.....	91
4.3 CASE STUDY: Federation University Australia	92
Authors	92
University profile	92
FedUni's transition and retention programs.....	92
Overview of the NPP project within which the Case Study is framed	94
Research Design underpinning the Case Study.....	95
Method	95
Discussion	96
Implications	98
Policies and practices	98
4.4 James Cook University	99
University Profile	99
Overview of the NPP project within which the Case Study is framed	101
Research Design underpinning the Case Study:.....	102
Method	102
Discussion	103
Findings and the 5P's.....	106
Recommendations.....	108
4.5 The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC)	108
Authors	108
University Profile	108
Transition and Retention Initiatives for First Year Students	109
HEPPP context of these projects and initiatives	112
Overview of the NPP project within which the Case Study is framed	113

Research Design underpinning the Case Study.....	113
Method	113
Discussion	114
Recommendations.....	118
5. Discussion.....	120
Profile	120
Preparedness	122
Processes.....	125
Progress.....	127
Promise	129
Online platform.....	130
Concluding comments	131
6. Outcomes and deliverables	133
6.1 Project outcomes	133
6.2 Project deliverables	133
7. Guidelines	134
7.1 Guidelines for staff.....	134
7.2 Guidelines for universities	134
8. Recommendations	136
8.1 Recommendations for universities	136
8.2 Recommendations for the Commonwealth Government.....	137
9. References	138
Appendix 1. Human Research Ethics Approval	141
Appendix 2. Email invitations	143
Appendix 3. Consent forms.....	147
Appendix 4. Plain Language Information Sheet.....	150
Appendix 5. Student participant interview questions	153
Appendix 6. National forum handouts	170
Appendix 7. Inherent Requirements.....	186
Appendix 8. Evaluation	257

List of tables

Table 1: 5Ps framework adopted for review of relevant policies, plans and programs	25
Table 2: Inherent Requirements: http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/ir	26
Table 3: Interviews conducted with first year regional undergraduate students.....	29
Table 4: Demographic characteristics of participating undergraduate students.....	29
Table 5: Mapping CQUniversity relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework.....	30
Table 6: Mapping Charles Sturt University relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework	32
Table 7: Mapping Federation University Australia relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework.....	33
Table 8: Mapping James Cook University's relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework.....	35
Table 9: Mapping the University of the Sunshine Coast's relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework.....	36
Table 10: Structure of inherent requirements documentation adapted from Western Sydney University's inherent requirements approach	37
Table 11: Mapping the findings against the 5Ps framework	75
Table 12: Re-enrolment progress in the subsequent term/s following interviews by cohort and discipline	81
Table 13: CSU Participant attributes and identifiers	86
Table 14: FedUni transition and retention programs	93
Table 15: JCU Student and staff facing support programs	100
Table 16: JCU: Students involved in HEPPP funded activities	101
Table 17: Alignment between USC institutional plans, policies and strategic imperatives ..	112
Table 18: USC interview responses aligned to the 5Ps framework	114
Table 19: Summary of the twelve USC pre-commenced students' responses aligned to the 5Ps	116
Table 20: Summary of responses of the USC pre-commenced students who participated in follow-up interviews aligned to the 5Ps	116
Table 21: New normal retention rate of participating universities (source Department of Education and Training, 2016b).....	127

List of figures

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the '5Ps' Approach.....	22
Figure 2: Examples of equity initiatives at CQUniversity	71
Figure 3: USC student communication strategies aligned within the Blueprint	109

1. Introduction

This project addresses the persistently high levels of attrition of regional students of LSES backgrounds through a four staged project aimed at: 1) building the evidence about the efficacy of the strategies employed by universities to support transitioning regional students of LSES backgrounds; 2) building on that evidence to identify strategies for better preparing students from LSES backgrounds transitioning into the university and identify students who are at risk of not meeting the requirements; 3) developing a framework and online system for universities to enable them to review their own strategies for supporting transitioning students focusing on the critical components of the '5Ps' framework and implementing the strategies found to be effective through this project; and 4) using the evidence to inform policy and practices relating to supporting students from LSES backgrounds. The project involved research undertaken across five disciplinary fields (Business, Education, Engineering, Nursing, and Social Work) at five regional universities. Human research ethics approval was obtained prior to commencement of the project (Appendix 1).

1.1 Project rationale

Australian Government, Department of Education higher education data (2014) shows that 68.5% of regional and 58.3% of remote students complete their programs¹ of study compared to 73.7% for metropolitan, with students from LSES backgrounds also showing lower levels of completion (67.7% for LSES background; 76.5% for high-SES background). Regional and remote students also experience multiple levels of disadvantage as they are more likely to be of low SES background, first-in family and studying externally than metropolitan students; moreover, people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background who live in remote locations experience some of the greatest challenges to completing their studies.

This project has addressed the need for research that builds the evidence about strategies that can improve the access, participation, retention and success of regional students from LSES backgrounds. The project has responded to Kift's (2015) recommendation that universities adopt a "whole-of-student emphasis that delivers a coordinated and integrated engagement and proactively intervenes to assure just-in-time, just-for-me support and a sense of belonging" (p. 51). It did so by building the evidence concerning how well universities recognise and have strategies in place to align their support to the LSES student profile, monitor their students' progress, ensure their processes match the needs of students from LSES backgrounds and that they are realistic in the promises they make when recruiting students, while also ensuring that students from LSES backgrounds are adequately prepared during transition into their program.

The research is informed by Kalsbeek's (2013a) '4Ps' framework for student retention strategy. According to this framework, the '4Ps' approach recognises the importance of focusing on student profile, progress, process and promise in helping to shape how universities can reframe their core underlying assumptions to improve retention. Understanding the profile of students is a critical component of this approach given the high correlation between student profile and retention. Kalsbeek (2013a) also calls for greater attention to student progress rather than persistence, arguing that academic progress must be at the core of the

¹ The term 'program' is used here to refer to an undergraduate degree. It is recognised that some universities refer to a degree as a 'course', however, to avoid confusion and for the purposes of this study, the term program is used when referring to an undergraduate degree program.

university's retention strategy. The third 'P' focuses on the processes; those institutional processes such as enrolment, choosing the right courses, navigating student services and engaging with the online curriculum that may either enhance student success or impede their ability to progress. The fourth 'P', promises that a university makes when recruiting future students, must also be aligned with institutional performance and students' perceptions of how well the university delivers on those promises. Our expanded '5Ps' framework (Wood et al., 2016) also considers student preparedness during transition; that is, the extent to which commencing students have an understanding of university life and both the inherent and program requirements of their chosen program of study. Inherent requirements are the essential components of a program that demonstrate the capabilities, knowledge and skills to achieve the core learning outcomes of the program. The importance of each of these 5P aspects of the student experience are elaborated upon in the following sub-sections.

1.1.1 Profile

The relationship between a university's profile and that of its students, and the retention and success of those students is well documented. As Kalsbeek and Zucker (2013) note, "retention and completion goals are interrelated in empirically demonstrable ways with diversity, quality, and access" (p. 19) as evident in the Australian context where lower retention and completion rates are observed for universities enrolling higher numbers of students from particular equity groups such as those from low socio-economic backgrounds, Indigenous students, students with disability and students located in regional and remote locations (Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, 2016; Nelson et al, 2017; Wood et al, 2016). A recent report by the Tertiary Education Qualifications Standards Association (TEQSA, 2017) confirms the view that high attrition is associated with a combination of institutional and student characteristics. The institutional factors include the type of institution, its size, the disciplines offered, quality of teaching and quality of services and facilities, and student factors include lack of preparation, poor choice of course, lack of engagement, academic ability and personal circumstances such as family and financial pressures.

While acknowledging the impact that institutional and student profile has on student retention and completions, Kalsbeek and Zucker (2013) caution against institutions adopting a fatalistic view, advocating instead for retention goals and expectations that are empirically and strategically linked to institutional intentions that are balanced against institutional constraints (pp. 19-20). They argue further that retention outcomes need to be advanced through institution-wide strategies relating to academic enrolment (including preparation and support for transitioning students), mission-based goals and strategic objectives informed by the institution's market profile. Viewed in this way, the institution's market profile and the diversity of the institution's students can be a strategic advantage, providing the institution aligns its services and processes in ways that are appropriate to the profile of its students and supports their progress.

1.1.2 Preparedness

Although not explicitly identified as a component of Kalsbeek's 4Ps retention framework, the importance of students being adequately prepared and having realistic expectations about university prior to and during transition to their first year in higher education is implicit in the framework and well documented in the literature (Cole, 2017; Darlaston-Jones et al, 2003;

Devlin, 2013; Engestrom & Tinto, 2008; Gale & Parker, 2011; Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010; Kuh et al, 2008; Longden, 2006; Ramsden, 2008; Scutter et al, 2011; Tinto, 2002, 2006). Tinto (2010) argues, that “Student retention and completion is, among other things, conditioned by the availability of clear and consistent expectations” (p. 57). Yet despite the importance of students having realistic expectations and being prepared for the transition into university, many students commence higher education studies with little preparation and a lack of understanding about what to expect in their studies and institutional life (Lowe & Cook, 2003).

Institutions have an important role to play in assisting transitioning students to understand the demands of university education including workload and time commitments, independent learning, services available and how to access resources (Ramsden, 2008). Researchers have also highlighted the need for transitioning students to develop the ‘cultural capital’ required to help them decode university discourses and respond to implicit expectations — the tacit requirements students need to transition into the university student role (Collier & Morgan, 2007; Devlin, 2013; Mckendry, Wright & Stevenson, 2014). Devlin (2013) highlights the need for transitioning students to bridge these socio-cultural incongruities, arguing that this process needs to be a joint endeavor between student and institution making the adjustments necessary to ensure student success and achievement (p. 947). Similarly, Ramsden (2008) advocates for a shared responsibility for the academic, attitudinal and social preparation for new students, emphasising the need to promote interactions between staff and students in a way that values the diversity of student experiences and recognises the enrichment that such diversity brings to learning.

Gale and Parker (2011) argue for a more inclusive approach, suggesting like Ramsden that transition is a lengthy process not just a single event at a “particular time of crisis”, “part of a linear progression”, or a process that is “universally experienced and normalised” (p. 31). Rather, they see transition as a process of becoming, one that ideally begins in school and “explodes the ideas about what we are and what we can be beyond the categories that seem to contain us” and is “more accommodating of diverse knowledges and ways of knowing” (p. 32). The implications of this approach to transition challenge the concept of induction or orientation as the primary medium for supporting students during transition, instead recognising and valuing the diversity of students through a genuine partnership between students and staff, which requires responsiveness and a willingness to adapt university systems and processes in ways that enhance the learning experiences of students from a diversity of backgrounds.

1.1.3 Progress

Tinto (2002) argues that the most important focus of institutions should not be on access alone, but rather, on supporting students to complete their studies. Tinto (2002) reinforces the importance of adequate preparation of transitioning students, arguing that “access without academic preparation is not real opportunity” (p. 3, para. 1). As noted in preceding sections, the likelihood that a student will progress through their studies to completion is impacted by a number of factors including the type of institution attended, the mode and type of attendance, (TEQSA, 2017; HESP, 2017); ATAR, age of commencing students (HESP, 2017; Productivity Commission, 2017) and personal factors impacting on students from equity groups including those from low-SES backgrounds (Nelson et al, 2017; Wood et al, 2016). Greater attention to ensuring students are better prepared and able to make informed choices, and to the processes required support student progress to completion taking into

account the particular supports required by students who are at greater risk of attrition is of paramount importance given the personal cost to students and their communities, universities and the Australian Government (Productivity Commission, 2017). This concern is reflected in the Government's response to the Higher Education Standards Panel 2016 report in which it is noted:

Enrolment is only the first step in the journey to a qualification and productive employment. If we wish to maximise the economic benefits of public investment in higher education, the Government and the public also need to be assured that everything possible is being done to ensure students have the best chance of successfully completing their enrolled units, courses and qualifications (Australian Government, 2016).

Spittle (2013) emphasises the importance of supporting student progression to completion and expresses concern about undue focus on persistence (retention) as distinct from progress (forward progression through accumulation of credit points). Spittle further expresses concern that efforts to improve student persistence have often prioritised strategies aimed at facilitating the integration of students into the culture of the institution without due consideration of academic policies, structures, and practices. A view shared by Pitman, Koshy and Phillimore (2015) who argue that "progression and attrition rates are as much a function of university policy as they are of student aptitude" (p. 619).

The strategies to improve retention and completion though well documented have not always been applied well in practice. As Tinto (2006) suggests "most institutions have not yet been able to translate what we know about student retention into forms of action that have led to substantial gains in student persistence and graduation" (p. 5). One of the challenges for universities has been the fragmented nature of efforts to improve retention and the tendency to regard retention efforts to be the responsibility of student support services rather than recognising the need for an all of institution approach that bridges "...the gaps between academic, administrative and support programs" (McInnis, 2003, p. 13). This shifts the focus away from a deficit approach that sees the problem as residing in the student or their circumstances to a proactive and integrated approach in which universities interrogate their policies and processes to ensure there is alignment between the mission and values of the university, the strategies to support the transition of students into university and the methods the university employs to provide an enriching and engaging student experience that is reflective of a "success oriented culture", one that "complements the institution's academic values and students' preferred learning styles" (Kuh et al, 2008, p. 557) and assists students towards completion.

At the same time, Spittle cautions against viewing progress in purely accountability terms as reflected in recent shifts in education policy towards performance-based funding. As Spittle writes in the context of the US post-secondary education system, "...moves to tie financial aid at both the federal and state levels to degree completion timelines...it does not give ample recognition to the fact that for students from the poorest communities and weakest schools, participation in any form of postsecondary education is no small achievement, and arbitrary progress indicators and requirements might turn into barriers" (2013, p. 29). Similar concerns have been voiced in the Australian context in an external policy environment that reflects a commitment to linking the amount of funding growth to performance requirements, which may be based on improvements in student attrition, the participation of students from LSES

backgrounds and workforce preparedness of graduates (The Higher Education Reform Package, 2017). However, as Norton (2017) argues, "...reliable measures of university performance are hard to calculate...given students have many different goals and needs, and universities have many different missions and objectives". Echoing similar concerns to Spittle (2013), Norton also expresses concern about penalising universities that have a widening participation mission. Both Gale and Parker (2011) and Norton (2017) recognise that withdrawal is always a possibility and for some students a change in direction, change of institutions or change of course might be the best outcome. However, as they point out, students need to be supported to make informed decisions; hence the importance of ensuring students are adequately prepared and supported throughout the student journey to be able to make well-informed choices.

1.1.4 Process

It follows then that for universities to improve retention and student success, more attention needs to be paid to not only better preparing students transitioning into university, but also ensuring alignment with the mission and values of the university, its policies and processes and the needs of students. As highlighted in the preceding sections discussing other components of the 5Ps framework, this requires an all-of-institutional strategy and willingness to interrogate existing policies and processes and where necessary, disrupting the status quo.

Schroeder (2013a) drawing on the work of Seymour in 2002 suggests five institutional strategies for improving quality and productivity in ways that support student success. First, institutions need clear aims and a shared commitment to improve student outcomes. This leads to the second strategy that necessitates universities interrogating policies, practices, programs and processes that influence student success through the lens of the student experience. Schroeder argues that the third strategy involves adopting a process orientation that examines the effectiveness of processes and identifies unattended processes that are not being actively monitored. Fourth, Schroeder suggest the need for better communication and hand-offs between the staff and services that impact on the student experience. Finally, Schroeder points out that institutions need to challenge deeply held assumptions about what is important in supporting the student experience in order to engage in a renewal process that can lead to improved processes that support student progression and success.

More specifically, Schroeder (2013b) proposes the following strategies that he argues can help institutions to adopt processes that support student progress:

- Improving the consistency, quality, and effectiveness of institutional services
- Overcoming Dysfunctional Business Processes
- Eliminating frustrating bottlenecks
- Reducing service problems through proactive strategies
- Improving course availability and scheduling
- Improving success rates in high-risk courses
- Creating early identification/intervention programs
- Configuring facilities to optimise coordination and integration of academic support

and Enrichment Services

- Creating clear pathways to student success
- Creating a compelling aim and champion its attainment
- Challenging prevailing assumptions, and think and act systemically
- Fostering shared institutional responsibility for educational quality and student success

In examining existing policies, procedures and practices universities also need to challenge their assumptions about their level of responsibility in supporting students from under-represented populations. This requires a shift from attributing students' personal challenges to matters that are outside the university's control, and taking responsibility for providing the services that meet the needs of students whose circumstances pose a risk to the successful completion of their studies.

1.1.5 Promise

The final component of the 5Ps framework focuses on how well the promises a university makes through its mission statement, strategic documents, values and marketing align with the programs and services provided to students. As Kuh (2013) argues, universities need to ensure that "...the policies, programs, and practices to which students are exposed are enacted in ways congruent with the institution's espoused educational promise to students" (p. 88). Similarly, Davies (2002) suggests that while universities need to be responsive to market needs, they also need to ensure their marketing messages are true to organisational capability and goals, and their ability to deliver on the promises they convey to prospective students. The promises also need to align with student expectations and the lived experience of being a student at that university. As noted in preceding sections of this report, student expectations are influenced not only by the promises the university makes, but also by the university's profile (for example regional university with lower tertiary entrance score requirement), and their prior experiences as well as how well the university prepares students in transition. As Davies (2002) observes, "...marketing is not just about giving customers what they want. Customer satisfaction comes from the match between expectation and reality" (p. 110).

Kalsbeek (2013a) argues that when student expectations are met or exceeded students are more likely to continue with that university. Conversely, if student expectations are not matched by reality, they are more likely to leave that university, and potentially, their studies. This suggests the need to: a) ensure the brand of the university and the messages conveyed through marketing and other documentation matches the policies and procedures, services and learning and teaching experience that students will encounter; b) build strategic partnerships with schools and communities as part of a widening participation strategy that aims to not only promote higher education pathways, but also help students prepare in advance of applying for universities studies; and c) ensure that appropriate preparation and support for transitioning students is provided so that students have more realistic expectations about the requirements of their studies and the services available to support them.

Retention efforts, therefore, need to consider the expectations students bring regarding their likely experiences and outcomes at the institution; the congruence of those expectations with

the institution's purposes and priorities; and the extent to which "...the lived experience and interaction between the student and the institution [is] consistent with what each values" (Kalsbeek, 2013b. p. 50).

1.1.6 The 5Ps approach to the study

This research adopted the '5Ps' approach described in the preceding sections to building the evidence by trialing a pre-commencement interview strategy across five disciplines at partner universities. The project aimed to trial an approach that is responsive to the diverse abilities of enrolling students (Profile) by identifying their prior experiences, aspirations and expectations to identify their understanding of what to expect in their program and their awareness of the inherent and program requirements (Preparedness), and to also identify any challenges relating to their situation that might make it difficult for them to progress through the program (Progress) to achieve their goals. Participants were supported to navigate institutional processes (Processes) that many regional and external students find daunting, linked with services they may require and be assisted in establishing a clear understanding of the role that the university can play in supporting their progression towards program completion (Promise). Figure One illustrates the conceptualisation of the 5Ps approach.

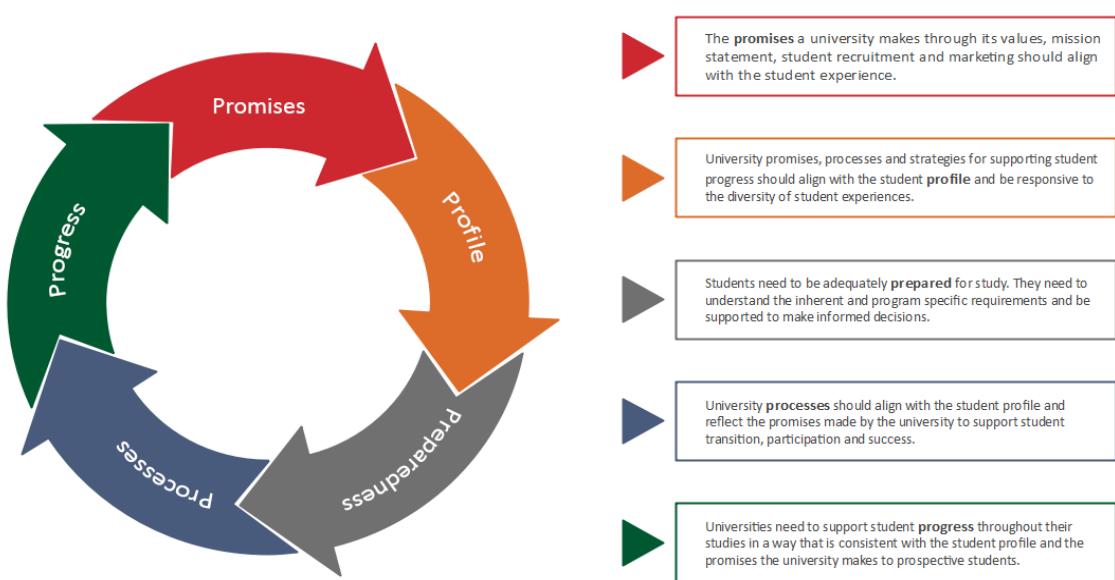


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the '5Ps' Approach

The evidence gained from these interviews has informed recommended institutional policies and practices to ensure better alignment between the '5Ps' and the development of an online system that can guide students through initial self-assessment, and trigger alerts to designated staff to be proactive in following up those students whose responses indicate that they will need more guidance to help them make informed decisions prior to enrolment and commencement in their chosen program.

1.2 Project aims

The aims of the project were to:

1. Build an evidence base demonstrating effective strategies that can improve the transition, participation, retention and success of students from LSES backgrounds, particularly in regional contexts.
2. Provide guidance to universities on the strategies they can adopt to review their policies and strategies against the '5Ps' framework informed by the findings of the efficacy of this model arising from this project.
3. Demonstrate the potential of the 5Ps framework and online system for enabling transitioning students to self-assess their readiness for study and triage students identified at risk to ensure they are supported through their studies to succeed.
4. Inform future policy and practice concerning strategies for improving the transition, participation, retention and success of students from LSES backgrounds.

1.3 Research questions

The research questions this project sought to address are as follows:

1. What strategies can universities adopt that can assist students from LSES backgrounds to transition to, progress through and succeed in their studies?
2. What is the student experience of the pre-commencement interview in terms of how well it assists students to prepare for their studies, transition into university and succeed?
3. What is the potential of the 5Ps framework and online system for assisting universities to prepare transitioning students for their studies, triage students identified as at-risk and support them throughout their studies to succeed?
4. How can universities adopt a similar approach within their own institutions to improve the transition, retention and success of students from LSES backgrounds?
5. How can the findings of this project influence policy and practice across the sector in the longer term?

1.4 Project governance

The project team included academics with track records in research relating to equity, widening participation, transition pedagogy, student support and retention strategies and graduate outcomes from participating universities. The team also included researchers recruited from the participating universities who undertook student interviews and assisted with analysis and preparation of institutional case studies.

1.5 Reference Group

A reference group was established to provide oversight of the project and to ensure the project outcomes are relevant and applicable to the broader context. Members included:

- Professor Sue Trinidad, Director and Program Leader of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education.
- Professor Helen Huntly, Provost, Central Queensland University.
- Associate Professor James Smith, Program Manager – HEPPP, Charles Darwin University.
- Ms Karen Hunt, Manager, Equity in the Student Engagement and Equity Portfolio, University of South Australia.

2. Project approach

This project addressed the persistently high levels of attrition of students from LSES backgrounds through a four staged project aimed at: 1) building the evidence about the efficacy of the strategies employed by universities to support transitioning students from LSES backgrounds; 2) building on that evidence to identify strategies for better preparing regional, students from LSES backgrounds for transition into the university and identify students who are at risk of not meeting the requirements; 3) developing a framework and online system for universities to enable them to review their own strategies for supporting transitioning students focusing on the critical components of the '5Ps' framework and implementing the strategies found to be effective through this project; and 4) using the evidence to inform policy and practices relating to supporting students from LSES backgrounds, particularly those located in regional areas. The project was undertaken across five disciplinary fields at five regional universities and human research ethics approval was obtained prior to commencement of the initiative (see Appendix 1).

2.1 Recruitment

2.1 Building the evidence

The first stage of the research involved building the evidence. There were two components to this first phase of the research: 1) reviewing policies and procedures and documentation relating to the programs/courses relevant to the study at each of the participating universities; and 2) development of inherent and program specific requirements by each university partner.

2.11 Review of existing policies and relevant programs

The project team comprising partners from participating universities together with research assistants at each institution reviewed each of the university's existing transition and retention strategies against the '5Ps' framework. This involved review of existing policies and plans, as well as initiatives aimed at supporting students from LSES backgrounds at each university. The review was undertaken by team members using the 5Ps framework (Table 1). Examples of documents suggested by team members as relevant for the review include: university strategic plans; access and participation plans; values statements; engagement and

retention strategy documents; academic related policies and procedures; Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funded and university supported initiatives such as widening participation programs, access and transition programs, programs aimed at improving participation and retention, and programs focusing on graduate outcomes; disability action plans and reconciliation action plans. The 5Ps framework used for mapping relevant documentation, policies, plans and programs of each university is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: 5Ps framework adopted for review of relevant policies, plans and programs

Review Title of Plan/Policy or Program Reviewed	Promises Messages conveyed to students and prospective students	Profile Demographic characteristics of student population and target market	Preparedness Strategies/programs in place to support and communicate program requirements to transitioning students	Processes Alignment between promises, profile and the processes in place to support students	Progress Strategies/ programs in place to support students throughout the student journey
Plan or Document Reviewed					
Policy Reviewed					
Program Reviewed					

2.12 Development of inherent and program specific requirements

Inherent requirements are the essential skills required to demonstrate “the ability to perform tasks which are essential to perform a job productively and to the required quality, the ability to work effectively in a team or other organisation, the ability to work safely” (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014). In the context of higher education, inherent requirements refer to the essential skills a student must demonstrate to fulfil the requirements of the degree relevant to the profession. While employers are required to identify the inherent requirements of a position when recruiting to ensure applicants understand the essential skills required of the role, universities are not yet required to communicate the inherent requirements relevant to a given program to students prior to their enrolment. However, given the important implications for students who are unable to meet inherent requirements for their chosen profession, this project aimed to develop both inherent and program requirements for the five disciplinary fields targeted for this research and to incorporate those requirements into a pre-commencement interview script that was trialled with commencing students who agreed to participate in the project (ie the second cohort of students).

Each project team member worked collaboratively with the relevant disciplinary leads and their teaching teams at each of the partner universities. The framework adopted was based on the Western Sydney University (WSU) (formerly University of Western Sydney) model, which defines inherent requirements as:

...the essential components of a program or course that demonstrate the capabilities, knowledge and skills to achieve the core learning outcomes of the

program, while preserving the academic integrity of the university's learning, assessment and accreditation processes (University of Western Sydney, Inherent Requirements Working Party, 2010).

This model identifies up to 10 domains under which specific inherent requirements are grouped. The domains proposed by WSU are: Ethical behaviour; behavioural stability; legal; communication; cognition; reflective skills; relational skills; sensory ability; strength and mobility; relational skills; sensory ability; strength and mobility; and sustainable performance. Not all domains are relevant for all programs. The WSU approach to the structuring of inherent requirements for communication to students was also adopted for this project. As Table 2 shows, each domain and related sub-domain is structured into sections that help guide students in understanding the inherent requirements and their relevance to both their course and profession.

Table 2: Inherent Requirements: <http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/ir>

Domain: Brief description of what this inherent requirement domain entails and why it is important	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Explanation of why this inherent requirement is required in professional practice and articulating the relevant competency standards for practice, codes of ethics, codes of professional conduct and professional boundaries. The explanation elaborates on the expectations of students to be accountable and responsible for ensuring relevant professional behaviour in all contexts; this includes their behaviour in clinical practice (where relevant), online learning and in their community.
2	Statement of what the student needs to demonstrate to fulfil this inherent requirement.
3	Justification of the inherent requirement: This section specifies the need for students enrolled in the specific degree to represent the university as student practitioner. The justification also refers to relevant policies and the need for students to facilitate safe, competent interactions and relationships with the students and the people with whom they engage, including university students and staff, and in the case of placement situations, with staff in those professional settings.
4	Reasonable adjustments: This section explains to students that reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, such adjustments must not compromise the codes and standards relevant to the inherent requirement of the profession. Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration with the relevant university accessibility/disability service. Students are provided with the contact details of the relevant support service and encouraged to contact them if they are unable to meet an inherent requirement without some adjustments and accommodations.
5	Exemplars: This section provides students with exemplars of how they can demonstrate compliance with the relevant academic and non-academic misconduct policies and procedures and in their professional

	interactions in classroom and professional practice settings. This also includes reference to demonstrating respect for cultural diversity.
--	---

2.2 Strategies for preparing regional, LSES students for transition

There were two cohorts of students invited to participate in this study:

1. No pre-commencement interview group: The project team aimed to recruit a purposive sample of up to 12 first-year students from LSES backgrounds from each of the programs to identify the extent to which those students felt prepared for their studies, understood the inherent and program requirements and were supported during their transition into university and during their first year. Recruitment emails were distributed to students enrolled in the relevant program (see Appendix 2). Students who agreed to participate were provided with a plain language information sheet (Appendix 4) and were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 3). Participating students completed a short semi-structured interview (Appendix 5) addressing their experiences transitioning into first-year at university. Students were advised that if they found the interview distressing they would be referred to appropriate counselling support, and they were assured that they could withdraw at any time, and that their responses would be confidential.
2. Pre-Commencement interview group: A second cohort of up to 12 students from LSES backgrounds were recruited by each partner institution. This second cohort were also recruited via email invitation (Appendix 2). Students who agreed to participate were again provided with a plain language information sheet (Appendix 4) and were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 3). Those students who agreed to participate were contacted prior to census date and invited to participate in semi-structured interviews (Appendix 5) during which the students were made aware of the inherent and program requirements and supported to make informed decisions regarding their ability to meet those requirements. Students were referred to appropriate student support services in situations where they were identified as at risk of not being able to meet the requirements. They were advised they could withdraw at any time and that their responses would be treated as confidential. These students were followed up at the end of term one to identify the extent to which they felt prepared for their studies, the advice they received had been useful and to determine how many have re-enrolled to continue their studies into the next term.

2.3 Development of a framework and online system to support transitioning students

The 5Ps framework was developed based on a rigorous evidence-based approach informed by the findings of the research. The framework was designed to embed strategies that can empower transitioning students to be better prepared and help them to make informed decisions regarding their capacity to meet inherent and program requirements, while also supporting those students who are identified as 'at risk'. An online student self-assessment

tool was developed, informed by the findings of the research and based on the 5Ps framework.

The open source approach to development was designed ensure the transferability of the system, and the accompanying framework, flowchart documentation and guidelines will enable universities to integrate the approach within their own current systems for supporting students.

2.4 Using the evidence to inform policy and practice

The findings from the research provided an evidence base that can inform policy and practices relating to supporting students from LSES backgrounds. Good practice guidelines and recommendations based on the findings were developed collaboratively and discussed at a national roundtable. The draft guidelines and recommendations were presented to key stakeholders who attended a national forum. Attendees at the forum were invited to provide feedback on these documents at the forum and via an anonymous online evaluation circulated to participants following the event

3. Findings

This section reports the findings from the four stages of the research undertaken across the five participating universities.

3.1 Demographic characteristics of participants

A total of 99 undergraduate students agreed to participate in the study. Table 3 shows that of the 99 participants, 49 students had a pre-commencement interview and 50 students did not have a pre-commencement interview. Of the 49 students who participated in the pre-commencement interview, 33 agreed to participate in a follow-up interview towards the end of term.

Table 3: Interviews conducted with first year regional undergraduate students

University Partners	Interviews No pre- commencement	Interviews Pre- commencement	Interviews Follow-up
CQUniversity Bachelor of Business Bachelor of Education (Primary)	12 12	12 10	10 7
Federation University Australia Bachelor of Engineering (Honours)	3	No mid-year intake	
James Cook University Diploma of Higher Education	8	8	6
Charles Sturt University Bachelor of Social Work Bachelor of Business	1 2	6 1	2 1
University of the Sunshine Coast Bachelor of Social Work	12	12	7
Total	50	49	33

Table 4 shows that of the 99 participants, 92 students met the criteria of LSES, 78 were regional, one identified as Indigenous and 3 identified as having disabilities.

Table 4: Demographic characteristics of participating undergraduate students

University Partners – student participant demographics	LSES	Indigenous	Regional	Identified as having a disability
CQUniversity	45	0	41	2
Federation University Australia	3	0	3	0
James Cook University	10	0	16	0
Charles Sturt University	10	1	10	0
University of the Sunshine Coast	24	0	8	1
Total	92	1	78	3

3.2 Mapping of relevant university documentation

The first stage of the research involved mapping of each partner university's relevant documentation, policies and programs against the 5Ps framework.

3.2.1 CQUniversity profile and documentation

CQUniversity is a comprehensive regional-based university and Queensland's first dual sector university, providing a comprehensive approach to education, training, research and engagement in the Central Queensland region and beyond. The University has 25 campuses and locations across Australia and provides a diverse range of training and education programs and courses to more than 30,000 students studying qualifications from certificate to post-graduate level. Of these students, 14,847 are enrolled in domestic undergraduate courses, 50% of whom are from LSES backgrounds and 62% from regional and remote locations. The university adopted the Critical Interventions Framework to the prioritisation and selection of equity-related program initiatives in 2015, and has been applying this framework to the management and monitoring of these initiatives, evaluation and drawing on the evidence to make recommendations to senior managers concerning future equity-related policy and decision-making concerning ongoing student support services. Table 5 identifies relevant CQUniversity documentation, policies, plans and programs mapped against the 5Ps framework.

Table 5: Mapping CQUniversity relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework

Relevant documentation, policies, plans and programs identified for review	Promise	Profile	Preparedness	Process	Progress
CQUniversity					
<i>Policies</i>					
CQUniversity Values	X	X			
First Year Transition & Orientation Policy and Procedure	X	X	X	X	
University Plan 2017	X	X			
CQUniversity Access and Participation plans (2015-2017; 2018)		X	X	X	X
Admission to CQUniversity Coursework Course Policy and Procedure		X		X	X
Articulation Policy and Procedure				X	
Assessment Policy and Procedure				X	X
Council Charter	X	X			
Student Participation and Retention Committee Terms of Reference		X			X
Reconciliation Action Plan	X	X		X	
Student Misconduct Policy			X	X	X
Student Charter				X	
Leave of Absence Policy		X	X	X	X

Withdrawal without Financial Penalty/Academic Penalty	X	X	X	X	X
Disability Action Plan	X	X	X	X	X
Monitoring Academic Progress Policy and Procedures			X		X
Academic Misconduct Procedure			X		X
Higher Education Qualifications Policy and Procedure	X			X	
Academic Appeals Policies and Procedures	X			X	X
Student Behavioural Misconduct Procedure	X			X	X
<i>Programs</i>					
STEPS (Skill for tertiary education preparatory program)		X	X		
Community Aspirations Program (CAP-ED)	X	X	X		
CQUni Connect - Outreach and Widening Participation Program	X	X	X		
Student Mentoring	X	X	X		
Student Equity Program	X	X	X	X	
UCROO (Student Social Networking)	X				X
Communication Hub	X				X
Indigenisation of the Curriculum	X	X			X
Inherent Requirements					
Accessible Online Delivery	X	X	X	X	X
Supporting Students Assessment Success	X	X	X	X	X
Alumni Mentoring Program	X	X	X	X	X
Rising Star Program	X	X			X
PSE	X	X	X	X	X

3.22 Charles Sturt University profile and documentation

As of 2016 (the most recent year for which full data are available), Charles Sturt University (CSU) had 43,142 students, of which 31,329 were domestic. Among domestic students, 22% were from low SES backgrounds, and 3.3% were Indigenous. CSU also has a significant representation of regional and remote students, with 49% of domestic students falling into these groups. Commensurate with its student demographic profile, CSU undertakes a significant amount of work aimed at ensuring positive outcomes for students from low SES backgrounds and Indigenous students. Much of this work is mainstreamed, in that it is built into regular practice across the university. CSU's NSW campuses are located in some of Australia's fastest growing regional cities, offering a unique study experience with access to the best of city living along with the benefits of a regional lifestyle. Large campuses have allowed the development of fully operational, hands-on teaching facilities, ranging from

state-of-the-art scientific and computer laboratories to television studios, broadcasting studios and a simulated hospital. The university states that its facilities set the university apart from other universities, allowing students to learn the skills required to be industry-ready from the first year of study. CSU has developed formal partnerships with number of TAFE Institutes across NSW, Victoria and the ACT, with the aim of developing pathway programs and study options for students. CSU's regional campuses are located within the area occupied by NSW's largest Aboriginal group, the Wiradjuri. CSU acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which its campuses are located, paying respect to the Elders, both past and present, and extending that respect to all Indigenous Australians. Table 6 identifies relevant Charles Sturt University documentation, policies, plans and programs mapped against the 5Ps framework.

Table 6: Mapping Charles Sturt University relevant documentation
against the 5Ps framework

Relevant documentation, policies, plans and programs identified for review	Promise	Profile	Preparedness	Process	Progress
Charles Sturt University					
<i>Policies</i>					
CSU Values (Insightful, Inclusive, Impactful, Inspiring)	X				
CSU Access and Participation Plan 2015-2017				X	
Admissions Policy				X	X
Assessment Policy - Coursework Projects				X	X
Assessment Principles Policy				X	X
Course accreditation policy				X	
Misconduct - Student Academic Misconduct Policy				X	
English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Policy			X	X	
Graduate Attributes Policy					X
CSU 2017-2022 Strategic Direction	X				
<i>Programs</i>					
Outreach and Student Outreach Team		X	X		
Academic Learning, Literacy and Numeracy (ALLaN)			X		
Student Mentoring			X		
Pathways (Diploma of General Studies)		X	X		
FirstDegree (First in Family students)		X	X		
Future Moves		X	X		

3.23 Federation University Australia profile and documentation

Federation University Australia is Australia's newest university. Federation University was created by bringing together the University of Ballarat and the Monash University Gippsland Campus. It is the third oldest site of higher learning in Australia and offers higher education, TAFE and secondary schooling. Federation University has approximately 23,000 international and domestic students, of whom approximately 25% of commencing domestic students are from LSES backgrounds. Federation University Australia has adopted a student retention and success plan, which draws on reliable and valid data and evidence to inform the institutional priorities aimed at improving student retention and success. Table 7 identifies relevant Federation University Australia documentation, policies, plans and programs mapped against the 5Ps framework.

Table 7: Mapping Federation University Australia relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework

Relevant documentation, policies, plans and programs identified for review	Promise	Profile	Preparedness	Process	Progress
Federation University Australia					
Policies:					
Student Retention and Success Plan 2015-17				x	
FedUni Strategic Plan 2016-2020	x				
BOLD Learning and Teaching Plan 2015-2017	x				
Student Access, Progression and Wellbeing Policy		x			x
Disability Learning Access Plan (LAP) Procedure		x			x
Higher Education Assessment Policy				x	
Higher Education Assessment Procedure				x	
Higher Education Examinations Procedure				x	
Higher Education Special Consideration Procedure		x		x	
Work Integrated Learning Policy	x				
Higher Education Work Based Training and Practical Placement Requirements Procedure	x				
Intervention Strategy - Monitoring Course Progression Guidelines					x
Learning and Teaching Policy	x			x	
Programs:					

Student Experience Survey (national)	X				
eVALUate Survey (FedUni)	X				
Student Retention website (resources for staff)					X
Orientation program	X		X		
FedReady			X		
Mentoring					X
PASS					X
ASK					X
Yourtutor					X
Learning Skills Advisors					X
Kickstart		X			
Live Learn Lead	X				
Counselling		X			
Disability Learning Access Unit		X			
Maths Drop-In Centre					
FAST		X	X		

3.24 James Cook University profile and documentation

James Cook University is committed to enhancing students' access, participation and success through a 'whole-of-institution' approach to widening participation, learning, teaching and the student experience, including appropriate facilities and access to technologies. Since 2015 JCU has enacted a whole-of-institution life-cycle approach to student equity, with well-articulated responsibility across a four-domain framework across the student life cycle with lead indicators for each area. Broad strategies are proposed within each domain. The framework draws on work by Naylor et al. (2013) and is informed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (2014) articulation of equity performance indicators. Informed by increasingly sophisticated data available from business intelligence systems and learning analytics, JCU utilises an evidenced-based approach to strategies, activities, policies and practices. The plan has a particular focus on undergraduate students, but includes strategies to promote pathways to Higher Degree by Research (HDR) opportunities for targeted equity groups. The plan is supported by varying funding sources, including core funds, Indigenous Support Funding, strategic initiatives and other grants. Responsibility for enhancing access and participation is dispersed across the University, with the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre, the Directorate of Future Students and International, and the Directorate of Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement each having specific responsibilities. Table 8 identifies relevant James Cook University documentation, policies, plans and programs mapped against the 5Ps framework.

Table 8: Mapping James Cook University's relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework

Relevant documentation, policies, plans and programs identified for review	Promise	Profile	Preparedness	Process	Progress
James Cook University					
<i>Policies</i>					
JCU Curriculum framework	X			X	
JCU Model	X	X			
Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy				X	
Access, Success and Participation Plan		X			X
University Plan	X				
Student Experience of Learning and Teaching				X	
Blended Learning Policy		X		X	
First Year Experience and Retention Policy		X		X	X
<i>Programs</i>					
FYE Program			X		
FYE projects and reporting			X		X
First Year Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities				X	
First Year Program Curriculum Guidelines				X	
College Student Support Officer Programs			X	X	
Mentors Program		X	X		
Learning Support Programs		X	X		

3.25 University of the Sunshine Coast profile and documentation

The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) is headquartered on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, one of Australia's fastest growing regions. Other campuses are located to the north and south: at Gympie, Fraser Coast, and SouthBank in Brisbane, with a new campus to open in Moreton Bay in 2020. In addition to these main campuses USC has teaching locations at Noosa, Caboolture, and North Lakes. USC currently has 13,492 students enrolled, of which 82.8% are domestic and 17.2% are international. 99.1% study on campus. The average age of USC students is 25 years with 59.6% of students aged 21 years or over. 62% of USC students are female, 37.3% are male and 0.04% identify as 'other'. Of the sub degree and undergraduate students, 47.8% are the first in their family to attend university. Of the total number of students enrolled, 19% are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, 24% are from regional backgrounds and 0.3% are from remote backgrounds. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently represent 3.1% of all domestic students. The percentage of students with disabilities is 6.7%. Table 9 identifies relevant University of the Sunshine Coast documentation, policies, plans and programs mapped against the 5Ps framework.

Table 9: Mapping the University of the Sunshine Coast's relevant documentation against the 5Ps framework

Relevant documentation, policies, plans and programs identified for review	Profile	Process	Progress	Promise	Preparedness
University Sunshine Coast					
Policies:					
USC Student Engagement & Retention Blueprint 2017-2020		X		X	X
First Year Experience - Enabling Plan 2017-2020	X			X	X
USC Strategic Plan				X	
Governance Framework - Governing Policy		X	X	X	
Equity and Diversity - Governing Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Anti Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment (Students) - Governing Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Health, Safety and Wellbeing - Governing Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Learning and Teaching - Academic Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy		X	X	X	X
Student Conduct - Governing Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources - Governing Policy		X	X	X	
Monitoring Academic Progress and Exclusion - Academic Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Student Academic Integrity - Governing Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Admissions, Enrolments and Graduation - Academic Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Work Integrated Learning - Academic Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Academic Timetable - Academic Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Library Collection Development - Academic Policy		X	X	X	
Intellectual Property - Governing Policy		X		X	
Blended Learning Strategy	X	X	X	X	X
Programs:					
Process to support first year students via Welcome	X	X	X	X	X

Days/1:1 peer appts, welcome calls					
Student Experience Survey		X	X	X	X
Orientation Week		X	X	X	X
Student Wellbeing	X	X	X	X	X
Burunga Centre (+ Indigenous Support)	X	X	X	X	X
USC International	X	X	X	X	X
Academic Skills Support		X	X	X	
Faculty Drop In Sessions		X	X	X	X
Student Success	X	X	X	X	X
AskUSC		X	X	X	X

3.3 Mapping inherent requirements

Each project team member worked collaboratively with the relevant disciplinary leads and their teaching teams at each of the partner universities to map the inherent requirements for each of the targeted programs: Business; Education; Engineering; Nursing; and Social Work. The ten domains of inherent requirements identified by Western Sydney University (Ethical behaviour; behavioural stability; legal; communication; cognition; reflective skills; relational skills; sensory ability; strength and mobility; relational skills; sensory ability; strength and mobility; and sustainable performance) were adapted for each program by participating partner universities.

Table 10 shows the template that each partner adopted for mapping inherent requirements to the relevant programs. As Table 10 shows, the structure provides students with an introduction to the inherent requirement; a description of the inherent requirement; an explanation of why this is an inherent requirement of the program; the nature of any adjustments that may be made to meet the requirement; and examples showing how the student could demonstrate that they meet the requirement.

Table 10: Structure of inherent requirements documentation adapted from Western Sydney University's inherent requirements approach

Domain	
Introduction to the inherent requirement and why it is relevant to the program	
As a student, what do I need to do?	Description or what the student must do/perform to demonstrate that they meet this inherent requirement.
What are some examples of this?	Examples of how the student can meet this inherent requirement.
Why is this important for me?	Explanation of why the inherent requirement is relevant to the profession.
What reasonable adjustments could be considered?	Statement advising students with disabilities that reasonable adjustments may be tailored for each student. However, there may be some instances where the university policies and/or the professional code that preclude reasonable adjustments for particular inherent requirements (for example in the case of inherent

	<p>requirements relating to the ethical domain).</p> <p>Email address provided enabling students to contact relevant disability services unit for further information regarding reasonable adjustments.</p>
--	---

The detailed inherent requirements mapped to each target program are provided in Appendix 7. These inherent requirements formed the basis for the scripts that were used by partner universities to guide pre-commencement interviews conducted with transitioning students.

The findings from these pre-commencement interviews are documented in section 3.4 and elaborated upon by the project team members in their respective detailed case studies presented in section

3.4 Findings from student interviews

3.4.1 CQUniversity interviews

Pre-commencement interview: Education cohort

Overview

Ten pre-commencement interviews were completed. One of the participants had made the decision to defer prior to the interview, this was for family reasons and the student had a clear plan to continue with study and gave every indication of enrolling next term.

Two participants had completed the CQU STEPS preparatory program, two had completed part of a university degree previously, one participant had completed the Start University Now (SUN) program at CQU and one student had transitioned from TAFE.

Major themes for this cohort

Generally, this cohort of students exhibited a sense of overall preparedness for the requirements of their degree program, as this on campus, full time participant stated, “*I’ve already done orientation online, I’m regularly checking uni emails and have a blue card for work*” (CQUEDU3). Another participant noted, “*I have planned out my schedule already, and I have plenty of support*” (CQUEDU10) and, as this student who had completed STEPS and is studying by distance described, “*I have already organised with lecturers to sit in on lectures and have a tutor for Maths*” (CQUEDU09). The participant with significant health issues perceived that STEPS had prepared her well for university study and she had assistance from disability services. A common theme suggested that participants who had already completed a preparation for study program or had already done some university study saw this as a sound way of preparing for a tertiary program. For example, “*STEPS – it was brilliant*” (CQUEDU02) and “*I studied a while ago at JCU and was doing well there so think I will be OK*” (CQUEDU06).

All participants, except for the student who deferred, were working full or part time while enrolled in two or more units plus most students have other committed responsibilities. The majority of participants needed to maintain paid work to enable their study to continue. However, overall, the students gave every indication that they were prepared for and could manage these commitments.

It was clear, although students were indicating that they were prepared, the pre-

commencement interview raised important points that were able to be clarified there and then or links to information provided for future use. Overwhelmingly this cohort saw the pre-commencement interview as very helpful, “*Yes, this interview was helpful*” (CQUEDU 03) and “*this has been very helpful and I didn’t realise that there was the possibility of emailing with a counselor* (CQUEDU06)”.

Value of the pre-commencement interview

Overwhelmingly, this cohort regarded the pre-commencement interview as very helpful and timed appropriately. Participants described the interview in these ways: “*the interview was definitely helpful*” (CQUEDU04); “*yes it has been very helpful*” (CQUEDU09); and “*this has been a worthwhile call (phone interview) and I hope that it is available next year when I come back*” (CQUEDU07) – this participant had decided to defer, for family reasons, and was able to clarify aspects of the process during the interview. Another participant used the interview to ask a number of questions, for example, about technology requirements and orientation. (CQUEDU08). This student who saw herself as very prepared was most appreciative of the interview but also noted, “yes, very helpful particularly for someone not as prepared as I am.”

Referrals made and/or information forwarded to participants and/or assistance provided

None of the participants required referrals, all asked for or welcomed the offer of links to services being provided. The interviewer answered questions or gave immediate assistance regarding inherent and/or essential requirements in each interview. For example, showing one student how to log a request with a course advisor for a Program Plan (CQUEDU10), answering questions about Practicums, Technology, and Moodle including stepping through Moodle processes during the interview, describing Academic Learning (ALS), Counselling and Inclusion and Disability services, alerting students to the importance of checking email regularly and clarifying information about blue cards and census dates.

Study/work/life balance

The majority of participants saw themselves as having planned their study to be well balanced with their other commitments enabling them to meet the requirements of their degree program, a common comment was, “*balancing isn’t a concern*” (CQUEDU01).

Students were either working full time or more than part time. One student who reported that he was working full time and studying three units stated “*I’m fine, I have a good boss who realises I may need to move work hours around, I’m hoping to give up work next year to focus on study*” (CQUEDU05). Another student who works full time, is studying two units and has three children asserted, “*I’ll be OK balancing my commitments, I was doing well previously at JCU and my partner is excellent*” (CQUEDU06). One student who is studying full time, living at home, working 15 hours per week described her major health challenge stating that despite regular travel to Brisbane for treatment and illness symptoms she saw herself as managing well.

Two students who were working part time (20-25 hours per week), enrolled in three and four units and both living at home appeared to have the best opportunity to focus on their study needs. One student who had been enrolled in four units and has two infants had decided to defer her studies until her youngest child is in kindergarten. This participant’s response to the interviewer when balancing commitments was discussed was this, “*I didn’t know what I was thinking when I originally applied and was accepted and that given the amount of study (I now realise) is involved I will now be dropping until my child goes to Kindy next year*” (CQUEDU07).

From an observer point of view it is evident that the participants' lives are fully committed with financial security of high importance. Potentially, some students seemed as though they may struggle with fulfilling their study goals although their confidence in doing so, at this stage, is high and also evident was the value participants saw in the pre-commencement interview discussion.

Cultural/family responsibilities

Participants did not note any cultural responsibilities. Some had family responsibilities with one student, who has two infants, after acceptance into university realised the full extent of the study load and has now decided to defer. This student plans to return to study once her youngest is at kindergarten (CQUEDU07).

Four other participants reported that they have dependent children, however they stated that they are well organised and have family, extended family and/or work support for their study commitments.

Financial responsibilities

Most participants reported that they were coping financially, with one participant commenting, "I don't perceive any issue, I've bought 2nd hand textbooks this term and plan to buy new ones next term" (CQUEDU06) noting that "I have no financial concerns, I'm prepared to travel if necessary [for prac]". This student was working full time, with three dependent children, and was studying two units. She reported that her husband works away, however, she described herself as having lots of extended family support (CQUEDU08). Other participants, for example, those who live at home also stated that they see themselves as being financially okay while studying, "Mum and Dad will help if needed".

Although participants stated that they had few financial concerns that would negatively impact on their study program, it was clear that the majority need to work to afford to study. This is potentially a concern, especially with the commitment of practicums.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing

None of the CQU participants reported any issues of mental or emotional health that would impact on them meeting the requirements of their degree. Mostly, students spoke of partner, family, extended family and/or the workplace as their main source of support for mental and emotional wellbeing. For example, one student who was working as a teacher's aide and studying two units said that she is on medication for anxiety however, "*My partner is excellent, and I have no financial concerns*", this student also noted that her principal at work had offered assistance and that she found the interview, "*Very helpful and I didn't realise that there was a possibility of emailing with a counsellor*" (CQUEDU06).

Other participants described their support sources such as one student who commented, "Mum is a psychologist. I help out at Head Start and so I'm aware of Youth Line" (CQUEDU09) and "I have lots of friends and family around for support" (CQUEDU04).

Disability related concerns

One participant noted a serious illness in the form of benign cancer, which resulted in seizures, and necessitated the need to travel to a capital city regularly for treatment (CQUEDU02). This participant felt she was able to meet the requirements of the degree program with the assistance of the Inclusion and Disability service.

All other participants perceived that they were able to meet the requirements of their degree

within the context of this question.

Learning skills/needs

A number of participants saw their previous study experiences as sound preparation for this degree. Two had completed the STEPS preparatory program, with one commenting, "STEPS was brilliant" (CQUEDU02). Another participant attended TAFE, one had completed the SUN program and two students had completed some units at University previously, with one noting that "*I feel okay with assignments as I did two years at JCU prior to this*" (CQUEDU06).

Three participants were planning on attending Orientation, had attended and/or had completed Orientation Online. One participant stated that in their view "*Online orientation didn't flow well. It doesn't move on. There wasn't a statement at the end to know that you have completed it all*" (CQUEDU05), another participant gave similar feedback.

All participants appeared to be familiar with the inherent and essential requirements of their degree program. Students either had blue cards or were in the process of obtaining these, all gave good indication of having thought about the commitment of Practicums. One participant was a little concerned about travelling more than an hour for her Prac and this was discussed in the interview with suggestions of how to obtain more information about this.

One participant had already emailed her Lecturer for advice and received a response (CQUEDU06), another had made arrangements to sit in with on campus lectures and sourced a tutor for Maths (CQUEDU09). Some participants noted potential anxiety with oral presentations and that they may find referencing a challenge; however, they were also aware of Academic Learning Services and were prepared to access this assistance.

A number of participants had questions answered that were prompted by the interview, for example, regarding Academic Learning services assistance, the process with Moodle, the process for deferment, ID card, scholarships and loans, practicums, Inclusion and Disability, Counselling and suggested time to allocate to study.

Except for the participant who had decided to defer all other participants saw themselves well or quite well prepared and able to meet the Learning requirements of their new degree. The participant with the major illness felt that with the experience of STEPS and with the assistance of the Inclusion and Accessibility service she was confident of being able to meet all requirements of the degree.

No pre-commencement interview: Education cohort

Overview

Twelve first year B. Ed participants completed interviews. Participants had successfully completed Term 1 except for one student who received a fail grade for one unit along with two distinctions and one credit. Eight participants were studying in distance mode.

Major themes from this cohort

Generally students noted they were prepared for the inherent and essential requirements B.Ed. degree. Seven had completed STEPS and for another student, this was her second degree. All received successful results in first term with the exception of one student who failed one unit, but reported good results for his other three units.

Participants had varied responses in relation to the helpfulness of the interview and whether this would be a useful strategy pre-commencement. Generally students liked the interview

discussion, “*Yes – good to know about Maths (Learning Centre)*” (CQUEDU21) and with regard to the resource links offered by Interviewer, “*Yes, websites will be pretty handy*” (CQUEDU18). A few participants particularly saw value of a pre-commencement interview, “*Maybe before the first term and the first assignment when I was looking for things*” (CQUEDU17). Most students described STEPS as preparing them well for the inherent and essential requirements of their degree, “*Personally a lot was prior knowledge because of STEPS, but for people without doing STEPS who don't know about a lot of the help this phone call would help*” (CQUEDU19).

Although most students stated they had a handle on their finances, clearly it was a juggle with most working more than the hours than would appear realistic while studying two to four units. A number of students were in receipt of Centrelink support. An example of participants’ financial vulnerability was exemplified by a student who expressed concern about being able to afford the student amenities fee as this was an unexpected expense. This student expressed considerable relief when advised that she would be able to defer this payment.

The major concerns identified by students related to practicums, with one student commenting that they were concerned about how they could afford to live if they can’t work while on prac. This student also expressed concern about the need to undertake the prac locally due to family responsibilities (e.g. care for children), asking if the university would help with childcare during prac. The practicum aspect of the program appeared to represent a dissonance between the expectations students had of what the university would provide and/or assist with, the promise they perceived the university gave about being inclusive and the reality for them once they begin their degree.

Overall, this cohort of students expressed understanding the inherent and essential requirements of their study program, but also had an expectation that the university would assist them meet certain requirements (for example, practicums that were accessible) and their stress was increased when they perceived that there was a lack clarity (in their perception) about this expectation.

Value of a pre-commencement interview

There were varied responses regarding the extent of overall helpfulness provided by the interview and the timing of the interview (that is, whether conducting a similar interview pre-commencement would be more worthwhile). Six students expressed the view that they definitely found the interview helpful when it was conducted and that it would be helpful pre-commencement. Participants noted, “*The interview was useful as I wasn't aware of I & A*” (CQUEDU11); “*Yes, helpful, particularly if I was a distance student*” (CQUED15); “*Interview was helpful, maybe better before the first term*” (CQUEDU17) and “*Maybe before the first term and the first assignment when I was looking for things*” (CQUEDU17).

Other students who had completed STEPS felt they were aware of the information commenting “*Yes, I think so* (that the interview was helpful), *sort of all things I had heard before* (at STEPS)” (CQUEDU14) and another who had completed STEPS suggested, “*Probably not as I did a lot of research before commencing*” (CQUEDU16). This student, although having completed the STEPS program saw the interview as useful, with a timing preference for prior to commencement: “*Probably would have been good to have the call before I commenced study*” (CQUEDU21).

Referrals made and/or information forwarded to participants and/or assistance provided during the interview

Eight of the twelve participants stated that a referral was not needed to any resource and/or service, explaining that they believed they were aware of all that was available and would seek assistance if needed. For example, one student explained that she “*had an appointment with the Counsellor*” (CQUEDU11). Three students, after discussion with the interviewer, asked for assistance and referrals were made: one student was referred to Student Finance (for student amenities related questions) and another student was referred to a program advisor to discuss a possible change in program. A third student sought assistance in relation to an exam centre question and also asked for advice concerning the possibility of undertaking the practicum in her home town as the student “*is currently stressed, worrying about what is happening to her daughter* (who may have a learning disability) *and how she will cope doing placements*” (CQUEDU20). Several students were receptive to and/or asked for links to various resources and/or agencies, after discussion with the interviewer.

Study/work/life balance

Six of the twelve participating students completed four units in Term 1 (one student failed one unit) and are continuing with enrolment in four units respectively in Term 2: One of the six students reported that they work 20 hours per week; one advised that she has three small children, works casual hours (in receipt of Centrelink student loan) and stated “*time is a bit of a problem*” (CQUEDU15); one student, living at home, from a blended family, was working three casual jobs of 16 hours or more per week and shared some responsibility for family child care (one sibling has a disability), she was also currently seeking Centrelink assistance and not eligible for equity scholarships. Three of the six students, also living at home, each reported that they work an average 16 hours per week. One of the six students “*rents with mates*” and indicated that he works 6 to 30 hours per week.

Three of the twelve participating students successfully completed two units in Term 1 with one enrolled in three units in Term 2, the other two students were enrolled in two units: One of the students (enrolled in three units), reported that she works in the family business with her husband, has an infant and had surgery seven months ago, but is “*slowly getting better*” (CQUEDU11); one participant advised that she “*isn't currently*” in paid work although she does home school her children; and, the other student reported that they were working full-time over four days per week and were “*worried if I can't work while on prac*” (CQUEDU 18).

Three of the twelve participating students successfully studied one unit in Term one, one had continued with one unit in Term 2, one had enrolled in two units and one student was enrolled in 3 units for Term 2. One student who at the time of the interview was enrolled in two units in Term 2 reported that she was working 38 – 40 hours per week and had a three year old with “challenges”, this participant stated that she “*puts a lot pressure on herself*” (CQUEDU12). Another student who was enrolled in three units reported that she is a single Mum, is not in paid work at present and has a young child with learning difficulties. Yet another participant advised that she has children was working part-time in a school and was a foster carer on weekends. This student expressed concern about “*when she has to do prac as there will be less income*” and asked the interviewer for guidance (CQUEDU22). Most of the participants stated and/or gave the strong view that their study, work and life commitments were balanced and that they were coping, some stating this with more confidence than others.

Concerns relating to life balance primarily concerned the availability of local practicums and responsibilities for child care, and the implications of needing to complete practicums. As one student commented, “[I] wondered about a Carer in my area (as I have) a concern over child care during pracs” (CQUEDU13). Students also expressed concern about the loss of income while doing practicum, for example one student stated, “I’m concerned about work and (I) haven’t worked out with my employer to have time off for pracs” (CQUEDU18). Another participant stated that “she is on top of things”, while also stating that she put a lot of pressure on herself with the challenge of her three year old daughter’s “difficult behavior”, that she worked 38-40 hours per week while enrolled in two units and was thinking of changing degrees.

When some participants stated for example that, “Time is a bit of a problem” (CQUEDU 15), they also stated that they were working on that and/or that they had other support (“My partner is very good”) and it was considered that these supports countered the work/study imbalance.

Cultural/family responsibilities

No participants described any cultural responsibilities or specific carer roles within the family. A number of students noted family commitments, particularly with small children and had concerns about availability of care for them while on practicums or asked about university assistance for childcare, generally, while completing assessment and exams. One student reported that she undertakes foster care on weekends and another advised that she regularly helps out with younger siblings along with her three casual paid jobs and full time study. Two students reported that they have small children with special learning needs and challenging behavior, and another student stated that she home schools her children. While some students described challenges with managing family commitments, anxiety related to meeting goals and fitting everything in, they also described having good support and awareness of what had been undertaken: “[I’m] on top of things and know if I’m not coping to drop before census date” (CQUEDU11) and “I see a psychologist if needed (for anxiety)” (CQUEDU13). Another student stated that studying in mixed mode particularly going to her local campus “40 minute drive away” (CQUEDU15) was very helpful. It was evident that having access to supportive family and friends was important for this cohort. As one student commented, “[I] have friends and family and [I’m] aware of the [university] counsellor”.

Financial concerns

Generally participants suggested that they were “financially okay” (CQUEDU11) or as described by one participant, “improving, I got my text books via afterpay” (CQUEDU12). This participant was working 38-40 hours per week and advised that she has one child. A similar sentiment was expressed by a participant who saw herself as “pretty OK financially - I get a student loan from Centrelink” (CQUEDU15). That student reported that she has three dependent children and was working casually while studying.

Another student said that she was concerned at having to “find” the student amenities fee last year, while another participant was “currently seeking assistance from Centrelink (CQUEDU16). This student reported that she was studying full time, working three casual jobs and helping out with childcare within her blended family.

A number of students were clear that study would be out of the question or very difficult if HECS and student amenities fees were not able to be deferred.

A frequently recurring theme relating to finances was the compulsory practicum component of the program, with one students stating that she was “*worried if I can't work during pracs*” (CQUEDU18). This participant asked if Centrelink could be claimed while undertaking pracs and wanted the university to assist her to work this out. Similarly another participant reported that she was, “*concerned when I have to do pracs as there will be less income*” (CQUEDU22) and asked what assistance was available from the university.

Despite these concerns, many participants reported that they were coping with study despite the apparent precariousness conveyed when participants described their financial situation along with family commitments and work responsibilities.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing

One of the participants stated that she “*has been in contact with Counselling*” (CQUEDU11) – and was recovering from surgery while studying three units after successfully completing two units in Term 1. This student reported that she has one child at home and works with her husband in the family business. Other participants described challenging situations yet also perceived that they were going along “okay” with their studies because of the way they had prepared for their studies and/or the various supports available to them during their study program. For example, one participant, a single mother studying in distance mode, living in a small town, and receiving Centrelink support reported that she frequently experienced power outages in her locality, and was worried about her child with possible learning difficulties. This student also advised that she was coping with the aftermath of “*a lot of changes in her life recently*” (CQUEDU20). However, this participant also noted her positive experience with the STEPS program, stating that this prepared her well for her studies. This participant had received a high distinction for her the one unit she was studying in Term 1 and described herself as coping well with the three units she had enrolled in for Term 2. Supportive contact from friends locally and the services provided by the university were important resources that helped this student to manage the load. Again, the major stressor reported by this student related to concern about whether or not she would be able to do her Practicums locally particularly in relation to available child care for her child and the cost if not available locally. This was a shared concern among several other participants and a source of stress for them.

Overall, this cohort of students appeared to have a good understanding the requirements of their study program, but also had an expectation that the university would assist them meet certain requirements (for example, locally accessible practicums) and their stress was increased when they perceived that there was a lack of clarity around this expectation.

Disabilities and possible adjustments required to meet inherent and program requirements

None of this cohort reported that they were experiencing temporary or permanent disabilities and felt confident that they would be able to meet inherent and other requirements of their degree. Three interviewees had a child or a sibling with a learning disability or mental health illness and this was a source of or seen as a potential source of stress. Support options (for example, Counselling and Inclusion and Disability) were discussed by the interviewer and referrals made if support was not already in place.

A number of students interviewed were not aware of the Inclusion and Disability (I & A) service as one student, who had had surgery a number of months ago stated, “*this interview has been useful as I wasn't aware of I & A*” (CQUEDU11). Another student with a sibling with multiple disabilities described herself as having an “*extremely supportive family*”, a “*Student Mentor*” and felt well prepared for the requirements of study having completed STEPS

(CQUEDU16), however, she was open to further information about the university counselling services.

Learning skills/needs

None of the participants in this cohort perceived themselves as having a learning disability or any specific learning skill requirements that would prevent them from meeting the inherent and essential requirements of their degree. Seven participants had completed STEPS and for another participant this degree was her second degree. Those who had completed STEPS were positive about how this preparatory program had helped them noting: “*I did STEPS and think it was the best thing*” (CQUEDU11) and, “*I did STEPS and found it very helpful. Moodle – good, it’s explained in detail in STEPS, so helpful with essay writing [STEPS] should be mandatory*” (CQUEDU20).

Generally, participants expressed their preparedness for the learning skills requirements of their degree, for example, in relation to Moodle – “*Moodle was easy,*” (CQUEDU22) and students reported confidence with written and oral assessment. However, one participant noted that with “*Group work, it was a lot more difficult than doing it alone*” (CQUEDU17), and from another “*Group work was difficult*” (CQUEDU 22). Another student suggested that “*referencing sucks*” (CQUEDU12) – this participant was now eager to seek help from Academic Learning Centre (ALC). Not all students were aware of the ALC service and another expressed her goal to manage her time better so that she could use ALC to review her assignments and still submit on time. One participant who had failed a unit in Term 1 explained that he would have found it “*easier if assessment was spread out*” (CQUEDU19).

Pre-commencement interview: Business cohort

Overview

Twelve pre-commencement interviews were completed with the CQUniversity the B.Business cohort prior to Term 2, 2017.

Major themes for this cohort

Generally participants expressed their awareness of and fitness for the inherent and essential requirements of their degree and students felt they were well prepared or prepared for tertiary study.

It was evident that the interview discussion raised questions for participants about their actual understanding of all aspects of the requirement of their degree and their preparedness with one participant commenting that “*Sure I’ll be ok as I was ok in school but after talking (during interview) I think I may be screwed*” (CQUBUS07). The pre-commencement interview was well received by all participants and it was clear that through the interview discussion important assistance was provided for example, the discussion “*helped me discover Moodle*” (CQUBUS06).

Although students described themselves as confident and/or okay financially the recurring theme here is one of the importance of work to enable study, “*I worked last year and saved money to go to uni, I’m not working at the moment but plan to get a job*” (CQUBUS09). And, even for those in full or part time work, where work is funding study it can be observed that for most of the participants if there were even the slightest change in financial circumstances then the study program would be threatened or ceased. Although this theme is evident for the Business cohort their overall financial resilience is less precarious than for the Education

cohort (for further detail see comments under question 3 for Business participants and question 3 for Education participants).

Similarly with regard to study, work, life balance, participants expressed awareness and the sense that they were prepared for the inherent and essential requirements of their study program. However, for a number of students the interview raised essential points where this may not be the case and for others the interview gave helpful information, which would enable possible problems to be resolved before they occur.

Value of the pre-commencement interview

All of the participants regarded the interview as being helpful, with one student commenting “*Yes, very helpful*” (CQUBUS03) and another indicating the interview “*helped me discover Moodle [learning management system]*” (CQUBUS06). All participants showed their appreciation for the interview discussion and described the helpfulness of the pre-commencement interview as exemplified by this student, “*Great thing that you are doing. It is real helpful*” (CQUBUS08).

One student who had not studied since leaving school ten years ago said the interview was helpful as she “*had spoken to others but I’m interested to know if there was anything else out there that I could use*” (CQUBUS02). The majority of the participants emphasised that the interview was most helpful with one student wanted further support, stating “*Yes (helpful), but I needed further information - like has all my paperwork been done*” (CQUBUS10). This student was able to be assisted with his request during the interview.

Referrals made and services recommended

One participant required a referral to program advisors with all participants expressing eagerness to receive links to information and/or resources prompted by discussion during the interview; for example, UCROO, Moodle, HECS, SAF, locations of exams and availability of Counsellors. One participant, who said he “*hasn’t been in and looked at anything yet, not really checking emails either....I wasn’t aware of Moodle*” (CQUBUS06), was able to be assisted immediately with the interviewer directing the student to essential links during the interview.

Study/work/family/life balance

Of the twelve participants, four students reported that they were studying four units: one student was not undertaking paid work having saved to study full time and has applied for Centrelink assistance; three students at the time of the interview were living at home with parents; one student was working 38 hours per week; one working casually and can be flexible with hours and the other is being fully supported financially by parents. Four students reported that they were studying three units: two of whom were working full time; one was looking for casual work and also helped by parents; one was living on campus, looking for work but had saved to come to university. Two students reported that they were studying two units: one working full time and the other was looking for work but stated that he is “OK” financially. Two students were studying 1 unit: one working full time and the other working 30 hours per week and caring for a small child.

The majority of participants (nine out of ten) reported that they were prepared for the additional commitment of tertiary study stating that they had “*no concerns*” about balancing study, work, family and other life commitments. One participant who was working full time, with work funding fees and enrolled in three units stated, “*study balance shouldn’t be a concern, my husband is supportive and children are grown up, one is studying as well so*

understands Mum needs to study" (CQUBUS03). Another participant who was living on campus, enrolled in three units, had saved up to study but is looking for casual work suggested that support from her friends would help her keep her life balanced. One participant, a school leaver who was enrolled full time, living at home with parents and working a thirty-eight hour week stated that for him "*balance was a BIG concern*" (CQUBUS07). This student felt that he would be okay as he had coped at school, although he was more aware through the interview about the expectations of university study and suggested the interview, "*helped me understand that I may not cope*" (CQUBUS07), also noting that the interview highlighted where he may have challenges with balancing his overall commitments and where to go for assistance.

Cultural and/or family responsibilities

None of the participants reported having cultural or family responsibilities. One student stated that all of her children were adults and one of was undertaking study and so understands "*Mum needs to study*" (CQUBUS03). Another student who was studying one unit, working thirty hours a week and at the time was caring for a two year old stated that her "*Husband, parents and work are supportive*" and she "*felt she would be okay*" (CQUBUS08).

Financial issues that may impact on study

All students appeared to have thought about the financial implications of studying and stated that they had made adequate plans for this. However, the interview data shows that the majority of participating students have full lives (working/looking for work, studying/life commitments) with their finances dependent on their current level of work.

Five of the twelve students were working full time and work was supporting three of these students with their study. One student reported working thirty hours per week but had the support of her partner. One participant who reported that he was working full time, living at home with parents, and studying full time gave every indication that working full time was important and that he would cope – "*I believe I will be ok with it all*" (CQUBUS07)

For the other six participants, five had either worked to save for study and were now enrolled to study and looking for casual work and/or applying for Centrelink or were being supported by parents and/or living at home or with friends and looking for work.

Of the twelve participants, just one student appeared to have less financial concerns and more ability to focus fully on study. This was a student who at the time was living at home with parents, was not working and reported that he had full financial support from parents (CQUBUS04).

Mental health and emotional wellbeing:

All participants stated that they were mentally fit and they did not perceive any problems with emotional wellbeing. When the interviewer explored a little further querying if participants had factored in possible stress with the extra load of study, examples of responses included: "*my wife is a good support*" (CQUBUS12); "*I believe I'll be okay but happy to hear about Counselling*" (CQUBUS10); and "*I've studied previously, I've got plans for getting my jobs done at home, plus my husband and parents are supportive as well as work is being supportive*" (CQUBUS08). Two participants discussed feeling some anxiety when thinking about doing exams and oral presentations for which the interviewer was able to offer support.

Disabilities and possible adjustments required for inherent and program requirements

None of the students from this cohort identified as having a disability or required any related adjustments to meet the inherent and essential requirements of their program. The interviewer described the university's Inclusion and Accessibility service and the counselling service as two resources that may be helpful for participants to pre-empt and/or assist with any issue during the study program.

Learning skills/needs

One student who was working full time and enrolled in three units stated that *he had not "written an assignment for about 18 years"* (CQUBUS12) but stated he would be fine as he has a work colleague studying the same degree, an Aunt in academia who will help out, a supportive partner and work is allowing him time for study. This participant also reported that he was not aware of Moodle and the interviewer was able to assist and send the student links to resources (for example, the Academic Learning Centre).

Three participants had previously studied (though not completed) at tertiary level and felt they would be okay in relation to the range of learning skill needs required for their degree, each stating their confidence with being prepared for tertiary requirements. One student noted that she was "*used to doing online work*" (CQUBUS05). Two other students reported that despite anxieties concerning academic aspects of their study, they had the skills to cope suggesting, "*I'm a little concerned about maths and nervous about oral presentation otherwise I feel ok* (CQUBUS01)" and "*I'm a little concerned about exams but I was fine in high school although that was 10 years!* (CQUBUS2).

One participant who at the time was working full time and enrolled in three units expressed her preparedness for study noting that she had "*already reviewed past exam papers*", (CQUBUS03), checked up on Moodle a number times and was ready to upload an action plan. This student had also completed Orientation Online, however, consistent with several other respondents was critical of the orientation stating, "*with online orientation you don't know if you are finished or not right at the end it doesn't say anything*" (CQUBUS03).

Overall, participants appeared confident that they could meet the inherent and essential requirements of their degree program. Despite their perceived confidence, however, it was apparent that many students had underestimated the work involved with one student commenting, "*I haven't been online or checked emails yet*" (CQUBUS10) and others expressing uncertainty regarding the university learning management system. The pre-commencement interview raised important questions for students, enabling them to be proactive in addressing issues that may impede their study progress in the future.

No pre-commencement interview: Business cohort

Overview

Twelve interviews were completed with first year participants who weren't offered a pre-commencement interview. All participants had successfully completed term one, ten are now enrolled in term two, 2017 with two participants deferring for term two but giving every indication of continuing with study in 2018. Socio economic background status of the twelve participants includes six from low socio-economic, five from medium socio-economic and one from a high socio-economic background.

Major themes for this cohort

The majority of participants stated that the interview was helpful with each interview transcript exemplifying how the interviewer assisted participants in varying ways. Ten of the twelve participants thought a pre-commencement would be most helpful, noting "*It would have been more helpful before I started*", and from another student "*I feel like I haven't had much communication. This has been really helpful*" (CQUBUS19). A number of participants were assisted with information directly during the interview (for example, scholarship and student loan information) while other students asked for links to resources prompted through the interview discussion (for example, the Inclusion and Disability Service).

The majority of students reported that their commitments were well balanced and that they were coping with the addition of higher education studies. As one student advised, "*Not really any concerns - pretty balanced*" (CQUBUS24). Whilst there was evidence that many participants had been successful in their first term studies, two students had deferred (one deferred Term 1, the other Term 2), however, these seemed to be thoughtful decisions and part of an overall longer term study plan. Participants gave examples of what helped them with the added commitment of study including: organisational skills; self-discipline; a supportive family; and a supportive workplace. As one student described, "*I've got the Employee Assistance Program with work, good support at work. My husband is good and supportive*" (CQUBUS22). Despite this, it was also clear that the need to remain in current permanent jobs or paid casual work was very important/or essential for all but one of the students who was living at home with a supportive family and receiving Centrelink support; this was the only participant who could potentially focus solely on her study.

In addition to the majority of participants coping with full or part time work plus full time or part time study, most students had other life challenges (to varying degrees) that they were managing. For example one participant reported that they were working full time, studying two units, studying to enable career advancement, with carer responsibilities for two small children and a parent with health problems, but still reported they were "coping well", noting that "*I have a counselling service at work, a good husband and family around. I'm pretty resilient*" (CQUBUS15). It could be suggested that it may only take some extra stressful situation to threaten the continuation of study for many of these students.

It would appear from the interviews with this cohort of students that most have fully committed lives with little room for flexibility, a great determination to succeed with their study, but who also require a consistently, supportive and responsive university environment to enable them to succeed in their studies. It was evident that a supportive university environments was a motivating factor for many students. As one student stated, "*My Lecturer for Statistics is awesome in offering assistance*" (CQUBUS15). The interview was well-received and perceived by participants as evidence that the university is supportive of their needs, with one student noting that it was "Nice to talk, the discussion has reassured me" (CQUBUS22).

Value of the interview

Ten of the twelve students stated that the interview was helpful and would have also been helpful pre-commencement. Some students were unaware of some and appreciated the useful information and timely prompts, giving responses such as: "*Yes good to do a review of each unit*" (CQUBUS14) and "*Good to have a chat about the process. (I'm) feeling supported*" (CQUBUS15), with another student suggesting that the interview was "*Definitely helpful, a bit more information, (there are), so many platforms it's a bit overwhelming*" (CQUBUS16).

The responses from two students who were less sure about the value of such an interview timed pre-commencement nevertheless reported the value of this kind of interview at some stage later in the term, suggesting that an “*interview wouldn’t have been as helpful then (pre-commencement), not really as I didn’t know what I needed then*” (CQUBUS24), and the other student commenting that “*an earlier call would not have helped any more than now as I was dealing with own concerns in Term 1*” (CQUBUS22).

Referrals made and/or information forwarded to participants

Ten of twelve students from this cohort stated that they did not require any referrals to resources, two students requested referrals in response to questions raised by the interviewer (for example, to a Program Advisor). Five students were eager to receive links to resources; for example, one student had specific questions about HECS and SAF and another asked for information on the Counselling service.

Study/work/family/life balance

Of the twelve participants in this cohort, four were each studying a full time load of four units. One of those students at the time of the interview was not involved in any paid work, one was working 30 hours per week, one working part time and one working varied hours of 12 to 20 hours per week. Another student was enrolled in three units and working 32 hours per week. Four students were studying two units each with each working the equivalent of full time including one working up to at least 50 hours per week (having dropped from 70 hours per week). Only one student was student studying just one unit and was working full time.

Of the two students who had deferred for Term 2 one was caring for a new baby and reported having other children to care for, while also managing a business and is planning on buying another. The second student who deferred reported that she has an infant, works full time and is concerned that she may be made redundant, which had contributed to her decision to defer studies for Term 2. Both of these deferred students successfully completed Term 1 studies and both reported their plans to pick up study again next term. All twelve students in this cohort had successfully completed their units studied in Term 1.

Despite these obvious work/life/study commitments, the majority of students did not appear concerned about their study/work/family/life balance and/or they were prepared for, and had allowed for, the impact that study would have, with some students being prepared to adjust the number of units they were studying each term if needed. Again, organisational skills and effective time management appeared to be conducive to student confidence with as exemplified by one student who suggested, “*(I’m) working a 7 or 8 day per fortnight roster with 14 hour days and have a timetable set up which allows time to complete an assessment task prior to having to go on shift*” (CQUBUS18). While some students were prepared to adjust their study load if required, they were less willing or able to cease work or reduce their working hours. The two students who had deferrals in place appeared to have actively planned for the deferment although the reason for deferment for one of these students was less about ‘balance’ and more about financial capacity for study if made redundant (while also having family responsibilities).

Cultural/Family responsibilities

One of the twelve participants reported that English was her second language. This student also advised that she was receiving Centrelink payments and lives at home with a supportive family. None of the students reported having cultural or family responsibilities that would

impact on study. Three students reported that they have family (children) responsibilities and two of these students were students who had deferred their studies citing the responsibility of caring for children as contributing to the reason for deferment. One student asked why the university would assist with child care for exam times but not at assessment times. This same student suggested that the orientation could be more user friendly and noted "*Orientation should be after hours for people that could make it to campus after work*" (CQUBUS13). Both students who had deferred have dependent children were in paid work with one student very concerned about possibly being made redundant – the work place currently pays for this student's HECS.

Financial concerns

There was a mix of students in this cohort who are independent – that is studying and undertaking full time paid work or more than part time work – and students who are studying with parents supporting them financially.

Seven students reported that they were studying in distance mode. Three of the students studying and working full time reported that their HECS expenses were funded by work and this was a major consideration in being able to undertake the study. As noted in previous sections, one of the students who had deferred reported that she "*decided not to study over Term 2 until I find out what is happening with work*" (CQUBUS13). Clearly for this student, the ability to continue studying was contingent on the continuation of financial support through her employment.

Most students were aware of university scholarships and the student loans scheme, although some students asked for further information about these supports to be forwarded onto them. Two students asked for clarification about HECS process and more information on the student amenities fee.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing

All students reported that they felt they were coping well mentally and emotionally and/or that they were aware of their stressors and/or their anxiety. One student reported that they experience depression but was able to manage their condition. All of the students reported that they understood the impact that study can have on their stress levels. Four students reported that they were receiving employee assistance programs at work, which they either had used or would use if the need arose. Other students noted that they had supportive partners and/or family and this would be their first, preferred source of support for assisting with mental and emotional issues with one student stating "*I'm aware of the Counsellors but have a supportive family*" (CQUBUS21). Family or extended family were noted by some students as also being their first line of support for assisting with general study concerns; particularly, where these family members were also studying or had recently studied. One student stated that studying was her stress release from long working hours. Interviewees were receptive to information about the university counselling service and most stated they would seek help if required.

Disabilities and possible adjustments required to meet Inherent Requirements

None of the students from this cohort reported that they have a disability and each saw themselves as being able to meet the inherent requirements of their program.

Some students were not aware of the Inclusion and Disability service, with one student commenting that, "*I wasn't aware of the Inclusion & Accessibility team so it was good to know*

that they are there to help you" (CQUBUS17). The Inclusion and Accessibility service was described by interviewer and information was forwarded as a future resource should the need arise for the students.

Learning skills/needs

Similarly, none of the students perceived themselves as having a learning disability or any specific learning that would prevent meeting the inherent and essential requirements of their degree. However, one student expressed concern that she was "nervous" about exams and that the information around how to structure written assessment was "misleading" (CQUBUS15). Another student advised that "*it took a long time to get into study*" (CQUBUS16).

All students reported that they were aware of the Academic Learning Centre (ALC) services, with one student needing clarification about what the service offered. All of the participants "*were prepared to accept help [from the ALC] if needed*" (CQUBUS13), with some participants having already sought assistance stating for example, that they, "*used them (ALC) for referencing*" (CQUBUS14), this same student stated that although she had no difficulties, "*written assessment – [was] difficult to begin with and (explanations from Lecturer) could have been clearer*". One student reported considering changing her degree, and the process for doing this was discussed with the interviewer.

The Moodle learning management system (LMS) did not appear to be a challenge for most students with one student reported that "*I'm good with Moodle*" (CQUBUS24), and another student accessing Moodle on her phone reporting that while she is able to access the LMS via that medium, she does need to "re-load" pages regularly (CQUBUS17). Two of the twelve participants reported that they initially struggled, with Moodle, with one student reporting that they received help from a student friend and is now fine, and the other student indicating that she "*lost it, until she got it*" (CQUBUS24), causing her some delay with completing online quizzes and group work. All students described themselves as being comfortable or more than comfortable with computers and information technology generally. A number of students commented on the ease of some platforms, for example this student who, "*Likes online and Moodle*" (CQUBUS22).

3.4.2 Charles Sturt University interviews

Overview

Seven pre-commencement interviews were completed with the CSU Social Work (n=6) and the CSU Business (n=1) cohorts prior to Term 2, 2017. Three interviews were completed with students in the CSU Social Work (n=1) and the CSU Business (n=2) cohorts who did not have a pre-commencement interview.

Recruitment was difficult for this study, with very low response rates to requests for participation. It was apparent that there may be some self-selection bias among participants, with most displaying the characteristics of highly-motivated, high-achieving students who are likely to succeed even in very challenging circumstances.

Pre-commencement interviews

Students interviewed pre-commencement generally expressed that they felt well-prepared for study.

This cohort of students showed a tendency to wait and see prior to seeking or being open to additional supports offered by interviewer.

Participants had generally sought and received assurances from other trusted advisers about their preparedness for university.

Key areas of concern typically related to referencing.

Generally, participants expressed a sense of having a strong support network around them.

With regard to work/life/study balance, participants expressed that their lives were already acts of balancing around work, children and social lives, and that study was simply another thing to balance. All expressed some degree of confidence that they would be able to do so, although it was also apparent that participants also felt they might experience circumstances related to day-to-day life which could potentially affect their study negatively, even to the point of attrition.

Participants were generally aware of CSU's Academic Learning, Literacy and Numeracy (ALLaN) service, and provided positive feedback where they had used this service – importantly, the major finding this data points to is a sense that supports like this are not invisible.

The interviews were generally regarded as helpful, although more in terms of reinforcing that participants are on the right track than providing material assistance. That said, participants' reactions to suggestions around possible scholarships appeared to show this was new information.

No pre-commencement interview

One of the three students who had not undertaken a pre-commencement interview reported similar experiences to those who had the benefit of participating in the pre-commencement interview. This student reported that she considered herself to be very well-prepared for study, and had taken action at points where needed and achieved positive outcomes for doing so, such as seeking extensions or additional support.

The information conveyed about additional supports was well-received, although it appeared her level of knowledge was already high in terms of which support to access and how to access it. Two of the three students who had not undertaken pre-commencement interviews were notably different to those who did:

- One student identified as Aboriginal and was aged in his mid-50s. He reported that he had experienced significant hardships in the lead-up to his study due to the death of close family and significant cultural responsibilities.
- Another student had made the decision to defer based on an unexpectedly high workload of two subjects coupled with the demands of day-to-day life.

3.4.3 Federation University Australia (FUA)

Overview

The FUA cohort was drawn from first-year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Engineering (Hons).

The timing of the project was problematic given the pre-commencement interviews were

scheduled to occur across university partners in Term 2, 2017 as the Engineering degree at FUA does not offer a mid-year intake. Therefore pre-commencement interviews were unable to be conducted. The research at FUA focused on undertaking interviews with first year students in the B.Eng (Hons) who had already commenced their studies (ie no-commencement interview cohort). Three participants from a sample of nineteen responded to the invitation to participate in the project and completed interviews. Follow-up interviews will be conducted with the three participants at the end of term.

No pre-commencement interview: Engineering cohort

The interview discussion answered questions for the participants and prompted referrals to a number of support services as well as information being forwarded to them about specific services. Participants noted that a pre-commencement interview would be helpful, "*Would probably help you to talk about any concerns you have and understand what's required. (I) probably would have asked about course requirements and tips on balancing work and life*" (FEDENG03) and "*Could have been helpful to know more about the services available and to get personalised advice/referral on top of the more general services that I got told about in O Week*" (FEDENG02). A third participant was more reserved about the helpfulness of a pre-commencement interview: "*Not sure how much a pre-interview would help because there is quite a bit of information available anyway through FedReady. Interview is probably a good idea to fill in the information gap*" (FEDENG01).

Two participants at the time of the interview were studying full time with one of these working part time. Both participants indicated that they were achieving a good balance between study and other commitments, with one student noting that he had "*been able to balance that with study OK so far*" (FEDENG02). The third participant was working more than full time, studying part time with considerable travel time between home, work and campus (campus and work are in the same city). He also reported that he works two weekends out of four and tries to have time for his three adult children living at home; however, he also described his lifestyle balance with the study component as "*not the easiest thing but doesn't find it too bad*" (FEDENG01).

All participants appeared to have their own self-management strategies for coping with their busy lives along with a study program that may present potential stressful situations. Participants didn't give any indication that there was a negative impact on their study. As one student described, "*Every now and again if I feel I'm not grasping something I might then have a bad day at work sort of thing. But nothing out of the ordinary; not interfering with my program*" (FEDENG01). However, all three students described anxiety related to oral presentations with one participant feeling, "*concerned that this may impact her grades in future for the units that have a heavy group work component*" (FEDENG02). The interviewer was able to discuss services to assist the student with this concern and made referrals or sent links describing the relevant support services.

Generally, it seemed that the participants had planned their finances to incorporate study, with two students in paid work and one on a scholarship. However, all three were still in varying degrees of planning with regard to their placements and how finances may be impacted during this time, either with regard to the cost of travel to the placement or how to fit work around the placement. The interview, again, seemed to be a useful forum to talk through how this could be managed.

Although participants indicated that there wouldn't be any untoward effect on their program,

they did raise a number of challenges experienced related to learning skills. For example, one participant described, “*sometimes (I) have problems listening and conveying information accurately and sometimes it takes longer than expected to do basic maths but (I) can do the advanced calculus*”. This student didn’t see this as “*impeding*” her on the course so far (FEDENG02). And, as another student stated, “*Sometimes (I) find it tricky to interpret what exactly is being asked in assessment tasks but I’m becoming more confident at asking for clarification - probably prefer to approach lecturer after class/send email rather than asking in class*” (FEDENG01). All three students raised concerns relating to experiencing anxiety with oral presentations.

Overall, the three participants indicated that they were generally prepared for the inherent and essential elements of their program. Students also seemed to benefit from this first interview discussion and stated that they saw the value of a similar interview pre-commencement as long as the interview was focused and did not repeat information already available from other sources. The follow-up interview later in the term may yield further data, which will help predict the value of a pre-commencement interview.

3.4.4 James Cook University

Overview

The JCU participants were all enrolling into the Diploma of Higher Education (DHE - Health stream) and had expressed some interest in transitioning into a nursing degree. All students were commencing their first semester of study at university. None had studied at university before. The Diploma of Higher Education is an open access pathways course at JCU, so there are no academic pre-requisites to commence studying. Students receive an individualised study plan that includes pathways and discipline subjects, based on their educational background, aspirations and home and family commitments.

Pre-commencement interviews: Diploma of Higher Education (health)

Eight Diploma of Higher Education participants completed the pre-commencement interviews. Five of the students had completed Year 12, one student had obtained an OP 16 and the others had completed VET certificates in school. The other non-school leavers included a mother returning to study and three students who had been working in a variety of retail or administration positions before moving into study. All students were studying on campus as the course is only offered internally. All participating students were based at the Townsville campus. One student had moved from a remote area to commence their study.

Many students expressed excitement at the prospect of studying as well as some trepidation at the demands of university study.

Many students noted that they were concerned that they were not wholly prepared for study, particularly what was perceived as ‘academic study’ as opposed to a VET qualification.

All students were open to the idea of a referral to other study and were open to future conversations about how they could best manage their study/ work/ family life balance.

It was clear from the participants that many students are managing very complex life situations beyond their study. This includes serious financial vulnerability, mental health and complex health challenges and family responsibilities.

Value of the pre-commencement interview

Students overwhelmingly were positive about the helpfulness provided by the interview and the timing of the interview. Some students noted that the discussion had made the expectations of study and the types of plans they should be making as they commence their studies much clearer for them.

One student [JCUDHE9] used the interview as an opportunity to disclose a very serious health condition (a heart condition) that results in her often losing consciousness leading to regular hospital admissions in hospital. Even though this student had met with lecturers and support staff, she had not thought to disclose information about her condition, as “*it’s not a disability, or a learning problem, it’s just something I manage*” [JCUDHE9]. This student expressed concern about the implications of disclosure stating, “I want to get into nursing, I don’t want this to be held against me” [JCUDHE9].

Many students expressed a sense of relief that the challenges such as mental health, financial concerns relating to their ‘complicated lives’ were being normalised through the discussion.

Participants were pleased to receive helpful information during their transition noting, “I didn’t know that all of that help was available at university, the waitlist at headspace is months, so I’m pleased that I can access help here if I need” [JCUDHE11]. Another student commented, “I need all the help I can get, enrolling and getting started I didn’t know where to begin, then I found the student support advisor and I was so relieved” [JCUDHE13]. The interview was also reassuring and provided a sense of connection and belonging for one student who reported that “I’ve moved onto campus. I don’t really know anybody and this feels like a big gamble, especially when I struggled at school” [JCUDHE16].

Referrals and requests for information

Seven of the eight participants stated that a referral would be helpful to supporting their wellbeing, accessing scholarships or AccessAbility services. Three students suggested that the learning centre referral would likely be useful, but they would wait until the demands of classes became clearer. All of the participants were aware of the pathways student support officer on campus and that this could be a first point of contact for any assistance, questions etc.

All of the participants indicated that they would like to study full time. Participants were aware that to qualify for on campus accommodation or collect centrelink payments they would need to be full time, but were unaware that they could be considered a full time student with three subjects.

Study/family/life balance

Many of the students in the pre-commencement interview cohort talked about being anxious about managing study life balance and “time management” [JCUDHE15]. Concerns about their ability to manage time were expressed differently by different cohorts. School leavers were more inclined to indicate that they struggled with time management, motivation and getting everything done by a deadline. However, students who were mothers and/or career changers reported greater confidence in their ability to be organised, while also noting that there were just too many commitments to make time management feasible. Students from low-socio economic backgrounds and some medium socio-economic backgrounds indicated paid work was a serious consideration in maintaining a life work study balance. One participant noted that the pathways program had a food pantry service for students saying “/

won't need to use this, I don't think, but I can see why some do. Especially when your centrelink or scholarship money doesn't come through early in the semester" [JCUDHE13].

Cultural/Family responsibilities

None of the participants described any cultural responsibilities or specific carer roles within the family. A number of students noted family commitments. The importance of a supportive family member was reflected by one student who stated, "*I want to do well and my husband is on board, he's dropped days at work to help me out. We have two under two and our youngest was a micro-premie so health stuff still comes up. We don't have family here, so it's just us*" [JCUDHE14].

Financial concerns

Generally, participants indicated that they would need to take steps to manage financially through the semester. Three of the participants expressed interest in applying for scholarships [JCUDHE7]. All of the students were undertaking paid work prior to studying. All acknowledged that they may need to amend work hours to accommodate study and expressed varying degrees of confidence of their employer's willingness to negotiate on hours of work. As one student commented, "*My boss is ok with me studying, but obviously, they want to know what days, so does daycare, and it's hard to say well it's these days till July and then some other days, I'm not sure of yet*"[JCUDHE16]. Despite the challenges, most students were determined to "make it work" [JCUDHE8].

Mental health and emotional wellbeing

Of the eight participants, six reported that they deal with mental health issues. Most of these students concerns related to anxiety and to a less extent, depression. Three of these participants were aware of supports available through knowing other students who have gone through the pathways programs. Five of the six students indicated that they would be happy to receive support from the relevant university services. The other student was well connected with external services. Again, it was evident that students were determined to succeed despite potential challenges as exemplified by one student who stated, "*I don't want to let my anxiety get in the way, it is just something I need to learn to manage*" [JCUDHE10]. Another student noted that they "*went through a very bad period last year, my anxiety was very bad so I just didn't go to school and my enrolment was cancelled. I really need to get a qualification so I can get a job*" [JCUDHE11] and another student suggested that "*I guess I have some anxiety, and so that will make this study a bit harder*" [JCUDHE13].

Disabilities and possible adjustments required to meet inherent requirements

All interviewees responded, in the context of this question/discussion, that they didn't have a disability, and that they felt they were able to meet the IR and other requirements of the degree, though some commented again here around their mental health. One student used this opportunity to disclose a serious long term heart condition, she was worried about being discriminated against in her future degree because of this [JCUDHE9]. Support options (for example, Counselling and AccessAbility) were discussed by the interviewer and referrals made if support was not already in place. Students were open to hearing what the support services had to offer.

Learning skills/needs

None of the participants perceived themselves as having a learning disability that would prevent meeting the inherent and essential requirements of their degree.

Several participants spoke to the benefits of the pathways program where additional support was provided and noted their need for such support prior to commencing their degree

Many participants expressed concern about their preparedness for study, mostly due to their perceived lack of familiarity with academic study. Participants expressed concerns about the impact of non-school completion on their ability to progress with study. Participants spoke positively about the availability of learning support, extra workshops and explicit pathways subjects. As one student commented, “*I’m looking forward to getting started. This has been helpful in letting me know what’s needed, I’ll definitely go and see AccessAbility*” [JCUDHE9]. Another student commented, “*I’ve been talking to Anne (pathways student support officer) and she’s been great*” [JCUDHE11].

Follow up pre-commencement interviews: Diploma of Higher Education (health)

Six of the eight Diploma of Higher Education participants completed follow up interviews.

Many students expressed excitement at the prospect of studying as well as some trepidation at the demands of university study. Students noted concerns about not feeling prepared for ‘academic study’ as opposed to a VET qualification.

All students were open to the idea of a referral to other services and were open to future conversations about how they could best manage their study/work/family life balance.

It was clear from the interviews that many students were managing very complex life situations beyond their study. This included financial vulnerability, mental health and complex health challenges and family responsibilities.

Value of the pre-commencement interview

Participants overwhelmingly responded positively about the helpfulness provided by the interview and the timing of the interview, noting that an early interview would have been beneficial. As one student commented, “*Yes, because it puts out questions that you need to ask about, what you’re not sure about and it gives you a push to get started*” [JCUDHE10].

Circumstances since commencing university

Participants described events that had led to a change in their circumstances since commencing study. Students spoke of moving house, renegotiating work hours, and one student spoke of their partner being deployed with the Defense force. One student also spoke of a relapse in a health condition that included time spent in hospital. Some of these changes were initiated by the participant in response to the impacts of study, such as moving house to be closer to study or renegotiating working hours.

Support and direction during the term

Students were overwhelmingly positive with a majority of students highlighting the help they received from the pathways student support officer and academic staff.

Reference was made by some students to the university counselling services and the availability of help to students with a disability. For example, one student commented on the help received from lecturers and learning advisor in relation to essay planning and “academic stuff”.

Confidence in progressing with degree

All of the participants indicated that they felt much more confident moving on with their degree now that they had experienced some success with university and were better aware

of expectations and supports available. Students also commented on the benefit of undertaking a pathways program before moving into their degree, with one student commenting “I feel 10 times more confident now. A lot of people said I could go straight in and not do a pathways but the supported start has been really beneficial. It’s been hard but it’s been a good preparation”.

Participants also noted that university was challenging and that they could understand why people would need to leave. Two students reported that they had considered leaving, but their goal kept them focused and enrolled. The helpfulness of a friend network was also mentioned.

Challenges

Participants noted that while there were no text book related expenses in the course, some students nevertheless experienced financial challenges relating to rent etc. as well as personal such as a family member illness, death or personal health challenges ie. Anxiety.

Referrals and requests for information

There seemed to be a consensus here of “so far, so good” and that students knew where they could go to seek assistance.

Enrolling into second semester

All of the students had thought of their enrolment next semester, and many of them had met with an enrolment advisor to commence this process.

No pre-commencement interviews: Diploma of Higher Education (health)

Eight commenced Diploma of Higher Education participants completed interviews. All students were undertaking study at JCU for the first time and based at the Townsville campus. One student had previously attempted an online diploma offered by another institution, but did not complete this.

As this was their first attempt at university study, many students expressed initial trepidation about studying. Whilst many noted on reflection that they were generally prepared for the inherent requirements of the pathways courses, participants noted the benefit of having these articulated beforehand and being able to make informed decision about their study load.

Many students noted that at the outset, they had underestimated the work required in the course and the need to attend to issues around working hours, health challenges (particularly mental health challenges) early in their studies

Students also expressed the benefits of having supportive academic staff and especially the Pathways student support officer as a point of contact throughout their studies to triage requests and referrals.

It was clear from the participants that many students are managing very complex life situations beyond their study. This includes serious financial vulnerability, mental health and complex health challenges and family responsibilities.

Value of an interview have been of assistance prior to commencement

Students overwhelmingly responded positively about the helpfulness provided by the interview and the timing of the interview (that is, whether conducting a similar interview pre-commencement would be more worthwhile). All students expressed that they definitely

found the interview helpful when it was conducted and that it would be helpful pre-commencement. As one student commented, “*Yes, this interview would have been helpful. The concept of uni is daunting and I didn’t know what to expect. This helps to explain what you are in for*”. Another student suggested, “*Yes I think so, the information on scholarships and mental health is really important*”. Other students noted it would be helpful for staff to have a greater understanding of their students prior to commencement, and such a pre-commencement interview would facilitate this engagement. For example, one student commented, “*...it really made me think about what I could and couldn’t do. I think it’s also helpful for teaching staff to help them understand students*” and another suggested, “*This would be useful beforehand, helpful for staff to know the reasons why you can’t do everything. Life just impacts you*”.

Referrals made and/or information forwarded to participants and/or assistance provided during the interview

Five of the eight participants stated that a referral wasn’t needed to any resource and/or service, explaining that they believed they were ‘pretty’ aware of all that was available or could go and speak the Pathways Student Support Officer and seek assistance if needed. The other three asked for referrals, two for advice regarding scholarships and one to AccessAbility.

Study/Life Balance

Many of the students in the interview cohort talked about needing to stay enrolled in full time study to assure themselves of Centrelink payments. However, students talked about needing to manage work, family commitments and study, so many students undertake three subjects per semester to meet Centrelink study requirements. For one, this was stressful. The Diploma of Higher Education does not have practicum requirements, or textbooks costs, students indicated that these were not concerns at this time, but could be problematic in the future and require forward planning.

All of the students had continued with their study loads across their semesters, in that those who studied full time (3 or 4 subjects) or part time (1 or 2 subjects) continued to do so. Some discussed needing to negotiate with employers around work hours and how issues such as the timetable or class registration not opening till later complicated that process. Students commented on the need to continue to manage complicated life and work scenarios as exemplified by one student who commented, “*I’m just juggling all the time, work, kids, study. I really want to do this well. This is the only chance I get at this. Of course, I worry. I see all of the job losses with Adani, and I think. I hope _____ keeps his job*” [JCUDHE3]. Another student indicated that, “*I didn’t do well at school. But I’m going well at Uni. I’m working really hard to get good marks to get into Medicine, we lived at Bluewater so it’s a big commute in, I moved part way through the semester to try and make that more manageable*” [JCUDHE8].

Most of the participants stated and/or gave the strong view that their study, work and life commitments were balanced and that they were coping, some stating this with more confidence than others. Many stated that time and sometimes motivation was an issue, but they were working on it.

Cultural/Family responsibilities

No participants described any cultural responsibilities or specific Carer roles within the family. A number of students noted family commitments.

Financial concerns

Generally participants indicated that they were “managing financially” [JCUDHE7]. Five of the six full time students were dependent on Centrelink for study and many spoke of the need to manage a reduced income since commencing study and financial management being a week to week affair where unexpected bills caused significant stress and deferring fees was really critical (JCUDHE1, JCUDHE2, JCUDHE3)

Despite the concerns expressed by students, most implied that they were “ok” and coping with study despite the apparent precariousness conveyed by participants with respect to their financial situation, family commitments and work responsibilities.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing

Four of the eight participants indicated that they deal with issues of mental health. The concerns these students shared were primarily related to high levels of anxiety and to a less extent, depression. Three of those students are working with counselling already and had been made aware of service by their lecturers and or the pathways students support officer. The other student asked for a referral to counselling.

The participants described challenging situations yet also perceived that they were going along “okay” with their studies because of the way they had prepared for their studies and/or the various supports available to them during their study program. Mental health challenges and concerns transcended age, gender and socio-economic status. All of the students talked about the importance of support staff, and the benefits of studying foundational pathways units to develop important academic skills. As one student reflected, *“The stuff that they teach in Learning in Digital Environment and Developing Academic Skills is really important- I didn’t do essays or research at school, I could never have gone straight into a degree. Seeing it all broken down step by step is really helpful”* [JCUDHE4]. Another student noted that *“The lecturers and the support staff are wonderful. Really happy to help you with whatever you need”* [JCUDHE6].

The students largely perceived themselves with coping well with their studies. But that it had been a difficult transition, requiring hard work and lots of support.

Possible adjustments required to meet IR and program requirements

None of the participants indicated that they had a disability and perceived that they were able to meet the IR and other requirements of the degree, though three students mentioned the impacts of mental health concerns on their studies. Students were open to hearing what the support services had to offer.

A number of students interviewed were not aware of the inherent requirements of the program and some commented that a discussion around this was useful in providing clarity about the expectations of their studies. Some students commented that strategies for increasing awareness about the available university services would have been useful during the pre-enrolment and orientation phases.

Learning skills/needs

None of the participants indicated that they had a learning disability that would prevent them from meeting the IR and essential requirements of their degree. A number of the participants spoke to the benefits of being in a pathways program where additional support was provided and the value of undertaking such a pathway before commencing their degree. One student

noted that “I’ve never been great at school, especially maths. I knew I needed to build those skills before I started my degree” [JCUDHE1]. Another student suggested, “I thought, well the kids are old enough now, I should go and study, but it’s been a long time, I knew I needed to walk before I can run- and just have a test run” [JCUDHE3].

Generally participants expressed their preparedness for the learning skills requirements to complete the program but it took them some time to develop these skills, and several participants indicated that they were still working on these, particularly in their first semester of study. Two of the participants spoke about the importance and Computer/IT skills with most expressing their confidence with these skills. One student indicated that he/she was nervous about oral presentations, stating that they would just need to push through despite being nerve-racking (JCUDHE7). Two students reported that they had met with Learning Advisors. Five had attended Peer Assisted Study Sessions or additional support workshops.

Students were positive about the benefits of the interview noting “These interviews are good. It’s important to know as much as you can at the start, to make the whole process easier” [JCUDHE1]; “*There’s a lot of information that comes at you, all at once in the first weeks, it’s good to talk to someone*” [JCUDHE2] and “*I’m feeling pretty good now, but it’s good to know where to go if you need help*” [JCUDHE3]. The important role of student support was evident from these interviews with one student commenting, “*I’ve had lots of help from support staff. I think that’s all that has got me through at times*” [JCUDHE4] and another indicating “*I got on really well with my lecturers in the first semester. That’s why pathways was so good for me, I could just go and ask a question, you know, whenever it came up and my lecturer would always take the time to answer it*” [JCUDHE6].

Resilience was also a key factor influencing positive student experiences as indicated by one student’s comment that “I’ll do whatever I need to do to get into my degree. I’m working hard, I’m going to every class, accessing all the extra help I can” [JCUDHE8].

3.4.5 University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) Social Work students, no pre-commencement interview participants.

Overview

Students from USC participating in the project were enrolled in the first year Social Work program. Twelve pre-commencement interviews, follow-ups and 12 students who did not complete the pre-commencement interview participated in the research.

Pre-commencement interviews: Bachelor of Social Work

The majority of participants stated that the pre-commencement interview was helpful. One student commented that it was “*comforting to talk to somebody at a personal level*” (USC017). A number of students benefited from interviewer initiated referrals to specialist support services (for example to Disability Services) and one participant was assisted with a number of essential processes during the interview (for example, navigating a student through the website and the Learning Management System).

Study/work/life balance

All participants showed a thoughtful approach to the study/work/life balance required when taking up a tertiary program, with some students having more non-negotiable commitments than others. The following examples of student responses show the varying approaches described by participants and are reflective of the cohort. This participant advised that she

made a “conscious decision to concentrate on study, and so will not be working coming into first semester of study” (USC019) from this student, who works 15 – 20 hours per week, who advised that “I enrolled into full time study of four courses, but dropped one subject by end of week two” (USC021) and a further student, enrolled in four courses, living at home and not currently working who “does not foresee a problem” (USC013). One participant studying full time said that, “she is keen to complete study as quickly as possible to allow for diversity of (work) role opportunities” (USC015). This participant indicated she had thought through how to balance her commitments and decided to resign her full time work role and will work casually three days a week while studying with the casual work also allowing the flexibility of lessening hours when study load is high.

Cultural and family responsibilities

With regard to cultural and family responsibilities, participants responded that they did not have any (cultural) and/or did not foresee any issues with family responsibilities. Although most students expressed the view that they had anticipated the costs of study and were managing these, it was clear that the majority of students had to carefully balance their finances to incorporate study expenses and at times this was stressful and a challenge. For example, the participant who has been a Smith Family supported student isn’t “expecting a problem” (USC013); however, has “also applied for 2 Smith Family scholarships” to hopefully assist with tertiary study expenses of travel, text books and related expenses. And a further participant, who lives remotely and has a three hour round trip journey to get into Uni stated that she is “considering re-financing her car, as she is experiencing financial stress, particularly as she is waiting for Austudy to commence” (USC019). Fewer participants expressed confidence that the extra costs of study would not have an impact as for example with this participant who, confirmed she “had budgeted for travel expenses, but found the books a bit more expensive than I thought, but had given consideration to overall expenses, so (I’ve) not experienced any financial shock or hardship so far” (USC020).

Mental health challenges

Five participants stated that they had anxiety and/or depression and a further four participants expressed feelings of stress and of being overwhelmed with some aspects of study. For example this participant at week three, has just had the Internet connected and realised that she has an assignment due “at the end of the week, and (I’m) unsure what to do, as I haven’t made the tutorial for the subject yet due to health and car accident issues” (USC021) and this student said “I felt behind from not checking LMS in the week or so before Orientation, and was overwhelmed with so much information when I opened the system” (USC19). The interviewer was able to assist participants with information, referrals and/or direct assistance with the majority of students expressing confidence in their ability to manage especially with the added support offered by the university as noted by this participant: “[I] will arrange an appointment with disability services to support anxiety” (USC018).

Inherent and essential requirements

All participants expected to fulfil the inherent and essential requirements of their degree program. The interviewer assisted one student who had an eye condition with information about on campus disability services and academic learning services (USC021). For another participant this question prompted discussion regarding the student’s challenges with English as a second language: “I am feeling disadvantaged due to having a non-English speaking

background, and there should be a requirement for students to do a course before studying to help with academic writing skills to give a head start" (USC019), the interviewer encouraged the student to follow the advice previously given by her program coordinator.

Learning skills, communication skills and technology requirements

With regard to the questions encompassing inherent and essential learning skills, communication skills and technology requirements, overall the majority of students conveyed evidence of being effective to highly effective in these areas and this following script summary reflects the responses of most students: "*Participant stated that she has not taken a long time to complete written work in the past, has no difficulty with reading or sentence structure, nor difficulty in reading print on line or in text. She advised she is able to convey messages succinctly, research information to inform practice development responses, and reflect on multi-dimensional issues people face, as well as reflect on own values to influence practice. Noted high level of communication needed in current work role. Has no problem navigating all programs discussed*" (USC015). One participant was provided with information to assist her negotiate her challenges with written work related to her eye sight diagnosis and other students who had some concerns related to, for example, power point presentations and navigating blackboard were either assisted directly and/or were referred to Academic Services.

Value of pre-commencement interview

The majority of participants expressed that the pre-commencement interview was worthwhile as exemplified by these response, "*I have been feeling quite anxious about starting at USC but you really put me at ease and explained things really easily*" (USC014), and "*interview at start of semester has been therapeutic - good to talk through*" (USC023). Most participants stated that they felt prepared for their tertiary study program - that they had thought through the implications of the commitment of study. However, it was evident that the pre-commencement interview provided useful information and a way of trouble shooting potential challenges for example, with regard to finances, personal issues and work, life, study balance as noted by this participant, "*It was good to verbalise struggles*" (USC024).

Follow-up pre-commencement interviews: Bachelor of Social Work

Follow-up interviews were conducted with seven of the fourteen BSW participants who had already taken part in pre-commencement interviews prior to the beginning of their studies. The follow-up interviews were conducted near the end of participants' first term of study or just after the end of term. Just two of the seven participants stated that they had thought about dropping out, with one student describing that she "*was confused about assessments but talked herself into staying on. I also made friends with other students which was a great support to keep going*" (USC024), similarly the other participant who had thoughts of dropping out had stayed on and now felt "*glad not to have done so as I feel a good sense of achievement, and very passionate about study*" (USC014). All of the seven participants from the follow-up cohort had enrolled for the subsequent term.

Situation since pre-commencement interview

Regarding areas of concern that may have occurred since the pre-commencement interview, four of the seven participants stated that there were no particular areas of concern for them as they progressed with their study program. One of the three participants who noted some concerns stated that she had needed to organise extensions as she had "*experienced some*

personal issues.....which had impacted on study" (USC014) and that the teaching staff "were very empathetic" (USC014). One other participant found "*four subjects challenging*" (USC019) as she moved into the term. This participant also advised that she was unaware she could do three courses as a full time classification. The third participant, who noted concerns, described how she had dropped back to three courses pre-census as she had "*concerns with two courses being difficult to understand. (I had) issues with long lectures and short tutorials, minimum help in class with assessment preparation, difficulty in speaking to tutors regarding direction as not enough time in class. Third class was very well structured with re-caps of lectures, interaction/discussion and support*" (USC023)

Timing of pre-commencement interview

All seven participants indicated that the timing of the pre-commencement interview was appropriate as reflected in this response, "*timing was right for preparation purposes*" (USC013) and "*Timing was good for pre-commencement interview*" (USC015) with two participants stating that the pre-commencement interview along with the one on one interview with a peer adviser helped a lot to prepare for university study. Some students noted that circumstances had changed for them since the pre-commencement interview. For example, one participant who had given up her full time work role to take on study was now working casually three days per week, another student stated that her husband "*had secured a new job and will be working away a lot, which means I will have more responsibility for upkeep of home*" (USC015). However, for participants where circumstances had changed somewhat adversely, they still appeared to be coping with the changes.

Support provided

Participants provided mainly positive responses regarding the support and information available to them from the University during the term and the effectiveness of the support. All seven participants stated that they had accessed support services, which mostly, they had been alerted to in the pre-commencement interview, for example, academic skills sessions, wellbeing services, library services and additional subject specific workshops provided by Lecturers. Generally, participants described the assistance provided as worthwhile, for example, "*[in the subject] SCS110 additional workshops were really helpful, and the tutor also put up extra support on BB which I greatly appreciated*" (USC014) and "*Yes – I made use of drop in sessions, library support, academic skills appointments, and Yourtutor online support. I found all to be very helpful to achieve grades*" (USC019). Some participants gave some useful feedback as one student described, "*The Drop in sessions provided constructive feedback, but also conflicting information (e.g. one support person may give conflicting advice to another). (I) also found that I may not be able to receive assistance for questions in specific courses, depending on who was on duty on the day*" (USC015). One other participant spoke about the wellbeing group sessions she was attending where sessions were cancelled at the last minute (due to staff illness), the student found this anxiety provoking when she had driven in specifically to attend the sessions. It was evident that the interviewer, provided valuable information to participants about University services and how to access these as noted by this participant, "*I was unaware of Yourtutor support online, or how to access it*" (USC013) - the interviewer advised how to do this for future reference, if needed, from home.

Future enrolment

The seven interviewees expressed confidence with moving forward with their degree ranging from feeling very confident to having "*some reservations in my own abilities, but feel this is a*

mindset issue. My results have been good so far and I'm motivated to continue" (USC015). Some participants also noted how that they had benefited from their first semester experience and how they were able to apply that learning going forward: "*my confidence has greatly improved. (I've received) some distinctions, and I'm happy with grades. I plan to work on time management further next semester to further improve marks*" (USC023).

Challenges

The main challenges noted by participants as they progressed through their first semester related to university processes including structure and learning requirements. For example, participants stated "*finding the library difficult to navigate, as well as assessments difficult to complete* (USC024), "*the main challenges were adapting to university structure - thinking differently, unexpected language differences* (USC014) and difficulties with "*essay writing - structuring / linking*" (USC015). Some challenges experienced may have been emphasised by participants' profile as with the student who described her anxiety and stress undertaking oral presentations (USC020), another who sought assistance for anxiety while struggling with issues of concentration and time management (USC023) and for one participant who had difficulty with essay writing and attributed some of this to her history of "*low education*" (USC015). However, a consistent thread evident through the interviews was that despite the challenges, participants were aware of services available and ready to seek assistance or were more determined to avail themselves of services given the learning experience of first semester. Evidence gained from follow-up interview data does suggest that the pre-commencement interview provided significant assistance toward preparedness and/or provided valuable supplementary support to participants' own preparedness for the requirements of the specific degree program.

There was agreement from all interviewees that they did not require assistance at this time with comments reflecting satisfaction with the support the university was providing to assist progress, for example from this participant, "*No - happy with supports in place and looking forward to moving forward*" (USC019) and "*I'm feeling confident and ready for next semester*" (USC024).

Overall student experience

Overall, all participants from the follow-up interview cohort conveyed that the university had generally fulfilled the promise as they anticipated. The interview data does seem to support that this was assisted by students' own preparedness, the early intervention strategy of the pre-commencement interview and services provided to new students by the university. The following quote reflects the experience of a number of students where difficulties had been experienced, however, through their own endeavours and with the assistance of the pre-commencement initiative and the university, students had overcome challenges and are successfully continuing with their studies, "*I've managed to complete the semester successfully, despite challenges and I did better than I thought would do*" (USC023).

No pre-commencement interview: Bachelor of Social Work

Value of a pre-commencement interview

The majority of participants thought that a pre-commencement interview would be helpful as noted by this student who suggested, "*Yes - would have been useful at pre-commencement to support varying issues around anxiety, academic writing and childcare*" (USC08) and a pre-commencement interview "*could lead to not going ahead with course*" (USC07). While a

number of students considered their own research prior to starting sufficient for their needs, for example, “*not specifically (helpful), as I had gathered all information needed through attending pre-semester workshops and O week sessions*” (USC09).

Study/work/life balance

Although most students advised there “*were no real concerns about balance*” (USC10), there was a persistent theme that “*study load was heavier than anticipated*” (USC01) and some adjustments needed to be made to ensure commitments were better balanced. For example, for one student who had a full study load first semester and was working approximately 15 hours per week has decided to drop to three courses in semester two to enable better focus on study (USC10). Another student with three children stated, although she has some financial concerns with stopping work, she has “*stopped working to concentrate on study, and increased her study load*” with the intent to achieve a better balance with commitments (USC05). Seven of the twelve participants are involved in paid work, a number of these plus another student with school age children struggle with class timetables as described by one participant, who “*felt that timetables were very suitable for school leavers, but not so much for mature age students trying to juggle home/work life*” (USC04). Overall, the theme of ‘I’ve got this covered’ persisted and emphasized by comments such as this one from a participant who “*manages work/study/life balance by being well organised and managing my time well*” (USC12).

Financial concerns

With regard to financial costs related to study, all students described that they had undertaken planning in some way; however, all noted a varying degree of concern from minor concern to anxiety about costs of study, as described by this participant who, “*felt fairly well prepared for expenses, but did find textbooks to be more expensive than originally thought, with not the best re-sale value*” (USC09). Seven of the twelve participants are working full or part time and it appears from the data that working is necessary for them to be able to afford to study. Some have adjusted work hours or number of units to assist management of study commitments. Some examples of comments related to study expenses include, “*definite financial strain, but manageable*” (USC08) and “*extra financial burden for childcare due to limited classes*” (USC05). For those participants living more remotely and attending Sippy Downs, travel expenses were definitely a consideration, “*with a 45 min drive to uni, the drive, cost of fuel and parking adds considerably to expenses*”, this student also added that “*costs such as buying lunch on campus can also be a burden*” (USC10).

Mental health concerns

The majority of participants expressed the belief that they had sound coping skills and apart from some anxiety related to deadlines, negative assessment feedback and oral presentations no students revealed any concerning issues related to mental health and emotional wellbeing. Participants seemed to have gained from their semester one experience, for example, for this participant who described her ways of managing anxiety around oral presentations, “*Tutors have also been helpful and offered alternatives for delivery of material*”, this student feels her confidence has increased, and she has improved from last semester (USC03). Participants shared that they were aware of support options (and these were also further discussed in the interview), were keen to self-manage any anxieties and/or issues of mental and emotional wellbeing, “[*I’m*] working on new strategies to be more prepared next semester, and want to self-manage these strategies” (USC07). A recurring theme to, within the context of this

question, was the appreciation expressed by participants for the community feel of the campus, for the value that peer support provided and the value of constructive feedback from Lecturers and Tutors.

Adjustments required to meet inherent and essential program requirements

With regard to the question related to inherent requirements and adjustments required, including, one participant who requires the assistance of Disability services, all participants appeared to be aware of inherent and essential degree requirements and seemed well able to meet these requirements. Most issues raised here were related to Learning skills needs with participants describing how they had addressed these or were currently working on these, for example the student who had experienced some disappointing feedback regarding writing skills. This student utilised PASSdi and went to extra academic writing support classes, which assisted to elevate marks from 60% to 80+% so after initial anxiety, the student described “*feeling really good*” about sourcing support and achieving better marks (USC02).

A clear theme for this cohort was their comfort with technology within the context of the programmes discussed in the interview, “*IT and learning systems have not been a problem to date* (USC09) and “*(With) IT - I have no problem navigating all programmes discussed. Strong area for me, as I rely heavily on technology to support learning and work practice. Fully embrace IT*” (USC11). Similarly, a recurring theme, relating to learning skills needs for the compulsory and essential elements of the degree, was that a number of students had experienced challenges with for example, constructing assignments and maths concepts. However, students had or are seeking assistance and this was proving effective for them.

Overall this cohort seemed well prepared for the inherent and essential requirements of their degree program, had learnt from their experience throughout first semester and were continuing to be open to support but also keen to self-manage with strategies as challenges arose.

4. Case studies

4.1 Central Queensland University

Authors: Professor Denise Wood, Mary McLeod and Robyn Bailey

University Profile

CQUniversity is a regional-based university and Queensland's first dual sector university, providing a comprehensive approach to education, training, research and engagement in the central Queensland region and beyond. The university has 25 campuses and locations Australia-wide and provides a diverse range of training and education programs and courses to more than 30,000 students studying qualifications from certificate to post doctorate level. Of these students, 14,847 are enrolled in domestic undergraduate courses, approximately 3% are from a low socioeconomic status (Low SES) background and 62% from regional and remote locations. Approximately 52% of students study in off campus mode.

Transition and Retention Initiatives at CQUniversity

CQUniversity has a long history of providing access and support platforms for students from diverse backgrounds as well as conducting research to increase awareness of issues and improve strategies for transition and retention for students from for example, low SES populations. Commonwealth Government funded programs such as the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) and the National Priorities Pool (NPP) have assisted the implementation of initiatives for students from designated equity backgrounds.

The CQUniversity Strategic Plan (2016-2021) directs its focus to develop a culture, to assist students be what they want to be, foster a positive student experience and embed the value of inclusiveness. The goal of a positive student experience and inclusiveness is further articulated in the Equity Initiatives Map (CQUniversity 2017), and informs research undertaken by the Centre for Regional Advancement of Learning, Equity, Access and Participation (LEAP). CQUniversity strives to embed the strategy of 'Inclusion is the standard not the exception' in all aspects of university programs, procedures and processes, this is a holistic approach that considers the impact of the individual, program and institutional on the student experience at university.

Transition and Retention Initiatives and the 5Ps framework

CQUniversity has prioritised early intervention initiatives which provide a fit for its diverse student profile, recognising the strengths, skills and experience that students bring to their study program and responding by providing services that are personalised, timely, and accessible. Transition and retention policies, such as the First Year Transition & Orientation Policy and Access and Participation Plan (2015-2017), reflect this approach, with this approach further strengthened by the application of the 5Ps framework to research projects, programs and initiatives. The 4Ps framework was developed by Kalsbeek, (2013) for framing retention for institutional improvement and comprises: Profile (student demographic background and individual factors); Promise (the institutional promise and how students perceive that it delivers on its promise); Process (institutional, campus, departmental systems); and Progress (success and learning outcomes). In addition based on a 2015 research project involving pre-commencement interviews to support transition and retention of

commencing CQUniversity, Bachelor of Nursing students, Wood et al (2016) expanded the 4Ps framework to include a 5th 'P', preparedness.

Figure 2 identifies examples of transition and retention projects, programs and initiatives underpinned by the 5Ps framework. Current or past HEPPP funded initiatives are designated with an asterisk.

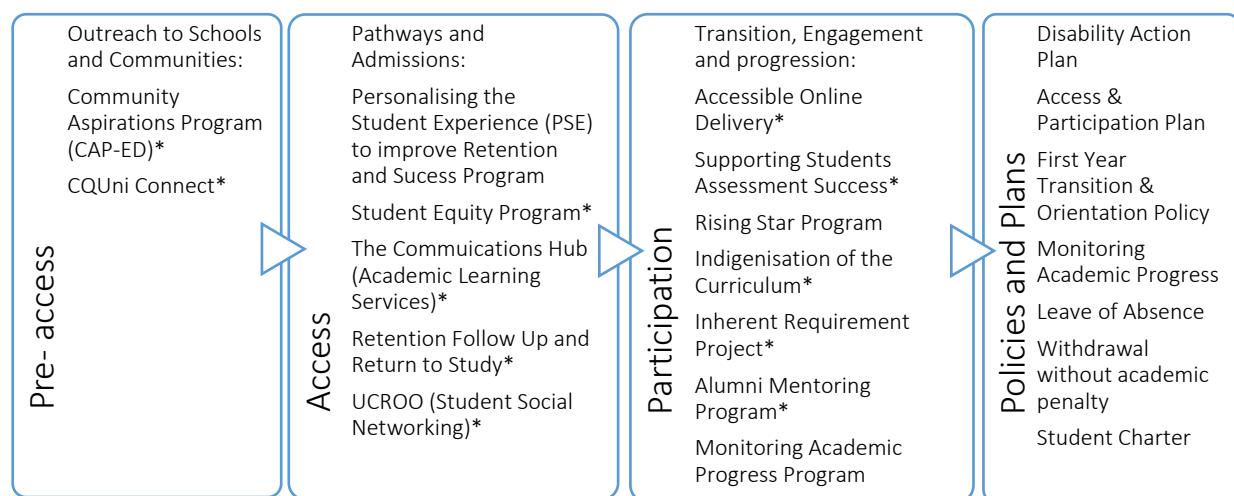


Figure 2: Examples of equity initiatives at CQUniversity

1. *Retention, Follow-up and Return to Study*

This HEPPP funded project (2015-2017) involved a planned approach to addressing continuing issues associated with high levels of attrition at CQUniversity through research involving semi-structured interviews conducted with former students who had withdrawn, failed to re-enrol, transferred or were precluded over a three year period to identify the factors that contributed to them not completing their studies and to identify strategies that the university could have taken to encourage them to complete their degree. Former students who indicated that they would like to complete their studies were supported to return to study with embedded flexible support to increase their chances of success.

2. *Pre-commencement interviews to support transition and retention in 1st year Bachelor of Nursing students:*

This project informed this NPP 5Ps research project and has been continued as a mainstream transition program for Bachelor of Nursing students. This project (2015-2016), aimed to support the transition and improve retention and success of commencing Bachelor of Nursing students. This initiative involved communicating the inherent requirements (that is, the 'student essentials') and program requirements to students via pre-commencement phone interviews, that is, after their acceptance of an offer and prior to their enrolment and/or commencement of their first term of studies (up until Census date) in the undergraduate, nursing program. The pre-commencement interview engaged students in self-reflection and self-assessment to consider their personal context in relation to the inherent and program requirements. The interview

ascertained whether a student requires support services before they have commenced their study, as well as whether they have a raised likelihood of becoming an at risk student in their first year of study (Wood, Gray-Ganter and Bailey, 2016).

3. *The Student Readiness program (2016-2017):*

This program provided evidenced based data for the implementation of the program - Personalising the Student Experience to improve Retention and Success (PSEIRS) program:

A HEPPP funded project implemented to improve student preparation, transition and success at CQUniversity through a number of initiatives, including: development of an online pre-orientation program to enable early engagement with commencing students; proactive intervention with identified 'at-risk' students to connect them with existing support services and advice; improved access to general academic assistance outside of business hours; facilitation of a University-wide Student Retention Community of Practice to increase staff knowledge, communication and collaboration on retention-based issues and projects.

4. *Personalising the Student Experience (PSE) to improve Retention and Success program:*

PSE draws together research data and program evaluation results within a 5Ps framework to provide a personalised approach to preparing transitioning students for university study.

The PSE initiative is supported by CQUniversity Strategic Initiatives funding and HEPPP. On acceptance of offer, commencing students are contacted by phone by final year students who are employed as Student Experience Mentors (SEMs). The SEMs welcome students to the University and discuss the inherent and specific requirements of their course, while also alerting commencing students to the services that can provide support during their studies. The SEMs identify commencing students who are in need of further support and refer those students to either Academic Liaisons employed in the Schools to support students from LSES backgrounds who are in need of academic support or Student Readiness Advisers who assist students identified as "at risk" to access appropriate services as required.

The PSE team also follow-up on students from LSES backgrounds who fail to re-enrol at the start of each semester to determine the reasons and support them to continue their studies and the Retention & Return to Study Officer now works as a member of the PSE team to follow up on students from LSES backgrounds who withdraw and support them to return to complete their studies when they are ready.

It is anticipated (based on evidence from benchmarking with other universities and the factors identified as contributing to students discontinuing) that this strategy, over time, will improve retention and completion rates.

Overview of the NPP project within which this Case Study is embedded

A major challenge facing Universities as they seek to provide inclusive, personalised and accessible education for diverse populations is scalability. A further challenge is to ensure that the information conveyed to students by the University is clear and pertinent so that students understand the requirements of their degree. This NPP research study seeks to add new knowledge to this topic.

The objectives of the research project are to build an evidence base regarding strategies that can improve the success and outcomes of regional students of low SES backgrounds by:

- investigating the extent to which universities have strategies in place to support regional, students from LSES backgrounds.
- exploring whether regional, students from LSES backgrounds are prepared for, and have a realistic understanding of, the requirements of the higher education program into which they are enrolling.
- identifying the factors that contribute to regional, students from LSES backgrounds being unable to meet the requirements of a higher education program.
- advising students of the appropriate steps to follow to meet a higher education program's requirements.
- developing a framework and online system that enables students to self-assess their readiness for undertaking study in their chosen program, preparing for study, and services available to help them meet the requirements of their chosen program of studies to inform institutional policy and the implementation of the approach at other higher education institutions

Research Design underpinning the Case Study:

The research project responds to Kift's (2015) recommendation that universities adopt a 'whole-of-student emphasis that delivers a coordinated and integrated engagement and proactively intervenes to assure just-in-time, just-for-me support and a sense of belonging' (p. 51). It does so by building the evidence concerning how well universities recognise and have strategies in place to align their support to the regional, LSES student profile, monitor their students' progress, ensure their processes match the needs of regional, LSES students and that they are realistic in the promises they make when recruiting students, while also ensuring that regional, LSES students are adequately prepared during transition into their program.

The research adopted the 5Ps framework to building the evidence by trialling a pre-commencement intervention strategy aimed at supporting the transition and participation, retention and success of commencing students from regional and LSES backgrounds across five disciplines: business, health sciences (pathways), social work, education and engineering and five regional universities: CQUniversity, James Cook University, University of the Sunshine Coast, Federation University Australia and Charles Sturt University.

The 5Ps approach to retention informed by Kalsbeek's 4Ps (2013) identifies student profile, progress through their studies, university processes and alignment between a university's promises and the student experience of its delivery on those promises as critical components of an all of institution approach to improving student retention and success. The project specifically builds on the findings of a small scale pilot undertaken in 2015-2016 at CQUniversity involving one hundred and twenty-four commencing Bachelor of Nursing students, fifty-five of whom were identified as from regional or remote and low SES background which demonstrated the potential and identified the fifth P, 'preparedness' for study as a vital component of an effective transition and retention strategy (Wood, Gray-Ganter & Bailey, 2016) and the Personalising the Student Initiative that has since been expanded and implemented for all disciplines at CQUniversity.

Method

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted at each university with first year students from regional, low SES backgrounds who had not previously had a pre-commencement interview and were from identified courses to identify the extent these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with pre-commencing students from regional and low SES backgrounds at each university to discuss students understanding of the compulsory and essential course/program requirements, their expectations of first year study and to identify any challenges they perceived they may experience in meeting these requirements. Students were referred where necessary to appropriate student support services
- Follow up interviews were conducted toward the end of term with the pre-commencement interview cohort to investigate if the pre-commencement interview was helpful, if this interview helped students' level of preparedness and to gather suggestions for areas of improvement.

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to each universities transition and retention policies and programs/courses and analysed through the theoretical lens of the 5Ps framework.

Discussion

A total of sixty-three interviews were conducted with pre-commencing and first year participants enrolled in the Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Business degrees:

- Education - *ten* pre-commencement interviews completed prior to Census date, with *seven* follow up interviews completed at the end of this commencement term with this cohort
- Education - *twelve* interviews completed with first year students who did not have a pre-commencement interview
- Business - *twelve* pre-commencement interviews completed prior to Census date, with *ten* follow up interviews completed at the end of this commencement term with this cohort
- Business - *twelve* interviews completed with first year students who hadn't had a pre-commencement interview

Table 11 provides an overview of results and emerging themes, followed by a more detailed discussion of the major themes under the 5P headings of Profile, Preparedness, Process, Progress and Promise.

Table 11: Mapping the findings against the 5Ps framework

Profile	3 students with English as second language 26 studying in distance mode, 20 on campus. 9 of 46 participants are school leavers. 8 of the non-school leavers had gap year/s to save for study. 21 are working F/T; 17 P/T; 4 noted that they receive Centrelink; 4 self-supporting (3 supplemented by Centrelink). Some of the F/T and P/T workers may be receiving a Centrelink supplement. 2 identified disability; 3 noted they had a child/family member with a disability. 20 described family commitments. <i>"I worked last year and saved money to go to uni, I'm not working at the moment but plan to get a job"</i> (CQUBUS09). Students were keen to show their resilience and determination to succeed
Preparedness	Students, generally, saw themselves as prepared for their studies, <i>"I've already done orientation online, I'm regularly checking uni emails and have a blue card for work"</i> (CQUEDU3). Most were confident about balancing commitments, <i>"study balance shouldn't be a concern, my husband is supportive"</i> (CQUBUS03). All of the pre-commencement students described their interview as very helpful. The commenced students stated the benefit of an earlier interview, <i>"Better before the first term and the first assignment when I was looking for things"</i> (CQUEDU17). It was evident that the early interview (pre-commencement) raised questions for many participants about the depth of their preparedness, <i>"I found the conversation that I had with you more valuable than attending orientation"</i> (CQUBUS01).
Process	Preparatory programs offered by the University were seen as excellent ways of understanding university processes, <i>"STEPS – it was brilliant"</i> (CQUEDU02). The data revealed that students were sometimes overwhelmed by the systems, <i>"so many platforms a bit overwhelming"</i> (CQUBUS16); <i>"I lost it 'til I got it with Moodle and missed some early quizzes and group work"</i> (CQUBUS24) - this student saw great value in a pre-commencement interview. All participants viewed the pre-commencement interview as an excellent way of understanding university processes, <i>"this interview has been very helpful and I didn't realize that there was the possibility of emailing with a counsellor"</i> (CQUEDU06).
Progress	The majority of students were reasonably confident of progressing with their studies with a minority stating thoughts of dropping out. Key elements described as impacting on or influencing progress included: University processes, supportive workplace, personal environment – with support from family & friends emphasized as a big positive, <i>"I have a counselling service at work, a good husband and family around. I'm pretty resilient"</i> (CQUBUS15); <i>"Did think of dropping (due to health) but Lecturers were brilliant"</i> CQUEDU02); <i>"Easier if assessment was spread out"</i> (CQUEDU19); <i>"Written assessment - a bit misleading with structure"</i> (CQUBUS15); <i>"I did think about dropping, my boss talked me into staying and my marketing Lecturer has been great, I'm now considering a marketing major"</i> (CQUBUS11).
Promise	The majority of participants were positive about their university experience, <i>"This interview has been really helpful"</i> (CQUBUS19); <i>"Lecturers have given loads of help"</i> (CQUBUS11); <i>"Felt supported - surprised how connected I feel to the other students in my course,</i> (CQUBUS01). Some, had unmet expectations regarding Practicum arrangements. <i>"I'm concerned when I have to do pracs as there will be less income"</i> (CQUEDU22); <i>"I wondered about assistance finding a Carer in my area, I'm concerned over child care during pracs"</i> (CQUEDU13).

Profile

From the total of 46 participants, 21 are working full time, 17 part-time, 4 are receiving full Centrelink and 4 are self-supporting (3 of the 4 receive a Centrelink supplement). Just 9 of the 46 participants are school leavers and 26 participants study in off campus mode. At least 20 participants noted family responsibilities. This student profile of an off campus student in full or part time work with family responsibilities reflects the overall profile of the CQUniversity student population.

The majority of participants described themselves as “financially okay” or “managing well with finances”. However, the recurring theme was one of importance of working to afford to study and that study wouldn’t be an option if HECS and/or SAF couldn’t be deferred and/or the workplace wasn’t assisting with study costs. Some participants had worked a gap year or years to save up for study, enabling them to focus on study while working minimal or fewer hours. Particularly with the education cohort, from the no pre-commencement interview cohort, were further into their first year and preparing for practicums, there was greater concern about balancing the need to work, meet family responsibilities and fulfill study commitments. Overall, participants were keen to convey their willingness to make the financial commitment required for university study and that they viewed a degree as something very worthwhile to work for. For some students, that means balancing part-time and work and study as one student noted, *“I work part-time as well as get a small payment from Centrelink”* (CQUBUS24 – no pre-commencement interview cohort). Other students appeared confident that they could balance the cost of study with other living expenses, as this student commented, *“I don’t perceive any issue, I’ve bought 2nd hand textbooks this term and plan to buy new ones next term”* (CQUEDU06 – pre-commencement cohort), and another student suggested, *“I’m pretty OK financially - I get a student loan from Centrelink”* (CQUEDU15). For other students, income from work is critical for their continuation of study. For example, one student indicated that *“[I] decided not to study over Term 2 until I find out what is happening with work”* (CQUBUS13 – no pre-commencement interview cohort), this participant was concerned about being made redundant. Two students were anxious about the impact on their income when on prac noting, *“I’m worried if I can’t work during pracs”* (CQUEDU18 – no pre-commencement cohort); and *“I’m concerned when I have to do pracs as there will be less income”* (CQUEDU22 – no pre-commencement interview cohort). Another student indicated that *“I’m hoping to give up work next year to focus on study”* (CQUEDU05 – pre-commencement cohort).

The majority of participants expressed confidence with balancing study, work and family commitments. Participants consistently conveyed their resourcefulness and life experience skills and how these would assist them work toward their study goal. Having a supportive partner was an important factor for two students as indicated by one student’s comment that *“study balance shouldn’t be a concern, my husband is supportive and children are grown up, one is studying as well so understands Mum needs to study”* (CQUBUS03 – pre-commencement cohort); and another student who suggested, *“I’ll be OK balancing my commitments, I was doing well previously at JCU and my partner is excellent”* (CQUEDU06 – pre-commencement cohort). A supportive work environment was also identified as a factor in enabling students to continue with their studies as this student’s comment suggests, *“I’ve got the Employee Assistance Program with work, good support at work. My husband is good and supportive”* (CQUBUS22 – no pre-commencement interview cohort)

Where students had concerns about balancing commitments effectively, the reasons were a lack of timely, specific information about what was involved with a study program and/or inaccurate expectations regarding the services provided by university when, for example, a compulsory practicum was part of the program. This was evident for the Education cohort. As one student indicated, *“I didn’t know what I was thinking when I originally applied and was accepted and that given the amount of study (I now realise) is involved I will now be dropping until my child goes to Kindy next year”* (CQUEDU07 – pre-commencement cohort) – this student confirmed in the follow-up interview that she had enrolled for term 1, 2018 and

reaffirmed how the pre-commencement interview had helped her decision making. Another students “*wondered about a Carer in my area as I have a concern over child care during pracs*” (CQUEDU13 – no pre-commencement interview cohort). This student was expecting more assistance from the university with arranging childcare while doing her practicum. The interview discussion clarified expectations and referrals and information were provided during the interview.

The pre-commencement interview and the interview for commenced students (the no pre-commencement interview cohort) provided important information and/or referrals to help with decision making and to clarify expectations about what is provided by the university with regard to for example, organising and completing practicums.

Preparedness

All participants described themselves as *prepared* for the overall requirements of their degree program with the majority exhibiting a diversity of personal and professional strengths which they saw as assisting them overcome the challenges presented with studying a university degree. Pre-commencement participants described support from family and the workplace, the information the university provided (for example, via Orientation) and their own skills and experience as significant for their sense of preparedness. There were similar responses from the no pre-commencement interview cohort who also noted that readily accessible lecturers and prompt responses were significant factors that helped students overcome anxieties relating to unpreparedness and assisting them towards a positive university experience. Again, a supportive work environment and supportive family were key for many students. As one student commented, “*I've been given time in work hours to study, my wife is good support, I have a work colleague who is also studying and I have an Aunt who is a Professor who is willing to help me*” (CQUBUS12 – pre-commencement cohort). Similarly, this student stated that “*I have good support at work and home, I have a designated study area at home, I'm a little concerned re maths, okay with everything else*” (CQU BUS01 – pre-commencement cohort), and another student commented, “*I work in a supportive team, have a supportive family and I've scheduled in time for myself – I don't stress much. I'm aware of ALC and good with IT and Moodle – I don't need any referrals but I wasn't aware of Inclusion & Accessibility so good to learn about that*” (CQUBUS17 - no pre-commencement cohort).

The fifteen participants who revealed they had undertaken prior study and/or completed a preparatory program (for example CQU STEPS - Skills for tertiary education preparatory studies) stated how valuable this was as preparation for their current university study. As one student suggested, “*Personally a lot was prior knowledge because of STEPS, but for people without doing STEPS who don't know about a lot of the help this phone call would help*” (CQUEDU19 – no pre-commencement interview cohort) and another student commented, “*STEPS – it was brilliant*” (CQUED02 – pre-commencement cohort)

Although participants perceived that they were prepared for the requirements of their degree and had planned for the addition of this commitment to their lives, for example, “*I have planned out my schedule already, and I have plenty of support*” (CQUEDU10 – pre-commencement cohort); and “*I have already organised with lecturers to sit in on lectures and*

have a tutor for Maths" (CQUED09 – pre-commencement cohort), it was evident that the pre-commencement interview highlighted gaps in preparedness and this was confirmed with responses provided in the follow-up to pre-commencement interviews. As one student commented "*Sure I'll be ok as I was ok in school but after talking (during interview) I think I may be screwed*" (CQUBUS07). This participant observed that he thought studying at uni was going to be like high school and now he was really understanding how much work is involved and noted, "*Yes this interview helped me understand that I may not cope* (in the same way I did at school)" (CQUBUS07 – pre-commencement cohort). For those participants from the no pre-commencement interview cohort, the interview later in the term demonstrated that even though they felt they were prepared and planned for their study commitment the interview discussion provided helpful information and clarified expectations.

All participants stated that the overall interview process based around inherent and essential requirements was very helpful or helpful, this was qualified as "*helpful although I was prepared anyway*" by participants who had completed STEPS or had studied previously. Students in the no pre-commencement interview cohort stated that they saw the value of a pre-commencement interview with most stating that pre-commencement was an optimum time while some saw more value in an interview conducted a few weeks into term. As one student suggested, "*yes, very helpful particularly for someone not as prepared as I am*" (CQUEDU08 – pre-commencement cohort) and another commented, "*Quite a good time (timing of interview) as we discussed Moodle, ALC and things like that. If you hadn't phoned at that time I wouldn't have checked out Moodle and found things*" (CQUEDU04 – follow up to pre-commencement cohort). Other students suggested, "*Yes this interview helped me understand that I may not cope*" (CQUBUS07 – pre-commencement cohort); "*perfect timing for the interview, the (first) interview was helpful it brought me back to reality about uni*" (CQUBUS07 – follow up cohort) and "*I feel like I haven't had much communication". This has been really helpful*" (CQUBUS19 – no pre-commencement cohort). Some students in the no pre-commencement interview suggested that a pre-commencement call would have been more helpful, noting "*Maybe before the first term and the first assignment when I was looking for things*" (CQUBUS17 – no pre-commencement cohort); "*It would have been more helpful before I started*" (CQUBUS23 – no pre-commencement cohort); and "*Probably would have been good to have the call before I commenced study*" (CQUEDU21 – no pre-commencement cohort).

Process

Although the participants from each cohort stated that they felt prepared and generally aware of university processes and services, the pre-commencement interview discussion raised important questions for many students about processes that were able to be resolved during the interview or through referrals and links to information and services. The majority of the no pre-commencement interview cohort had most often worked through these process hurdles themselves often seeking assistance later rather than earlier stating that this sometimes took time and added to frustration.

Participants were generally positive about university information and services but also spoke of hesitancy in seeking assistance (especially if help was sought and this was not responded to speedily or at all). Some participants were not aware of all pertinent services that are available, how a service could be of assistance or it was a challenge to make the time to seek assistance amidst already busy lives. The twelve participants who had completed the CQUniversity STEPS program saw this as valuable in helping them be aware of the essential university processes.

Participants from both cohorts were clear in their responses that it was not the actual content of a resource or learning item that they could not understand, but rather it was the scaffolding or process around it that caused confusion. For example with regard to processes, students expressed some concerns around accessing the university's Moodle learning management system; orientation; fees and processes relating to HECS and SAF; linking to Course Advisors, examination procedures; the services available for example through Inclusion & Accessibility; understanding assignment requirements (e.g. how to structure and referencing); and some confusion regarding university expectations and student responsibilities.

Overwhelmingly the pre-commencement cohort saw the interview as very helpful in assisting the student to sort out processes. Participants in the pre-commencement follow-up interview affirmed the helpfulness of the pre-commencement discussion. The no pre-commencement interview cohort, while describing how they negotiated processes, also stated that an earlier (pre-commencement) interview would prevent students falling behind if issues were sorted at the outset or as some participants stated the early interview would "help us know what we didn't know". As one student commented, "*yes, very helpful particularly for someone not as prepared as I am. Though I haven't been in and looked at anything yet, not really checking emails either. I wasn't aware of Moodle*" (CQUED06 – pre-commencement cohort), interviewer took student through Moodle process and discussed importance of checking emails and how to do this. Another student suggested, "*[I'm] feeling out of depth, not being sure that I am on the right track with assessments*" (CQUEDU05 – pre-commencement cohort), interviewer was able to link participant to assistance; and another commented "*Yes – good to know about Maths (Learning Centre)*" (CQUED21 – no pre-commencement cohort), with regard to participant noting she was struggling with Maths component and wasn't sure what the help she was eligible for.

Students expressed concerns with online orientation, noting that with "*Online orientation you don't know if you are finished or not right at the end it doesn't say anything*" (CQUBUS03 – pre-commencement cohort). Another student expressed confusion about the use of UCROO and where to find exam locations, and yet another student commented, "*I lost it 'til I got it with Moodle and missed some early quizzes and group work*" (CQUBUS24- no pre-commencement cohort). For some students, having to login to "*so many platforms [was] a bit overwhelming*" (CQUBUS16 – no pre-commencement cohort). For other students having the opportunity to chat helped them understand the processes, as indicated by this student who suggested. "*Good to have a chat about the processes (withdrawal without academic penalty and Moodle help centre)*" (CQUBUS15 – no pre-commencement cohort). Interviewer also referred student for assistance with assignment structure as student found guidelines

misleading. Again, having a supportive lecturer emerged as an important theme for participants as indicated by this student who commented that the “*Lecturer sent tips and hints and has been encouraging to everyone*” (CQUBUS02 – follow-up to pre-commencement cohort). This student described feeling very prepared in her pre-commencement interview; however, moved interstate and started a new job and had concerns about aspects of exams and assignments and found the hints and tips from Lecturer very helpful.

Progress

The majority of students were confident or reasonably confident of progressing with their studies, with only a small minority stating that they had had thoughts of dropping out. There was a strong theme of determination to complete the degree and if not now then later when, mainly work and/or family issues, were resolved. Key elements described as impacting on or influencing progress included: Support from family, friends and workplace; the affordability of study; university processes including accessible information and speedy replies to queries (this includes information and queries about the academic as well as administrative process). Students commented “*Lecturers have given loads of help. I’m pretty confident at moving on and haven’t thought about dropping out*” (CQUBUS11 – pre-commencement cohort); “*I got good feedback from lecturers. I’m pretty confident at moving forward now. I haven’t thought about dropping. It has been a bit tricky but I’m getting there*” (CQUEDU06 – follow-up to pre-commencement cohort); “*Did think about dropping at the start but the boss talked me into staying. It’s been relatively easy to navigate*” (since advice during pre-commencement interview), *Marketing Lecturer has been very good and I’m now considering doing marketing as a major*” (CQUBUS12 - follow-up to pre-commencement cohort); and “*with support, I’m on top of things now - finally settled into Moodle – it’s easy now, hard to start off with till you got the hang of things*” (CQUBUS05 – follow-up to pre-commencement). Another student indicated, “*Did think about dropping at one point. Main issues was being in hospital and missing out on lectures, but Lecturers were brilliant. Initially getting that phone call*” (pre-commencement interview) yes it gave me information and allowed me to access inclusion and accessibility” (CQUEDU02 – follow-up to pre-commencement cohort); while another student commented on the support of peers, noting, “*(I) have a facebook page with my study group and I’m lucky to have support in Geraldton Campus*” (CQUEDU15 – no pre-commencement cohort). Students again reaffirmed the benefits of the pre-commencement interview, suggesting, “*The call was good at that time I didn’t know what to expect and you captured the unknown. I found the conversation that I had with you more valuable than attending orientation, so I guess that would be the feedback that I would give*” (CQUBUS01 – follow-up to pre-commencement cohort).

Student progress was confirmed by the number of students who had enrolled in subsequent terms beyond their initial interview through the project. Table 12 provides detailed information showing student re-enrolment progress in the subsequent term/s after the interview/s identified according to cohort and discipline. As shown in Table 12, of the 12 Business students who participated in the no pre-commencement interview group, nine had

re-enrolled in T2, 2017 and nine had re-enrolled in T1, 2018. Of the 12 Education students who participated in the no pre-commencement interview group, 11 Education students re-enrolled in T2, 2017 and 9 re-enrolled in T1, 2018. Twelve Business and 10 Education students participated in pre-commencement interviews. Of those students, 10 Business and 7 Education students had re-enrolled in subsequent terms. Therefore, a total of 19 (79%) Business students and 16 (73%) of Education students had progressed in their studies following participation in the project.

Table 12: Re-enrolment progress in the subsequent term/s following interviews by cohort and discipline

Discipline	Interviews No pre- commencement cohort	No pre- commencement cohort re- enrolment status	Interviews Pre- commencement cohort	Interviews Follow-up to pre- commencement cohort	Pre- commencement cohort re- enrolment status
Bachelor of Business	12	9 Business students re- enrolled in T2, 2017 and 9 in T1, 2018.	12	10	10 Business students re- enrolled
Bachelor of Education (Primary)	12	11 Education students re- enrolled in T2, 2017 and 9 re- enrolled in T1, 2018	10	7	8 Education students re- enrolled

Promise

A key intent in CQUniversity's Strategic Plan (2016 – 2021) is the goal of developing a culture that fosters a positive student experience enabling students to 'be what they want to be'. The findings of the research confirmed that the majority of participants were positive about their student experience and were affirmed that the university provided services to support their studies. As one student noted, "*good email contact from Uni, the ALC [Academic Learning Centre] had a specialised maths support available and the info online was good*" (CQUBUS08 – pre-commencement cohort). Another student commented, "*Yes, sufficient support. Found that my questions are usually answered and some are already answered in the Forum* (CQUEDU04 – follow-up to pre-commencement cohort)". As noted in previous sections, experiencing supportive lecturers influenced students' perceptions on how well the university was perceived to be meeting its promise of an inclusive environment that supports students to 'be what they want to be'. The pre-commencement interview was regarded by most students as an important factor contributing to their self-confidence and

satisfaction with university support. Students suggested that it is a "Great thing that you are doing. It is really helpful" (CQUBUS08 – pre-commencement cohort) and noted that "the first interview was definitely helpful and gave me advice, probably earlier may have been better (CQUBUS11 – follow-up to pre-commencement interview cohort). Despite these positive aspects of student experiences, some students indicated that the university had not lived up to their expectations and delivered services that matched their situation. For example, some students, (mainly from the no pre-commencement interview cohort) described the challenges they experienced with attending practicums given their particular circumstances. While students indicated that they understood the inherent and essential requirements of their program, it was evident that they had an expectation that the university would assist them more and be more flexible with practicum arrangements. As one student commented, "*Travelling over an hour (for a practicum) would be a concern*" (CQUEDU01 – pre-commencement cohort). This student had expected that her practicum would be in her hometown. Similarly, another participant stated, "*I'm worried if I can't work during pracs*" (CQUEDU18 – no pre-commencement interview cohort). This student had expected flexibility with practicums so that he could continue with some paid work during those periods. A third student indicated, "*I'm concerned over child care during my practicums as I home school my children and I wondered about finding a Carer in my area*" (CQUEDU13 – no pre-commencement interview cohort) and another student stated "*I'm concerned when I do pracs as there will be less income and I'm wondering what I could do – what help is available*" (CQUEDU22 – no pre-commencement interview cohort)

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings from CQUniversity interviews with Education and Business students suggest that the majority of students felt they had prepared themselves well for study and had ensured that they had required family and work support systems already in place. The interviews also demonstrated that students benefited from the pre-commencement interviews, which raised their awareness of and/or explained, the inherent and essential requirements of their degree and the processes and services the university provides to assist students meet their study goals. These research findings suggest a strong case for personalised early intervention initiatives that help students to understand the requirements of their program. The findings also indicate that a student interview conducted at any time during the first term of a student's degree is beneficial, though students consistently recommended an earlier interview prior to commencement was most helpful. The findings point to strengths in university processes as well as limitations, particularly with respect to the disconnect, at least for some students, between what they perceived that the university could/should be doing to support their family and work commitments and the reality of their experience, particularly with respect to Education students who were concerned about the challenges that compulsory pracs would impose on their financial and family commitments. This suggests the need for further review of relevant policies and implementation of policies to address student concerns.

4.2 Charles Sturt University

Author: Liam Downing

Profile of Charles Sturt University

As of 2016 (the most recent year for which full data are available), Charles Sturt University (CSU) had 43,142 enrolled students, of whom 31,329 were domestic students. Of those domestic students, 22% were from LSES backgrounds, and 3.3% were Indigenous. CSU also has a significant representation of regional and remote students, with 49% of domestic students falling into these groups.

Commensurate with its student demographic profile, CSU undertakes a significant amount of work aimed at ensuring positive outcomes for students from LSES backgrounds and Indigenous students. Much of this work is mainstreamed, in that it is built into regular practice across the university. Key elements of these programs in the online (external/distance) student space include:

- CSU's Academic Literacy, Learning and Numeracy (ALLaN) Team helps students develop their academic literacy and numeracy skills. Students can submit assignment drafts for feedback, book an individual appointment or attend a workshop. The ALLaN team works with Faculty to embed academic literacy skills into the curriculum and can design bespoke programs according to the specific needs of students. Some aspects of this service are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and are specifically targeted at those who might not be able to access this type of support in regular working hours.
- STUDY LINK offers a suite of short, online preparatory subjects to help students feel better equipped for their University studies. Some subjects boost general study skills, such as grammar or the transition from TAFE or VET to university, while others focus on preparation for particular subjects, including Anatomy, Mathematics or Statistics. The program supports students in making a successful transition to university, or in achieving their potential in specific subject areas. STUDY LINK subjects are free for Commonwealth supported students.
- The CSU Student Outreach Team personally welcomes all commencing students and provides assistance when they begin to show signs of disengagement.
- The CSU Outreach Team travels to selected areas around Australia and holds Outreach sessions. The team works with Faculty to identify online students' signs of disengagement, tailor Faculty-specific welcoming campaigns and create course-specific outreach events for students in Sydney.
- The Study Coach program offers going telephone mentoring to students identified as at risk of disengaging from their studies. Students are given advice regarding a number of non-subject specific skills that help them be successful in their studies.
- CSU Orientation now includes a specific online component, including:
 - An online recordings page made available to all new students post orientation;

- The CSU welcome pack, containing a CSU red t-shirt, CSU branded ear buds, and a USB drive containing information about CSU and available services, and Studylink, CSG Give and Alumni information; and
- A bespoke, customised Orientation portal for all students, including information specifically tailored and personalised to each individual student.

In keeping with its levels of LSES student enrolments, CSU is a significant recipient of HEPPP funding, with around \$6.3m in Participation funding in 2017. This funding was utilised predominantly to deliver programs administered by the Division of Student Services (87%) supporting transition and retention improvement programs (this includes outreach into primary and secondary schools). Additional funding flowed to the Division of Learning and Teaching (8%) and the faculties (5%) to fund initiatives around best practice teaching and faculty-specific student support within the HEPPP guidelines.

Overview of the NPP project within which the Case Study is framed

The objectives of the 5 Ps project are to build an evidence base regarding strategies that can improve the success and outcomes of regional students of LSES background by:

- investigating the extent to which universities have strategies in place to support regional, students from LSES backgrounds;
- exploring whether regional, students from LSES backgrounds are prepared for, and have a realistic understanding of, the requirements of the higher education program into which they are enrolling;
- identifying the factors that contribute to regional, students from LSES backgrounds being unable to meet the requirements of a higher education program;
- advising students of the appropriate steps to follow to meet a higher education program's requirements; and
- developing a framework and online system that enables students to self-assess their readiness for undertaking study in their chosen program, preparing for study, and services available to help them meet the requirements of their chosen program of studies to inform institutional policy and the implementation of the approach at other higher education institutions.

Research Design underpinning the Case Study

The research adopted Kalsbeek's 4 Ps framework while adding a 5th P 'preparedness' approach to building the evidence by trialling a pre-commencement intervention strategy aimed at supporting the transition and participation, retention and success of commencing students from regional and LSES backgrounds across five disciplines: business, health sciences (pathways), social work, education and engineering and five regional universities: CQUniversity, James Cook University, University of the Sunshine Coast, Federation University of Australia and Charles Sturt University.

The 5Ps approach to retention informed by Kalsbeek (2013) identifies student profile, progress through their studies, university processes and alignment between a university's

promises and the student experience of its delivery on those promises as critical components of an all of institution approach to improving student retention and success. The project also builds on the findings of a small scale pilot undertaken at CQUniversity involving one hundred and twenty-four commencing Bachelor of Nursing students, fifty-five of whom were identified as from regional or remote and low SES backgrounds, which demonstrated the potential and identified the fifth P, 'preparedness' for study as a vital component of an effective transition and retention strategy (Wood, Gray-Ganter & Bailey, 2016).

Method

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted at each university with first year students from regional, LSES backgrounds who did not have a pre-commencement interview and were from identified programs to identify the extent these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with pre-commencing students from regional and LSES backgrounds at each university to discuss students understanding of the compulsory and essential course/program requirements, their expectations of first year study and to identify any challenges they perceived they may experience in meeting these requirements. Students were referred where necessary to appropriate student support services
- Follow-up interviews were conducted toward the end of term with the pre-commencement interview cohort to investigate if the pre-commencement interview was helpful, if this interview helped students level of preparedness and to gather suggestions for areas of improvement.
- It will also be determined how many students have re-enrolled to continue their studies into the next term.

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs and analysed within the 5Ps framework.

Discussion

Seven (n=7) pre-commencement interviews were completed with the CSU Social Work (n=6) and the CSU Business (n=1) cohorts prior to Term 2, 2017. A total of three follow-up interviews were completed with this group; n=2 in Social Work and n=1 in Business. Table 13 shows the profile of the student who participated in the study.

A further three interviews were completed with students in the CSU Social Work (n=1) and the CSU Business (n=2) cohorts who did not have a pre-commencement interview.

The pre-commencement and no pre-commencement interviews were facilitated by a CSU Study Coach.

Recruitment was difficult for this study, with very low response rates to requests for participation. This is likely due to a number of factors, including existing burden on students

to participate in research. It was apparent that there may have been some self-selection bias among participants, with most displaying the characteristics of highly-motivated, high-achieving students who are likely to succeed even in very challenging circumstances.

Table 13: CSU Participant attributes and identifiers

Participant number	Category of participant	Identifier in report	Course area	Other data
Participant 1	Pre-commencement	Participant 1, Pre-commencement	Social Welfare	
Participant 2	Pre-commencement (followed up)	Participant 2, Pre-commencement (followed up)	Social Welfare	
Participant 3	Pre-commencement	Participant 3, Pre-commencement	Social Welfare	
Participant 4	Pre-commencement	Participant 4, Pre-commencement	Social Welfare	
Participant 5	Pre-commencement (followed up)	Participant 5, Pre-commencement (followed up)	Business	
Participant 6	Pre-commencement (followed up)	Participant 6, Pre-commencement (followed up)	Social Welfare	
Participant 7	Pre-commencement	Participant 7, Pre-commencement	Social Welfare	
Participant 8	Non pre-commencement	Participant 8, Non pre-commencement	Accounting	Indigenous
Participant 9	Non pre-commencement	Participant 9, Non pre-commencement	Social Welfare	
Participant 10	Non pre-commencement	Participant 10, Non pre-commencement	Accounting	
Participant 2	Follow up interview	Participant 2, Follow up interview	Social Welfare	
Participant 5	Follow up interview	Participant 5, Follow up interview	Business	
Participant 6	Follow up interview	Participant 6, Follow up interview	Social Welfare	

Profile

CSU's typical student studies online and balances this with work and family responsibilities, and this was reflected in this study. In general, the students interviewed were working a full-time or close to full-time job, often accompanied by family responsibilities. Interviewees did not generally have any cultural responsibilities that went beyond their immediate family. Family responsibilities, it should be noted, were significant, even where partners were

generally supportive. Physical health concerns were generally not reported by participants, although some outlined their own mental health concerns (albeit already well-managed), as well as issues within their family.

Previously I have had depression but it is pretty well managed (CSU0).

One key, exceptional finding was an Aboriginal Accounting student interviewed in the no pre-commencement cohort in his mid-50s who had significant cultural responsibilities, which included significant support responsibilities in times of grief. The level of cultural responsibility this participant had was atypical among the research participants as he was the only Indigenous participant in the study, although it is important to note in the context of any work around cultural appropriateness in programs aimed at improving student outcomes.

Cultural responsibilities, that has been as far as family ties go. All we have been able to do is get through all of the grief, wade through all of the deaths we have going on at the moment (CSU08).

These responsibilities had a significant material impact on this participant's studies, even with Abstudy supplements and other support.

Well you only have these incidentals through Abstudy that happens twice a year. It is not sufficient to buy all the textbooks so it has to come out of the rest of my payments. It is just through the good grace of my cousin's wife here that I am able to even exist, because the Abstudy money is nothing better than getting the dole and when you have to repay money that makes it even less. So I can't buy clothes, medicine, a car. I can't do any of that (CSU09).

Other than the case above, finances were not generally identified as an issue among either the pre-commencement or no pre-commencement cohorts, with participants generally able to either draw on their own financial resources or their partners'. However, it was noted in the follow-up interviews that textbooks – even with grants – could be an unexpected impactor on financial resources.

Yeah that is quite expensive. I got a grant from CSU but the thing with that is it expires in 12 months, so I have only managed to buy two sets of textbooks with that. I think it was a \$500 grant (CSU06).

Participants generally noted that they were in control of their own situations, but that if there were incidents, then family would obviously take first precedence over study.

Of note is that the profile of the interviewed students – while presenting some risks – has many strengths, and participants were aware of this. In particular, time management among this group was simply a regular part of life, and contributed strongly to some elements of preparedness.

I think, because I've managed to juggle family and full time work, study for the last 3 years, that I know how to manage it, so I'm really quite comfortable/ I actually feel quite comfortable at this point (CSU02).

It is also worth noting that participants had generally undertaken some kind of study previously, generally in the vocational sector.

Preparedness

In keeping with the aforementioned observation that there may have been some self-selection bias in this study, the students interviewed generally assessed themselves as having a strong sense of preparedness for participation in their study. While there was a certain element of ‘wait and see’ in terms of what their study would actually yield, they felt that their pre-existing skills in time-management built through parenthood and work responsibilities would easily transfer to study. That said, there was a sense among participants that they were operating at the limit of their time resources.

So far I have managed to balance it out pretty good. I am studying part time, but in saying that I don't think I would be able to take on full time. I have 5 children. Life is busy (CSU10).

One area in which students were unsure of their skills was in successfully completing the referencing requirements of their course. This was often through a preconception formed through conversations with friends and family who had already studied, and it was perceived that this was a difficult but necessary component of study. That said, participants had noted this as a potential shortcoming, and were generally aware of the support structures in place to build referencing skills.

Referencing. I'm terrified. I've looked at everything. I've had plenty of reassurance from my work colleagues that I will survive referencing and it will make a lot more sense very soon. It is a bit scary to me right at this very minute, but I'm sure I'll get there. [...] There's lots of links there and lecturers have spoken about the guidance that they will provide so I'm confident that it will be ok (CSU01).

One of the key findings in terms of how the pre-commencement interviews impacted on students was almost contradictory: That is, while students were prepared and expressed awareness of the services suggested by the interviewer, they did appreciate hearing about those services again in the context of the interview, as well as any follow up information emailed to them. In a sense, the interviews provided validation that their work in preparing for study was on the right track.

You've made me feel really organised now! (CSU02).

Progress

CSU’s institution-wide progress rates are commensurate with other, regionally similar universities with matching student profiles, with online progress lower than that of on-campus students. On the whole, interviewees expressed an initially sound understanding of the requirements to successfully navigate their program. However, this was generally tempered with the aforementioned sense that students would wait and see how these requirements would pan out in reality. Students were generally aware of the expectations of study hours in their degree, although there was perhaps a sense of optimism that students could fit these hours into their already busy lives. Among those who had commenced and in

the follow-up interviews, they were able to fit these hours in, although responses highlighted that this was generally the most significant challenge to be met.

The challenge was probably the amount of time. It was very consuming but I understood it was going to be like that. I was good with time management. I structured everything and allocated myself time and that (CSU02).

Students who participated in the follow-up interviews – while acknowledging the challenges that lay ahead – were generally optimistic about their future study, and their likelihood of progress.

I am confident, probably more confident than what I was but yeah it is still quite daunting (CSU06).

Process

CSU's Division of Student Services has a very strong focus already on ensuring its students are aware of and linked with support services that contribute positively to students' journeys. This is particularly the case in the Orientation and Outreach spaces, where a significant effort is made to ensure that awareness is as high as possible in commencing students; particular effort has been made in recent years to ensure this is as strongly communicated in the online space as it is on-campus. This appears to have paid dividends, at least among participants interviewed in this study.

Students interviewed had largely navigated CSU's initial processes successfully, including enrolment, accessing course-specific information and other services.

Importantly, participants were generally highly aware of CSU's various support services, indicating that the promotion of these had been effective through programs such as Online Orientation and the Student Outreach Team. This includes the Academic Learning, Literacy and Numeracy (ALLaN) service, and participants in the non pre-commencement and follow up phases of this research provided positive feedback where they had used this service. Students were generally aware of the Study Link short courses aimed at building academic knowledge, skills and confidence.

The Indigenous student interviewed had knowledge of and had utilised the Indigenous Student Centres, and regarded it as a space which provided both logistical and social support structures.

It is a really valuable resource. Basically requirements, desktop computers, scanning requirements they have got a kitchen plus there is, you get, they have a job noticeboard there, plus interaction with the other students doing other studies whatever they may be doing. It is like find out which mob they belong to and which tribe. You have that social bit going on there (CSU09).

Importantly, the major finding this data points to a sense that support services within CSU are not invisible, even to online students. Conceptually, at least, students also generally expressed an awareness of steps to follow if they ran into difficulties, including extensions, special consideration and other adjustments. Some had even approached teaching staff proactively to ask about specific processes.

I contacted both lecturers to let them know and they said the process to take if I feel I need to. They told me what to do (CSU9).

That said, there was still a sense that any knowledge in this sphere was conjectural; that students would not necessarily know how following these processes would work in reality. This observation should be viewed in the context of interview participants who were largely very well prepared for study. There was a wealth of time management knowledge and experience, and a sense that they could always find out what they needed to through searching the CSU website or approaching relevant staff members.

A lot of first year students sort of wait to be told what they have to do before they do it, whereas I went ahead and did it, so I feel like I had that bit of advantage because it is all there on the CSU webpages and stuff; you just have to find it" (CSU06).

That said, the same participant also felt that the initial interview worked well in terms of topping up their preparedness.

Yeah I think I did speak to her about getting ahead and getting everything ready and organised. So I had textbooks organised, I had done all of my HELP documents so basically once the semester started it was just a matter of starting the study like waiting for the course material to be released (CSU06).

Promise

CSU's key promise to its students in terms of outcomes is geared towards employment and employability, and this is largely reflected through its graduate outcomes data. Other promises include that CSU will produce graduates who work towards the public good, and who possess 'the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in', which is the English translation of the Wiradjuri phrase 'Yindyamarra Winhanganga' and the key ethos of the university. CSU also promotes itself as highly flexible and supportive to diverse cohorts.

Findings from the interviews largely reflected that the students understood this promise, although this was tempered with the knowledge that flexibility can only go so far. There was also a strong sense that the courses' promises were largely around employment. This was particularly keenly felt in terms of studying and working in regional areas.

Study is good but it's also good to have an outcome. Meaning jobs – also too when you're living regionally you've got look at what's available realistically and locally (CSU03).

At least with the degree I can move forward. If I have to go and live out the back of Kununurra or you know where ever to get a job then so be it. That is what has to be done (CSU09).

Participants who had commenced generally felt that the courses lived up to what they promised, particularly through the support offered by the teaching staff.

The teachers have been really helpful that has been a big stand out for me (CSU05).

The tutors are very good at that. They help me break things down and how to strategize with essays and things. Like key words and what we need to look at. They are very good (CSU09).

Study Coach researcher observation

Of particular interest in the pre-commencement and no pre-commencement phases of the research was the use of a Study Coach with previous research experience to conduct the interviews. Doing this allowed the Study Coach to reflect on previous practice, and apply the knowledge gained during this process to future work. In follow-up debriefings, it was apparent that the lessons learned during the interviews were being applied to the researcher's day-to-day work.

Recommendations

As highlighted earlier in this report, CSU already works in depth and proactively with its students to ensure that they are prepared for study, and that they are aware of elements of the 5Ps framework. In many ways, although not explicitly so, practice at CSU thus already reflects some of the key aims of the proposed 5Ps online tool. However, while the findings do indicate that the students interviewed were generally well-prepared and existing services were broadly-known and utilised, they also indicate that CSU has some work to do in reinforcing students' ability to progress successfully, follow CSU processes and gain access to important support structures. The recommendations below are largely geared towards ensuring that key elements of this are explicit, and that the best outcomes are generated among key student demographics.

Recommendation 1: There is value in implementing a 5Ps-based online tool as proposed in this project, backed by early pre-commencement telephone contact among at-risk students or those who would benefit from additional advice.

While an online tool is likely to be of value to many students, some of the unique situations participants found themselves in illustrate that a more personal approach may be required, and that this could take place earlier.

"Yeah I enjoyed that phone call. I got a lot from it. An earlier one would have been good because there was some preparatory things that I could have done" [CSU05].

An online tool appears likely to provide students with a set of tools they could use to understand the 5Ps, although it needs to be emphasised that even if this were compulsory to undertake, there is a likelihood that some students might skim the tool, or not fully utilise it. In these cases, there may be value in reinforcing this through telephone contact, possibly through CSU's existing Study Coach program or similar.

Recommendation 2: Any work in implementing 5Ps-based online tools and strategies must ensure cultural appropriateness in work with Indigenous students.

This should include training aimed at cultural competency among coalface staff, and should also be incorporated into any online tool. The Indigenous participant in this research highlighted some key considerations for anyone working on building 5Ps among students;

particularly around the specific issues of family responsibilities among this group, and potentially accompanying issues around finance.

Recommendation 3: Consideration should be given to referrals to internal or external financial counselling or advice for issues around government payments and finances.

While this may not be required among all students (particularly those who are in paid employment), this is likely a critical issue for those students who live in tight financial circumstances and on low incomes, and are supported by government supplements. In terms of preparedness for study, a lack of any safety net or knowledge of government payments, or an existing financial issue, may impact negatively on students' abilities to persist with study. Where it is apparent through any 5Ps tool that financial distress is likely, referral to financial counselling or advice may assist in building resilience to financial issues.

4.3 CASE STUDY: Federation University Australia

Authors

Amy Barnhouse and Fiona Sunderland

University profile

Federation University Australia (FedUni) is Australia's newest university. It was created by bringing together the University of Ballarat and the Monash University Gippsland Campus. FedUni is the third oldest site of higher learning in Australia and offers higher education, TAFE and secondary schooling. With campuses in Ballarat, the Wimmera and Gippsland in regional Victoria, the University also has partner providers in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and South-East Asia. FedUni has approximately 22 000 students, including 15 500 domestic students. Of the higher education students, approximately 29% are from low SES backgrounds.

FedUni is moving to become a more open access university and adopts a philosophy of inclusivity, opportunity and support. It increasingly welcomes second chance learners, mature age students, those who have not succeeded educationally in traditional ways, school-leaver students with a wider range of Australian Tertiary Admission Rank scores and students from a variety of pathways and backgrounds.

To assist students from low socioeconomic backgrounds succeed at FedUni, the University has developed a range of programs that fulfil the Participation component of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP).

FedUni's transition and retention programs

FedUni has a broad range of transition and retention programs aimed at low SES students. Of these, HEPPP funding is used on around 20 projects per year ranging from \$1K to \$1 million. The projects listed in Table 14 are not intended to provide a comprehensive list; rather they represent FedUni's primary support programs.

Table 14: FedUni transition and retention programs

Program	HEPP funded	Description
Orientation program		Social and educational activities organised during Orientation Week and the early weeks of semester designed to ensure new students make a smooth transition into university life.
Transition Support Program	✓	Consists of three complementary programs that provide support through the student lifecycle from pre-commencement (FedReady) to study success (FedForward) and career planning (FedFuture).
Mentoring	✓	<p>Provides each first year student with a mentor for the first five weeks of semester in group sessions that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates access to a student network. • Introduces the student support structures at university • Provides guidance regarding the campus, the lingo and academic expectations.
Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)	✓	Offers new students group study sessions facilitated by experienced students (PASS leaders) in which students can consolidate their understanding of the course content and develop their study skills. PASS is usually attached to courses that can be challenging for students
Academic Skills and Knowledge (ASK)	✓	<p>Supports students with their development of study skills. Comprised of experienced student leaders, the ASK team is there to help answer any question a student has during their undergraduate degree, from referencing to finding a booklist.</p> <p>Senior students who have demonstrated abilities in academic writing, research and general all around study skills, have been trained to support first year students by offering drop-in sessions (individual or group) and workshops on academic skills.</p>
Studiosity	✓	Gives students access to one-to-one online support from an experienced tutor.
Learning Skills Advisors (LSAs)		Professional staff who assist students develop skills in structuring assignments and refining their study and academic skills.
Kickstart	✓	Covers the awarding and administration of scholarships, bursaries and grants. Students are provided with: direct financial assistance to help meet day-to-day living costs and/or essential resources such as laptops, internet access or nursing kits.
Live Learn Lead (LLL)	✓	Incorporates innovative practice in outreach activity; tailored needs-based assessment and admission; holistic transition and

		orientation programming and; a resilience-based growth, development and success program that is integrated with the institutional teaching, learning and support framework.
Counselling	✓	Helps students meet the daily challenges of student life and to achieve their academic potential. Provides counselling by appointment for personal, academic and financial/welfare issues.
Disability Learning Access Unit (DLAU)	✓	The role of the DLAU is to support the development of a learning and working environment that maximise participation in University life by students with a disability.
Maths Drop-In Centre	✓	This provides a one-on-one, 'as-needed' support for students experiencing specific difficulties with mathematics and statistics in their studies across FedUni.
FAST		Designed to provide alternative entry to tertiary study at FedUni and prepare students for study in a degree program.
FedStart Survey		Rolled out in 2017 to commencing FedUni students who have accepted their offers to study for the upcoming semester. Enables self-assessment of preparedness for university life and provides an option to speak to a student ambassador for further advice.

Overview of the NPP project within which the Case Study is framed

The objectives of the 5Ps project are to build an evidence base regarding strategies that can improve the success and outcomes of regional students of LSES background by:

- investigating the extent to which universities have strategies in place to support regional, students from LSES backgrounds;
- exploring whether regional, students from LSES backgrounds are prepared for, and have a realistic understanding of, the requirements of the higher education program into which they are enrolling;
- identifying the factors that contribute to regional, students from LSES being unable to meet the requirements of a higher education program;
- advising students of the appropriate steps to follow to meet a higher education program's requirements; and
- developing a framework and online system that enables students to self-assess their readiness for undertaking study in their chosen program, preparing for study, and services available to help them meet the requirements of their chosen program of studies to inform institutional policy and the implementation of the approach at other higher education institutions.

Research Design underpinning the Case Study

The research adopted Kalsbeek's 4 Ps framework while adding a 5th P 'preparedness' approach to building the evidence by trialling a pre-commencement intervention strategy aimed at supporting the transition and participation, retention and success of commencing students from regional and LSES backgrounds across five disciplines: business, health sciences (pathways), social work, education and engineering and five regional universities: CQUniversity, James Cook University, University of the Sunshine Coast, Federation University of Australia and Charles Sturt University.

The 5Ps approach to retention informed by Kalsbeek (2013) identifies student profile, progress through their studies, university processes and alignment between a university's promises and the student experience of its delivery on those promises as critical components of an all of institution approach to improving student retention and success. The project also builds on the findings of a small scale pilot undertaken at CQUniversity involving one hundred and twenty-four commencing Bachelor of Nursing students, fifty-five of whom were identified as from regional or remote and low SES background which demonstrated the potential and identified the fifth P, 'preparedness' for study as a vital component of an effective transition and retention strategy (Wood, Gray-Ganter & Bailey, 2016).

Method

FedUni's method differed slightly to the other participating universities as it did not have a mid-year intake in its chosen discipline (Engineering) so it was not possible to conduct pre-commencement interviews.

That being the case, it conducted:

- a) Semi-structured interviews with first year students in their second semester from regional, LSES backgrounds who had not had a pre-commencement interview to identify:
 - the extent these students felt prepared for study;
 - how well they understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements;
 - any challenges experienced in meeting these requirements;
 - how well they were supported during the transition to university;
 - their expectations of first year study; and
 - appropriate services to support their transition/retention.
- b) Follow-up interviews were conducted towards the end of term to investigate what challenges students had experienced, what support they had accessed and if they would be re-enrolling.

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs and analysed within the 5Ps framework.

Discussion

FedUni had a small sample size of 19 LSES first year Engineering students. Of these, three participated in the first interview and two in the subsequent follow-up interview. These will now be examined in the context of the 5Ps framework.

Profile

Of the three participants, one was a mature age student who also worked long full-time hours up to 48 hours per week but averaging 42 hours per week. He combined this with part-time study as well as family responsibilities parenting four children, three of whom were in their late teens. He noted that his preference would have been to work part-time especially as he also had significant commuting time, but his job as a fitter and turner did not offer part-time shifts. Although his children were in an older age bracket, which he noted, “*makes things a lot easier*” (FED01), he explained that finding time to spend with them on weekends was difficult as apart from finding time to study, he worked two weekends a month.

The remaining students were both studying full-time. One was combining this with part-time work of 18 hours per week, a balance which he said was proving manageable so far. The other was currently not working and had received a scholarship that helped financially support her. She was, however, finding the commuting burdensome as she lived in the regional city CBD whereas her campus was on the outskirts and she also regularly travelled home to a different regional area. She felt a planned move closer to campus would solve this issue.

In summary:

- One participant working long full-time hours, studying part-time with four older children and considerable commuting. Managing well and can sometimes study at work.
- Two participants studying full-time – one also working part-time.
- One intended to move closer to campus

Preparedness

At the time of the interview, the FedUni cohort were already into their second semester. They had practical understanding and experience of their program’s day-to-day requirements the issues from which are described below. When asked hypothetically whether a pre-commencement interview would have been of benefit to transitioning to university life, while acknowledging that there was already a lot of information accessible through the FedReady program and O Week, two students suggested that a pre-commencement interview “*could have been helpful to know more about the services available and to get personalised advice/referral*”(Fed002) and “*would probably help you to talk about any concerns you have and understand what is required*” (FED003). The other student suggested that they were “*not sure how much a pre-commencement interview would help because there is quite a bit of information available anyway the FedUni*” noting, however, that an interview might be a good idea to “*fill in the information gap*” (FED001).

Each of the students will be required to complete a placement in their final year. While none had thought that far ahead to make concrete plans, none saw it as being problematic. Those currently employed were able to think of solutions such as taking long service leave from their current employer and/or completing their placement with their current employer.

In summary:

- Students indicated that they could manage the 8-12 week, final year placement
- Mixed feelings about the helpfulness of a pre-commencement interview; saw the potential danger of information overload but also saw the benefit of being provided with tailored support information

Progress

Oral presentations were the main concern for all participants. One stated, “*I get very nervous for oral presentations and working in groups and needing to interact/ present my ideas*” (FED002). She worried that may impact her grades in future for the courses that have a heavy group work component. The other two participants, while noting their discomfort with presenting, felt that it was not impacting on their grades and were confident they would feel more comfortable with practice.

Two students cited issues with time management. One, because of working long, full-time hours, found it difficult to revisit his lecture notes in a timely manner to consolidate on learnings. He was trying to work around this by studying while on night shift “*when there's no-one around*” (FED001) but this was not an ideal solution. The second student was also finding it challenging to maintain a social life and find time to study and felt she would benefit from the assistance of a Learning Skills Advisor. Although the contact details for an LSA were emailed to her post-first interview, at the time of the follow-up interview she had not contacted the service.

At the time of the follow-up interviews, both students had passed their first semester courses and were intending to re-enrol into their second year.

In summary:

- Both follow-up students had passed first semester, were waiting for second semester results and had re-enrolled for second year
- Oral presentations were the standout concern
- Time management also an issue

Processes

As stated previously, the participants were in their second semester and reported no problems accessing course information, using the learning management system (LMS) and submitting assignments.

In summary: No issues reported

Promise

In their first interview, participants indicated that they had been aware of services that were available to them and provided positive feedback regarding PASS, ASK and the Maths Drop-In Centre. They were less aware of services such as Your Tutor, Learning Skills Advisors and Student Counselling but were positive about being provided with that information.

One participant expressed frustration with a lecturer and a timetabling issue but also said that he had received a lot of assistance from another lecturer.

In summary:

- Participants had re-enrolled for second year therefore indicating a successful transition
- Good awareness of support services
- Timetabling issue

Implications

Given FedUni's small sample size and the fact that the interviews occurred in the participants' second semester, it is perhaps unsurprising that the participants reported no major areas of concern.

The issue of most concern to the participants was oral presentations. Although this apprehension could be more pronounced in the Engineering cohort, it is also reflected in the FedStart survey results completed by students across all disciplines. These show that of all the learning skills (academic writing, numeracy, group work etc.), presenting orally was the skill about which students felt least confident. While FedUni has some existing resources on oral presentations online (notes and a video), the feedback from students indicates this is a gap in support that would benefit from more sophisticated strategies.

Participants also cited issues managing their time and completing assessments. Again, this indicated that FedUni could intensify its support in these areas.

Recommendations

Policies and practices

FedUni will use the data from this research project to investigate the following opportunities to enhance its current support as follows:

- Developing a tailored program to improve public speaking support.
- Embedding presentation skills and group work modules into Learning Management System (LMS).
- Establishing a University Toastmasters Club.
- Creating sessions with Learning Skills Advisors focused on group work and oral presentations.
- Embedding self-paced FedReady module on Time Management in LMS.

- Continued development of Transition Support Program.
- Increase awareness of the services provided by Learning Skills Advisors.

Online tool

FedUni sees the 5Ps as a useful conceptual framework to enhance existing transition strategies including an online tool. While the participants in this study were mostly already aware of the support available, they did appreciate the additional personalised advice given to them. FedUni sees this capacity to provide tailored support as being the key benefit of the online tool by allowing:

- a) students to self-identify areas of concern via a convenient, online medium; and
- b) enabling individualised support options to be recommended via a phone conversation.

In 2017, FedUni rolled out the FedStart online survey (based on a model developed by the University of Sunshine Coast). This used a structure found to be very effective when implemented and one it would recommend for the 5Ps online tool. Students were asked 23 questions ranging from their confidence about their study skills to whether they needed to register with Centrelink. They were also asked whether they would like to receive a call from a student ambassador and to nominate a time for the call back. This allowed the student to receive personalised advice from someone with prior background knowledge of what concerns they had and what information would be most helpful to a successful transition.

4.4 James Cook University

Author: Kate Sheppard

University Profile

James Cook University was established in 1970. The university has three tropical campuses in Townsville, Cairns and Singapore and study centres in Mackay, Thursday Island and Mt Isa. JCU's mission is to create a brighter future for life in the tropics worldwide through graduates and discoveries that make a difference. In 2016, the university had 21,927 students enrolled across all modes and campuses. The university has a diverse student demographic. This includes 5.84% of the student cohort identifying as Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 87.87% of students from a regional or remote background. The university has strong participation rates of students from low socioeconomic status (LSES) backgrounds at 22.75%. Further, more than half of the students enrolled at JCU are the first in their family to attend university (JCU, 2017).

The university has a strong commitment to transition and retention strategies for first year students and for all students. JCU offers a range of student support programs that seek to address some of the factors that impact on the student experience and play a part in student engagement, participation, retention and success and (see Table 15). These programs primarily target the transition, academic and personal needs of the students and focus on first year students with the exception of the Learning Advice Desk, Learning Advisors, Academic

Health Checks, AccessAbility (JCU disability services) and Student Wellbeing, which are available to students from all years.

Table 15: JCU Student and staff facing support programs

Programs and services	Type of support		
	Transition	Academic	Personal
Orientation / Student Mentors	✓		
Academic health checks / Exam Plan	✓		
Unistart	✓		
PASS	✓	✓	
Learning Centre	✓	✓	
Yourtutor		✓	
Learning Advice Desk and Learning Advisors		✓	
Short Courses		✓	
Careers and Employment	✓	✓	
College Student Support Officers	✓	✓	✓
Student Wellbeing Services	✓	✓	✓
AccessAbility	✓	✓	
Student Life events	✓		
Multi-faith Chaplaincy	✓		✓
Scholarships and Bursaries			✓
Pre-enrolment interviews	✓		✓

The university's Access, Success and Participation Plan (2017) informs transition and retention initiatives at JCU. HEPPP funding at JCU is used to support a range of outreach, participation and success initiatives at the university to support the transition and retention of LSES students. This includes funding programs that support student success including:

- Scholarships, the JCU Access Fund
- Targeted pre-enrolment interviews
- Student Mentor Program
- Unistart
- Academic Health Check Ups
- PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions)
- Yourtutor
- Campus student life events

HEPPP funds are also used to support curriculum enhancement work, aimed at first year courses and subjects with high enrolments of LSES students. Staff-facing learning advisors are embedded in courses and subjects through the university's curriculum enhancement project. Further, HEPPEP also finances positions such as career counsellors, college student support

officers, psychologists and wellbeing staff, positions that are proven to have a positive impact on student retention through a regular evaluation cycle. HEPPP funding at JCU supported 26 projects in the areas of inclusive entry processes, transition programs, academic preparation, mentoring, peer support, parent programs, cohort monitoring, scholarships and research (James Cook University, 2016). Table 16 identifies the numbers of students involved in these programs, by equity group.

Table 16: JCU: Students involved in HEPPP funded activities

	Total numbers of students
Low SES	1484
Low SES and Regional/ Remote	849
Low SES and Disability	105
Low SES and Indigenous	137
Low SES and Non-English Speaking Background	88

The students involved in this case study were enrolled in the Diploma of Higher Education course at JCU. The aspiration for the program is twofold – to support the widening participation agenda *and* provide an improved and alternative pathway for students from diverse educational backgrounds thus contributing to retention through preparing students adequately for university. To achieve this, the Diploma of Higher Education has been systematically informed by a number of foundational educational principles to support engagement, purpose and teaching quality with a view to enhance student retention and success. The pathways program was established as a whole of institutional course and promotes a high expectations, high support approach to teaching and learning. As such, curriculum encompasses the academic and affective domains and focuses on the educational conditions in which we place our students. This project builds on previous work around student transitions in pathways. Since 2015, JCU pathways have conducted pre-enrolment interviews supported by an online readiness tool. However, this project builds on iterations of these by providing a common language for discussions around course requirements.

Overview of the NPP project within which the Case Study is framed

The objectives of the 5 Ps project are to build an evidence base regarding strategies that can improve the success and outcomes of regional students of LSES background by:

- investigating the extent to which universities have strategies in place to support regional, students from LSES backgrounds;
- exploring whether regional, students from LSES backgrounds are prepared for, and have a realistic understanding of, the requirements of the higher education program into which they are enrolling;
- identifying the factors that contribute to regional, students from LSES backgrounds being unable to meet the requirements of a higher education program;
- advising students of the appropriate steps to follow to meet a higher education program's requirements; and
- developing a framework and online system that enables students to self-assess their readiness for undertaking study in their chosen program, preparing for study, and

services available to help them meet the requirements of their chosen program of studies to inform institutional policy and the implementation of the approach at other higher education institutions

Research Design underpinning the Case Study:

The research adopted Kalsbeek's 4 Ps framework while adding a 5th P 'preparedness' approach to building the evidence by trialling a pre-commencement intervention strategy aimed at supporting the transition and participation, retention and success of commencing students from regional and LSES backgrounds across five disciplines: business, health sciences (pathways), social work, education and engineering and five regional universities: CQUniversity, James Cook University, University of the Sunshine Coast, Federation University of Australia and Charles Sturt University.

The 5Ps approach to retention informed by Kalsbeek (2013) identifies student profile, progress through their studies, university processes and alignment between a university's promises and the student experience of its delivery on those promises as critical components of an all of institution approach to improving student retention and success. The project also builds on the findings of a small scale pilot undertaken at CQUniversity involving one hundred and twenty-four commencing Bachelor of Nursing students, fifty-five of whom were identified as from regional or remote and low SES background which demonstrated the potential and identified the fifth P, 'preparedness' for study as a vital component of an effective transition and retention strategy (Wood, Gray-Ganter & Bailey, 2016).

Method

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted at each university with first year students from regional, LSES backgrounds who hadn't had a pre-commencement interview and were from identified programs to identify the extent these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with pre-commencing students from regional and LSES backgrounds at each university to discuss students understanding of the compulsory and essential course/program requirements, their expectations of first year study and to identify any challenges they perceived they may experience in meeting these requirements. Students were referred where necessary to appropriate student support services
- Follow-up interviews were conducted toward the end of term with the pre-commencement interview cohort to investigate if the pre-commencement interview was helpful, if this interview helped students level of preparedness and to gather suggestions for areas of improvement.
- It will also be determined how many students have re-enrolled to continue their studies into the next term

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs, and analysed within the 5Ps framework.

Discussion

This discussion reports on themes that have emerged from the interviews with the two student cohorts. Firstly, the cohort of pre-commencement and follow up interview students and secondly the students who did not undertake a pre-commencement interview. Throughout the project, the qualitative responses of the students in the interview phases were analysed to identify the major themes that emerged in relation to the student profile, their preparedness for study, their perceptions of university expectations and supports available. These themes included study/ paid work/ family/ life balance, health and wellbeing and learning skills. Responses were then organised according to the expanded 5P's framework- student profile, preparedness for study, the required processes for university study, student progress and university promises.

Pre-commencement student interviews

In this research phase, eight participants completed interviews. Each of the participants were commencing their first semester of study at university. Of the eight participants, four were from a LSES background, five had completed year twelve with VET qualifications. The non-school leavers included a mother returning to study and three students who had been working in a variety of retail or administration positions before moving into study. All of the participants expressed excitement at the prospect of studying as well as some trepidation at the demands of university study.

Study/ paid work/ family/ life balance

One of the major recurring themes from the interviews related to concerns related to managing 'complex' lives. The interviews provided a framework to discuss workload demands of university and managing this. More than half of the participants in the interview cohort talked about being anxious around managing a study life balance and time management. This anxiety is exemplified in the following comment from one interviewee, "*I want to do well and my husband is on board, he's dropped days a week to help me out. We have two under two and our youngest was a micro-preemie so health stuff still comes up. We don't have family here, so it's just us, so I'll need to manage my time*". Two of the participants noted the importance of needing to renegotiate paid work arrangements to support engagement in studies. All of the participants indicated that they would like to study full time and would be reliant on Centrelink payments to secure financial support for study. Issues of time management, family commitments, academic writing, numeracy, and assessment submission caused concern for the majority of participants, particularly those who had transitioned to university from VET qualifications or were returning to study from the workforce.

Health and wellbeing

Three quarters of participants identified challenges in managing their health and wellbeing. One student used this opportunity to disclose a serious long-term heart condition and was advised to contact Accessibility services. She commented that she was unsure if she was able to access the service as she was managing a health condition rather than what she perceived as a disability. During the interviews, half of the students raised issues around anxiety.

Participants commented on their anxiety, saying, “I don’t want to let my anxiety get in the way, it is just something I need to learn to manage” and “*I went through a very bad period last year, my anxiety was very bad so I just didn’t go to school and my enrolment was cancelled*”. Participants were provided information on university health and wellbeing services as per the interview protocols.

Learning Skills

Generally, participants expressed concern around their preparedness for study, mostly due to the perceived foreign nature of university study, “*I’ve never written an essay*”. While no participants in their responses, perceived themselves as having a specific learning deficit that would prevent them from meeting the essential requirements of their degree, three of the participants spoke directly to the benefits of being in a pathways program and the additional support provided, “*the support officer is fantastic*”. Participants expressed concerns about the impacts of non-school completion on their ability to progress with study. A number of the participants identified that they were concerned about the demands of academic writing and referencing throughout the course. Participants spoke positively about the availability of learning support, extra workshops and explicit foundation subjects within the course. The provision of course based support staff were commented on by a number of participants. These student support officers act as a first point of contact in all student queries and students noted the benefits of this rather than attempting to seek help from multiple points of contact at the university.

Many of the students interviewed commented on the usefulness of the interviews, and expressed relief that challenges such as mental health, financial and ‘complicated lives’ being normalised through the discussion as “*I’m looking forward to getting started. This has been helpful in letting me know what’s needed, I’ll definitely go and see AccessAbility*” and “*I’ve been talking to _____ and she’s been great*”.

Follow up interviews

Six of the eight participants in the pre-commencement interviews completed the follow up interviews; all were still enrolled in their course of study. Participants were positive about the usefulness of a pre-commencement interview and the importance of completing this before students commence study, with one student confirming the utility when he/she noted, “*yes because it puts out questions that you need to think about, what you’re not sure about and it gives you a push to get started*”.

Student profile

Throughout the interviews, the majority of students spoke of managing life issues such as moving house, having a partner deploy with the defence force, renegotiating work hours and health challenges. Of the life changes initiated by the students, many were in response to the demands of studying such as needing to be closer to campus.

Student support

Students were largely happy with the support that they had received since starting university. The support most commonly discussed was that provided by the course specific support officers and core subject teaching staff. One participant described this support, “Yes, I have had help from my lecturers, they are fantastic. So approachable, I also went and saw the

learning advisor about some essay writing stuff." Some students also referred to the university counselling and disability services.

Confidence

Participants responded positively about their confidence moving forward with their studies now that they had experienced some success and were more aware of course expectations and supports available. All had made plans for the following semester at the time of interview. Students also commented on the usefulness of completing foundational subjects around academic literacy in increasing their preparedness and confidence for study, "I feel ten times more confident now. A lot of people said I should just go straight in and do a degree and not do a pathway, but the supported start has been really helpful. It's hard but it's a good preparation." Participants largely agreed that university was more demanding than they had anticipated and that remaining goal-focused and building support networks assisted with this.

No Pre-Commencement Interviews

Eight students participated in the no pre-commencement interviews; half of these were from a LSES background. Each of these students had completed a semester of study.

Study/ paid work/ family/ life balance

The majority of the participants identified challenges in managing work, family commitments and study. All of the students had continued with their commencing study loads across semesters. Participants discussed needing to negotiate paid work around study and the frustrations of trying to do so when timetables and class registration were not immediately available. Students enrolled full time also commented on the need to stay enrolled in enough subjects to access Centre link and one participant identified this as stressful. As can be seen by the following statements, participants gave the view that their managing study, work and family required deliberate effort, "*I'm just juggling all of the time. This is the only chance I get at this this. Of course I worry*" and "*I didn't do well at school, but I'm doing well at Uni. I'm working really hard, all the time, to get into medicine... it was too big a commute so I moved closer to the uni to give me more time*". Three of the participants reported a loss in income since commencing studying and that while they were managing financially, this was a week-to-week affair. Generally, participants stated they were coping with study and its demands despite an apparent precariousness for some when participants described their financial, work and family commitments.

Health and wellbeing

Half of the participants identified that they are managing issues of health and wellbeing. These were largely around anxiety. Three of the four students were working with university services already, after being referred to services by pathways staff. One participant was referred to counselling during the interview. Participants in the interviews described challenging situations but perceived that they were progressing adequately with their studies because of supports available to them or steps they had taken to manage this. Mental health challenges transcended age, gender and socio-economic status of participants. Each of the participants responded that they felt able to meet the demands of study, despite challenges that they were managing. For example, "*I've had lots of help from staff, I think that's all that's*

got me through at times". A number of participants commented that more rigorous discussion of inherent requirements and supports available would have been beneficial prior to commencing study.

Learning skills

Generally, participants expressed their growing preparedness for bachelor study, but that this had taken some time to develop. The majority of students had accessed some form of extra-curricular support such as PASS or workshops. Overwhelmingly, the participants spoke to the benefits of being in a pathways program that included foundational subjects where academic skills building was explicitly addressed within core curriculum. Comments on this topic included, "I've never been great at school, especially maths. I knew I needed to build those skills before my degree." Participants also expressed the benefit of having supportive academic staff during this phase of study. For example, "*I got on really well with my lecturers. That's why pathways was so good for me, I could just go and ask a question, you know, whenever it came up and my lecturer would always take the time to answer it*".

Usefulness of the interviews

All of the students commented on the usefulness of a pre-commencement interview. Comments included, "*Yes, this interview would have been helpful. The concept of uni is daunting and I didn't know what to expect. This helps to explain what you are in for*" and "*There's a lot of info that comes at you those first few weeks, it's good to talk to someone*". Some participants also commented on the usefulness of the interviews for staff. Particularly telling were comments such as, "*Absolutely, it really made me think about what I could and couldn't do. I think it's also helpful for teaching staff to help them understand students*" and "*This would be useful beforehand, helpful for staff to know the reasons why you can't do everything. Life just impacts you*".

Findings and the 5P's

Interview data collected throughout the interviews affirms the need for a holistic understanding of retention and the complex inter-relationship of factors that impact student retention and engagement. According to Yorke and Longden (2008, p. 2), "the major influences on non-continuation are: poor choice of programme; lack of personal commitment to study; teaching quality; lack of contact with academic staff; inadequate academic progress; and finance". In an Australian context, Krause, Hartley, James and McInnis (2005, p. 64) further noted that first year students' reasons for leaving university were a "complex inter-relationship between course dissatisfaction, course preference, limited engagement, and student perceptions of academic staff and of the quality of teaching". The interview data resonated strongly with this, demonstrating the complexities that many students are navigating as they commence study (*student profile*). The pre-commencement interviews provided students with a clear understanding of the course and study requirements and allowed them to plan for those by altering study plans, accessing supports or negotiating hours of work. Students noted the benefits of being made aware of university expectations and processes prior to commencing study (*preparedness*). The data from this study clearly indicate that models of transition should consider the extent to which students understand the inherent requirements of their course and expectations of university life and supports available to assist with this.

Participant responses demonstrated clearly the importance of pedagogical frameworks around student transition to promote and normalise university support structures within the curriculum (Kift, 2009; Yorke & Longden, 2008). The positive impact of teaching specialist academics and integration of academic skills explicitly in the curriculum, rather than as an 'add on' presented strongly in the interview data (Collis, 2004; Dawson, Charman, & Kilpatrick, 2013). This would suggest that retention and transition are best enabled through a whole-of-institution approach. This requires organisational structures that facilitate collaboration between academic and professional staff in curriculum design and delivery.

Participant responses in these interviews would suggest that connecting to services supports student *progress* through university. More than half of the students interviewed were accessing student support services, commenting positively on their impact on their university journey. One participant identified these services the primary reason why they had persisted with study. Institutions need to continue investigate the most effective ways to connect students with support services, normalising this behaviour as something successful students do. More than half of the participants who accessed student supports did so at the recommendation of academic staff. This suggests that the core curriculum is a powerful vehicle in promoting and supporting student wellbeing.

Throughout the interviews, participants were satisfied with the levels of support provided by the university highlighting the importance of consistency between what is *promised* by the university and what is delivered. In this case study, comments around the support from pathways support and teaching staff were the most common responses around student support structures. A number of participants commented on the value of having a singular point of contact rather than inconsistent advice provided by multiple units. Participants appeared to understand the working relationship between the pathways supports and teaching staff and the benefits of this (*processes*).

At the outset, this project aimed to identify strategies that can better support regional students from LSES backgrounds during their transition into university to address the persistently high levels of attrition of regional, LSES students, especially those at regionally based universities. To do so, the project adopted Kalsbeek's 4 Ps framework (while adding 'preparedness' - a fifth 'P') approach to building the evidence by trialling a pre-commencement intervention strategy aimed at supporting the transition, participation, retention and success of commencing regional LSES students. This case study overwhelmingly demonstrates the positive impact of pre-enrolment interviews on student preparedness for study. All of the participants in this case study recommended these interviews for commencing students as they serve to clarify student expectations and university processes, connect students with support and demystifies study. These interviews highlight the importance of addressing student preparedness to support transition and retention. Responses in this case study also provide insight into the utility of wrap around support for students and the impact of this on student confidence. Further, curriculum that authentically includes students and normalises their needs sends a powerful message that they belong at the institution. By explicitly supporting students transitioning experience, universities prepare them to meet university expectations.

Recommendations

As demonstrated by the interview data, there are a range of issues that influence student retention and success. These include not only the students themselves but also the curriculum and institutional processes. This case study clearly demonstrates the importance of pre-enrolment processes to support students transitioning to university, particularly the importance of early interviews in clarifying students' expectations around university and alerting them to measures that increase their preparedness for study. These pre-enrolment processes should continue to utilise frameworks such as Wood et al's '5P's to support student retention as it captures the range of factors that influence student participation and success.

If the Bradley Goals of 40% attainment of a bachelor degree are to be realised by 2020, then increased numbers of regional and remote students will need to attend university. Universities will need to invest in structures that provide students with appropriate support to transition effectively to university. This includes providing students with clear information around course requirements and university expectations. By developing course inherent requirements, and using these to inform pre-commencement discussions, university staff and students have a shared language around what is required for successful participation. An online tool is a financially sustainable and effective way for universities to engage students in these pre-enrolment processes as it allows students to engage in these pre-commencement processes in real time, wherever they are and provides immediate feedback that will benefit their transition to university.

4.5 The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC)

Authors

Veronica Sanmarco, Debbie Flashman and Professor Karen Nelson

University Profile

The footprint of USC extends from Fraser Coast in the north to central Brisbane. USC is headquartered on the Queensland Sunshine Coast, one of Australia's fastest growing regions. Other campuses are located to the north and south at Gympie, Fraser Coast, and SouthBank in Brisbane. In 2020, a new campus will open in Moreton Bay which will offer a full range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs. In addition to these main campuses USC has teaching locations at Noosa, Caboolture, and North Lakes. USC at the time of the report had 13,492 students enrolled, of which 82.8% are domestic and 17.2% are international. The vast majority of students (99.1%) study on campus. The average age of USC students is 25 years with 59.6% of students aged 21 years or over; 62% of USC students are female, 37.3% are male and 0.04% identify as 'other'. Of the students undertaking a Bachelor Pass, Bachelors Graduate Entry, Bachelors Honours, Associate Degree or Diploma, 47.8% are the first in their family to attend university. Of the total number of students enrolled, 19% are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, 24% are from regional backgrounds and 0.3% are from remote backgrounds. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently represent 3.1% of all domestic students. The percentage of students with disabilities is 6.7%.

Transition and Retention Initiatives for First Year Students

USC prioritises increasing access to higher education for all equity groups, in particular, students from LSES backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disabilities. Strategies include school-based and community-based aspiration building and academic preparation programs, particularly in the STEM disciplines, and a range of activities including on-campus experiences and USC's undergraduate enabling program the Tertiary Preparation Pathway. Specific strategies are also in place to address the needs of current USC students from equity groups, these strategies include equity bursaries and additional support services for students with disabilities, however all support services are designed with the overall aim of increasing participation of the cohorts of students who enrol at USC.

In response to the launch of USC's new Strategic and Academic Plans in 2016, the University's previous Student Engagement Strategy was reviewed and updated to become the Student Engagement and Retention Blueprint 2017-2020. The Blueprint encompasses four key objectives:

- Strengthen first year experiences – first year is the foundation for success in later years
- Design and enact high quality curricula – high quality programs and courses engage students in learning
- Promote access, equity & diversity – a USC-wide coordinated approach to increasing and widening student participation
- Enable support for learning – intentional, proactive, timely access to life and learning support

There are a number of strategies within the Blueprint which entail direct communication with students as summarised in Figure 3 below.

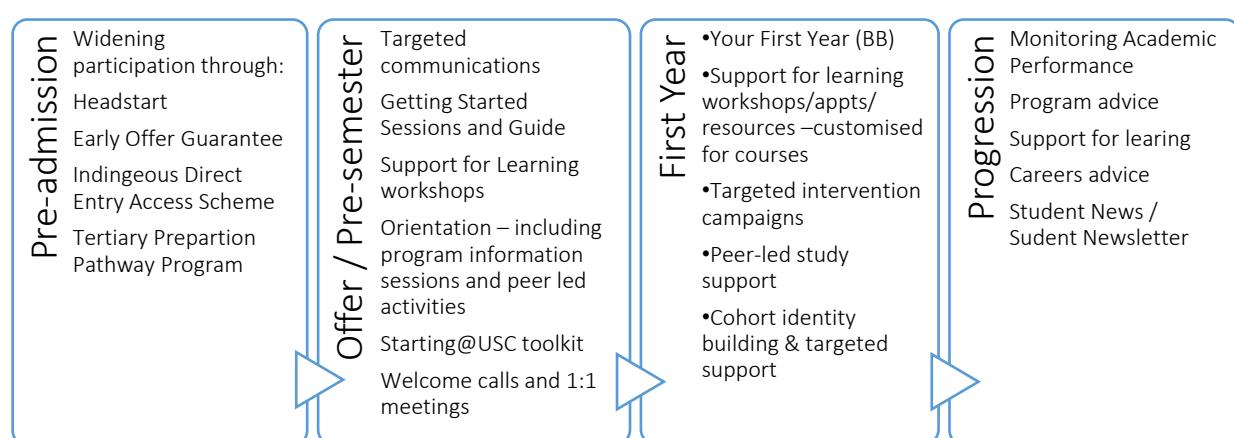


Figure 3: USC student communication strategies aligned within the Blueprint

Pre-admission

The focus in the pre-admission stage is on widening participation.

- The Headstart transition program provides students in Years 11 and 12 to study up to two undergraduate courses at USC
- Early Offer Guarantee enables Year 12 students to be offered an early and guaranteed place at USC in November, prior to the main QTAC offer round in January
- The Indigenous Direct Entry and Access Scheme is for potential students who identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person and who may not have received an OP, have received an OP which does not meet the cut off for their chosen course, or who might not have completed Year 12
- The Tertiary Preparation Pathway equips students with the skills and knowledge necessary for undergraduate studies and upon successful completion of the program students are able to gain direct entry into most USC degree programs

Offer/Pre-semester

- Targeted communications in the form of emails and phone calls offer just in time information for commencing students e.g. welcome calls, orientation awareness, pre-semester study skills, ID cards, and program planning
- The ‘Getting Started’ sessions and guide offer guided steps to enrol at USC, they also provide an introduction to systems, campus facilities and support services. The sessions are held regularly prior to the start of semester
- Pre-semester Support for Learning Workshops include academic writing and study skills intensives
- Orientation for new students includes program information sessions, academic skills, careers advice and peer led activities
- The ‘Starting@USC’ toolkit is an online self-assessment tool which provides students with relevant information and resources that align with some generic academic requirements
- All commencing students are offered a 30 minute one to one consultation. These consultations are designed to provide students with program-specific information and help to ease their transition into first semester. These consultations are conducted by high achieving, mid to final year students that are aligned with their discipline of study and specifically concentrate on Inherent Academic Requirements

First Year

The following strategies are specific to the first semester:

- Your First Year is a series of Blackboard modules covering a range of support services and information for commencing students. These are set out on a week-by-week basis for ease of reference and incorporate a live discussion board

- Milestone emails are sent weekly to commencing students to provide relevant, just in time information
- Support for learning workshops and resources which include resources specifically customised for courses
- Support for learning one to one appointments and drop-in sessions for individuals or groups
- Targeted intervention campaigns at course and program level
- Peer led study support strategies such as 'POP up Squads'
- Cohort identity building strategies and targeted support as identified by teaching staff
- Information resources such as weekly PowerPoint slides are distributed to first year coordinators with just in time information

The following strategies are implemented throughout the first year:

- Academic and study support activities that prioritise the needs of first year students and are embedded in the curriculum
- Support for learning workshops and appointments are available throughout the year. There are also pre-semester intensive workshops and weekly workshops in a range of areas
- Building student awareness of quality resources which are available to enhance and support learning such as support for learning tools on Blackboard, study planning tools, and referencing guides
- Targeted intervention campaigns, Academics advise Student Engagement Team to make contact and offer support to students as an early intervention focus.
- Peer led study support in targeted courses is supported by the Support for Learning team
- Cohort building activities are negotiated with Program Coordinators and aligned to career and leadership aspirations of students

Progression

- The three stage Monitoring Academic Performance and Exclusion (MAPE) process involves identification, intervention and support. Ongoing support, assistance and referral is provided to students face-to-face and over the phone
- Student advisers provide program advice in person, by email or phone. This includes study sequencing assistance to commencing and continuing students, and is complemented by online planning resources
- Careers advice appointments are available with Careers Advisers for current and prospective students, supported by a range of resources available on the website and StudentHub

- A weekly newsletter called ‘Student News’ is sent by email to all active students

Ensuring alignment between institutional plans, policies and strategic imperatives has been key to the successful implementation of student engagement programs at USC. The relevant documents are listed in Table 17 below.

Table 17: Alignment between USC institutional plans, policies and strategic imperatives

Blueprints and Plans	Policies	First Year Engagement Programs
USC Strategic Plan	Governance Framework – Governing Policy	Process to support first year students via Welcome Days/1:1 peer appts, welcome calls
USC Academic Plan	Equity and Diversity – Governing Policy	Student Experience Survey
USC Student Engagement & Retention Blueprint 2017-2020	Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment (Students) – Governing Policy	Orientation Week
First Year Experience - Enabling Plan 2017-2020	Health, Safety and Wellbeing - Governing Policy	Student Wellbeing
	Learning and Teaching - Academic Policy	Indigenous Services
	Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy	USC International
	Student Conduct - Governing Policy	Academic Skills Support
	Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources - Governing Policy	Faculty Drop-in Sessions
	Monitoring Academic Progress and Exclusion - Academic Policy	Student Success
	Student Academic Integrity - Governing Policy	AskUSC
	Admissions, Enrolments and Graduation - Academic Policy	
	Work Integrated Learning - Academic Policy	
	Academic Timetable - Academic Policy	
	Library Collection Development - Academic Policy	
	Intellectual Property - Governing Policy	
	Blended Learning Strategy	

HEPPP context of these projects and initiatives

USC utilises HEPPP funding to support the implementation of the Student Engagement and Retention Blueprint 2017-2020. This is supplemented by USC operational funds and the Student Services and Amenities Fee.

Overview of the NPP project within which the Case Study is framed

The objectives of the 5Ps project are to build an evidence base regarding strategies that can improve the success and outcomes of regional students of LSES background by:

- investigating the extent to which universities have strategies in place to support regional, LSES students.
- exploring whether regional, LSES students are prepared for, and have a realistic understanding of, the requirements of the higher education program into which they are enrolling.
- identifying the factors that contribute to regional, LSES students being unable to meet the requirements of a higher education program.
- advising students of the appropriate steps to follow to meet a higher education program's requirements.
- developing a framework and online system that enables students to self-assess their readiness for undertaking study in their chosen program, preparing for study, and services available to help them meet the requirements of their chosen program of studies to inform institutional policy and the implementation of the approach at other higher education institutions

Research Design underpinning the Case Study

The research adopted Kalsbeek's 4 Ps framework while adding a 5th P 'preparedness' approach to building the evidence by trialling a pre-commencement intervention strategy aimed at supporting the transition and participation, retention and success of commencing students from regional and LSES backgrounds across five disciplines: business, health sciences (pathways), social work, education and engineering and five regional universities: CQUniversity, James Cook University, University of the Sunshine Coast, Federation University of Australia and Charles Sturt University.

The 5Ps approach to retention informed by Kalsbeek (2013) identifies student profile, progress through their studies, university processes and alignment between a university's promises and the student experience of its delivery on those promises as critical components of an all of institution approach to improving student retention and success. The project also builds on the findings of a small scale pilot undertaken at CQUniversity involving one hundred and twenty-four commencing Bachelor of Nursing students, fifty-five of whom were identified as from regional or remote and low SES background which demonstrated the potential and identified the fifth P, 'preparedness' for study as a vital component of an effective transition and retention strategy (Wood, Gray-Ganter & Bailey, 2016).

Method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at each university with first year students from regional, low SES backgrounds who hadn't had a pre-commencement interview and were from identified programs to identify the extent these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with pre-commencing students from regional and low SES backgrounds at each university to discuss students understanding of the compulsory and essential course/program requirements, their expectations of first year study and to identify any challenges they perceived they may experience in meeting these requirements. Students were referred where necessary to appropriate student support services.

Follow-up interviews were conducted toward the end of term with the pre-commencement interview cohort to investigate if the pre-commencement interview was helpful, if this interview helped students level of preparedness and to gather suggestions for areas of improvement.

It will also be determined how many students have re-enrolled to continue their studies into the next term.

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs and analysed within the 5Ps framework.

Discussion

Commenced Students

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 first year students in the Bachelor of Social Work program. The students were from regional, low SES backgrounds and hadn't had a pre-commencement interview.

The focus of the interviews was identifying the extent these students felt prepared for study, understood the inherent academic requirements and were supported during the transition to university. Table 18 provides a summary of how the interview responses relate to the 5Ps.

Table 18: USC interview responses aligned to the 5Ps framework

Commenced Students Interview responses aligned with the 5P's	
Profile	
12	Enrolled in Semester Two
11	Female
11	Full-time study
8	Mature age
7	Working part-time
5	Identified financial strain
5	More than 45-minute drive from campus
4	Rely on walking/bus/lifts
3	Caring responsibilities
2	Attending remote campus
2	Identified mental health condition
1	Identified disability
1	Identified South Sea Islander
1	Working full-time
1	Part-time study
1	Male
Process	
8	Issues with parking and textbook expenses
2	Timetable issues
1	Issue with course not being offered in full at remote campus

Progress	
7	Concerns with academic skills
2	Anxiety about doing presentations
2	Concerns about group work
1	Exam nerves
Promise	
2	Timetabling issues, students were unaware upon enrolment that class days/times would be limited
Preparedness	
7	Advised a pre-commencement interview would have been advantageous
2	Time management was a challenge
1	If the student had understood the volume of work involved, he may not have commenced due to work commitments

Seven of the commenced students identified that a similar interview would have been useful at the pre-commencement stage. The same number of students also identified academic skills as being an area of concern, although several students reported that they had received good support from academic skills advisors, course coordinators and tutors.

Referencing and academic writing were the struggle (USC004)

Financial pressures were a common concern amongst this group of students, with the majority of those who were interviewed engaged in either full or part-time work. Processing concerns were highlighted by eight students commenting that parking and textbook expenses were significantly impacting on their finances. Another student mentioned the financial impact of having a limited choice of class times. From a profile perspective, three female students identified caring responsibilities, which led to further consideration around planning and preparing for semester.

...extra financial burden for childcare due to limited classes (USC005).

The challenges that can face students from non-English speaking backgrounds was also highlighted during the interview with one participant.

I am feeling disadvantaged due to having a non-English speaking background, and there should be a requirement for students to do a course before studying to help with academic writing skills to give a head start (USC019).

However, despite the challenges faced by the students, all twelve were enrolled to continue the same program the following semester, and overall had a realistic understanding of Inherent Academic Skill Requirements across the five categories of Observation, Communication, Sustained Performance, Intellectual and Behavioural/Social skills.

Pre-commenced Students: Initial Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 pre-commencing students in the Bachelor of Social Work program, these students were from regional and low SES backgrounds.

Table 19 provides a summary of the twelve pre-commenced students' responses during their initial interviews with alignment to each of the 5P's.

Table 19: Summary of the twelve USC pre-commenced students' responses aligned to the 5Ps

Pre-commenced Students: Initial Interview responses aligned with the 5P's	
Profile	
12	Female
10	Full time study
9	Mature aged
5	Part time work
5	Identified financial strain
4	Identified mental health condition
4	More than 45-minute drive from campus
3	Caring responsibilities
2	Part time study
1	Identified disability
1	Non-English speaking background
1	Identified ethnic minority background
0	Full time work
Process	
6	Issues with parking and textbook expenses
5	Identified that LMS navigation systems were confusing/difficult
Progress	
7	Poor academic skills were a concern
4	Work/life/study balance was a concern
2	Identified personal issues were impacting study
2	Identified travel was impacting study
Promise	
3	Confident of smooth transition into tertiary study
1	Identified that when researching which institution to study at USC was her best option
Preparedness	
11	Identified pre-commencement interviews were useful
10	Identified feeling well prepared for the start of semester

Pre-commenced Students: Follow-up Interviews

Follow-up interviews were conducted toward the end of the semester with seven of the pre-commencing students, four of the original cohort could not be contacted to arrange a follow-up interview, and one student was contacted but chose not to take part. Table 20 provides a summary of responses of the seven pre-commenced students who participated in follow-up interviews and the alignment to each of the 5P's.

Table 20: Summary of responses of the USC pre-commenced students who participated in follow-up interviews aligned to the 5Ps

Pre-commenced Students: Follow-up Interview responses aligned with the 5P's	
Profile	
7	Female
6	Full time study
5	Part time work
4	Mature age students
3	Identified mental health condition
2	No car
1	Caring responsibilities

1	Identified disability
1	Non-English speaking background
1	Part time study
0	Full time work
Process	
7	Enrolled in the next semester, 4 with continuing study load, 1 with increased study load and 2 with decreased study load
6	Identified pre-commencement interview timing was just right
1	Identified interview could have been slightly earlier, but had accessed a priority 30 minute phone consultation to gain a better understanding of university processes and supports
1	Difficulty with parking
Progress	
4	Identified drop in sessions were useful
2	Identified drop in session did not have support specific to needs
2	Course coordinators/tutors were a good support
2	Academic skills workshops and one to one consultations were a good support
1	Identified drop in sessions gave conflicting information
1	Students were a good support
1	There was a 1.5 week backlog for academic skills appointments
1	Yourtutor was good
1	Library provided good support
1	Group anxiety sessions started well but two were cancelled
1	Student Wellbeing team were supportive
1	2 courses were difficult to understand
Promise	
6	Confident to continue with study based on enjoying overall program
2	Had thoughts of dropping out, 1 was due to confusion around assessment criteria, 1 was for personal reasons
1	Had some reservations about the program but mostly feeling confident
Preparedness	
3	Changes to personal circumstances impacted on study, 2 were positive and 1 was negative
1	Experienced panic attacks, medical support and extensions were needed
1	Study load was too high

Ten of the 12 pre-commenced students advised that they felt well prepared, and had found the interviews helpful and well-timed.

Timing was good for pre-commencement interview (USC015)

Interview at the start of semester has been therapeutic – good to talk through (USC023).

It was good to verbalise struggles (USC023).

I have been feeling quite anxious about starting at USC, but you really put me at ease and explained things really easily (USC016).

The opportunities provided during the pre-commencement interview to identify concerns and refer students to the appropriate services were found to be very useful.

...will arrange appointment with disability services to support anxiety (USC017).

The students also mentioned other sources of support that they had found useful prior to the start of their first semester.

Priority meeting at the start of semester was really useful (USC019)

The social work orientation was great, enough to help prepare...(USC009)

Uni staff were very welcoming and friendly (USC020).

Of the pre-commenced students interviewed, seven students advised that from a preparation viewpoint, they were concerned about academic skills, which is a key academic requirement of the program. It is interesting to note that the same number of students from the commenced cohort expressed similar concerns. Four of the pre-commenced students identified during their follow-up interviews that academic skills support had been useful. Progress was supported with most students accessing support services either online or face-to-face for academic and student wellbeing services. Some students also found support from tutors and fellow students to be an important part of the learning process.

Failed first assessment, but was guided by tutor feedback, and other students to improve (USC001).

During the interviews with commenced students, three students shared challenges that had impacted on their preparedness relating to health, relationship breakdown and high study load.

...have had depression – social work course has made a big difference (USC003)

Gave up hobbies in first semester, but want to participate in music again (USC006).

A student commented that despite their concerns about their academic ability at the start of the semester, they had been pleased with how they had coped with the work.

...did better than I thought I would do (USC024).

Another student discussed how much they had enjoyed their studies during their first semester.

Passionate about subjects and learning (USC014).

All seven of the follow-up students had enrolled for another semester in the same program, with no students identifying any major concerns about ongoing study, or completing their degree. This reflects well on pre-commencement interview support, as well as a realistic understanding of the inherent academic requirements.

Recommendations

Recommendation One: Responses from both commenced and pre-commenced students, indicates support for a Student Engagement framework that is granular in approach and includes pre-commencement intervention strategies. The focus of such a strategy should ensure students feel prepared for study, understand the inherent academic requirements and there is availability of support during the transition to university.

It is clear from the case study that many new students at regional universities such as USC are non-traditional and can face multiple challenges when making the transition to university

study. It is therefore essential that universities apply a comprehensive and systematic approach to supporting student transition and retention.

Recommendation Two: The case study and collection of data was a time-consuming approach to supporting students. The study demonstrates a case for the development of a framework to support processes and a trial of an online system which will enable students to review their success strategies by focusing on the critical components of the 5Ps framework.

Responses from the commenced and pre-commenced students indicate that the strategies which form part of USC's Student Engagement and Retention Blueprint 2017 – 2020 provide an effective framework of support which facilitates transition to university and the continuation of study during subsequent semesters.

Recommendation Three: The data collected for this case study will be used to inform the ongoing development of strategies and practices relating to supporting students from low SES and regional backgrounds at USC, for example by identifying opportunities to expand the Blueprint strategies to additional first year support projects.

5. Discussion

The findings presented in the preceding sections of this report have been drawn from a range of sources as documented in the methodology section including the mapping of each participating university's documentation (for example, relevant policies and procedures, strategic plans, access and participation plans, Reconciliation Action Plans and Disability Action Plans) and relevant programs, inherent requirements developed for each of the disciplinary fields addressed in the study, student interview data and case studies developed by each university. The triangulation of these data sources provides a rich understanding of the profile of each university and more specifically, the participating students, each university's promises communicated to commencing students and students' experience of these promises, how well students felt prepared for their transition into university and the value of the pre-commencement interviews, the processes in place to support students as well as the strategies employed by the universities to support the progress of their students.

This section reports the major themes emerging from analysis of these data sources and the implications for guidelines of good practice for staff and universities, as well as recommendations for the Commonwealth Government and universities. The discussion also documents how the findings informed and have provided the foundation for the design and development of the online platform that enables commencing students to self-assess their readiness for the program into which they are enrolling and links them to support services they can access to assist them during their transition into university. This section concludes with discussion about the aspects of the project that were effective as well as the challenges experienced in undertaking the research, and the implications of the findings for the Australian higher education sector.

Profile

The interrelationship between institutional and student profile and access, participation, retention and success has been empirically demonstrated (Kalsbeek & Zucker, 2013, p. 19) as evident in the Australian context where lower retention and completion rates are observed for universities enrolling higher numbers of students from Commonwealth defined equity groups (Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, 2016; Nelson et al, 2017; TEQSA, 2017; Wood et al, 2016). On the other hand, the 5Ps framework and the findings from this study provide tangible strategies that can assist students in bridging socio-cultural incongruities through preparation prior to commencement and by ensuring the processes in place to support student progress are consistent with organisational values and the messages conveyed to prospective students.

All of the participating universities in this study are regional-based and have a high proportion of students from LSES backgrounds (between 22% and 30% of domestic students from LSES backgrounds and as many as 87.9% of students from regional and remote locations) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (ranging from 5.84% to 3.1% of domestic undergraduate students). The participating students in this study reflect the profile of the universities at which they are studying, with 92 of the 99 participating students from LSES backgrounds, 78 from regional or remote locations, 3 identifying as having a disability and one identifying as Indigenous. In addition, both CQUniversity and CSU have a high percentage of students studying at a distance (Table 3).

The interviews with students reveals a rich tapestry of diverse and complex lives with the majority of students balancing study commitments with work and family responsibilities. For example, of the 46 CQUniversity student participants, 21 identified that they were working full time and 17 part-time. The majority of the students were mature aged and 20 participants noted family responsibilities. Similarly, the majority of CSU students interviewed reported that they were working a full-time or close to full-time job, often accompanied by significant family responsibilities. One of the FUA participants reported working up to 48 hours per week while also managing part-time study as well as family responsibilities parenting four children. More than half the JCU participants also expressed anxiety around managing study life balance and time management, and USC students reported financial pressures to be a concern, with the majority of those interviewed engaged in either full or part-time work. As one student shared; "*I'm just juggling all of the time. This is the only chance I get at this this. Of course I worry*".

It was also apparent that students who had family and or employer support, were more able to cope with the work/study/life balance challenges. As one student noted,

...study balance shouldn't be a concern, my husband is supportive and children are grown up, one is studying as well so understands Mum needs to study (CQUBUS03).

Another student suggested, "*I'll be OK balancing my commitments, I was doing well previously at JCU and my partner is excellent*" (CQUEDU06). Another student reported that she wanted to do well and that her husband was on board, having dropped days a week to help her out.

A supportive work environment was also identified as a factor in enabling students to continue with their studies as this student's comment suggests, "*I've got the Employee Assistance Program with work, good support at work. My husband is good and supportive*" (CQUBUS22).

Only one of the student participants identified as being Indigenous. For this mature-aged Accounting student, the addition of significant cultural responsibilities added to the complexity of balancing family and study commitments, and financial challenges. As this student reported, all we have been able to do is get through all of the grief, wade through all of the deaths we have going on at the moment (CSU09). Although the majority of students reported that they needed to work, most described themselves as financially OK or managing well providing they continued to work. There were however, exceptions, most notably the Aboriginal student from CSU who reported that Abstudy:

...is not sufficient to buy all the textbooks so it has to come out of the rest of my payments. It is just through the good grace of my cousin's wife here that I am able to even exist, because the Abstudy money is nothing better than getting the dole and when you have to repay money that makes it even less. So I can't buy clothes, medicine, a car. I can't do any of that (CSU09).

Mental health and anxiety concerns were reported by several participants in the study with several students stating that they had anxiety and/or depression and a further four participants expressed feelings of stress and of being overwhelmed with some aspects of study. Students also reported challenges in managing their health and wellbeing. One student used the pre-commencement interview opportunity to disclose a serious long-term heart

condition and was advised to contact the university's 'Accessibility' services. She commented that she was unsure if she was able to access the service as she was managing a health condition rather than what she perceived as a disability. During the interviews, students also raised issues around anxiety. Participants commented on their anxiety, saying, "*I don't want to let my anxiety get in the way, it is just something I need to learn to manage*" and "*I went through a very bad period last year, my anxiety was very bad so I just didn't go to school and my enrolment was cancelled*".

The findings from this study suggest that universities and their staff can make a significant difference to the outcomes for students whose circumstances might make university study difficult and have the potential to derail their studies, suggesting the following guidelines for staff and universities:

Guideline S1. Staff should take steps to familiarise themselves with the **profile** of their students and be aware of those students who may need particular support throughout their studies.

Guideline U1. Universities should tailor their services to the **profile** of their students to create a greater sense of belonging and a stronger link between supporting students' individual circumstances and their academic study.

The findings also support the following two recommendations for universities:

Recommendation U1. Universities should consider adopting a personalised approach to supporting commencing students to help students prepare for their studies, identify those students likely to experience difficulties in meeting the requirements of their program and link students to the services available that can support them.

Recommendation U2. Universities should ensure that the strategies they adopt in implementing the 5Ps-based approach to transition, retention and success are culturally appropriate and that staff implementing personalised support have appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

The implications from this study also suggest the following recommendation for the Commonwealth Government:

Recommendation G1. Funding of equity initiatives should take into account the diversity of institutions and the cumulative impact of disadvantage and the complexity of the lives of students who belong to multiple equity groups as reflected in the institutional and student profiles of higher education institutions.

Preparedness

The majority of students from both the pre-commencement interview cohort and those who did not have a pre-commencement interview felt that they were prepared for study, as indicated by one participant who stated, "*I've already done orientation online, I'm regularly checking uni emails and have a blue card for work*" (CQUEDU3). Another participant noted, "*I have planned out my schedule already, and I have plenty of support*" (CQUEDU10) and, as this student who had completed STEPS and is studying by distance described, "*I have already organised with lecturers to sit in on lectures and have a tutor for Maths*" (CQUEDU09). Another student commented,

So far I have managed to balance it out pretty good. I am studying part time, but in saying that I don't think I would be able to take on full time. I have 5 children. Life is busy" (CSU10).

A common concern expressed by commencing students related to meeting specific academic requirements of the program. For example, one student noted,

Referencing. I'm terrified. I've looked at everything. I've had plenty of reassurance from my work colleagues that I will survive referencing and it will I make a lot more sense very soon. It is a bit scary to me right at this very minute, but I'm sure I'll get there. [...] There's lots of links there and lecturers have spoken about the guidance that they will provide throw out so I'm confident that it will be ok (CSU01).

Similarly, oral presentations were identified as a concern for some participants. As one student stated, "*I get very nervous for oral presentations and working in groups and needing to interact/ present my ideas*". She worried that may impact her grades in future for the courses that have a heavy group work component. The other two participants, while noting their discomfort with presenting, felt that it was not impacting on their grades and were confident they would feel more comfortable with practice. A student from a non-English speaking background also expressed concern about their preparedness for academic study, noting that there should be a requirement for students to do a course before studying to help with academic writing skills to give a head start.

The majority of students participating in the study were positive about the value of the pre-commencement interview. Students who were interviewed prior to commencement commented that the pre-commencement interview helped them to know where to start, noting "*I need all the help I can get, enrolling and getting started I didn't know where to begin, then I found the student support advisor and I was so relieved*" (JCUDHE13). Other students suggested, "*Yes this interview helped me understand that I may not cope*" (CQUBUS07) and indicated that they found the "*...interview at start of semester has been therapeutic - good to talk through*" (USC023) and gave students the opportunity to "*...verbalise struggles*" (USC024). One student (JCUDHE9) used the interview as an opportunity to disclose a very serious health condition (a heart condition) that results in her often losing consciousness leading to regular hospital admissions in hospital. Even though this student had met with lecturers and support staff, she had not thought to disclose information about her condition, as "*...it's not a disability, or a learning problem, it's just something I manage*" (JCUDHE9). This student expressed concern about the implications of disclosure stating, "*I want to get into nursing, I don't want this to be held against me*" (JCUDHE9). This reflects a concern that many students expressed regarding the challenges such as mental health and financial concerns relating to their 'complicated lives' and were appreciative that the pre-commencement interviews normalised these concerns through the discussion of inherent and essential requirements of the program.

Others noted the timing prior to commencement was helpful "*...as timing was right for preparation purposes*" (USC013) and "*...it puts out questions that you need to ask about, what you're not sure about and it gives you a push to get started*" [JCUDHE10]. Others noted that the pre-commencement interview "*...brought me back to reality about uni*" (CQUBUS07). One student commented that "*If you hadn't phoned at that time I wouldn't have checked out*

Moodle and found things" (CQUEDU04). Several students indicated that the interview was well timed, "...before the first term and the first assignment when I was looking for things" (CQUEDU17) with two participants stating that the pre-commencement interview along with a one-on-one interview with a peer adviser helped a lot to prepare for university study. It was evident that the early interview (pre-commencement) raised questions for many participants about the depth of their preparedness, "*I found the conversation that I had with you more valuable than attending orientation*" (CQUBUS01) and "...I feel like I haven't had much communication". This has been really helpful" (CQUBUS19).

It was evident from the research findings that even those students who expressed readiness for study found the pre-commencement interview useful. For some students the interview provided validation that their work in preparing for study was on the right track, noting "You've made me feel really organised now!" (CSU02), and as one student commented,

Yeah I think I did speak to her about getting ahead and getting everything ready and organised. So I had textbooks organised, I had done all of my HELP documents so basically once the semester started it was just a matter of starting the study like waiting for the course material to be released (CSU06).

For other students the interview highlighted gaps in the awareness of the requirements of the program. Other students noted that the interview would be "... very helpful particularly for someone not as prepared as I am" (CQUEDU08). Similarly some students commented on the information already available, and cautioned about the risk of "*information overload*" for those students, while also noting that the personalised tailored advice provided to students who need assistance prior to commencement would help to "*fill in the gaps*" in their knowledge. As one student who had undertaken preparation work observed.

A lot of first year students sort of wait to be told what they have to do before they do it, whereas I went ahead and did it, so I feel like I had that bit of advantage because it is all there on the CSU webpages and stuff; you just have to find it (CSU06).

It was also apparent that students who had completed a preparation for study program or had already undertaken some university study saw this as a sound way of preparing for a tertiary program. For example, "*STEPS – it was brilliant*" (CQUEDU02) and "*I studied a while ago at JCU and was doing well there so think I will be OK*" (CQUEDU06).

The findings from this study demonstrate the importance of ensuring students are prepared for study and understand the requirements of their program prior to commencement. The findings suggest the following guidelines for staff and universities:

Guideline S2: Staff should engage with prospective students prior to enrolment to help them to be better **prepared** for the transition into higher education. This will help students to understand the requirements of their study, the services available to support them and will help to create a sense of belonging for students, while also setting them up well to successfully progress through their studies once enrolled. Even though some students will require continuing support to manage their circumstances, early preparation enables those students to know where to get assistance during times of difficulty.

Guideline U2: Universities should be proactive in ensuring that future students are **prepared** for their studies. Given the transition process occurs long before prospective students enrol

at university, universities should convey realistic information about university study through their widening participation initiatives, recruitment campaigns and assisting with preparedness of future students (ie. Student Ambassadors doing school talks) and have strategies in place to connect with commencing students prior to enrolment to assist them in the transition process and ensure that students are connected with the services they may need to enable them to succeed in their studies.

The findings also suggest the following recommendations for universities and the Commonwealth Government:

Recommendation U3: Universities should provide students with clear information about the program and university expectations prior to commencement. This requires the development of relevant inherent requirements and using these to inform pre-commencement discussions. Such an approach can foster a shared language between staff and students about what is required for successful participation.

Recommendation G2: The Commonwealth Government should continue to support HEPPP initiatives that help to bridge sociocultural incongruity through engagement with schools and communities, preparatory programs and transition strategies recognising that transition into higher education is not a single event but part of a continuum that needs to begin long before students are ready to enrol in a program of study.

Processes

As noted in the preceding section, while students were generally satisfied with the processes in place to support them, it was evident that for some students there was some disconnect with what they perceived to be their needs, the promises of the university and the processes. The findings point to strengths in all of the participating university processes but also identified some limitations. Though students were generally positive about university information and services, they also spoke of hesitancy in seeking assistance (especially if help was sought and this was not responded to speedily or at all). Some participants were not aware of the services that are available, how a service could be of assistance or it was a challenge to make the time to seek assistance amidst already busy lives. Conversely, many students spoke of the value of support services such as academic learning support, library services, disability services and mentoring, and the Indigenous student also noted the benefits of support services available for Indigenous students. As one student commented, *"I made use of drop in sessions, library support, academic skills appointments, and yourtutor online support. I found all to be very helpful to achieve grades"* (USC019). On the other hand, another student suggested that the drop in sessions provided constructive feedback, but also conflicting information (e.g. one support person may give conflicting advice to another). Another noted, *"(I) also found that I may not be able to receive assistance for questions in specific courses, depending on who was on duty on the day"* (USC015) and another student spoke about wellbeing group sessions she was attending where sessions were cancelled at the last minute (due to staff illness). A few students also reported finding the number of online systems overwhelming. As one student commented, *"....so many platforms a bit overwhelming"* (CQUBUS16) and other stated, *"I lost it 'til I got it with Moodle and missed some early quizzes and group work"* CQUBUS24).

Some students also noted that it was not the actual content of a resource or learning item that they could not understand, but rather it was the scaffolding or process around it that caused confusion. For example with regard to processes, students expressed some concerns around accessing the university's Moodle learning management system; orientation; fees and processes relating to HECS and SAF; linking to Course Advisors, examination procedures; the services available for example through disability services; understanding assignment requirements (e.g. how to structure and referencing); and some confusion regarding university expectations and student responsibilities.

The importance of culturally appropriate student support was also apparent from the Indigenous student's comment about the benefit of the university's Indigenous Support Centre:

It is a really valuable resource. Basically requirements, desktop computers, scanning requirements they have got a kitchen plus there is, you get, they have a job noticeboard there, plus interaction with the other students doing other studies whatever they may be doing. It is like find out which mob they belong to and which tribe. You have that social bit going on there (CSU09).

Some students indicated that there was disconnect between what they perceived that the university could/should be doing to support their family and work commitments and the reality of their experience, particularly with respect to Education students who were concerned about the challenges that compulsory practicums. Similarly, timetabling issues were perceived by some students to reflect a lack of adequate processes to meet their specific family commitments. This suggests the need for further review of relevant policies and implementation of policies to address student concerns.

It was evident that participants appreciated the benefit of having supportive academic staff. For example, one student stated that their "*Lecturer sent tips and hints and has been encouraging to everyone*" (CQUBUS02) and another indicated that "*My Lecturer for Statistics is awesome in offering assistance*" (CQUBUS15). Another student commented, "*I contacted both lecturers to let them know and they said the process to take if I feel I need to. They told me what to do*" (CSU9).

Several students also commented on the benefits of having access to preparatory programs that were regarded as excellent ways of helping students to understand university processes. As one student noted, "*STEPS – it was brilliant*" (CQUEDU02), and another student commented, "*...pathways was so good for me, I could just go and ask a question, you know, whenever it came up and my lecturer would always take the time to answer it*". One student reflected, reflected, "*The stuff that they teach in Learning in Digital Environment and Developing Academic Skills is really important- I didn't do essays or research at school, I could never have gone straight into a degree. Seeing it all broken down step by step is really helpful*" [JCUDHE4]. Another student noted that "*The lecturers and the support staff are wonderful. Really happy to help you with whatever you need*" [JCUDHE6].

The findings from the study suggest the following guidelines for staff and universities:

Guideline: S3. Staff should be aware of their students who are challenged by university **processes** and ensure that students feel supported in navigating systems. Students who are new to distance study and/or first in family are often challenged by the online systems and processes required to navigate the range of services and resources available online, including

the online learning environment. Distance study is reported to be one of the major factors contributing to high levels of student attrition, additional personalised supports are required to assist them in navigating and accessing university systems.

Guideline U3: Universities should regularly review their systems and *processes* and be proactive in responding to identified limitations to ensure students from diverse backgrounds can participate and progress with their studies.

The findings also suggest the following recommendation for universities:

Recommendation U4: Universities need to ensure that the processes they have in place to support students during transition to university helps prepare them for their studies and assists their progression in a way that aligns with their needs.

Progress

As regionally based universities, the partner universities have retention rates commensurate with other regional universities. The most recent data available from the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training (2016) shows the new normal retention rates for commencing students ranging from 71.11 (CQU) to JCU having the highest retention rate of the five participating universities at 78.46 (see Table 21) compared to a national average retention rate of 80.97.

Table 21: New normal retention rate of participating universities
(source Department of Education and Training, 2016b)

Partner University	New Normal Retention Rate (2015)
CQUniversity (CQU)	71.11
Charles Sturt University (CSU)	72.88
Federation University Australia (FUA)	72.28
James Cook University (JCU)	78.46
University of the Sunshine Coast (CSU)	72.70

This is not surprising given the profile of regional universities and their students, hence the aim of this study to identify strategies that can improve the transition and success of students from LSES backgrounds at regional universities.

The findings from the analysis of university documentation and the interviews shows that while all participating universities had strategies in place to support transitioning students and monitor academic progress, the framework adopted for this study provided a new lens for understanding the student experience and reviewing how well the existing processes and services prepare and support students during their transition and throughout their first year.

The findings from follow up interviews with students who participated in the pre-commencement interview show that the majority of students were confident in progressing with their studies with a minority stating thoughts of dropping out. Key elements described as impacting on or influencing their progress included: university processes and services, a supportive workplace, support from family and/or friends, having completed a preparatory

program or previous studies, and having lecturers that are supportive, provided timely feedback and useful learning advice. For example, one student commented, “*I have a counselling service at work, a good husband and family around. I’m pretty resilient*” (CQUBUS15). Another noted that they “*Did think of dropping (due to health) but Lecturers were brilliant*” (CQUEDU02) and another student also contemplated dropping out but “*... my boss talked me into staying and my marketing Lecturer has been great, I’m now considering a marketing major*” (CQUBUS11). Students were generally aware of the expectations of study hours in their degree, although there was a sense of optimism that students could fit these hours into their already busy lives. Students indicated in the follow-up interviews that they had been able to fit these hours in, although responses highlighted that this was generally the most significant challenge to be met.

The challenge was probably the amount of time. It was very consuming but I understood it was going to be like that. I was good with time management. I structured everything and allocated myself time and that (CSU02).

The students undertaking the pathways program at JCU noted the benefit of the preparatory program in supporting their progress, with students noting the usefulness of completing foundational subjects to improve academic literacy and increasing their preparedness and confidence for study as reflected in this student’s comment:

I feel ten times more confident now. A lot of people said I should just go straight in and do a degree and not do a pathway, but the supported start has been really helpful. It’s hard but it’s a good preparation.

Conversely, one of the students who did not participate in a pre-commencement interview reflected on the need for preparatory studies for students from non-English speaking backgrounds, noting,

I am feeling disadvantaged due to having a non-English speaking background, and there should be a requirement for students to do a course before studying to help with academic writing skills to give a head start (USC019).

Most students, however, indicated they felt confident progressing with their studies having experienced some success and were more aware of course expectations and supports available. Students who participated in the follow-up interviews – while acknowledging the challenges that lay ahead – were generally optimistic about their future study, and their likelihood of progress, as one student reflected, “*I am confident, probably more confident than what I was but yeah it is still quite daunting*” (CSU06).

At the time of follow-up interviews, most students had made plans for the following semester and at the completion of the project, the majority of students had progressed into the next term. It was evident that for many students, the pre-commencement interview discussion raised important questions and their concerns were able to be resolved during the interview or through referrals and links to information and services. The majority of those who did not have a pre-commencement interview had most often worked through these process hurdles themselves often seeking assistance later rather than earlier stating that this sometimes took time and added to frustration.

The findings from the study suggest the following guideline for staff and universities:

Guideline S4. Staff should be proactive in providing timely feedback and following-up enquiries from students. Academic staff in particular are well placed to identify students who are disengaging from their studies or not coping. Lecturers and tutors have an awareness of support services as they are the first line of contact for students and best placed to support the **progress** of their students.

Guideline U4: Universities need to monitor student **progress** in a timely and supportive manner, rather than a punitive approach. Ensure students who fail to re-enrol are contacted and supported; this is a lost opportunity for re-engaging with students at the point at which they are most likely to attrite.

The findings also suggest the following recommendation for universities:

Recommendation U5. Universities should ensure that systems are in place to monitor student progress and support students long before they fail subjects. The use of learning analytics can assist universities in the timely identification of risk. Processes should also be in place to follow-up students who defer their studies, take leave or fail to re-enrol to ensure they are supported to continue their studies.

Promise

The majority of students expressed satisfaction with the support provided by their university and suggested that the promises of the university matched their experiences as reflected by comments such as "*The teachers have been really helpful that has been a big stand out for me*" (CSU05) and "*The tutors are very good at that. They help me break things down and how to strategise with essays and things. Like key words and what we need to look at. They are very good*" (CSU09). Another student commenting on the level of support the university provided noted "*Yes, I have had help from my lecturers, they are fantastic. So approachable, I also went and saw the learning advisor about some essay writing stuff*".

However, it was also evident that in some instances the university had not lived up to their expectations. For example, some students, (mainly from the no pre-commencement interview cohort) described the challenges they experienced with attending practicums given their particular circumstances. While students indicated that they understood the inherent and essential requirements of their program, it was evident that they had an expectation that the university would assist them more and be more flexible with practicum arrangements. As one student commented, "*Travelling over an hour (for a practicum) would be a concern*" (CQUEDU01). This student had expected that her practicum would be in her hometown. Similarly, another participant stated, "*I'm worried if I can't work during pracs*" (CQUEDU18). This student had expected flexibility with practicums so that he could continue with some paid work during those periods. A third student indicated, "*I'm concerned over child care during my practicums as I home school my children and I wondered about finding a Carer in my area*" (CQUEDU13) and another student stated "*I'm concerned when I do pracs as there will be less income and I'm wondering what I could do – what help is available*" (CQUEDU22).

Concerns were also highlighted by eight students who did not have the benefit of a pre-commencement interview who expressed concern about parking and textbook expenses, which were significantly impacting on their finances. Another student mentioned the financial impact of having a limited choice of class times. From a profile perspective, three female students identified caring responsibilities, which led to further consideration around

planning and preparing for semester, with one student commenting on the “*...extra financial burden for childcare due to limited classes*” (USC005). And as noted in the preceding section, at least one student from a non-English speaking background perceived that they had been disadvantaged by not having access to the support they needed to improve their English skills.

While the research identified areas in which students perceived their university had not lived up to their expectations, the findings suggest that the majority of students were satisfied that the university had delivered on the promises it made through recruitment strategies and its documentation. The findings also point to where there are gaps that the universities can address to better support their transitioning students and assist them in progressing towards completion.

The findings from this study suggest the following guidelines for staff and universities:

Guideline S5: Staff should ensure that their interactions with students are sensitive to the profile of the students and consistent with the values and mission of the university. Students may be attracted to universities by the ***promises*** they perceive the university makes through its recruitment processes, but their continuation and progression in their studies will be impacted by their lived experiences as a student.

Guideline U5: Universities should ensure that the ***promises*** they make align with the student experience. This requires scrutiny of university mission statements, values, strategic plans, policies and procedures, and marketing material to ensure consistent and realistic messages are conveyed to prospective and commencing students.

The findings also suggest the following recommendation for universities:

Recommendation U6: Universities should regularly review their communications to students to ensure the services and processes they have in place to support student progress enable the university to deliver on the promises it makes to students through mission statements, policies and procedures and marketing material.

Online platform

One of the proposed deliverables for this project was the development of a prototype online platform that would enable transitioning students to self-assess their readiness for study and connect them with appropriate services that could support them to succeed in their studies. The aim was to develop the platform informed by the findings of the research and based on the scripts developed for pre-commencement interviews undertaken in this project, to provide universities with a more scalable solution to connecting with all commencing students prior to enrolment.

The design of the platform was a collaborative endeavour involving all project team members, reference group members and the developers who were employed at partner university JCU, and contracted by the lead institution for this project. The platform developed is based on an automated chatbot technology, which enables staff to customise questions and answers to guide students through a natural conversation via text. Chat bots and artificial intelligent agents are gaining in popularity in higher education as a means by which universities can provide students with 24x7 responses to their questions. Carayannopoulos (2017) describes chatbots as automated response systems with “limited artificial intelligence capabilities” that

enable students to "...navigate through frequently encountered questions using an intuitive, conversation-like approach and locate information as it is needed, when it is needed".

Moreover, such chatbots are increasingly being used in higher education to provide automated guidance to students at any time of day without increasing staff workload, thereby enabling staff to focus on supporting students who are identified through their interactions online as in need of further assistance. Many universities, for example CQUniversity, have integrated such chatbot technologies with their customer relationship management systems, ensuring that students who pose questions for which no automated response is available, are followed up by a student support staff member who can assist them in real-time with their enquiry.

The prototype platform developed was customised by each of the partner universities using their own scripts tailored to the appropriate language and services associated with the university. The test sites for the five participating universities are available online at url: <https://uniprep.net.au>, the documentation for content authors (academic and support staff), system administrators and developers can be accessed from url: <https://jcu-eresearch.github.io/uniprep/> and the source code can be downloaded from url: <https://github.com/jcu-eresearch/uniprep>.

The project team members were unanimous in their view that the prototype online tool is a valuable adjunct to the pre-commencement interview process, enabling universities to reach more transitioning students in a timely manner, particularly those who are not-contactable via phone, do not respond to emails or are too busy to participate in an interview due to work and/or family commitments.

This finding leads to the following final recommendation for universities:

Recommendation U7. Universities should consider implementing an online tool that can provide a scalable approach to assisting students to self-assess their readiness for study and inform them of the services they can access to help them to succeed. Such an approach should complement more individualised support for those students who are identified as at-risk due to their individual circumstances

Concluding comments

There were several limitations with this study. First, one of the partner universities was unable to trial the pre-commencement interview because the program they had chosen to work with did not offer a Term 2 intake. Therefore the methodology was modified to enable that university to participate in the end of term interviews with first year students to identify how well prepared they had been despite not having a pre-commencement interview, and to ask the students to reflect on whether they felt a pre-commencement interview would have been helpful. However, out of a possible 19 participants, only three students chose to participate in the interviews. Therefore the findings from this university need to be conservative in view of the low response numbers.

Another of the partner universities had limited follow-up interviews with students who participated in the pre-commencement interview due to difficulty reaching those students at the end of term.

Despite these limitations, the collective findings across the five participating universities demonstrate the potential of the 5Ps framework as valuable foundation on which universities can base their student retention and engagement strategies to improve the transition, participation and success of students from LSES backgrounds.

The findings validate the value of the pre-commencement interview approach and highlight the challenges students may encounter that can derail their studies, as well as the strategies that universities can employ to better support students from diverse backgrounds.

The online platform developed through the project provides a valuable adjunct to the personalised pre-commencement interview and provides a more scalable solution for reaching more transitioning students. While it was not possible given the timeframe for the project to trial the platform with students, the project team were unanimous in their view that the tool would be a valuable complement to the pre-commencement interview approach.

The findings were disseminated at a national forum held in February 2018, which provided the opportunity for participants from other universities to have input into the guidelines and recommendations. The feedback provided by forum participants suggests that the strategies shared at the forum resonated with most of those attending (see Appendix 8). Subsequent to that forum several universities have approached the lead institution for advice on how they might implement the strategy at their own institutions, indicating the potential for the project to have ongoing impact across the sector.

The findings overall from this study suggest the following recommendations for universities and the Commonwealth Government:

Recommendation U8: Universities should undertake rigorous evaluation of the strategies they have in place to support the transition, participation and success of their students, informed by the 5Ps framework. Universities should use the findings to inform future decisions concerning policies and processes aimed at maximising the opportunities for students to succeed in their studies.

Recommendation G3: Evaluation of the impact of equity funded initiatives needs to take into account the diversity of universities across the sector and the profiles of higher education providers and their students.

6. Outcomes and deliverables

6.1 Project outcomes

The outcomes of this project were as follows:

Demonstrated efficacy of the proposed '5Ps' approach in ensuring that universities are responsive to the particular needs of regional students of LSES background during transition and throughout the student journey.

Improved capacity of institutions and the sector to apply different strategies in practice, informed by the findings of the approach in which partners trial the approach and engage in formative process evaluation, to inform the modification of the approach and online system, and contribute to the ongoing modification of the approach in response to the findings from the ongoing evaluation.

Building the evidence of the efficacy of the approach in different contexts that can inform recommendations for other higher education institutions to guide future policy and practice.

6.2 Project deliverables

The deliverables included:

Evidence of the efficacy of the approach drawn from the findings conducted across the five partner universities in five disciplinary areas.

Five case studies of how different institutions adopted the approach within their own institutional contexts.

Guidelines developed by the partners reflecting on the approaches employed by each partner institution, which can guide other institutions in applying similar approaches to their practices within their own contexts.

Seven webinars based on the trials of the approach in each of the disciplinary areas in which each partner shared their practices enabling members of the wider sector to participate and contribute to the discussions.

A national forum hosted by the lead institution in which the partners shared their experiences of applying their strategies in practice. The forum provided participants with the opportunity to provide feedback on the guidelines prior to final revisions and publication.

Final report submitted to the funding body and published to the project website.

A prototype online tool developed to enable transitioning students to self-assess their readiness for study. The prototype tool is available online at <https://uniprep.net.au>. The open source code is available at <https://github.com/jcu-eresearch/uniprep> and the associated documentation for content authors, system administrators and developers can be downloaded from <https://jcu-eresearch.github.io/uniprep/>.

A minimum of three peer reviewed publications (including at least one conference presentation and two peer reviewed high impact journal publications) forthcoming.

7. Guidelines

The collective evidence gained from this project have implications for the higher education sector about the types of strategies that can better prepare students to be successful at university. The findings have informed the following good practice guidelines for staff and universities, which can be used to guide institutions in applying similar approaches to their practices within their own organisational contexts.

7.1 Guidelines for staff

Guideline S1. Staff should take steps to familiarise themselves with the *profile* of their students and be aware of those students who may need particular support throughout their studies.

Guideline S2: Staff should engage with prospective students prior to enrolment to help them to be better *prepared* for the transition into higher education. This will help students to understand the requirements of their study, the services available to support them and will help to create a sense of belonging for students, while also setting them up well to successfully progress through their studies once enrolled. Even though some students will require continuing support to manage their circumstances, early preparation enables those students to know where to get assistance during times of difficulty.

Guideline: S3. Staff should be aware of their students who are challenged by university *processes* and ensure that students feel supported in navigating systems. Students who are new to distance study and/or first in family are often challenged by the online systems and processes required to navigate the range of services and resources available online, including the online learning environment. Distance study is reported to be one of the major factors contributing to high levels of student attrition, additional personalised supports are required to assist them in navigating and accessing university systems.

Guideline S4. Staff should be proactive in providing timely feedback and following-up enquiries from students. Academic staff in particular are well placed to identify students who are disengaging from their studies or not coping. Lecturers and tutors have an awareness of support services as they are the first line of contact for students and best placed to support the *progress* of their students.

Guideline S5: Staff should ensure that their interactions with students are sensitive to the profile of the students and consistent with the values and mission of the university. Students may be attracted to universities by the *promises* they perceive the university makes through its recruitment processes, but their continuation and progression in their studies will be impacted by their lived experiences as a student.

7.2 Guidelines for universities

Guideline U1. Universities should tailor their services to the *profile* of their students to create a greater sense of belonging and a stronger link between supporting students' individual circumstances and their academic study.

Guideline U2: Universities should be proactive in ensuring that future students are *prepared* for their studies. Given the transition process occurs long before prospective students enrol at university, universities should convey realistic information about university study through

their widening participation initiatives, recruitment campaigns and assisting with preparedness of future students (ie. Student Ambassadors doing school talks) and have strategies in place to connect with commencing students prior to enrolment to assist them in the transition process and ensure that students are connected with the services they may need to enable them to succeed in their studies.

Guideline U3: Universities should regularly review their systems and ***processes*** and be proactive in responding to identified limitations to ensure students from diverse backgrounds can participate and progress with their studies.

Guideline U4: Universities need to monitor student progress in a timely and supportive manner, rather than a punitive approach. Ensure students who fail to re-enrol are contacted and supported; this is a lost opportunity for re-engaging with students at the point at which they are most likely to attrite.

Guideline U5: Universities should ensure that the ***promises*** they make align with the student experience. This requires scrutiny of university mission statements, values, strategic plans, policies and procedures, and marketing material to ensure consistent and realistic messages are conveyed to prospective and commencing students.

8. Recommendations

The collective findings from this research provide strong support for the personalised approach to communicating inherent program requirements to commencing students and supporting them to make informed decisions regarding their planned study. The findings have informed the following recommendations for universities and Commonwealth Government.

8.1 Recommendations for universities

Recommendation U1. Universities should consider adopting a personalised approach to supporting commencing students to help students prepare for their studies, identify those students likely to experience difficulties in meeting the requirements of their program and link students to the services available that can support them.

Recommendation U2. Universities should ensure that the strategies they adopt in implementing the 5Ps-based approach to transition, retention and success are culturally appropriate and that staff implementing personalised support have appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

Recommendation U3: Universities should provide students with clear information about the program and university expectations prior to commencement. This requires the development of relevant inherent requirements and using these to inform pre-commencement discussions. Such an approach can foster a shared language between staff and students about what is required for successful participation.

Recommendation U4: Universities need to ensure that the processes they have in place to support students during transition to university helps prepare them for their studies and assists their progression in a way that aligns with their needs.

Recommendation U5. Universities should ensure that systems are in place to monitor student progress and support students long before they fail subjects. The use of learning analytics can assist universities in the timely identification of risk. Processes should also be in place to follow-up students who defer their studies, take leave or fail to re-enrol to ensure they are supported to continue their studies.

Recommendation U6: Universities should regularly review their communications to students to ensure the services and processes they have in place to support student progress enable the university to deliver on the promises it makes to students through mission statements, policies and procedures and marketing material.

Recommendation U7: Consideration should be given to implementing an online tool that can provide a scalable approach to assisting students to self-assess their readiness for study and inform them of the services they can access to help them to succeed. Such an approach should complement more individualised support for those students who are identified as at-risk due to their individual circumstances.

Recommendation U8: Universities should undertake rigorous evaluation of the strategies they have in place to support the transition, participation and success of their students, informed by the 5Ps framework. Universities should use the findings to inform future decisions concerning policies and processes aimed at maximising the opportunities for students to succeed in their studies.

8.2 Recommendations for the Commonwealth Government

Recommendation G1. Funding of equity initiatives should take into account the diversity of institutions and the cumulative impact of disadvantage and the complexity of the lives of students who belong to multiple equity groups as reflected in the institutional and student profiles of higher education institutions.

Recommendation G2: The Commonwealth Government should continue to support HEPPP initiatives that help to bridge sociocultural incongruity through engagement with schools and communities, preparatory programs and transition strategies recognising that transition into higher education is not a single event but part of a continuum that needs to begin long before students are ready to enrol in a program of study.

Recommendation G3: Evaluation of the impact of equity funded initiatives needs to take into account the diversity of universities across the sector and the profiles of higher education providers and their students.

9. References

- Australian Government (2016). *Improving the transparency of higher education admissions Australian Government response to the report of the Higher Education Standards Panel*. Retrieved from https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian_government_response_to_hesp_admissions_transparency_report_0.pdf
- Carayannopoulos, S. (2018). Using chatbots to aid transition. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 35(2), 118-129. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJILT-10-2017-0097>
- Cole, J. (2017). Concluding comments about student transition to higher education. *Higher Education*, 73, pp. 539–551.
- Coller, P. and Morgan, D. (2007). “Is that paper really due today?”: Differences in first-generation and traditional college students’ understandings of faculty expectations. *Higher Education*, 55, p. 425–446. DOI 10.1007/s10734-007-9065-5
- Collis, D. (2004). The paradox of scope: A challenge to the governance of higher education. In W. Tierney (Ed.), *Competing Conceptions of Academic Governance: Negotiating the Perfect Storm* (pp. 125- 167). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Darlaston-Jones, D. K., Pike, L., Cohen, L., Young, A. H., Haunold, S., & Drew, N. M. (2003). Are they being served? Student expectations of higher education. *Issues in Educational Research*, 13(1), 31-52.
- Davies, S. (2002). Marketing in higher education: Matching promises and reality to expectations. In Responding to student expectations (pp. 103-114). Paris: OECD.
- Dawson, P., Charman, K., & Kilpatrick, S. (2013). The new higher education reality: What is an appropriate model to address the widening participation agenda? *Higher Education Research & Development*, 32(5), 706-721. doi:10.1080/07294360.2013.776520
- Department of Education (2014). *Completion rates of domestic Bachelor students: A cohort analysis*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Education, Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Education (2016). *Improving the transparency of higher education admissions Australian Government response to the report of the Higher Education Standards Panel*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Education, Commonwealth of Australia.
https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian_government_response_to_hesp_admissions_transparency_report_0.pdf
- Department of Education and Training (2017). *Completion rates of domestic Bachelor students: A cohort analysis*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Education, Commonwealth of Australia. <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/41841>.
- Devlin, M. (2013). Bridging socio-cultural incongruity: conceptualising the success of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds in Australian higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(6), 939-949. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.613991.

- Engstrom, C., & Tinto, V. (2008). Access Without Support is not Opportunity. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 40(1), 46-50. doi:10.3200/CHNG.40.1.46-50
- Gale, T., & Parker, S. (2011). *Good practice report: Student transition into higher education*. Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Surry Hills, N.S.W.
- Higher Education Standards Panel (2017). *Improving retention, completion and success in higher education. Higher Education Standards Panel Discussion Paper*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Kalsbeek, D. H. (2013a). *Framing retention for institutional improvement: A 4 Ps framework reframing retention strategy for institutional improvement* (pp. 5-14). San Francisco: Wiley.
- Kalsbeek, D. H. (2013b). Reframing Retention Strategy: A Focus on Promise. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2013(161), 49-57. doi:doi:10.1002/he.20045
- Kalsbeek, D. H., & Zucker, B. (2013). Reframing retention strategy: A focus on profile. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2013(161), 15-25. doi:doi:10.1002/he.20042.
- Kift, S. (2015). A decade of Transition Pedagogy: A quantum leap in conceptualising the first year experience. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* (Vol. 2).
- Kift, S., Nelson, K. & Clarke, J. (2010). Transition Pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE – A case study of policy and practice for the higher education sector. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 1(1), 1-20.
- Kuh, G. D., Cruce, T. M., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. M. (2008). Unmasking the Effects of Student Engagement on First-Year College Grades and Persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(5), 540-563. doi:10.1080/00221546.2008.11772116.
- Longden, B. (2006). An institutional response to changing student expectations and their Impact on retention rates. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 28(2), pp. 173–187.
- Lowe, H., & Cook, A. (2003). Mind the Gap: Are students prepared for higher education? *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27(1), 53-76. doi:10.1080/03098770305629.
- Mckendry, S., Wright, M., & Stevenson, K. (2014). Why here and why stay? Students' voices on the retention strategies of a widening participation university. *Nurse Education Today*, 34(5), 872-877.
- Nelson, K., Picton, C., McMillan, J., Edwards, D., Devlin, M. & Martin, K. (2017). *Understanding the completion patterns of equity students in regional universities*. The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Curtin University: Perth.
- Pitman, T., Koshy, P., & Phillimore, J. (2015). Does accelerating access to higher education lower its quality? The Australian experience. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(3), 609-623. doi:10.1080/07294360.2014.973385
- Productivity Commission (2017). *University education, shifting the dial: 5 year productivity review, supporting paper No. 7*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Ramsden, P. (2008). The future of higher education: Teaching and the student experience. Report to John Denham. Retrieved, 12th April, 2018, from,
<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/future-higher-education-teaching-and-student-experience>

Schroeder, C. C. (2013a). Reframing retention strategy: A focus on process. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2013(161), 39-47. doi:doi:10.1002/he.20044

Schroeder, C. C. (2013b). Process and progress in action: Examples of what works. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2013(161), 71-80. doi:doi:10.1002/he.20047

Scutter, S., Palmer, E., Luzeckyj, A., Burke da Silva, K. & Brinkworth, R. (2011). What do commencing undergraduate students expect from first year university? *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 2(1). 8–20.

Spittle, B. (2013). Reframing retention strategy: A focus on progress. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2013(161), 27-37. doi:doi:10.1002/he.20043

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (2017). *Characteristics of Australian higher education providers and their relation to first-year student attrition*. Melbourne, Victoria: Commonwealth of Australia.

Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 8(1), 1-19.

Tinto, V. (2010). From theory to action: Exploring the institutional conditions for student retention. In *Higher education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (pp. 51-89): Springer.

Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 8(1), 1-19. doi:10.2190/4ynu-4tmb-22dj-an4w

Tinto, V. (2002). Enhancing student persistence: Connecting the dots. Paper presented at the *Optimizing the Nation's Investment: Persistence and Success in Post Secondary Education Conference*, Madison, WI. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED535133.pdf>.

Wood, D., Gray-Ganter, G., & Bailey, R. (2016). Pre-commencement interviews to support transition and retention of first year undergraduate students. *Student Success*, 7(2), 21-31. doi:10.5204/ssj.v7i2.338.

Yorke, M., & Longden, B. (2008). *The first-year experience of higher education in the UK*. Retrieved from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/fyefinalreport_0.pdf

Appendix 1. Human Research Ethics Approval



Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee

Ph: 07 4923 2603

Fax: 07 4923 2600

Email: ethics@cqu.edu.au

Prof Denise Wood

School of Education and the Arts

CQUniversity Rockhampton North

11 August 2017

Dear Prof Wood

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE OUTCOME PROJECT: H17/02-022, IMPROVING THE TRANSITION AND RETENTION OF REGIONAL STUDENTS FROM LOW-SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS: A 5P'S APPROACH

The Human Research Ethics Committee is an approved institutional ethics committee constituted in accord with guidelines formulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and governed by policies and procedures consistent with principles as contained in publications such as the joint Universities Australia and NHMRC *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*. This is available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/_files/r39.pdf.

On 7 March 2017, the committee considered your application. The project was assessed as being greater than low risk, as defined in the National Statement. On 28 March 2017, the committee acknowledged compliance with the conditions imposed on your research project *Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A 5P's approach* (Project Number H17/02-022) and it is now **APPROVED**. On 9 August 2017, the Chair approved your request to conduct a follow up phone call with potential participants.

The period of ethics approval will be from 28 March 2017 to 30 June 2018. The approval number is H17/02-022; please quote this number in all dealings with the Committee. HREC wishes you well with the undertaking of the project and looks forward to receiving the final report and statement of findings.

The standard conditions of approval for this research project are that:

- (a) you conduct the research project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments required to be made to the proposal by the Human Research Ethics Committee;
- (b) you advise the Human Research Ethics Committee (email ethics@cqu.edu.au) immediately if any complaints are made, or expressions of concern are raised, or any other issue in relation to the project which may warrant review of ethics approval of the project. (*A written report detailing the adverse occurrence or unforeseen event must be submitted to the Committee Chair within one working day after the event.*)

- (c) you make submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee for approval of any proposed variations or modifications to the approved project before making any such changes;
- (d) you provide the Human Research Ethics Committee with a written "Annual Report" on each anniversary date of approval (for projects of greater than 12 months) and "Final Report" by no later than one (1) month after the approval expiry date; (*A copy of the reporting pro formas may be obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee Secretary, Sue Evans please contact at the telephone or email given on the first page.*)
- (e) you accept that the Human Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to conduct scheduled or random inspections to confirm that the project is being conducted in accordance to its approval. Inspections may include asking questions of the research team, inspecting all consent documents and records and being guided through any physical experiments associated with the project
- (f) if the research project is discontinued, you advise the Committee in writing within five (5) working days of the discontinuation;
- (g) A copy of the Statement of Findings is provided to the Human Research Ethics Committee when it is forwarded to participants.

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

The Human Research Ethics Committee is committed to supporting researchers in achieving positive research outcomes through sound ethical research projects. If you have issues where the Human Research Ethics Committee may be of assistance or have any queries in relation to this approval please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Officer or myself.

Yours sincerely,



A/Prof Tania Signal
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
Cc: Ms Gillian Gray-Ganter (co-researcher), Ms Kate Sheppard, Prof Karen Nelson, Prof Marcia Devlin, Prof Julia Coyle, Ms Amy Barnhouse (partner researchers) Project file

APPROVED

Appendix 2. Email invitations

First Year Students (no pre-commencement interview conducted)

"Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach"

Dear Name of Student,

We have received your name as a student who is enrolled in their first term of study and as we are committed to constantly improving student experiences we are inviting you to participate in a research project. We are researching students' perceptions of how prepared they are as they commence study. Our research will also offer you tips to help your study journey, assist you with information and accessing appropriate support services if required.

Your participation would be purely voluntary. It would involve giving a confidential, individual, telephone interview with an experienced researcher that would last between 20 to 30 minutes. The interview would take place by telephone at a time that suits you. Your interview would be recorded and transcribed and given a code name so that **your contribution would remain anonymous**. Any identifying details in your interview would be removed before we use the information you share with us.

If you decide to participate, then change your mind, you can withdraw from the project at any stage before the data analysis stage, when your comments will be combined with those of other students.

We are offering a \$10 coffee voucher as a thank you if you decided to participate in this research project.

If you are interested in contributing to this research, please read the attached Plain Language Information Statement (PLIS), which gives more details about the project.

We look forward to hearing from you. Your participation will contribute to the improvement of our services.

If you want to take part in the research project, then please press REPLY with answers to these two questions:

1. Have you studied at University level previously?
2. Is there a mobile telephone number we can contact you on to arrange an interview? If so, please provide.

If you are not interested there is no need to reply. Thank you for your interest.

With best wishes

[insert your name and contact details]

Email Invitation:

Email Invite – Pre-Commencement and Follow-Up Participants

Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A ‘5Ps’ approach.

Dear Name of Student,

We have received your name as a student who is potentially new to CQUniversity and as we are committed to constantly improving student experiences we are inviting you to participate in a research project. We are researching students’ perceptions of how prepared they are as they commence study. Our research will offer tips to help your study journey, and assist with information to help you make informed decisions and seek appropriate supports.

Your participation would be purely voluntary. It would involve giving a confidential, individual, telephone interview with an experienced researcher that would last between 20 to 30 minutes. We will then follow up this initial interview with a follow up telephone interview later in the term to see whether our earlier interview was helpful. The interviews would take place by telephone at a time that suits you. Your interview would be recorded and transcribed and given a code name so that **your contribution would remain anonymous**. Any identifying details in your interviews would be removed before we use the information you share with us.

If you decide to participate, then change your mind, you can withdraw from the project at any stage before the data analysis stage, when your comments will be combined with those of other students.

We are offering a \$10 coffee voucher as a thank you if you decided to participate in this research project.

If you are interested in contributing to this research, please read the attached Plain Language Information Statement (PLIS), which gives more details about the project.

We look forward to hearing from you. Your participation will contribute to the improvement of our services.

If you want to take part in the research project, then please press REPLY with answers to these two questions:

1. Have you studied at University level previously?
2. Is there a mobile telephone number we can contact you on to arrange an interview? If so, please provide.

If you are not interested there is no need to reply. Thanks for reading all the way to the end.

With best wishes

[insert your name and contact details]

Email Invite Follow Up Pre Commencement

"Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach."

Dear Name of Student,

Thank you for participating in our initial interview when we spoke to you at the beginning of the term.

We are following up now to find out if the earlier interview was useful and if it helped you prepare for your studies.

Once again your participation would be purely voluntary. It would involve giving a confidential, individual, telephone interview with an experienced researcher that would last between 15 minutes. The interview would take place by telephone at a time that suits you. Your interview would be recorded and transcribed and given a code name so that **your contribution would remain anonymous**. Any identifying details in your interview would be removed before we use the information you share with us.

If you decide to participate, then change your mind, you can withdraw from the project at any stage before the data analysis stage, when your comments will be combined with those of other students.

If you are interested in contributing to this research, please read the attached Plain Language Information Statement (PLIS), which gives more details about the project.

We look forward to hearing from you. Your participation will contribute to the improvement of our services.

If you want to take part in the research project, then please press REPLY and let me know that I may phone you on the number you previously supplied.

If you are not interested there is no need to reply. Thanks for reading all the way to the end.

With best wishes

[insert your name and contact details]

Email Invite Follow Up Pre Commencement

"Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach."

Dear Name of Student,

Thank you for participating in our initial interview when we spoke to you on

We are following up now to find out if the earlier interview was useful and if it helped you prepare for your studies.

Once again your participation would be purely voluntary. It would involve giving a confidential, individual, telephone interview with an experienced researcher that would last between 15 minutes. The interview would take place by telephone at a time that suits you. Your interview would be recorded and transcribed and given a code name so that **your contribution would remain anonymous**. Any identifying details in your interview would be removed before we use the information you share with us.

If you decide to participate, then change your mind, you can withdraw from the project at any stage before the data analysis stage, when your comments will be combined with those of other students.

If you are interested in contributing to this research, please read the attached Plain Language Information Statement (PLIS), which gives more details about the project.

We look forward to hearing from you. Your participation will contribute to the improvement of our services.

If you want to take part in the research project, then please press REPLY and let me know that I may phone you on the number you previously supplied.

If you are not interested there is no need to reply. Thanks for reading all the way to the end.

With best wishes

[insert your name and contact details]

Appendix 3. Consent forms

Consent form: 'Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach'



- I have read the participant information sheet and I consent to participating in the "Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach research project".
- I understand that participation may take the form of an audio-recorded telephone interview
- I have been given clear information about the study, and understand what is required of me
- I understand that the interviewer will discuss health, wellbeing, work, study and general life matters and how these may impact on my study program
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to answer any question and I remain free to withdraw from the research study at any time up until the start of data analysis without explanation.
- I understand that all information from the research will remain confidential and that all information will be securely stored with all identifying information removed. The research data will be retained for at least five years from the date of any publication that is based upon them in accordance with the University Code of Conduct for Research.
- I understand that in published material, none of the information that I provide will be described or portrayed in any way that will identify me.
- I am aware that I may ask any further questions about the research study at any time.

Participant Name

Signature.....

Date

Contact for Further Information:

If you have any further questions or wish further information, then please contact the chief researcher Professor Denise Wood, Professor of Learning, Equity, Access and Participation, Learning and Teaching Services, Central Queensland University via email: d.wood@cqu.edu.au

Please contact CQUniversity's Division of Research (Tel: 07 4923 2603; E-mail: ethics@cqu.edu.au; Mailing address: Building 32, CQUniversity, Rockhampton QLD 4702) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

This project has been approved by the CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee, approval number H17/02-022.

You can view CQUniversity's Code of Conduct for Research at <https://staffnet.cqu.edu.au/tools-resources/policies/Documents/Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Research.pdf>

Consent Form: Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach



- I have read the participant information sheet and I consent to participating in the "Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach research project".
- I understand that participation will take the form of an audio-recorded pre-commencement telephone interview with a further follow up telephone interview conducted later in the term
- I have been given clear information about the study, and understand what is required of me
- I understand that the interviewer will discuss health, wellbeing, work, study and general life matters and how these may impact on my study program
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to answer any question and I remain free to withdraw from the research study at any time up until the start of data analysis without explanation.
- I understand that all information from the research will remain confidential and that all information will be securely stored with all identifying information removed. The research data will be retained for at least five years from the date of any publication that is based upon them in accordance with the University Code of Conduct for Research.
- I understand that in published material, none of the information that I provide will be described or portrayed in any way that will identify me.
- I am aware that I may ask any further questions about the research study at any time

Participant Name

Signature..... Date

Contact for Further Information:

If you have any further questions or wish further information, then please contact the chief researcher Professor Denise Wood, Professor of Learning, Equity, Access and Participation, Learning and Teaching Services, Central Queensland University via email: d.wood@cqu.edu.au

Please contact CQUniversity's Division of Research (Tel: 07 4923 2603; E-mail: ethics@cqu.edu.au; Mailing address: Building 32, CQUniversity, Rockhampton QLD 4702) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

This project has been approved by the CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee, approval number H17/02-022.

You can view CQUniversity's Code of Conduct for Research at <https://staffnet.cqu.edu.au/tools-resources/policies/Documents/Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Research.pdf>

Appendix 4. Plain Language Information Sheet

Information sheet - 'Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach'

Dear Student,

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do contact me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. It is important that you take time to decide whether or not you would like to take part.

As a CQUniversity student who is just about to commence your study program or in your first year of study you are invited to participate in this research project. The research project will be conducted at five regional universities by staff at each University: CQUniversity (Principal Researcher, Professor Denise Wood); James Cook University (Co-Researcher, Kate Sheppard); University of the Sunshine Coast (Co-Researcher, Professor Karen Nelson); Federation University of Australia (Co-Researcher, Professor Marcia Devlin); and Charles Sturt University (Co-Researcher Julia Coyle).

As a thank you for participating in the research project the researchers would like to offer you a coffee voucher, the assistance your feedback will provide is very valuable to us.

What is the purpose and possible benefit of the research project?

This project aim is to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the preparedness of regional, low socioeconomic status students for university. The project aim is also to ensure that commencing students are aware of the compulsory and essential components of their Course or Program and to identify ways that the university can best assist students to stay at university and succeed. The project findings will help the university improve processes and services to meet students' needs.

How the research project will be conducted.

There will be two parts to the data gathering for the research project for two separate groups of students:

1. If you are a student who has already commenced your first year of study we are inviting you to participate in a telephone interview to identify: the extent you felt prepared for your studies, how clearly you understood the compulsory and/or essential requirements of your Program and if you were felt supported during your transition to university.

Or

2. If you are a pre-commencement student, we are inviting you to participate in a telephone interview, in which the interviewer will discuss with you, your understanding of the compulsory and/or essential requirements of your Program /Course and the extent that you feel prepared to meet the requirements of your study program. If necessary, the interviewer will assist you with information and referrals to services that will help you meet these particular requirements. We will also invite you to participate in a follow up interview later in the term to assess the helpfulness of the initial pre-commence interview and/or how we can improve on this process.

Your interviewer will discuss some aspects regarding your health, wellbeing and work/study/life matters that you may find uncomfortable or difficult. Please let the interviewer know if you do feel uncomfortable and the interview will be ceased and/or the interviewer will refer you to a support service if required.

Do I have to take part? No, your participation is voluntary. You may also choose to change your mind and discontinue participation at any time during the interview. Your decision to not participate or withdraw from the interview will not impact on your university study in any way.

What happens if I take part? If you decide to take part, we will invite you via email to sign a consent form accompanying this information sheet and scan it back to us. We will then be in touch with you by email or telephone to arrange a suitable telephone interview time. The telephone interview will be recorded for later transcription. If you have been unable to forward your signed consent form back to us, but still would like to participate, please make contact with us so that arrangements can be made to record your consent. We can also answer any questions about the research before the interviewer begins the interview. The interview will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? It is possible that while participating in the interview, personal issues may be raised for you. If that were to happen, then we encourage you to seek assistance. CQUniversity student counsellors may be contacted on **074930 9456 (hours: 8.45am to 4.45pm)** and Lifeline Counselling can be contacted on **13 11 14 (available 24 hours)**. Both of these services are free of charge. You are free to withdraw from the research during the interview or at any time, up until the research data is de-identified, without any consequence to your studies.

As per the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research participants will be treated with respect, having due regard for personal beliefs, welfare, perception, customs and cultural heritage. The research team will take privacy, confidentiality and cultural sensitivity into account at all times. The benefits to the wider community will outweigh any potential risks to the participants.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential? Only members of the research team will have access to the information you provide. Your interview information will be coded so that this information always remains unidentifiable. Plus all information will be de identified before analysis and reporting. Any online or hard copy data and documents from the project will be kept in a secure password protected, online file or securely locked filing cabinet at the University. The research data will be retained for at least five years from the date of any publication that is based upon them in accordance with the University Code of Conduct for Research.

What will happen to the results of the research study? The results of the research study will be de-identified, analysed and a report written for submission to the Department of Education and Training and provided to each University. The report will include recommendations for improvement of services for future and current students. Case Studies, a conference paper and at least one Journal article will be prepared for submission to an appropriate peer-reviewed journal. As mentioned in the paragraph above, you will not be identified in any way in this report. A summarised statement of results will be available to participants from the research project website: (link TBA).

The project research team would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and, whether or not you decide to take part in the research, to thank you for considering it.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any further questions or would like further information, then please contact Professor Denise Wood, Director Learning, Equity, Access and Participation at CQUniversity, at d.wood@cqu.edu.au

Please contact CQUniversity's Division of Research (Tel: 07 4923 2603; E-mail: ethics@cqu.edu.au; Mailing address: Building 32, CQUniversity, Rockhampton QLD 4702) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

This project has been approved by the CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee, approval number H17/02-22. You can view CQUniversity's Code of Conduct for Research at <https://staffnet.cqu.edu.au/tools-resources/policies/Documents/Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Research.pdf>

Appendix 5. Student participant interview questions

First Year (no pre-commencement interview) interview questions

“Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A ‘5Ps’ approach.”

Participant Code:

NB: All Interviewers will have a ‘guide for interviewers’ to assist with the interviews.

Interviewer - introduction and checks that student, as part of the consent process, understands that this telephone interview will be recorded for later transcription (referring to the plain language statement - PLIS)

Interviewer refers to the PLIS to clarify: that the aim of the interview is to identify the level of preparedness the student felt when commencing studies, if the compulsory and/or essential Program requirements were clearly understood and if student felt supported during transition into university. The de-identified and summarised information from this research project will help the university with information to give to university staff and future students about what will best assist other students as they begin university.

Interviewer explains that she/he will discuss some aspects regarding your health, wellbeing and work/study/life matters that you may find uncomfortable or difficult. Please let the interviewer know if you do feel uncomfortable and the interview will be ceased and/or the interviewer will refer you to a support service if needed.

Interviewer explains, too, that if this interview identifies that the student may need information or referrals to an area of the university, the interviewer will seek student’s permission for this to occur.

Interviewer reaffirms that student can withdraw from the interview at any time, without any consequence to study program and that if any distress/discomfort arises at any time, the interviewer can cease the interview and make a note to the student of the counselling and support services available at the University and externally.

Confidentiality explained as noted in the PLIS.

Student willing for any queries/needs identified to be referred to CC/teachers/other staff:

No Yes

We want to make sure that you get the support you need to reach your goal.

I would like to quickly remind you of each units requirements:

Course delivery:

- Attend/review on-line lectures and/or tutorials
- If you study on-campus and miss a lecture you are able to catch-up by viewing the lecture in Moodle.

Assessment:

- written assignments,
- examinations
- verbal communication tasks
- group work

Based on these program requirements and before we start talking about the ‘student essentials’ that are necessary to meet the program requirements, I’m wondering if you have any concerns, which you think could perhaps affect your ability to successfully complete your program of study?

OR

Perhaps you know of something that may affect your studies and it may help for you to talk this through with me now so that together we are able to consider various options to help you achieve your study goals.

Interview Begins

Potential aspect of diversity and associated questions

1. Study/work/family/life balance

Explain to student: Sometimes students who commence the course tell us they find it difficult to achieve a study/work/family/life balance, which may include balancing full time study load with full or part-time paid work as well as with family responsibilities.

- a. Is study/life balance a concern for you? Let me give you some examples.
- b. Are you currently studying a full time study load? **No** **Yes**
- c. Are you working more than 20 hours a week? (for example) **No** **Yes**
- d. Do you have family or carer responsibilities (children, spouse, and parents)? **No**
Yes
- e. Do you have a designated study space where you live? **No** **Yes**
- f. After answering these questions do you now have any concerns? **No** **Yes**

No → Proceed to explore next potential aspect of diversity

Yes = Additional questions

→ Support student to identify what THEY can do to manage their study/work/family/life balance.

Explain to student: We know that successful study involves planning and organisation. Some common concerns we see with students include:

- Working full time while trying to manage a full time study load
- Significant carer and/or family responsibilities that impact on study and/or practicums
- Feeling overwhelmed/not making time to enjoy other important aspects of life.

We often see that students who do not either reduce paid working hours or planned study load OR seek help with child minding or other family responsibilities often struggle with their studies and risk burn out and not succeeding as well as they wanted with their studies.

Are you able to negotiate with your employer for a reduction in work hours? (NB It's often more about financial necessity rather than choice).

Are you able to arrange for child care support from family and friends or child care services? Having a network of support is very important if a child is sick or if you have an assignment due.

Do you have a support network of people around you who you can talk to or go to for help if you need? It is very important to understand you don't have to deal with everything alone → talk to family, partner,

house mates etc. about your studies and what it involves. If people around are fully informed, they are more likely to feel part of the process.

Have you set aside some time in the week for activities you enjoy?

→ Support **student to identify what the university** can do to help them manage their study/work/family/life balance – discuss speaking to a course advisor, or a counsellor regarding time management.

Potential aspect of Cultural responsibilities and associated questions:

2. Cultural and/or family responsibilities

Sometimes students tell us they have **cultural obligations** which impact on their attendance at classes.

- a. Do you think this may be of concern to you at some stage? **No** **Yes**
- b. Describe for me what your cultural responsibilities usually entail – say on a daily, weekly, monthly or other level?

Explain to student: *Planning ahead of time is always the best approach to be sure that possible solutions are explored so that essential course requirements and cultural responsibilities can be met.*

Potential aspect of diversity and associated questions

3. Financial Difficulty related to Travel Expenses

Sometimes students tell us that they are experiencing financial difficulty as they incur additional financial expenses even to purchase textbooks.

- a. Are you enrolled internally or externally?
- b. If externally, do you live in a rural or remote area? **No** **Yes**
- c. Do you think additional expenses may be of financial concern to you (relates to both internal and external students)?

Yes = **Additional questions**

→ Support **student to identify what THEY** can do to manage their financial circumstances.

You can seek information about scholarship opportunities and financial assistance.

→ Support student to identify what the university can do to help them manage their travel, accommodation if they should need to travel for their course.

Explore flexible learning options with student, for example, reducing study load to be able to undertake paid work to improve financial circumstances: **contact your Course Advisor** to discuss an appropriate workload and reduced enrolment.

10. Mental health and emotional wellbeing: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements.

Student anxiety, depression and personality disorders may impact negatively on a student's ability to successfully participate in aspects of course delivery, assessment and clinical placement (such as attendance at, oral presentations and team communication or exams).

Explain to student: University can be stressful: students need to be able to demonstrate behavioural and emotional stability to work constructively as an individual and also with peers, educators and assessors and students in diverse and changing academic, environments.

Students also need to be able to accept different points of view and respond appropriately to constructive feedback from academics.

Sometimes students tell us that they are experiencing high levels of anxiety related to:

- Giving oral presentations and/or taking part in group interactions.
- Sitting exams
- Depression, making it difficult for them to complete certain course requirements within set timeframes.
- Disappointing feedback from an assessment

Do you think any of these examples could possibly relate to you?

Support the student to identify what they can do to manage their mental health and emotional well-being.

11. Physical disability: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – Strength and mobility, Sustainable performance

Explain to student: Some fields of study are physically and mentally demanding.

*In these instances students need to be able to demonstrate physical strength and mobility to perform a variety of movements including standing, twisting and bending depending on your role it may be long periods of sitting. The ability to perform these **gross motor skills** is important when moving around for example: standing for long periods of time giving a presentation at work.*

Students may also need manual dexterity to perform fine motor skills as well as sustained levels of physical energy and concentration.

Do you think any of these examples could possibly relate to you?

12. Physical disability: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – Sensory ability

Explain to student: Many students may need to use vision, hearing, touch and smell to perform a range of skills, at a distance and close at hand, including working colleagues on a team project.

Do you think any of these examples of difficulties with sensory ability relate to you (either temporary or permanent)?

Visual, hearing, smell and touch

Explain to student: Good eyesight may be very important in your profession.

- a. Do you have any difficulty focusing on objects, reading or recognising objects that are near or far? **No** **Yes**
- b. Are you aware of any problems with your eyesight? **No** **Yes**
- c. Do you wear eyeglasses or contact lenses?

No Move on **Yes** = Explore further

- d. Are you colour blind?

Explain an example where this could affect someone else eg – if you were trying to create something interesting and you said see this red and blue graph and it was actually a green and yellow graph.

Verbal, non-verbal and written communication: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – Communication

Explain to student: Students may need to be able to communicate effectively and efficiently using verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills while engaging in course delivery (tutes and group work), course assessment (written assignments, exams)..

Verbal communication

Explain to student: You may need to be able to understand and respond to verbal communication (in English) accurately, appropriately, clearly and in a timely manner.

- a. Do you have any difficulty when speaking English? Is English your first language?
No Move on Yes = Explore further – **explain the repercussions**
- b. Will communicating verbally in a variety of situations likely be of concern to you? Such as: *participating in tutorial or oral presentations.*

No Move on Yes = Explore further

Non-Verbal communication

Explain to student: Often you may need to demonstrate effective non-verbal communication that is respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic, honest and non-judgemental when communicating with others.

Will maintaining effective non-verbal communication in a variety of situations likely be of concern for you? Such as: *recognising and responding appropriately in the workplace, e.g. understanding non-verbal cues assists with building rapport and gaining trust of peers and academics.*

No Move on Yes = Explore further

Written communication

Explain to student: Students need to demonstrate effective written communication in academic settings. Accurate documentation is a fundamental responsibility with professional and legal ramifications.

Do you think you will have any difficulty with constructing coherent written communication using correct grammar and punctuation?

Such as:

Constructing an essay to the required academic standards (including referencing)

13. Learning disabilities or deficits: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – Cognition (knowledge and the skills of cognition, literacy and numeracy)

Explain to student: Students require satisfactory theoretical knowledge and cognition (or reasoning and understanding), literacy and numeracy skills – extremely important for teachers.

Knowledge and Cognitive Skills and Literacy

Explain to student: When a person experiences difficulty in learning effectively they may find it hard to perform certain skills or to finish tasks learnt or assessed in conventional ways and/or within set time frames. You may need to read, analyse, interpret and comprehend multiple sources of information and at times with speed in an urgent situation.

- a. Did you take a long time to complete written work in previous study or education? **No Move on Yes = Explore further**

b. Do you have difficulty with reading or sentence structure?

No Move on **Yes** = **Explore further**

c. Do you have difficulty reading text; on line or in print?

No Move on **Yes** = **Explore further**

d. Are you able to listen to information and then convey a spoken message accurately?

No Move on Yes = Explore further

→ Support student to identify what the university can do to help them improve their communication skills. Encourage student to contact Academic Learning Centre as soon as possible for help related to literacy and numeracy skills.

Numeracy

Explain to student: You may be producing a report from data which although in Excel it still needs you to be competent in Maths to ensure you are entering the correct data.

a. Have you had difficulty learning mathematical concepts in the past?

No Move on **Yes** = **Explore further**

b. Do you have difficulty performing foundation mathematics without a calculator (such as addition; subtraction; times tables; long division; multiplication; fractions and percentages?)

No Move on Yes = Explore further

→ Encourage student to contact the Academic Learning Centre as soon as possible for help related to literacy and numeracy skills.

14. Information Technology Literacy: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – not identified

Explain to student: All students require a fundamental knowledge of information technology and computing skills while engaging in course delivery (lectures, tutes), course assessment (written assignments, exams).

Information technology and computing

Explain to student: As a student you will be expected to:

- Use word processing for development of assignments
- Set up and use email through a University email account
- Access and interact with other students and lecturers through Learning Management Systems, for example, Moodle and Student 1.
- Submit assignments via Moodle

Do you have any concerns with your ability to use a computer, internet, email or other information technology?

- Access and interact with other students and lecturers through Moodle.
- Submit assignments via the online system

No Yes = Explore further

Contact for Further Information

If you have any further questions or would like further information, then please contact Professor Denise Wood, Director Learning, Equity, Access and Participation at CQUniversity, at d.wood@cqu.edu.au

Please contact CQUniversity's Division of Research (Tel: 07 4923 2603; E-mail: ethics@cqu.edu.au; Mailing address: Building 32, CQUniversity, Rockhampton QLD 4702) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

This project has been approved by the CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee, approval number H17/02-22.

You can view CQUniversity's Code of Conduct for Research at <https://staffnet.cqu.edu.au/tools-resources/policies/Documents/Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Research.pdf>

Pre-commencement interview Questions

"Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: A '5Ps' approach."

Participant Code:

NB: All Interviewers will have a 'guide for interviewers' to assist with the interviews.

Interviewer - introduction and checks that student, as part of the consent process, understands that this telephone interview will be recorded for later transcription (referring to the plain language statement - PLIS)

Interviewer refers to the PLIS to clarify: that the aim of the interview is to identify the level of preparedness the student felt when commencing studies, if the compulsory and/or essential Program requirements were clearly understood and if student felt supported during transition into university. The de-identified and summarised information from this research project will help the university with information to give to university staff and future students about what will best assist other students as they begin university.

Interviewer explains that she/he will discuss some aspects regarding your health, wellbeing and work/study/life matters that you may find uncomfortable or difficult. Please let the interviewer know if you do feel uncomfortable and the interview will be ceased and/or the interviewer will refer you to a support service if needed.

Interviewer explains, too, that if this interview identifies that the student may need information or referrals to an area of the university, the interviewer will seek student's permission for this to occur.

Interviewer reaffirms that student can withdraw from the interview at any time, without any consequence to study program and that if any distress/discomfort arises at any time, the interviewer can cease the interview and make a note to the student of the counselling and support services available at the University and externally.

Confidentiality explained as noted in the PLIS.

Student willing for any queries/needs identified to be referred to CC/teachers/other staff:

No Yes

We want to make sure that you get the support you need to reach your goal.

I would like to quickly remind you of each units requirements:

Course delivery:

- Attend/review on-line lectures and/or tutorials
- If you study on-campus and miss a lecture you are able to catch-up by viewing the lecture in Moodle.

Assessment:

- written assignments,
- examinations
- verbal communication tasks
- group work

Based on these program requirements and before we start talking about the 'student essentials' that are necessary to meet the program requirements, I'm wondering if you have any concerns, which you think could perhaps affect your ability to successfully complete your program of study?

OR

Perhaps you know of something that may affect your studies and it may help for you to talk this through with me now so that together we are able to consider various options to help you achieve your study goals.

Interview Begins

Potential aspect of diversity and associated questions

4. Study/work/family/life balance

Explain to student: Sometimes students who commence the course tell us they find it difficult to achieve a study/work/family/life balance, which may include balancing full time study load with full or part-time paid work as well as with family responsibilities.

- a. Is study/life balance a concern for you? Let me give you some examples.
- b. Are you currently studying a full time study load? **No** **Yes**
- c. Are you working more than 20 hours a week? (for example) **No** **Yes**
- d. Do you have family or carer responsibilities (children, spouse, and parents)? **No**
Yes
- e. Do you have a designated study space where you live? **No** **Yes**
- f. After answering these questions do you now have any concerns? **No** **Yes**

No → Proceed to explore next potential aspect of diversity

Yes = Additional questions

→ Support student to identify what THEY can do to manage their study/work/family/life balance.

Explain to student: We know that successful study involves planning and organisation. Some common concerns we see with students include:

- Working full time while trying to manage a full time study load
- Significant carer and/or family responsibilities that impact on study and/or practicums
- Feeling overwhelmed/not making time to enjoy other important aspects of life.

We often see that students who do not either reduce paid working hours or planned study load OR seek help with child minding or other family responsibilities often struggle with their studies and risk burn out and not succeeding as well as they wanted with their studies.

Are you able to negotiate with your employer for a reduction in work hours? (NB It's often more about financial necessity rather than choice).

Are you able to arrange for child care support from family and friends or child care services? Having a network of support is very important if a child is sick or if you have an assignment due.

Do you have a support network of people around you who you can talk to or go to for help if you need? It is very important to understand you don't have to deal with everything alone → talk to family, partner, house mates etc. about your studies and what it involves. If people around are fully informed, they are more likely to feel part of the process.

Have you set aside some time in the week for activities you enjoy?

→ Support student to identify what the university can do to help them manage their study/work/family/life balance – discuss speaking to a course advisor, or a counsellor regarding time management.

Potential aspect of Cultural responsibilities and associated questions:

5. Cultural and/or family responsibilities

Sometimes students tell us they have **cultural obligations** which impact on their attendance at classes.

- a. Do you think this may be of concern to you at some stage? **No** **Yes**
- b. Describe for me what your cultural responsibilities usually entail – say on a daily, weekly, monthly or other level?

Explain to student: *Planning ahead of time is always the best approach to be sure that possible solutions are explored so that essential course requirements and cultural responsibilities can be met.*

Potential aspect of diversity and associated questions

6. Financial Difficulty related to Travel Expenses

Sometimes students tell us that they are experiencing financial difficulty as they incur additional financial expenses even to purchase textbooks.

- a. Are you enrolled internally or externally?
- b. If externally, do you live in a rural or remote area? **No** **Yes**
- c. Do you think additional expenses may be of financial concern to you (relates to both internal and external students)?

Yes = Additional questions

→ Support student to identify what THEY can do to manage their financial circumstances.

You can seek information about scholarship opportunities and financial assistance.

→ Support student to identify what the university can do to help them manage their travel, accommodation if they should need to travel for their course.

Explore flexible learning options with student, for example, reducing study load to be able to undertake paid work to improve financial circumstances: **contact your Course Advisor** to discuss an appropriate workload and reduced enrolment.

15. Mental health and emotional wellbeing: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements.

Student anxiety, depression and personality disorders may impact negatively on a student's ability to successfully participate in aspects of course delivery, assessment and clinical placement (such as attendance at, oral presentations and team communication or exams).

Explain to student: University can be stressful: students need to be able to demonstrate behavioural and emotional stability to work constructively as an individual and also with peers, educators and assessors and students in diverse and changing academic, environments.

Students also need to be able to accept different points of view and respond appropriately to constructive feedback from academics.

Sometimes students tell us that they are experiencing high levels of anxiety related to:

- Giving oral presentations and/or taking part in group interactions.
- Sitting exams
- Depression, making it difficult for them to complete certain course requirements within set timeframes.
- Disappointing feedback from an assessment

Do you think any of these examples could possibly relate to you?

Support the student to identify what they can do to manage their mental health and emotional well-being.

16. Physical disability: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – Strength and mobility, Sustainable performance

Explain to student: Some fields of study are physically and mentally demanding.

*In these instances students need to be able to demonstrate physical strength and mobility to perform a variety of movements including standing, twisting and bending depending on your role it may be long periods of sitting. The ability to perform these **gross motor skills** is important when moving around for example: standing for long periods of time giving a presentation at work.*

Students may also need manual dexterity to perform fine motor skills as well as sustained levels of physical energy and concentration.

Do you think any of these examples could possibly relate to you?

17. Physical disability: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – Sensory ability

Explain to student: Many students may need to use vision, hearing, touch and smell to perform a range of skills, at a distance and close at hand, including working colleagues on a team project.

Do you think any of these examples of difficulties with sensory ability relate to you (either temporary or permanent)?

Visual, hearing, smell and touch

Explain to student: Good eyesight may be very important in your profession.

- Do you have any difficulty focusing on objects, reading or recognising objects that are near or far? **No** **Yes**
- Are you aware of any problems with your eyesight? **No** **Yes**
- Do you wear eyeglasses or contact lenses?
 - **No** Move on **Yes** = Explore further
- Are you colour blind?

Explain an example where this could affect someone else eg – if you were trying to create something interesting and you said see this red and blue graph and it was actually a green and yellow graph.

Verbal, non-verbal and written communication: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – Communication

Explain to student: Students may need to be able to communicate effectively and efficiently using verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills while engaging in course delivery (tutes and group work), course assessment (written assignments, exams)..

Verbal communication

Explain to student: You may need to be able to understand and respond to verbal communication (in English) accurately, appropriately, clearly and in a timely manner.

- a. Do you have any difficulty when speaking English? Is English your first language?

No Move on Yes = Explore further – **explain the repercussions**

- b. Will communicating verbally in a variety of situations likely be of concern to you?
Such as: participating in tutorial or oral presentations.

No Move on Yes = Explore further

Non-Verbal communication

Explain to student: Often you may need to demonstrate effective non-verbal communication that is respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic, honest and non-judgemental when communicating with others.

Will maintaining effective non-verbal communication in a variety of situations likely be of concern for you? Such as: recognising and responding appropriately in the workplace, e.g. understanding non-verbal cues assists with building rapport and gaining trust of peers and academics.

No Move on Yes = Explore further

Written communication

Explain to student: Students need to demonstrate effective written communication in academic settings. Accurate documentation is a fundamental responsibility with professional and legal ramifications.

Do you think you will have any difficulty with constructing coherent written communication using correct grammar and punctuation?

Such as:

Constructing an essay to the required academic standards (including referencing)

18. Learning disabilities or deficits: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – Cognition (knowledge and the skills of cognition, literacy and numeracy)

Explain to student: Students require satisfactory theoretical knowledge and cognition (or reasoning and understanding), literacy and numeracy skills – extremely important for teachers.

Knowledge and Cognitive Skills and Literacy

Explain to student: When a person experiences difficulty in learning effectively they may find it hard to perform certain skills or to finish tasks learnt or assessed in conventional ways and/or within set time frames. You may need to read, analyse, interpret and comprehend multiple sources of information and at times with speed in an urgent situation.

- a. Did you take a long time to complete written work in previous study or education? **No Move on Yes = Explore further**

b. Do you have difficulty with reading or sentence structure?

No Move on **Yes** = Explore further

c. Do you have difficulty reading text; on line or in print?

No Move on **Yes** = Explore further

d. Are you able to listen to information and then convey a spoken message accurately?

No Move on Yes = Explore further

→ Support student to identify what the university can do to help them improve their communication skills. Encourage student to contact Academic Learning Centre as soon as possible for help related to literacy and numeracy skills.

Numeracy

Explain to student: You may be producing a report from data which although in Excel it still needs you to be competent in Maths to ensure you are entering the correct data.

19. Have you had difficulty learning mathematical concepts in the past?

No Move on **Yes** = Explore further

20. Do you have difficulty performing foundation mathematics without a calculator (such as addition; subtraction; times tables; long division; multiplication; fractions and percentages?)

No Move on Yes = Explore further

→ Encourage student to contact the Academic Learning Centre as soon as possible for help related to literacy and numeracy skills.

21. Information Technology Literacy: Compulsory and/or essential Course requirements – not identified

Explain to student: All students require a fundamental knowledge of information technology and computing skills while engaging in course delivery (lectures, tutes), course assessment (written assignments, exams).

Information technology and computing

Explain to student: As a student you will be expected to:

- Use word processing for development of assignments
- Set up and use email through a University email account
- Access and interact with other students and lecturers through Learning Management Systems, for example, Moodle and Student 1.
- Submit assignments via Moodle

Do you have any concerns with your ability to use a computer, internet, email or other information technology?

- Access and interact with other students and lecturers through Moodle.

- Submit assignments via the online system

No Yes = Explore further

Contact for Further Information

If you have any further questions or would like further information, then please contact Professor Denise Wood, Director Learning, Equity, Access and Participation at CQUniversity, at d.wood@cqu.edu.au

Please contact CQUniversity's Division of Research (Tel: 07 4923 2603; E-mail: ethics@cqu.edu.au; Mailing address: Building 32, CQUniversity, Rockhampton QLD 4702) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

This project has been approved by the CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee, approval number H17/02-22.

You can view CQUniversity's Code of Conduct for Research at <https://staffnet.cqu.edu.au/tools-resources/policies/Documents/Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Research.pdf>

Follow Up to Pre-Commencement Interview Questions

Student name:

Participant Code:

Date/time:

Phoned on:

Mode of study: Internal / External

Internal (Campus):

Confidentiality addressed – agrees to record kept without identifiers: No Yes

Student willing for any needs identified to be shared with CC/teachers: No Yes

Happy to accept follow up phone call or respond to the survey: No Yes

Introduction of Interviewer again: Hello I'm from and this call is the follow up to my earlier emails.

Group 2 phone interviews

Good morning/evening my name is and I am undertaking research on behalf of the CQUniversity.

Is it convenient to speak with you at this time or would you like to make a time for me to call back?

Thank you, we really appreciate your time. You are free to end the interview at any time and none of your data will be used. If you come to a question that you would prefer not to answer, please let me know and I'll skip over it for you. Please be aware that the information you provide will be confidential. If you would like me to send you some additional information please give me your email address.

Are you happy to get started?

Areas of concern will be identified and summarised.

Would an earlier pre-commencement phone call have been advantageous? Why?

Have your circumstances changed since beginning this term of study – did you change them or something else happen?

Have you received sufficient support or direction during the term?

.....
.....

Now that the term is over how confident do you feel moving along with your degree?

.....
.....

Have you thought about dropping out?

.....
.....

What were your main challenges?

.....
.....

Challenges with my finances and money

Challenge	Tick Yes, Cross No	Details
Cost of textbooks		
Travel		
Accommodation		
Tuition fees		
Attending practicum were you prepared for the extra costs associated with attending university		
Personal		

Could you elaborate on your circumstances?

.....
.....
.....

Are we able to offer you more assistance at this time?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Have you thought about enrolling in your second term of study?

.....
.....

Do you have any questions that I could assist you with?

.....
.....

Contact for Further Information

If you have any further questions or would like further information, then please contact Professor Denise Wood, Director Learning, Equity, Access and Participation at CQUniversity, at d.wood@cqu.edu.au

Please contact CQUniversity's Division of Research (Tel: 07 4923 2603; E-mail: ethics@cqu.edu.au; Mailing address: Building 32, CQUniversity, Rockhampton QLD 4702) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

This project has been approved by the CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee, approval number H17/02-22.

You can view CQUniversity's Code of Conduct for Research at <https://staffnet.cqu.edu.au/tools-resources/policies/Documents/Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Research.pdf>

Appendix 6. National forum handouts

Flyer



NATIONAL FORUM

IMPROVING THE TRANSITION AND RETENTION OF REGIONAL STUDENTS FROM LOW SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS: A '5PS' APPROACH

You are invited to participate in our National Forum, which is the culmination of a National Priorities Pool project funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training focusing on strategies for improving the success of university students from low socioeconomic status (Low SES) backgrounds.

The project has involved trials of a pre-commencement intervention strategy aimed at supporting the transition, participation, retention and success of commencing regional students from Low SES backgrounds. The participating partner universities are CQUniversity (lead), Charles Sturt University, Federation University Australia, University of the Sunshine Coast and James Cook University.

You will have the opportunity to learn about and contribute to discussions relating to the outcomes from the project including:

- » The '5Ps Framework' and strategies for supporting transitioning students and assisting them to succeed throughout the student journey
- » An Online Tool enabling students to self-assess their understanding of the program into which they are enrolling and guide them to appropriate supports and resources
- » Five Case Studies documenting the impact of applying the '5Ps' Framework in practice.

Please join us for robust and stimulating discussion, and provide us with your feedback so that we can improve on the final outputs from the project prior to final submission.

Finger food available from 12:30 pm

Date: Friday, 9 February 2018

Time: 1–4 PM

Venue: The Ship Inn Cnr Stanley Street and Sidon Street, South Brisbane

RSVP: Friday, 2 February 2018

Email: r.f.bailey@cqu.edu.au

PLEASE NOTE:

There will be a photographer present at this event.

If you do not want to appear in any photos, could you please make yourself known to the photographer.

Thank You

CHICHESTER | PWD:40000 | J_F12_100000

BE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE
cqu.edu.au

National Forum Agenda

National Priorities Project, Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: a 5Ps approach

Date: Friday 9 February 2018
Time: 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Venue: The Ship Inn, Stanley Street and Sidon Street, South Brisbane

Finger-food with tea & coffee available from 12:30 pm

1:00 – 1:10 pm	Welcome to Country by Shannon Ruska and Aaron Martin on the Didgeridoo
1:10 – 1:30 pm	Welcome and overview of the Project: Improving the transition and retention of regional students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: a 5Ps approach - Professor Denise Wood (Central Queensland University)
1:30 – 1:45 pm	Case Study: Central Queensland University - Mary McLeod and Robyn Bailey
1:45 – 2:00 pm	Case Study: Federation University Australia - Dr Amy Barnhouse
2:00 – 2:15 pm	Case Study: James Cook University - Kate Sheppard
2:15 – 2:30 pm	Case Study: Charles Sturt University - Liam Downing
2:30 – 2:45 pm	Case Study: University of the Sunshine Coast - Debbie Flashman
2:45 – 3:00 pm	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>
3:00 – 3:15 pm	Walk through the Online Prototype student self-assessment tool with Software Developers – Pauline Lawrey & Daniel Baird (James Cook University). Facilitator - Professor Denise Wood
3:15 – 3:45 pm	Panel discussion: “The 5Ps framework (Promise, Profile, Preparedness, Process and Progress) as a transition, retention and success strategy.” Panel: Project Team Members & External Reference Group. We welcome audience questions and experiences on this topic and related Forum topics.
3:45 – 4:00 pm	Summation – Professor Denise Woo

National forum: Case studies

Case Study: Central Queensland University



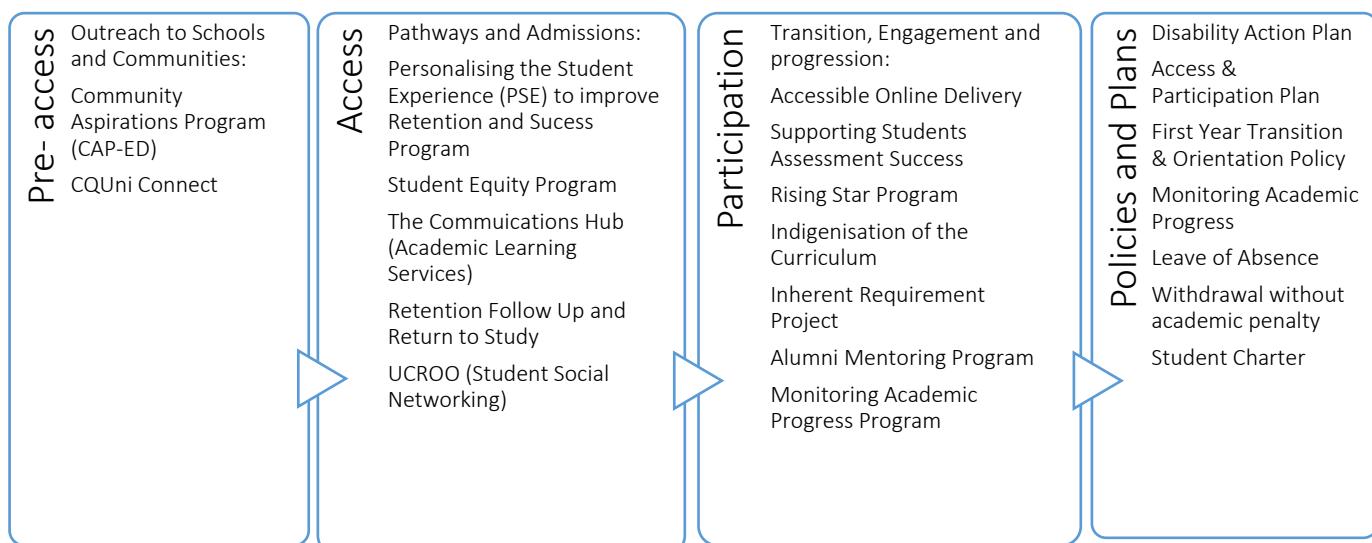
University profile

Central Queensland University is a regional-based university and Queensland's first dual sector university with 30,000 students studying qualifications from certificate to post doctorate level. Of these students, 14,847 are enrolled in domestic undergraduate courses, approximately 32% are from a low socioeconomic status (Low SES) background and 62% from regional and remote locations. Approximately 52% of students study in off campus mode. The Central Queensland University Strategic Plan (2016-2021) directs its focus to develop a culture that fosters a positive student experience and an embedded value of inclusiveness.

The goal of a positive student experience and inclusiveness is further articulated in the Equity Initiatives Map (Central Queensland University 2017), and underpins research undertaken by the Centre for Regional Advancement of Learning, Equity, Access and Participation (LEAP). Central Queensland University has prioritised early intervention student initiatives, which are recognisable of the complexity of student life, and provided services that are personalised, timely, accessible yet scalable. Transition and retention policies, such as the First Year Transition & Orientation Policy and Access and Participation Plan (2015-2017), reflect this focus.

Commonwealth Government funded programs such as the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) and the National Priorities Pool (NPP) have assisted the implementation of transition and retention initiatives.

Transition and retention HEPPP initiatives & related policies:



Discussion and Emerging Themes: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with first year Education and Business students from regional, low SES backgrounds to identify the following:

- The extent to which these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university
- their expectations of first year study and perceived challenges
- if the pre-commencement interview was helpful, and if it helped students' level of preparedness

63 interviews were conducted: 22 commencing students were interviewed and 17 participated in a follow-up interview. 24 first year students were interviewed who hadn't experienced a pre-commencement interview. Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs and analysed within the 5Ps framework. The '5Ps' approach is informed by Kalsbeek's (2013) framework for student retention, which identifies student 'profile', 'progress' through their studies, university 'processes' and alignment between a university's 'promises' and the student experience of its delivery on those promises as critical components of an all-of-institution approach to improving student retention and success. The fifth 'P' of 'preparedness' for study has been included as an important component of the "Ps" framework based on previous retention research (Wood, Gray-Ganter & Bailey, 2016).

Results and emerging themes from the research data summarised in the table below:

Profile	3 students with English as second language 26 studying in distance mode, 20 on campus. 9 of 46 participants are school leavers. 8 of the non-school leavers had gap year/s to save for study. 21 are working F/T; 17 P/T; 4 noted that they receive Centrelink; 4 self-supporting (3 supplemented by Centrelink). 2 identified disability; 3 noted they had a child/family member with a disability. 20 described family commitments. <i>"I worked last year and saved money to go to uni, I'm not working at the moment but plan to get a job"</i> (CQUBUS09). Students were keen to show their resilience and determination to succeed
Preparedness	Students, generally, saw themselves as prepared for their studies, " <i>I've already done orientation online, I'm regularly checking uni emails and have a blue card for work</i> " (CQUEDU3). Most were confident about balancing commitments, " <i>study balance shouldn't be a concern, my husband is supportive</i> " (CQUBUS03). All of the pre-commencement students described their interview as very helpful. The commenced students stated the benefit of an earlier interview, " <i>Better before the first term and the first assignment when I was looking for things</i> " (CQUEDU17). It was evident that the early interview raised questions for many participants about their depth of their preparedness, " <i>I found the conversation that I had with you more valuable than attending orientation</i> " (CQUBUS01).
Process	Preparatory programs offered by the University were seen as excellent ways of understanding university processes, " <i>STEPS – it was brilliant</i> " (CQUEDU02). The data revealed that students were sometimes overwhelmed by the systems, " <i>so many platforms a bit overwhelming</i> " (CQUBUS16); " <i>I lost it 'til I got it with Moodle and missed some early quizzes and group work</i> " (CQUBUS24) - this student saw great value in a pre-commencement interview. All participants viewed the pre-commencement interview as an excellent way of understanding university processes, " <i>this interview has been very helpful and I didn't realize that there was the possibility of emailing with a counsellor</i> " (CQUEDU06).
Progress	The majority of students were reasonably confident of progressing with their studies with a small minority stating thoughts of dropping out. Key elements described as impacting on or influencing progress included: University processes, supportive workplace, personal environment – with support from family & friends emphasized as a big positive, " <i>I have a counselling service at work, a good husband and family around. I'm pretty resilient</i> " (CQUBUS15); " <i>Did think of dropping (due to health) but Lecturers were brilliant</i> " CQUEDU02); " <i>Easier if assessment was spread out</i> " (CQUEDU19); " <i>Written assessment - a bit misleading with structure</i> "(CQUBUS15); " <i>I did think about dropping, my boss talked me into staying and my marketing Lecturer has been great, I'm now considering a marketing major</i> " (CQUBUS11).
Promise	The majority of participants were positive about their university experience, " <i>This interview has been really helpful</i> " (CQUBUS19); " <i>Lecturers have given loads of help</i> " (CQUBUS11); " <i>Felt supported - surprised how connected I feel to the other students in my course,</i> (CQUBUS01). Some, had unmet expectations regarding Practicum arrangements. " <i>I'm concerned when I have to do pracs as there will be less income</i> " (CQUEDU22); " <i>I wondered about assistance finding a Carer in my area, I'm concerned over child care during pracs</i> " (CQUEDU13).

Recommendations:

- To utilise evidence gained from the research data to inform institutional policy and practices to ensure better alignment between the '5Ps'
- The research findings suggest a strong case for personalised early intervention initiatives, which assist students understand the compulsory and essential requirements of their degree.
- To enable scalability an online system has potential as a tool to complement the personalized approach.

University Profile

CSU has six main campuses across regional NSW, stretching from Albury-Wodonga in the south to Port Macquarie in the north. In 2016, CSU had 43,142 students, of which 31,329 were domestic. Among domestic students, 22% were low SES, and 3.3% were Indigenous. CSU also has a significant representation of regional and remote students, with 49% of domestic students falling into these groups. Sixty-eight percent of domestic students (68%) were aged 25 or over, while 64% were female. Students with disability accounted for 4% of domestic CSU students.

Transition and Retention Initiatives for First Year Students

Commensurate with its student demographic profile, CSU undertakes a significant amount of work aimed at ensuring positive outcomes for low SES and Indigenous students. Much of this work is mainstreamed, in that it is built into regular practice across the university. Key elements of these programs in the online (external/distance) student space include:

- **CSU's Academic Literacy, Learning and Numeracy (ALLaN) Team** helps students develop their academic literacy and numeracy skills. Students can submit assignment drafts for feedback, book an individual appointment or attend a workshop. Some aspects of this service are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and are specifically targeted at those who might not be able to access this type of support in regular working hours.
- **STUDY LINK** offers a suite of short, online preparatory subjects to help students feel better equipped for their University studies.
- **The CSU Student Outreach Team** personally welcomes all commencing students and provides assistance when they begin to show signs of disengagement.
- **The CSU Outreach Team** travels to selected areas around Australia and holds Outreach sessions. The team works with Faculty to identify online students' signs of disengagement, tailor Faculty-specific welcoming campaigns and create course-specific outreach events for students in Sydney.
- **The Study Coach Program** offers going telephone mentoring to students identified as at risk of disengaging from their studies. Students are given advice regarding a number of non-subject specific skills that help them be successful in their studies.
- **CSU Orientation** now includes a **specific online component**, including an online recordings page made available to all new students post orientation; the CSU welcome pack, containing a CSU merchandise, information and resources; and launching in 2018, a bespoke, customised Orientation portal for all students, including information specifically tailored and personalised to each individual student.

Discussion and Emerging Themes

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with first year Social Science (Welfare) and Business/Accounting students from regional, low SES backgrounds to identify the following:

- The extent to which these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university
- their expectations of first year study and perceived challenges
- if the pre-commencement interview was helpful, and if it helped students' level of preparedness

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs and analysed within the 5Ps framework.

Profile	CSU's typical student studies online and balances this with work and family responsibilities, and this was reflected in this study. In general, the students interviewed were working a full-time or close to full-time job, often accompanied by family responsibilities. One participant was Aboriginal with significant cultural responsibilities, reinforcing a need for cultural appropriateness in any approach such as the 5Ps Framework. Of note is that the profile of the interviewed students – while presenting some risks – has many strengths, including time management, and participants were aware of this. <i>"I think, because I've managed to juggle family and full time work, study for the last 3 years, that I know how to manage it, so I'm really quite comfortable/ I actually feel quite comfortable at this point." (CSU02)</i>
Preparedness	Students interviewed generally assessed themselves as having a strong sense of preparedness for participation in their study. Concerns were expressed typically in time pressures if circumstances demanded more time outside of study, and referencing requirements. Findings also suggest that students are drawing on their existing strengths to prepare for their studies. <i>"So far I have managed to balance it out pretty good. I am studying part time, but in saying that I don't think I would be able to take on full time. I have 5 children. Life is busy." (CSU09)</i> <i>"Referencing. I'm terrified." (CSU01)</i>
Processes	The data points to a sense that support services within CSU are not invisible, even to online students. Conceptually, at least, students also generally expressed an awareness of steps to follow if they ran into difficulties, including extensions, special consideration and other adjustments. That said, participants stated that the pre-commencement interview was valuable in terms of providing them with real strategies for navigating CSU processes. <i>"I had textbooks organised, I had done all of my HELP documents so basically once the semester started it was just a matter of starting the study like waiting for the course material to be released." (CSU09)</i> <i>"Yeah I enjoyed that phone call. I got a lot from it. An earlier one would have been good because there was some preparatory things that I could have done." (CSU05)</i>
Progress	Interviewees expressed an initially sound understanding of the requirements to successfully navigate their program. However, this was generally tempered with the aforementioned sense that students would wait and see how these requirements would pan out in reality.

	<p>Students were generally cautiously optimistic about their likelihood of progressing in their degree.</p> <p><i>"I am confident, probably more confident than what I was but yeah it is still quite daunting." (CSU06)</i></p>
Promises	<p>CSU's key promise to its students in terms of outcomes is geared towards employment and employability, and this is largely reflected through its graduate outcomes data, and in study flexibility. Findings from the interviews largely reflected that the students understood these promises, albeit tempered with reality.</p> <p><i>"The teachers have been really helpful that has been a big stand out for me." (CSU08)</i></p>

Recommendations

1. There is value in implementing a 5Ps-based online tool as proposed in this project, backed by early pre-commencement telephone contact among at-risk students or those who would benefit from additional advice.
2. Any work in implementing 5Ps-based online tools and strategies must ensure cultural appropriateness in work with Indigenous students.
3. Consideration should be given to referrals to internal or external financial counselling or advice for issues around government payments and finances.

CASE STUDY: Federation University**University profile**

Federation University Australia (FedUni) is Australia's newest university. It was created by bringing together the University of Ballarat and the Monash University Gippsland Campus. FedUni is the third oldest site of higher learning in Australia and offers higher education, TAFE and secondary schooling. With campuses in Ballarat, the Wimmera and Gippsland in regional Victoria, the University also has partner providers in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and South-East Asia.

In 2016/17, FedUni had approximately 22000 students, including 15 500 domestic students. Of the higher education students, approximately 29% were from low SES backgrounds.

FedUni is moving to become a more open access university and adopts a philosophy of inclusivity, opportunity and support. It increasingly welcomes second chance learners, mature age students, those who have not succeeded educationally in traditional ways, school-leaver students with a wider range of Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) scores and students from a variety of pathways and backgrounds.

FedUni has a broad range of transition and retention programs aimed at low SES students. Of these, HEPPP funding is used on around 20 projects per year ranging from \$1K to \$1 million. The projects listed below are not intended to provide a comprehensive list; rather they represent FedUni's primary support programs.

Pre-semester	First Year	Progression
FAST	Mentoring	
FedReady	Academic Skills and Knowledge (ASK)	
FedStart Survey	Peer Assisted Study Sessions	
Orientation Program	Maths Drop-In Centre	
	Kickstart	
	Studiosity	
	Learning Skills Advisors	
	Live Learn Lead	
	FedForward	
	Disability Learning Access Unit	
	Counselling	
		FedFuture

Discussion and Emerging Themes

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with first year Engineering students in their second semester from regional, low SES backgrounds to identify the following:

- The extent to which these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university.
- Their expectations of first year study and perceived challenges.
- Whether they thought a pre-commencement interview would have been helpful.

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs and analysed within the 5Ps framework.

Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One participant working long full-time hours, studying part-time with four older children and considerable commuting. Managing well and can sometimes study at work• Two participants studying full-time – one also working part-time.• One intended to move closer to campus
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicated that they could manage the 8-12 week, final year placement• Saw the benefit of being provided with tailored support information
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reported no problems accessing course information, using the learning management system (LMS) and submitting assignments
Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students had passed first semester, were waiting for second semester results and had re-enrolled for second year• Oral presentations were the standout concern• Time management also an issue
Promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants had re-enrolled for second year therefore indicating a successful transition• Good awareness of support services• Timetabling issue

Recommendations

- FedUni will use the data from this research project to investigate further ways to enhance its support programs particularly regarding public speaking skills and time management.

- FedUni sees the 5Ps as a useful conceptual framework to enhance existing transition strategies including an online tool which will allow:
 - a) students to self-identify areas of concern via a convenient, online medium; and
 - b) enabling individualised support options to be recommended via a phone conversation.

CASE STUDY: James Cook University



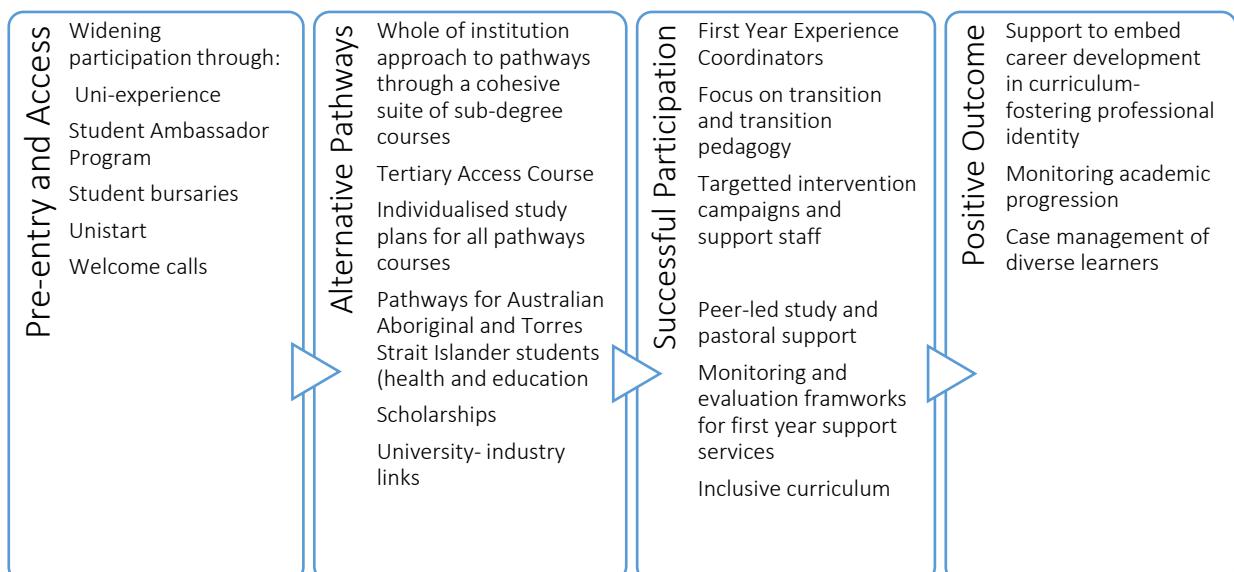
University Profile

James Cook University was established in 1970. JCU's mission is to create a brighter future for life in the tropics worldwide through graduates and discoveries that make a difference. The university has three tropical campuses in Townsville, Cairns and Singapore and study centres in Mackay, Thursday Island and Mt Isa. In 2016, the university had 21 927 students enrolled across all modes and campuses. The university has a diverse student demographic. This includes 5.84% of the student cohort identifying as Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 87.87% of students from a regional or remote background. The university has strong participation rates of LSES students at 22.75%. Further, more than half of the students enrolled at JCU are the first in their family to attend university.

Transition and Retention Initiatives for First Year Students

The university has a strong commitment to transition and retention strategies for first year students and for all students. JCU offers a range of student support programs that seek to address some of factors that influence the student experience and play a part in student engagement, participation, success and retention.

The university's Access, Success and Participation Plan (2017) inform transition and retention initiatives at JCU. HEPPP funding at JCU is used to support a range of outreach, participation and success initiatives at the university to support the transition and retention of low SES students. The four domains of this plan include pre-entry and access; alternative pathways; successful participation and positive outcomes.



Discussion and Emerging Themes

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Diploma of Higher Education students from regional, low SES backgrounds to identify the following:

- The extent to which these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university
- their expectations of first year study and perceived challenges
- if the pre-commencement interview was helpful, and if it helped students' level of preparedness

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs and analysed within the 5Ps framework.

Profile	As expected in an open access pathways course such as the Diploma of Higher Education, the student cohort is diverse. Sixteen students completed the interviews; eight of these were from a low- SES background. Of the eight commencing students, five had completed year twelve with VET qualifications. The complexity of students' lives were apparent in this interview. More than half of the project participants identified themselves as managing health conditions, primarily to do with mental health. "I went through a very bad period last year; my anxiety was so bad I just didn't go to school." Financial concerns, work and family commitments as well as time management were also major recurring themes in the interview data with fifteen of the sixteen participants identifying at least one of these as an issue.
Preparedness	Generally, most participants expressed concerns around their preparedness for study. These were largely concerns around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived foreign nature of university study (as compared with TAFE) • Demands of academic writing, referencing and numeracy "I've never written an essay". Participants spoke positively about the provision of a pathways curriculum that aimed to develop academic literacies "I know I need to build these skills" as well as the availability of learning support including learning advisors, workshops, peer assisted study sessions and online tutoring.
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All students iterated that a pre-commencement interview would have been OR was helpful to support first year "It puts out questions that you need to think about, what you're not sure about and what you need to get started" ▪ Over three quarters of participants noted the benefit of the provision of dedicated support staff in pathways as a first point of contact to assist in the navigation of university processes "I've been talking to _____, and she's been great."
Progress	Participants' responses suggest that connecting students with support services supports student progress through university. Participants responded positively about their confidence moving forward with their studies after they had experiences some success and were more aware of course expectations and supports available "I feel ten times more confident now."
Promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall, students were positive about their university experiences and the supports available "the supported start has been really helpful."

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overwhelmingly, these comments pertained to the support provided by teaching and course specific support staff. "yes, I have had lots of help from my lecturers, they are fantastic. So approachable" |
|--|---|

Recommendations



Responses from both commenced and pre-commenced students indicate that the range of issues that influence student retention and success are complex and interdependent. The case study demonstrates the importance of pre-enrolment processes to support students transitioning to university



By implementing an online tool framed around the inherent requirements this provides university staff and students a viable process to create a shared understanding of what is required for university study.



The data collected for this case study will inform the ongoing development of first year engagement strategies related to supporting students from low SES and regional backgrounds at JCU

CASE STUDY: The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC)

University Profile

USC is headquartered on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, one of Australia's fastest growing regions. Other campuses are located to the north and south: at Gympie, Fraser Coast, and SouthBank in Brisbane, with a new campus to open in Moreton Bay in 2020. In addition to these main campuses USC has teaching locations at Noosa, Caboolture, and North Lakes. USC currently has 13,492 students enrolled, of which 82.8% are domestic and 17.2% are international. 99.1% study on campus. The average age of USC students is 25 years with 59.6% of students aged 21 years or over. 62% of USC students are female, 37.3% are male and 0.04% identify as 'other'. Of the sub degree and undergraduate students, 47.8% are the first in their family to attend university. Of the total number of students enrolled, 19% are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, 24% are from regional backgrounds and 0.3% are from remote backgrounds. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently represent 3.1% of all domestic students. The percentage of students with disabilities is 6.7%.

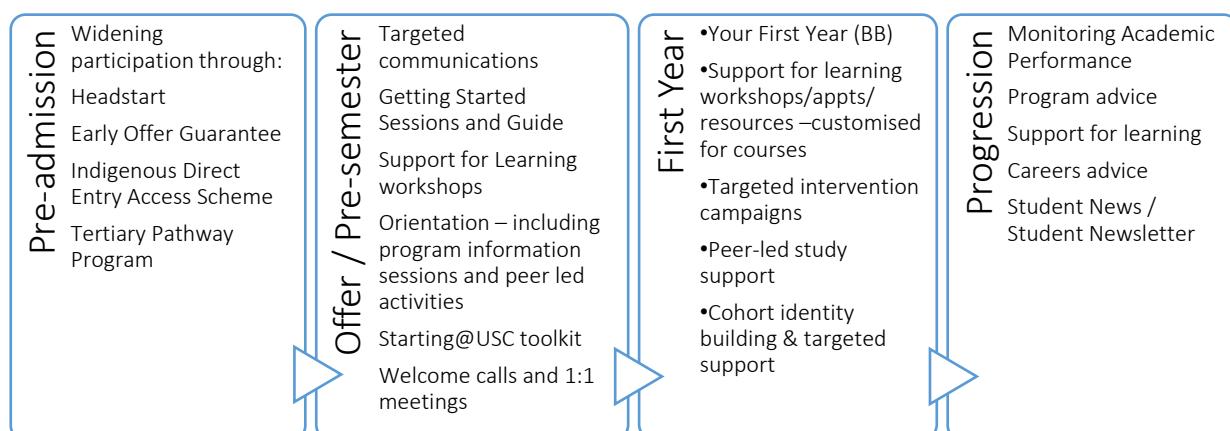
Transition and Retention Initiatives for First Year Students

USC prioritises increasing access to higher education for all equity groups, particularly students from low SES backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disabilities. Transition and retention strategies include a range of activities including on-campus experiences and USC's undergraduate enabling program the Tertiary Preparation Pathway, equity bursaries and additional support services for students with disabilities.

In response to the launch of USC's new Strategic and Academic Plans in 2016, the University's previous Student Engagement Strategy was reviewed and updated to become the Student Engagement and Retention Blueprint 2017-2020. The Blueprint encompasses four key objectives:

- **Strengthen first year experiences** – first year is the foundation for success in later years
- **Design and enact high quality curricula** – high quality programs and courses engage students in learning
- **Promote access, equity & diversity** – a USC-wide coordinated approach to increasing and widening student participation
- **Enable support for learning** – intentional, proactive, timely access to life and learning support

There are a number of strategies within the Blueprint which entail direct communication with all USC students, as outlined below.



Discussion and Emerging Themes

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with first year Bachelor, Social Work students from regional, low SES backgrounds to identify the following:

- The extent to which these students felt prepared for study, understood the compulsory and/or essential course/program requirements and were supported during the transition to university
- their expectations of first year study and perceived challenges
- if the pre-commencement interview was helpful, and if it helped students' level of preparedness

Data gathered from interviews was critically examined in relation to university transition and retention policies and programs and analysed within the 5Ps framework.

Profile	17 of the 24 students identifying as non-school leavers, 12 students identifying themselves as coming from underrepresented groups, 13 students experiencing challenges juggling work/study/life balance, and 9 having to travel 45 minutes or more to get to campus. It is clear that many new students at regional universities such as USC are non-traditional and can face multiple challenges when making the transition to university study.
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All students undertake planning in some way ▪ Most noted a varying degree of concern ▪ Student that identified as having a disability or health issue demonstrated a knowledge of how to access support <p><i>"will arrange appointment with disability services to support anxiety" (USC017); and "is aware of student wellbeing support if needed." (USC014); "felt fairly well prepared for expenses, but did find textbooks to be more expensive than originally thought" (USC09);</i></p>
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Majority of students iterated that a pre-commencement interview would have been OR was helpful to support first year ▪ Processes also impacted on challenges for participants, which may have been emphasised by their profile <p><i>"finding the library difficult to navigate, as well as assessments difficult to complete" (USC024), "Yes - would have been useful at pre-commencement to support varying issues around anxiety, academic writing and childcare" (USC08) "; and "Timing was good for pre-commencement interview" (USC015)</i></p>
Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrated correlation between university processes and progression ▪ Some concern regarding academic progress, particularly for students in minority groups <p><i>"I am feeling disadvantaged due to having a non-English speaking background, and there should be a requirement for students to do a course before studying to help with academic writing skills to give a head start" (USC019)</i></p>
Promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall fulfilled, although assisted by participants' preparation ▪ Some students that did not receive pre-commencement interview felt a lack of information contributed to elements of surprise around study expectations <p><i>"study load was heavier than anticipated" (USC01); and "felt that timetables were very suitable for school leavers, but not so much for mature age students trying to juggle home/work life" (USC04)</i></p>

Recommendations



The case study and collection of data was a time-consuming approach to supporting students. The study demonstrates a case for the development of a framework to support processes and a trial of an online system which will enable students to review their success strategies by focusing on the critical components of the 5Ps framework.

Responses from both commenced and e-commenced students indicate support for a Student Engagement framework that is granular in approach and includes pre-commencement intervention strategies. The focus of such a strategy should ensure students are prepared for study, understand the inherent academic requirements and that there is support available during the transition to university.



The data collected for this case study will inform the ongoing development of first year engagement strategies related to supporting students from low SES and regional backgrounds at USC

Appendix 7. Inherent Requirements

Central Queensland University – School of Education and the Arts

These inherent requirements apply to the following courses: CC14 - Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)

CC12 - Bachelor of Education (Primary) CC13 - Bachelor of Education (Secondary)

CV09 - Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary) CC45 - Master of Teaching (Primary)

In addition, these inherent requirements also apply to the following professional development course: CC10 - Diploma of Secondary Teaching (Major)

There are nine domains of inherent requirements for these courses:- Ethical Behaviour

Behavioural Stability Legal Compliance Communication Skills Cognitive Abilities

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Abilities Sensory Abilities

Reflective Skills Sustainable Performance

Some of these domains also have sub-domains.

Ethical Behaviour	
Ethical behaviour involves the capacity of thinking and acting in ways consistent with what	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students need to think, act and behave ethically because education is governed by codes, guidelines and policies such as Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Students are accountable and responsible for complying with ethical behaviour in their roles as students of CQUniversity as well as during Professional Practice placements in educational settings</p>
2	<p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Knowledge and understanding of all applicable Codes of Ethics for teachers, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Graduate Career Stage).
3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students must comply with the relevant codes, guidelines and policies to facilitate safe, competent interactions and relationships with the student participants with whom they engage.The physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of the individual must not in any way be put at risk. Accreditation with professional bodies will therefore be able to be maintained.

4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must not compromise codes and standards or result in unethical behaviour. Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p>
	<p>Email accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further information regarding reasonable adjustments.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to comply with academic and non-academic misconduct policies and procedures such as CQUniversity's Student Charter, Student Misconduct Policy and Student Behavioural Misconduct Procedures, Assessment of Coursework Policy and Assessment of Coursework Procedure. • You will be able to treat personal information obtained in educational settings as private and confidential. • You will be able to demonstrate an ability to reflect on ethical dilemmas and issues and take responsibility for ensuring awareness of ethical behaviour. • You will be able to demonstrate the applicable codes of ethics as they apply in the practice of education. • You will be able to respect diversity by demonstrating sensitivity to religious, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and individual differences to support equitable access to education and learning. <p>You will be able to receive a positive notice resulting from a Working With Children check.</p>

Behavioural Stability	
Behavioural stability involves the capacity to personally function in a consistent and stable manner in a wide range of circumstances and environments and demonstrate appropriate constructive behaviour.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to personally function with stable behaviours as teaching can at times be very emotionally demanding.
2	<p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable behaviours in a wide range of circumstances and environments because university and educational environments can be challenging and demanding.
3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will be exposed to university and classroom environments that can be stressful, demanding and sometimes unpredictable. Students must demonstrate the capacity for behavioural stability when the demands of the profession are at their greatest and/or when the most acute of circumstances arise. Students will require sufficient stable thinking and behaviour in order to respond objectively, consistently and professionally. Pre-service teachers must be able to work constructively with their peers at university and with supervising teachers and school staff during Professional Practice placements, in order for continuous improvement in performance to occur. Pre-service teachers must be able to respond appropriately and positively to constructive feedback on their performance and monitor their own emotions and behaviour when dealing with stakeholders in educational and community contexts.
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must ensure that the behavioural stability required as students of CQUniversity as well as during Professional Practice placements complies with the stated applicable conduct.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>

5	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to be reflective with personal behaviours appropriate for professional performance and being positive and receptive to processing constructive feedback on your teaching competence, use of interpersonal communication and academic progress. • You will be able to interact with people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures in a calm and composed manner that shows respect for difference, including when dealing within difficult situations. • You will be able to demonstrate cultural communication competence to resolve conflict and negotiate mutually agreeable outcomes in tutorials and Professional Practice settings while refraining from the use of words / actions that show intolerance of difference. • You will be able to successfully demonstrate the ability to manage challenging behaviours during Professional Practice placements to create and maintain safe and supportive learning environments • You will be able to successfully process your own emotions and behaviour when dealing with highly emotive people when challenging situations and/or behaviours arise in a variety of educational settings. • You will be able to maintain behavioural stability through successfully distinguishing your own personal behaviours, experiences and emotions from other stakeholders in a variety of educational settings.
---	--

Legal Compliance	
Legal compliance involves the capacity to understand Australian law, as well as the layers of institution/organisation rules that apply to almost every context. Students will need to function in a responsible manner within the law and applicable rules and regulations.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to function with an awareness and understanding that teaching practice is mandated by specific legal and regulatory requirements and standards to enable the professional delivery of practice.
2	<p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to know and comply with Australian Law and/or professional regulatory requirements and standards, which informs and determines the delivery of professional practices.
3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be working in an environment where many Australian laws and professional regulatory requirements and standards dictate many aspects of practice, and students must therefore be able to comply and work within these frameworks.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must know and comply with regulatory requirements and standards as they are accountable and responsible for their decisions and actions. Students with a criminal conviction and/or history <i>may</i> be impacted in the ability to undertake placements and this <i>may</i> prevent them from being able to complete the course requirements.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must be consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to comply with legislative and regulatory requirements for teaching, eg Codes of Ethics for teachers, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Graduate Career Stage). You will be able to comply with relevant child protection and safety legislation and report any notifiable concerns to your professional experience supervisor. You will be able to understand and comply with Anti-discrimination legislation and Disability Standards for Education as they apply to practice in educational settings. You will be able to understand and adhere to professional policy around the use of social media.

Communication Skills	
Communication skills include abilities in verbal, non-verbal and written communication.	
Verbal Communication:	
	Verbal communication involves the capacity of being able to effectively and appropriately communicate verbally, in English, in a wide variety of contexts.
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to effectively and appropriately communicate verbally, in English, in a wide variety of contexts to engage in activities related to the course of study and in professional contexts. Information can be found on the English Requirements webpage.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to understand and respond to verbal communication accurately, appropriately and in a timely manner. The ability to provide clear instructions in the context of the situation. The ability to provide timely, clear feedback and reporting.

3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must have highly developed verbal skills for timely, accurate and effective delivery of instructions as this is critical to the everyday work of a teacher, individual safety and effective classroom management.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments for impaired verbal communication may be tailored to meet student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must enable verbal communication effectiveness, timeliness, clarity and accuracy.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to verbally communicate in the English language with accuracy, appropriateness and effectiveness. You will be able to complete oral presentations for assessment and deliver lessons and learning sequences that have a positive impact on student learning in educational settings. You will be able to listen to other's point of view and actively participate in discussion activities related to the course. You will be able to use language that is appropriate to the context of the individual, group or workplace; and select and use questioning and feedback strategies that actively engage students across the full range of abilities and backgrounds in learning during Professional Practice placements. <p>You will be able to establish rapport with a wide range of educational stakeholders from differing socio-cultural environments in a wide range of contexts associated with teaching.</p>

Non-verbal Communication	
Non-verbal communication involves the capacity of recognising, interpreting and responding to non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, eye contact and body gestures in a variety of contexts.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to have an understanding of a wide range of non-verbal communication skills that also includes being able to give and receive correct and appropriate non-verbal cues. Non-verbal communication needs to be respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic and non-judgmental.

2	<p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity to recognise, interpret and respond appropriately to non-verbal behavioural cues. • The capacity to be self-aware of their own use of non-verbal cues during interactions. • The capacity to demonstrate sensitivity and empathy to cultural, religious and individual differences.
3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must have the ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues to assist with building rapport with people and gaining their trust and respect in academic and professional relationships. • Students must be able to consistently display appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, body movements and gestures while being mindful of personal space boundaries.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During placements in educational settings, students must be able to demonstrate effective non-verbal communication that is respectful, clear, empathetic, honest and non-judgemental when communicating with students, their families and professional colleagues.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must enable the capacity to recognise, initiate and respond to non-verbal communication in a timely and appropriate manner.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to demonstrate appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, body movements and gestures to reinforce on-task behaviour, promote student learning and encourage the participation of all students in educational settings during Professional Practice placements. You will be able to recognise and interpret non-verbal cues of others and respond appropriately during activities related to the course. You will be able to recognise and interpret non-verbal cues of supervising teachers, students, members of the broader school community and respond appropriately, sensitively and supportively to these cues during placement.
	<p>Written Communication</p> <p>Written communication involves the capacity of being able to competently and appropriately communicate in writing, in a wide variety of contexts.</p>
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to competently and appropriately communicate in written English, in a wide variety of contexts as it is essential in both academic and classroom settings. Information can be found on the English Requirements webpage.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A capacity to construct and model coherent written communication appropriate to the course of study and during Professional Practice placements.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must be able to construct a range of written text to academic and professional standards in order to convey knowledge, understanding and skills from relevant subject matter. Students must be able to produce accurate written communication necessary for the provision of consistent and appropriate professional practice, including e-mail, classroom related correspondence, letter writing, reporting and student related record-keeping that also meets legal requirements. Students must be able to be role models for effective written communication in all types of educational settings and engagement with members of school and university communities.

4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must meet necessary standards of clarity, accuracy and accessibility to ensure effective recording and transmission of information in both academic and educational practice environments.</p>
	<p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to competently and appropriately construct written assessment work in a logical, coherent manner, and with correct grammar and punctuation to the required academic standards. • You will be able to clearly communicate the intended message and document information in a written form that meets legal and educational requirements. • You will be able to express complex and detailed information and knowledge of curriculum and assessment processes in documentation for planning, observation, teaching and reflection tasks accurately and professionally in placement contexts. • You will be able to document evidence of meeting professional standards and impact on student learning using accurate and effective written communication.

Cognitive Abilities	
Cognitive ability involves the capacities of thinking and processing knowledge to gain understanding; and to function effectively in a wide variety of contexts. Cognition includes knowledge and cognitive skills, literacy and numeracy.	
Knowledge and cognitive skills – the activities of thinking, understanding, learning and remembering.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students need the cognitive capacity to acquire theoretical knowledge as well as develop the cognitive processing skills to successfully undertake the course, its learning activities and assessments.</p> <p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The capacity to acquire, process, integrate and implement a comprehensive body of knowledge and skills in both academic and educational practice.
2	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must demonstrate satisfactory theoretical knowledge and cognition (or reasoning and understanding) while engaging in course delivery, course assessment and in the delivery of effective teaching practice that has a positive impact on student learning during Professional Practice placements. Students must consistently demonstrate the knowledge and cognitive skills of competent teaching to maintain their ongoing professional accreditation, as they are accountable and responsible for their practice in educational settings.
3	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must ensure that a clear demonstration of teaching knowledge and cognitive skills are not compromised or impeded.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p>
4	

	Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to conceptualise and use appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment items. • You will be able to complete academic learning activities and assessment tasks within reasonable set timeframes. • You will be able to read, analyse, comprehend and synthesise multiple sources of information including school policy and legislative, systemic and organizational requirements for the effective enactment of Professional Practice in educational settings. • You will be able to interpret student assessment data to determine learning needs and modify teaching practice during placements in educational settings.
Literacy (language)	
Literacy involves the capacity to demonstrate appropriate, effective and proficient reading and writing of knowledge in English, in a wide variety of contexts in both electronic and non-electronic formats.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Education students need to demonstrate effective, proficient and appropriate reading and writing skills in English. These skills are essential for safe and competent educational practice.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to accurately read, process and comprehend information from educational literature and academic publications. • The ability to read and construct a comprehensive written response in an academic or professional context. • The capacity to understand and implement academic conventions to construct written text in a scholarly manner, including accurate grammar, punctuation, clear and logical written expression, and correct referencing.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be able to acquire information and to accurately convey this information in writing as these skills are fundamental to educational practice. • Students must be able to read, write, decode, interpret, comprehend and analyse multiple sources of information to accurately communicate curriculum content in educational settings.

	<p>Reasonable adjustments to address literacy issues may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to effectively acquire, comprehend, apply and communicate accurate information.</p> <p>4 Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	Exemplars:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to listen actively to information within a variety of academic and practical situations. • You will be able to paraphrase, summarise and reference in accordance with appropriate academic conventions associated with the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing format used by the School of Education and the Arts. • You will be able to read and accurately interpret information related to school and teaching contexts. • You will be able to complete documentation that is accurate, clear and concise. • You will be able to read and interpret curriculum documents and teaching programs to plan for effective teaching and learning during placements. • You will be able to identify the literacy demands of learning areas across the school curriculum and plan strategies to build students literacy competence during
Numeracy involves the capacity of using numbers in conjunction with mathematical principles and operations.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to be able to competently and accurately demonstrate numeracy skills as they are essential in educational practice.
2	<p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to interpret and correctly apply data, measurements and numerical criteria in a range of contexts. • The ability to clearly and competently communicate and demonstrate mathematical principles and operations as they apply to educational practice.
3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be able to understand and competently apply mathematical principles and operations in educational practice. • Students must be data literate to interpret and respond to individual and class performance on national and school-based assessment during placement.

4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to interpret and apply numeracy concepts and processes appropriately, accurately and effectively.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to demonstrate competency in applying mathematical knowledge and numeracy skills to identify opportunities for enhancing students' numerate thinking across the learning areas of the school curriculum. • You will be able to apply effective use of mathematical knowledge and numeracy skills to collate, summarise and interpret test scores in numerical form and defend planned responses to students' learning needs during placements •
<p>Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Abilities</p> <p>Information Communication Technology ability involves the capacity to demonstrate appropriate and proficient understanding and use of computers and associated technologies in a wide variety of</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to competently and accurately incorporate literacy, numeracy and research with ICT skills to perform a range of educational tasks or activities.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to apply ICT knowledge and skills into a range of pedagogies in the delivery of teaching and learning.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be able to understand and competently use computers and associated technologies to engage with their course of study as well as implement technology-based contemporary pedagogies in the classroom.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to effectively use a range of ICT to apply and communicate accurate information.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>

5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to competently use a desktop operating system such as Microsoft Windows or Mac OS X. • You will be able to competently use productivity software such as Microsoft Office, and operate associated electronic technologies such as (but not limited to) digital scanners, copiers, cameras and video cameras, a tablet computer or a mobile phone in the contemporary educational environment. • You will be able to use a range of digital tools to create presentations and construct digital portfolios of evidence against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Graduate Career Stage). • You will be able to use a range of ICTs to enhance student learning during Professional Practice placements in schools.
Sensory Abilities	
Sensory abilities involves the ability to use the main sensory modalities - visual, auditory and tactile.	
<p>Visual Ability Visual ability involves the ability to see, and visual acuity relates to sharpness or clearness of vision. In relation to inherent requirements, visual ability refers to how sight might affect the competent delivery of a task or role.</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need sufficient visual acuity to perform teaching and learning activities in a range the educational contexts. Additionally students must provide safe and effective care in a school or early childhood environment.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient visual capacity and/or acuity to perform the required range of educational activities.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must have sufficient visual capacity and/or acuity to obtain, process, interpret and translate information. • Students' visual observations are fundamental for the effective realisation of a wide range of performances in the educational context. • Students' visual observations are fundamental for the safe operation of a wide range of educational activities.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must not compromise a teacher's duty of care to students or impede pedagogical effectiveness.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>

<p>5</p>	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to focus on and recognise objects that are either near or far, e.g. reading learning resources such as lecture and tutorial screens face-to-face on-campus or on-line; as well as reading examination papers and/or on-line computer quizzes. • You will be able to monitor the safety, behaviour (including non-verbal behaviour) and engagement of students in the classroom, school and/or early childhood setting. • You will be able to observe the behaviour (including non-verbal behaviour) in non-classroom settings situations in the school and/or early childhood setting.
<p>Auditory Ability</p> <p>Auditory ability involves the capacity to hear. In relation to inherent requirements, auditory ability refers to how hearing might affect the competent delivery of a task or role.</p>	
<p>Levels</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Inherent requirements statements</p> <p>Students need sufficient auditory ability in education to provide consistent, safe and effective care and practice.</p> <p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient aural functionality to perform a minimum range of teaching skills. <p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must have sufficient auditory capacity to obtain, process, interpret, translate and respond to information in a range of educational contexts. <p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> <i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must not compromise a teacher's duty of care to students or impede pedagogical effectiveness.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services. Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p> <p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to monitor, assess and manage classroom activities consistently and accurately. • You will be able to sufficiently hear verbal communication from other students and lecturers during activities related to the course of study or learning environment.

Tactile Ability Tactile ability involves the capacity of using touch. In relation to inherent requirements, tactile ability refers to how touch might affect the competent delivery of a task or role.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students need to understand the role and place of appropriate tactile (physical) communication, as there are circumstances where this form of communication will be appropriate as well as inappropriate to use.</p> <p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to distinguish between circumstances where physical touch is appropriate and/or inappropriate.
2	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must understand the contexts where tactile (physical) communication is/isn't appropriate in a school, early childhood setting, classroom and pedagogical context.
3	<p><i>Reasonable Adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must ensure that personal integrity and professional standards are not compromised. Additionally, the adjustments must not compromise a teacher's duty of care to students or impede pedagogical effectiveness,</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services. Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
4	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to support young children to accomplish tasks such as climbing, and this support requires tactile communication. You will be able to support young children as they toilet. You will be able to provide tactile and/or emotional support to children in the event of injury, and/or responding to children in a first-aid capacity, and/or responding to other circumstances where tactile communication is appropriate eg a grieving child.
Reflective Skills <p>Reflective skills involve the capacity to give deep thought and consideration to particular issues, cases and situations.</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students need the capacity for substantial reflective skills that can be applied to professional practice.</p> <p><i>Students need to demonstrate</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to reflect on the content taught during the course. The ability to consider and accept feedback from academic staff or mentor teacher during professional practice, and respond constructively. The ability to accurately reflect on their teaching practice during professional practice.

	<i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must have the capacity for intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding in order to review personal and professional performance and circumstances. Students must be able to separate their own personal performance, values and emotions when reflecting on professional matters, and be able to remain objective and personally separated from the situations that may arise. Students must have the capacity to become reflective practitioners in order to comprehensively reflect on their own practice to improve student learning in classroom settings. Students must have the capacity to reflect on their professional knowledge base to make informed ethical and morally defensible decisions about all aspects of teaching practice during placements.
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must not compromise the student's ability to demonstrate the skills and competency with being a reflective practitioner.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to reflect on topics taught during the course of study, including on situations that may be difficult or sensitive, yet still require reflective processing, judgement or action. You will be able to identify when a practice issue is outside your scope or expertise. You will be able to identify when your practice may be negatively affected by personal experience and/or reactions. You will be able to reflect on your progress against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers during placement and identify sources and strategies to enhance practice and improve professional learning.
Sustainable Performance	
Sustainable performance involves the capacity of performing both physically and mentally at a sustained level to consistently deliver competence in a task or role.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need physical and mental stamina to consistently complete tasks in a timely manner, often under sustained stressful conditions, and over a set period of time.
2	<p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The capacity to maintain consistency and quality of performance for the duration of the task(s) or duration of the role delivery. The ability to perform repetitive activities with a level of concentration that ensures a capacity to focus on the activity until it is completed appropriately.

3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must have sustained physical and mental endurance to consistently perform multiple tasks over a set period of time to deliver effective practice and safe care in a school or early childhood learning environment. • Students must complete set Professional Practice placements over a continuous length of time. These commence with one week, then progress to five consecutive weeks in the fourth year of study in the course.
4	<p><i>Adjustments:</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must not compromise the student's ability to demonstrate consistent and sustained performance over a given period.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to appropriately and actively participate in activities related to the course of study, which could be either on-line, on-campus or Professional practice placements. • You will be able to undertake examinations and on-line quizzes with adequate, sustained levels of physical energy and concentration. • You will be able to maintain an up-to-date record of planning, teaching, observation and reflection tasks on a daily basis during Professional practice placements.

Inherent Requirements for Undergraduate Business at CQU

These inherent requirements apply to the following courses: CA01 Bachelor of Business

CB69 Bachelor of Hospitality Management CG01 Diploma of Business Studies

There are six domains of inherent requirements for Undergraduate Business Studies courses:
Ethical Behaviour

Behavioural Stability

Legal Compliance Communication Skills Cognitive Abilities

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Abilities. Some of these domains also have sub-domains.

Ethical Behaviour	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students must think, act and behave ethically because business is governed by codes of conduct and standards such as:</p> <p>Australian Institute of Management Code of Conduct Australian Marketing Institute Code of Professional Conduct Australian Human Resources Institute Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct Australian Market & Social Research Society Code of Professional Behaviour</p> <p>Students are accountable and responsible for complying with ethical behaviour in their roles as students of CQUniversity as well as in professional practice contexts.</p>
2	<p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Knowledge and understanding of ethical behaviour in all contexts.
3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students must comply with the relevant codes, guidelines and policies to facilitate safe, competent interactions and relationships with the stakeholders with whom they engage. The physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of the individual must not in any way be put at risk. Accreditation with professional bodies will therefore be able to be maintained
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must not compromise codes and standards or result in unethical behaviour.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p>
5	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">You will be able to comply with academic and non-academic misconduct policies and procedures such as CQUniversity's Student Charter, Student Misconduct Policy and

<p><u>Student Behavioural Misconduct Procedures</u>, <u>Assessment of Coursework Policy</u> and <u>Assessment of Coursework Procedure</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to demonstrate honesty and integrity in academic and professional practice. 	
<p>Behavioural Stability</p> <p>Behavioural stability involves the capacity of being able to personally function in a consistent and stable manner in a wide range of circumstances and environments with appropriate constructive</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must be able to personally function with stable behaviours in educational and professional environments where circumstances can at times be demanding.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable behaviours in a wide range of circumstances and environments. • Behavioural stability sufficient to work constructively in a diverse and changing academic and professional environment.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must have sufficient behavioural stability to work individually and in teams in changing, challenging and unpredictable environments. • Students and graduates will be exposed to demanding situations and will be required to have sufficient behavioural stability to respond objectively, consistently and professionally.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must support stable, effective and professional behaviour in both academic and professional settings.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the <u>registration process</u> with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to be reflective with personal behaviours appropriate for professional performance and be positive and receptive to processing constructive feedback or criticism from peers, supervisors, and/or lecturers. • You will be able to successfully process and cope with your own emotions and behaviour when dealing with individuals in educational and professional environments.

Legal Compliance	
Legal compliance involves the capacity to understand Australian law, as well as the layers of institution/organisation rules that apply to almost every context. Students will need to function in a responsible manner within the law and applicable rules and regulations.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students must be able to function with an awareness and understanding that business study and practice is mandated by specific legal and regulatory requirements and standards to enable the professional delivery of practice.</p> <p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to know and comply with Australian Law and professional regulatory requirements and standards, which informs and determines business practices.
2	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business students will be working in an environment where many Australian laws and professional regulatory requirements and standards dictates many aspects of practice, and students must therefore be able to comply and work within these frameworks. Students must know and comply with regulatory requirements and standards as they are accountable and responsible for their decisions and actions.
3	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must be consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQU University Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
4	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to know, understand and comply with the laws of the Sovereign State in which you reside, work and/or study. You will be able to comply with the policies and practices of businesses or organisations in which you may be placed or find employment. You will be able to comply with the requirements for student registration with organisations such as the Australian Institute of Management, the Australian Marketing Institute, the Australian Human Resources Institute and the like.
Communication Skills	
Communication skills include abilities in verbal, non-verbal, and written communication.	
<p>Verbal Communication:</p> <p>Verbal communication involves the capacity of being able to effectively and appropriately communicate verbally, in English, in a wide variety of contexts.</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must be able to effectively and appropriately communicate verbally, in English, in a wide variety of contexts to enable engagement in activities related to the course of study and in professional practice. Information can be found on the English Requirements webpage.

2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to understand and respond to verbal communication accurately, appropriately and in a timely manner. The ability to instigate clear, meaningful and appropriate verbal communication as and when required. The ability to provide clear instructions within the context of the situation. The ability to provide timely, clear feedback and reporting.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must have well developed verbal communications skills to ensure accurate understanding of the verbal communications of others. Students must have well developed verbal skills for timely, accurate and effective delivery of information in a range of educational and business contexts. Students must be able to respond quickly, accurately and effectively as speed of interaction may be critical for role performance in critical situations.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments for impaired verbal communication may be tailored to meet student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must address verbal communication effectiveness, timeliness, clarity and accuracy.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQU University Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to verbally communicate in the English language with accuracy, appropriateness and effectiveness. You will be able to actively participate in discussion activities related to the course. You will be able to use language that is appropriate to the context of the individual, group or workplace. You will be able to establish rapport with others in the study and practice of business and respond appropriately to peers, teaching staff, clients, supervisors and other professionals.
Non-verbal Communication	
Non-verbal communication involves the capacity of recognising, interpreting and responding to non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, eye contact and body gestures in a variety of contexts.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must have an understanding of a wide range of non-verbal communication skills that also includes being able to give and receive correct and appropriate non-verbal cues. Non-verbal communication needs to be courteous, respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic and non-judgmental.

	<i>Students need to demonstrate:</i>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity to recognise, interpret and respond appropriately to behavioural cues. • The capacity to be self-aware of their own use of non-verbal cues during interactions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity to have sensitivity and empathy to cultural, religious and individual differences. • The capacity to have awareness of cultural differences in non-verbal communication.
3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be effective non-verbal communicators, as these skills are fundamental to business practice and add more effectiveness to interpersonal communications. • Students must have the ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues to assist with building rapport with people and gaining their trust and respect in academic and professional relationships. • Students must be able to consistently display appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, body movements and gestures while being mindful of personal space and time boundaries. • Business professionals must be able to have meaningful interactions with peers, clients and co-workers within increasingly diverse organisational settings that demand practitioners who will be able to observe, understand and use non-verbal cues.
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must enable the capacity to recognise, initiate and respond to non-verbal communication in a timely and appropriate manner.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to observe and understand non-verbal cues to assist with building rapport with people and gaining their trust and respect in academic and professional relationships. • You will be able to consistently display appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, body movements and gestures while being mindful of personal space boundaries. • You will be able to be aware of culturally-based differences in non-verbal communications, to ensure effective, culturally appropriate interpersonal communications.
	<p><i>Written Communication</i></p> <p>Written communication involves the capacity of being able to competently and appropriately communicate in writing, in a wide variety of contexts.</p>
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must be able to effectively and appropriately communicate, in written English, in a wide variety of contexts to enable engagement in activities related to the course and in professional business settings. Information can be found on the English Requirements

2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to produce coherent written communication appropriate to the circumstances of their course of study and professional contexts.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must be able to construct a range of written text to academic and professional standards in order to convey knowledge, understanding and skills from relevant subject matter. Students must be able to produce accurate written communication necessary for the provision of consistent and appropriate professional practice. These can include (but are not limited to) e-mail, letters, record-keeping and client notes that also meet legal requirements.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must meet necessary standards of clarity, accuracy and accessibility to ensure effective recording and transmission of information in both academic and professional settings.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to competently and appropriately produce written assessment work in a logical, coherent manner, and with correct grammar and punctuation to the required academic standards. You will be able to express complex and detailed information and knowledge in logical and legible essays and reports that clearly communicate the intended message, and do so in a timely manner, meeting appropriate professional standards. You will be able to accurately convey and document information in a written form that meets legal and professional practice requirements.
<p>Cognitive Abilities</p> <p>Cognitive ability involves the capacities of thinking and processing knowledge to gain understanding; and to function effectively in a wide variety of contexts. Cognition includes knowledge and cognitive skills, literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Knowledge and cognitive skills - the activities of thinking, understanding, learning and remembering.</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must possess the cognitive capacity to acquire theoretical knowledge as well as develop the cognitive processing skills to successfully undertake the course, its <u>learning activities and assessments</u> .
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The capacity to acquire, process, integrate and implement a comprehensive body of knowledge and skills in both academic and professional practice settings.

3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must be able to engage in effective business practice, based on comprehensive knowledge, which can be sourced, understood and applied correctly. Students must be able to competently and consistently demonstrate the knowledge and cognitive skills expected of business professionals, as they are accountable and responsible for their practice in all settings.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must ensure that a clear demonstration of knowledge and cognitive skills is not compromised or impeded.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be able to conceptualise and use appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment items. You will be able to apply theoretical knowledge, research evidence, policies and procedures in academic and professional practice.
<p>Literacy (language)</p> <p>Literacy involves the capacity to demonstrate appropriate, effective and proficient reading and writing of knowledge in English, in a wide variety of contexts.</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to be able to demonstrate effective, proficient and appropriate reading and writing skills in English as these are essential to deliver competent professional
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to accurately read, process and comprehend information from literature and academic publications. The ability to read and construct a comprehensive written response in an academic or a professional setting. The ability to understand and implement academic conventions to construct written text in a scholarly manner, including accurate grammar, punctuation, clear and logical written expression, and correct referencing.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must be able to acquire information and to accurately convey this information in writing in both educational and organisational contexts. Students must be able to read, write, decode, interpret, comprehend and analyse multiple sources of information to accurately communicate all aspects of their professional practice in proficient English.

4	<p>Reasonable adjustments to address literacy issues may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to effectively acquire, comprehend, apply and communicate accurate information.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to construct written text proficiently, in English, using appropriate vocabulary and conventions of speech, including being able to paraphrase, summarise and reference in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. • You will be able to competently read, write and accurately interpret information to convey language effectively in educational and professional settings. • You will be able to produce accurate, concise and clear business documentation which meets legal requirements.
Numeracy involves the capacity of using numbers in conjunction with mathematical principles and operations.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students will need to competently and accurately demonstrate sufficient numeracy skills as they are essential for effective business practice.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to precisely interpret, manipulate and apply data, measurements and numerical information in a range of contexts. • The ability to competently communicate and demonstrate mathematical principles and operations.
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be able to understand and competently apply mathematical principles and operations to facilitate a range of effective business practices.
4	<p>Reasonable adjustments may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to interpret and apply numeracy concepts and processes appropriately, accurately and effectively.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>

5	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to demonstrate effective use of numeracy skills to perform a range of business functions. • You will be able to apply numeracy skills to interpret and solve a range of mathematical and data-related problems associated with a range of business practices.
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Abilities	
	Information and Communication Technology ability involves the capacity to demonstrate appropriate and proficient understanding and use of computers and associated technologies in a wide variety of contexts.
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must be competent ICT (computing) users as these skills are essential to the study and practice of business.
2	<p><i>Students need to demonstrate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to use ICT appropriately and effectively in a wide range of business and organisational contexts.
3	<p><i>Justification of inherent requirement:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be able to understand and competently use computers and associated technologies as these are fundamental to the course and contemporary business practice.
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, the adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to effectively use a range of ICT to apply and communicate accurate information.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with CQUniversity Inclusion and Accessibility Services. In some cases, a continuing student may approach directly the relevant academic staff who may refer the matter to Inclusion and Accessibility Services.</p> <p>Email: accessibility@cqu.edu.au for further inquiries.</p>
5	<p><i>Exemplars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be able to competently use a desktop operating system such as Microsoft Windows or Mac OS X. • You will be able to competently use productivity software such as Microsoft Office. • You will be able to competently use the internet for a range of study and business related activities. • You will be able to operate associated electronic technologies such as (but not limited to) digital scanners, copiers, cameras and video cameras, a tablet computer or a mobile phone in the professional business environment.

These inherent requirements apply to the Bachelor of Accounting (2412AC).

Charles Sturt University and the Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Studies strongly supports the right of all people to pursue an accounting course.

Introduction

Inherent requirements are the essential components of a course or unit that demonstrate the abilities, knowledge and skills to achieve the core learning outcomes of the course or unit, while preserving the academic integrity of the University's learning, assessment and accreditation processes. The inherent requirements are the abilities, knowledge and skills needed to complete the course that must be met by all students.

Students with a disability or chronic health condition may be able to have reasonable adjustments made to enable them to meet these requirements

The Faculty is committed to making reasonable adjustments to teaching and learning, assessment and other activities to enable students to participate in their course. Reasonable adjustments must not fundamentally change the nature of the inherent requirement.

Admission to the accounting profession in Australia is governed by the requirements of the major professional bodies, namely Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, CPA Australia and the Institute of Public Accountants (IPA). These rules require a minimum of the equivalent of three years full time academic study. A first degree in a business-related area is a requirement common to all accounting bodies recognised in Australia.

To support potential and current students' decision making, a series of inherent requirement statements have been developed. These statements specify the course requirements of the accounting courses for student admission and progression. The statements are clustered under six domains consisting of ethical behaviour, behavioural stability, legal, communication, cognition and information and communication technologies.

The inherent requirements outlined below provide a guide to inform decision making for students and staff.

How to read the inherent requirement statements

If you are intending to enrol in an accounting course in the Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Studies, you should look at these inherent requirement statements and think about whether you may experience challenges in meeting these requirements. These inherent requirements should be read in conjunction with other course information.

If you think you may experience challenges for any reason including a disability or chronic health condition, you should discuss your concerns with the subject convenor, course director (through the course administration officer or the CSU Disability Service. These staff can work collaboratively with you to determine reasonable adjustments to assist you to meet the inherent requirements. In the case where it is determined that inherent requirements cannot be met with reasonable adjustments, University staff can provide guidance regarding other study options.

The inherent requirement is made up of the following five components:

- Level 1 - introduction to the inherent requirement
- Level 2 - description of the inherent requirement
- Level 3 - explanation of why this is an inherent requirement of the course
- Level 4 - the nature of any adjustments that may be made to allow you to meet the requirement
- Level 5 - examples of tasks that show you've met the requirement.

These are examples only and are not a comprehensive list.

Inherent requirement statements

There are six domains of inherent requirements in the accounting courses. Some domains have a number of sub-domains.

Ethical behaviour

Behaviour stability

Legal

Communication

Cognition

Sustainable performance

Ethical Behaviour

Level	<i>Inherent requirements statements</i>
1	Accountancy is a profession governed by professional standards and the codes of conduct. These standards can be found at: <u>Accounting Professional and Ethics Standards Board</u> . Students must be able to demonstrate their ability to meet these standards.
2	Student demonstrates knowledge of and understanding of the requirements of ethical behaviour in practice.
3	Justification of inherent requirement: » The ability to comply with professional accounting codes and standards facilitates safe, competent interactions and relationships for students and/or the people with whom they engage. This supports the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of all.
4	Adjustments must support the recognised codes of conduct and values of society or result in unethical behaviour. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.
5	Exemplars: » Engage with the accounting industry in a professional manner. » Demonstrate ability to reflect on ethical dilemmas and issues and take responsibility for ensuring awareness of ethical behaviour.

Behaviour stability

Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Behavioural stability is required to function and adapt effectively in a program of study in accounting.
2	Student demonstrates the behavioural stability required to work constructively in a diverse and changing academic environment.
3	Justification of inherent requirement: » Behavioural stability is required to work individually and in groups in the academic environment. Accounting students will be required to have behavioural stability to manage their academic responsibilities.
4	Adjustments must support stable, effective and professional behaviour in academic and professional settings. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.
	Exemplars: » Being receptive and professional in responding appropriately to constructive feedback. » Managing own emotions and behaviour effectively when dealing with individuals both in classroom and placement settings. » The ability to engage with peers and staff appropriately and with sensitivity in discussion settings in the classroom and in team tasks

Legal	
Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Accounting is governed by related legislation, rules and codes of conduct to enable the professional delivery of accounting services.
2	Demonstrates knowledge of and compliance with Australian business Law, professional regulations and scope of practice.
3	Justification of inherent requirement: » Knowledge, understanding and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements are necessary to meet professional accreditation criteria

Level	Inherent requirements statements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Compliance with these professional regulations and the Australian Law facilitates professional, responsible and accountable accounting practice
4	<p>Adjustments must be consistent with legislation, rules, codes of practice and regulatory requirements. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.</p>
	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Preparing financial statements in accordance with relevant accounting standards and Corporations Law. » Applying appropriate legal principles and disclosure requirements in preparing financial reports. » Understanding and applying the reporting requirements for related and associated companies, joint ventures and company groups.
5	<p>Communication</p> <p>This course requires effective verbal and written communication skills.</p> <p>Verbal</p>
Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Effective verbal communication, in English, is an essential requirement to participate in accounting courses.</p>
2	<p>Student demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Sensitivity to individual and/or cultural differences » The ability to understand and respond to verbal communication accurately, appropriately and effectively » The ability to provide clear instructions in the context of the situation » The ability to provide clear feedback and reporting
	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Communicating in a way that displays respect and empathy to others and develops trusting relationships » Interactivity of communication is necessary for effectiveness of advice and for resolving complex problems in the course » Verbal communication is essential for developing and maintaining effective relationships with peers in tutorials and in group assessment tasks

Level	Inherent requirements statements
4	Adjustments must address effectiveness, clarity and accuracy issues. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service
	Exemplars:
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Participating in tutorial discussions » Responding appropriately to an information request in the classroom
Written	
Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Effective written communication, in English, is a fundamental part of Accounting practice. Accounting students must be able to acquire, understand, apply and convey information in a written format.
2	Student demonstrates the capacity to construct coherent written communication appropriate to the circumstances.
	Justification of inherent requirement:
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Construction of written text based assessment tasks to reflect the required academic standards are necessary to convey knowledge and understanding of relevant subject matter » Accurate written communication is essential to provide consistent professional service
4	Adjustments must meet necessary standards of clarity, accuracy and accessibility to ensure effective recording and transmission of information in academic, and placement settings. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.
	Exemplars:
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Constructing an essay or research report to academic standards » Constructing accounting reports and documents

Cognition

This course requires knowledge of theory and the skills of cognition, comprehension and numeracy.

Knowledge and cognitive skills

Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Consistent knowledge and effective cognition skills must be demonstrated to provide professional and competent accounting practice.
2	<p>Student demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Capacity to locate appropriate and relevant information » Ability to process information » Ability to integrate and implement knowledge
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The ability to acquire information and to accurately convey messages is fundamental to ensure effective assessment and advice » The ability to read, decode, interpret and comprehend multiple sources of information is fundamental for understanding and applying accounting principles
4	<p>Adjustments must ensure that a clear demonstration of knowledge and cognitive skills is not compromised or impeded. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ability to conceptualise and use appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment items » Demonstrating the capacity to apply knowledge of policy and procedures in class discussions and professional contexts
Numeracy	
Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Accurate numeracy skills are essential to accounting studies
2	<p>Student demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The ability to acquire evidence and accurately convey appropriate information both in data and numerical formats. » The ability to reason with numbers and other mathematical concepts and apply these in a range of contexts and to solve a variety of problems
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Competent application of numeracy skills is essential in accounting to facilitate effective information and advice

<i>Level</i>	<i>Inherent requirements statements</i>
4	<p>Adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to interpret and apply concepts and processes in an accurate and effective manner. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service</p>
	<p>Exemplars:</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Demonstrate accurate calculation and interpretation of complex accounting transactions involving numeracy skills » Demonstrating capacity to undertake complex financial analysis of accounting reports
Information and Communication technologies (ICT)	
<i>Level</i>	<i>Inherent requirements statements</i>
1	Competent ICT (computing) skills are essential to accounting studies.
2	<p>Student demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The ability to use ICT, both appropriately and effectively in a range of accounting areas
	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The ability to use computing skills (both specific and non-specific to accounting) is fundamental to accounting studies
4	<p>Adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to effectively use a range of ICT (both specific and non-specific to accounting) to apply and communicate accurate information. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with Campus Disability Advisor.</p>
	<p>Exemplars:</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Preparing accounting entries and/or reports using accounting specific ICT » Using accounting specific software programs to process and present information relevant to accounting.



Inherent requirements for Bachelor of Business Studies - CSU

These inherent requirements apply to the Bachelor of Business Studies (2401BS).

Charles Sturt University and the Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Studies strongly supports the right of all people to pursue an accounting course.

Introduction

Inherent requirements are the essential components of a course or unit that demonstrate the abilities, knowledge and skills to achieve the core learning outcomes of the course or unit, while preserving the academic integrity of the University's learning, assessment and accreditation processes. The inherent requirements are the abilities, knowledge and skills needed to complete the course that must be met by all students.

Students with a disability or chronic health condition may be able to have reasonable adjustments made to enable them to meet these requirements.

The Faculty is committed to making reasonable adjustments to teaching and learning, assessment and other activities to enable students to participate in their course. Reasonable adjustments must not fundamentally change the nature of the inherent requirement.

To support potential and current students' decision making, a series of inherent requirement statements have been developed. These statements specify the course requirements of the business course for student admission and progression. The statements are clustered under six domains consisting of ethical behaviour, behavioural stability, legal, communication, cognition and information and communication technologies.

The inherent requirements outlined below provide a guide to inform decision making for students and staff.

How to read the inherent requirement statements

If you are intending to enrol in this course, you should look at these inherent requirement statements and think about whether you may experience challenges in meeting these requirements. These inherent requirements should be read in conjunction with other course information.

If you think you may experience challenges for any reason including a disability or chronic health condition, you should discuss your concerns with the subject convenor, course director (through the course administration officer) or the CSU Disability Service. These staff can work collaboratively with you to determine reasonable adjustments to assist you to meet the inherent requirements. In the case where it is determined that inherent requirements cannot be met with reasonable adjustments, University staff can provide guidance regarding other study options.

The inherent requirement is made up of the following five components:

- Level 1 - introduction to the inherent requirement
- Level 2 - description of the inherent requirement
- Level 3 - explanation of why this is an inherent requirement of the course
- Level 4 - the nature of any adjustments that may be made to allow you to meet the requirement
- Level 5 - examples of tasks that show you've met the requirement.

These are examples only and are not a comprehensive list.

Inherent requirements statements

There are six domains of inherent requirements in the accounting courses. Some domains have a number of sub-domains.

Behavioural stability

Legal

Communication

Cognition

Sustainable performance

Behavioural stability

Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Behavioural stability is required to function and adapt effectively in a program of study in business studies.
2	Student demonstrates the behavioural stability required to work constructively in a diverse and changing academic environment.
Justification of inherent requirement:	
3	» Behavioural stability is required to work individually and in groups in the academic environment. Business studies students will be required to have behavioural stability to manage their academic responsibilities.
4	Adjustments must support stable, effective and professional behaviour in academic and professional settings. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.
Legal	

Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Business studies is governed by related legislation, rules and codes of conduct to enable the professional delivery of business studies services.
2	Demonstrates knowledge of and compliance with Australian business Law, professional regulations and scope of practice.

Level	Inherent requirements statements
	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>» Knowledge, understanding and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements are necessary to meet professional accreditation criteria</p> <p>» Compliance with these professional regulations and the Australian Law facilitates professional, responsible and accountable business studies practice</p>
3	
4	<p>Adjustments must be consistent with legislation, rules, codes of practice and regulatory requirements. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.</p>
	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>» Preparing financial statements in accordance with relevant business studies standards and Corporations Law.</p> <p>» Applying appropriate legal principles and disclosure requirements in preparing financial reports.</p> <p>» Understanding and applying the reporting requirements for related and associated companies, joint ventures and company groups.</p>
5	
Communication	
This course requires effective verbal and written communication skills.	
Verbal	
Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Effective verbal communication, in English, is an essential requirement to participate in business studies courses.</p>
2	<p>Student demonstrates:</p> <p>» Sensitivity to individual and/or cultural differences</p> <p>» The ability to understand and respond to verbal communication accurately, appropriately and effectively</p> <p>» The ability to provide clear instructions in the context of the situation</p> <p>» The ability to provide clear feedback and reporting</p>
	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>» Communicating in a way that displays respect and empathy to others and develops trusting relationships</p> <p>» Interactivity of communication is necessary for effectiveness of advice and for resolving complex problems in the course</p>
3	

Level	Inherent requirements statements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Verbal communication is essential for developing and maintaining effective relationships with peers in tutorials and in group assessment tasks
4	Adjustments must address effectiveness, clarity and accuracy issues. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service
	Exemplars:
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Participating in tutorial discussions » Responding appropriately to an information request in the classroom
Written	
Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Effective written communication, in English, is a fundamental part of Business studies practice. Business studies students must be able to acquire, understand, apply and convey information in a written format.
2	Student demonstrates the capacity to construct coherent written communication appropriate to the circumstances.
	Justification of inherent requirement:
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Construction of written text based assessment tasks to reflect the required academic standards are necessary to convey knowledge and understanding of relevant subject matter » Accurate written communication is essential to provide consistent professional service
4	Adjustments must meet necessary standards of clarity, accuracy and accessibility to ensure effective recording and transmission of information in academic, and placement settings. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.
	Exemplars:
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Constructing an essay or research report to academic standards » Constructing business studies reports and documents

Cognition

This course requires knowledge of theory and the skills of cognition, comprehension and numeracy.

Knowledge and cognitive skills

Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Consistent knowledge and effective cognition skills must be demonstrated to provide professional and competent business studies practice.
2	<p>Student demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Capacity to locate appropriate and relevant information » Ability to process information » Ability to integrate and implement knowledge
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The ability to acquire information and to accurately convey messages is fundamental to ensure effective assessment and advice » The ability to read, decode, interpret and comprehend multiple sources of information is fundamental for understanding and applying business studies principles
4	<p>Adjustments must ensure that a clear demonstration of knowledge and cognitive skills is not compromised or impeded. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ability to conceptualise and use appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment items » Demonstrating the capacity to apply knowledge of policy and procedures in class discussions and professional contexts
Numeracy	
Level	Inherent requirements statements
1	Accurate numeracy skills are essential to business studies
2	<p>Student demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The ability to acquire evidence and accurately convey appropriate information both in data and numerical formats. » The ability to reason with numbers and other mathematical concepts and apply these in a range of contexts and to solve a variety of problems
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Competent application of numeracy skills is essential in business studies to facilitate effective information and advice

<i>Level</i>	<i>Inherent requirements statements</i>
4	Adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to interpret and apply concepts and processes in an accurate and effective manner. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service
5	Exemplars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Demonstrate accurate calculation and interpretation of complex business studies transactions involving numeracy skills » Demonstrating capacity to undertake complex financial analysis of business studies reports

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

<i>Level</i>	<i>Inherent requirements statements</i>
1	Competent ICT (computing) skills are essential to business studies.
2	Student demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The ability to use ICT, both appropriately and effectively in a range of business studies areas
3	Justification of inherent requirement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The ability to use computing skills (both specific and non-specific to business studies) is fundamental to business studies
4	Adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to effectively use a range of ICT (both specific and non-specific to business studies) to apply and communicate accurate information. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with Campus Disability Advisor.
5	Exemplars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Preparing business studies entries and/or reports using business studies specific ICT » Using business studies specific software programs to process and present information relevant to business studies.



Inherent

Requirements <http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/ir>

© University of Western Sydney is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial Share Alike 4.0 International licence.

Inherent requirements for Bachelor of Social Science (Social Welfare)

These inherent requirements apply to the following course: Bachelor of Social Science (Social Welfare) (1416SW).

Charles Sturt University and the Faculty of Arts and Education strongly support the right of all people to pursue a Bachelor of Social Science (Social Welfare).

Introduction

Inherent requirements are the essential components of a course or unit that demonstrate the abilities, knowledge and skills to achieve the core learning outcomes of the course or unit, while preserving the academic integrity of the university's learning, assessment and accreditation processes. The inherent requirements are the abilities, knowledge and skills needed to complete the course that must be met by all students.

Students with a disability or chronic health condition may be able to have reasonable adjustments made to enable them to meet these requirements.

The Faculty is committed to making reasonable adjustments to teaching and learning, assessment, field placement and other activities to enable students' to participate in their course. Reasonable adjustments must not fundamentally change the nature of the inherent requirement. Students are required to undertake field placement activities which reflect the Australian social welfare context which may include mixed gender, religious and culturally diverse environments. For further information contact the subject convenor, course director (through the course administration officer or the CSU Disability Service).

To support potential and current students' decision making, a series of inherent requirement statements has been developed. These statements specify the course requirements of the undergraduate social welfare courses for student admission and progression. The statements are clustered under six domains consisting of ethical behaviour, behavioural stability, legal, communication, cognition and sustainable performance.

How to read the inherent requirement statements

If you are intending to enrol in an undergraduate social welfare course in the Faculty of Arts and Education, you should look at these inherent requirement statements and think about whether you may experience challenges in meeting these requirements.

If you think you may experience challenges for any reason including a disability or, chronic health condition, you should discuss your concerns with the subject convenor, course director (through the course administration officer) or the CSU Disability Service. These staff can work collaboratively with you to determine reasonable adjustments to assist you to meet the inherent requirements. In the case where it is determined that inherent requirements cannot be met with reasonable adjustments, University staff can provide guidance regarding other study options.

The inherent requirements are made up of the following five components and domains:

- Level 1 - introduction to the inherent requirement
- Level 2 - description of the inherent requirement
- Level 3 - explanation of why this is an inherent requirement of the course
- Level 4 - the nature of any adjustments that may be made to allow you to meet the requirement
- Level 5 - examples of tasks that show you've met the requirement. These are examples only and are not a comprehensive list.

There are five domains of inherent requirements in the undergraduate social science (social welfare) course. Some domains have a number of sub-domains.

- Behavioural stability
- Legal

Communication

Cognition

Sustainable performance

Inherent requirements – Behavioural stability

Inherent requirement statements

- 1 Behavioural stability is required to function and adapt effectively and sensitively in this role.
- 2 Student demonstrates behavioural stability to work constructively in a diverse and changing academic and field placement.

Justification of inherent requirement:

- 3 » Behavioural stability is required to work individually and in teams in changing and unpredictable environments. Social welfare students will be exposed to highly complex human situations and will be required to have behavioural stability to manage these events.
- 4 Adjustments must support stable, effective and professional behaviour in both academic and field placement settings. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.

Exemplars:

- 5 » Being receptive and responding appropriately to constructive feedback
» Coping with own emotions & behaviour effectively when dealing with individuals in the field placement setting

Legal

Inherent requirement statements

- 1 Social welfare practice is mandated by legislation to enable the safe delivery of support.

Inherent requirement statements

2 Student demonstrates knowledge and compliance with Australian Law, professional regulations and scope of practice.

Justification of inherent requirement:

3 » Knowledge, understanding, and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements are necessary prerequisites for field placements in order to reduce the risk of harm to self and others
» Compliance with professional regulations and the Australian Law in the field placement setting ensures that students are both responsible and accountable for their practice

4 Adjustments must be consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.

Exemplars:

5 » Complying with relevant child protection and safety legislation and reporting any notifiable concerns to your field placement supervisor

Communication

This course requires effective, verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills.

Verbal

Inherent requirement statements

1 Effective verbal communication, in English, is an essential requirement to provide safe delivery of support.

Student demonstrates:

2 » Sensitivity to individual and/or cultural differences
» The ability to understand and respond to verbal communication accurately, appropriately and in a timely manner
» The ability to provide clear instructions in the context of the situation
» Timely clear feedback and reporting

Justification of inherent requirement:

3 » Communicating in a way that displays respect and empathy to others and develops trusting relationships
» Communication may be restricted to verbal because of physical limitations of the individual (e.g. injury, disease or congenital conditions)
» Speed and interactivity of communication may be critical for individual safety and or assessment

Inherent requirement statements

- » Timely, accurate and effective delivery of instructions is necessary to provide safe professional support

4 Adjustments must address effectiveness, timeliness, clarity and accuracy issues to ensure safety and appropriate support. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.

Exemplars:

- 5
 - » Participating in tutorial and clinical discussions
 - » Responding appropriately in a client interview in the field placement

Non-verbal

Inherent requirement statements

1 Effective non-verbal communication is fundamental to social welfare and needs to be respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic and non-judgmental.

2 Student demonstrates:

- » The capacity to recognise, interpret and respond appropriately to behavioural cues
- » Consistent and appropriate awareness of own behaviours
- » Sensitivity to individual and/or cultural differences

3 Justification of inherent requirement:

- » The ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues assists with building rapport with people and gaining their trust and respect in academic and professional relationships
- » Displaying consistent and appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, being mindful of space, time boundaries and body movements and gestures promotes trust in academic and professional relationships
- » Being sensitive to individual and/or cultural differences displays respect and empathy to others and develops trusting relationships
- » The ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues is essential for effective observation of client reactions to facilitate assessment and to provide professional support

4 Adjustments must enable the recognition, initiation of or appropriate response to effective non-verbal communication in a timely and appropriate manner. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.

5 Exemplars:

Inherent requirement statements

- » Recognising and responding appropriately in classroom situations
- » Recognising and responding appropriately to cues in the field placement

Written

Inherent requirement statements

1 Effective written communication, in English, is a fundamental social welfare student responsibility with professional and legal ramifications.

2 Student demonstrates capacity to construct coherent written communication appropriate to the circumstances.

Justification of inherent requirement:

3 » Construction of written text based assessment tasks to reflect the required academic standards are necessary to convey knowledge and understanding of relevant subject matter for professional practice standards
» Accurate written communication, including record keeping, client instructions and case notes is vital to provide consistent and accurate assessments and professional care in the field placement context

4 Adjustments must meet necessary standards of clarity, accuracy and accessibility to ensure effective recording and transmission of information in both academic and field placement settings. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.

Exemplars:

5 » Constructing an essay to academic standards
» Constructing a social welfare report in a timely manner that meets professional standards

Cognition

This course requires knowledge of theory and the skills of cognition and literacy.

Knowledge and cognitive skills

Inherent requirement statements

1 Consistent knowledge and effective cognitive skills must be demonstrated to provide professional and competent social welfare support.

2 Student demonstrates:
» Capacity to locate appropriate and relevant information
» Ability to process information relevant to practice
» Ability to integrate and implement knowledge in practice

3 Justification of inherent requirement:
» Safe and effective social welfare practice is based on knowledge that must be sourced, understood and applied appropriately
» A demonstrated defined range of knowledge and cognitive skills is a requirement for course accreditation and field placements

4 Adjustments must ensure that a clear demonstration of knowledge and cognitive skills is not compromised or impeded. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.

5 Exemplars:
» Ability to conceptualise and use appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment items
» Appropriately applying knowledge of policy and procedures in the field placement setting

Literacy (language)

Inherent requirement statements

1 Competent literacy skills are essential to provide safe and effective professional support.

2 Student demonstrates:
» The ability to acquire information and accurately convey appropriate, effective messages
» Ability to read and comprehend a range of literature and information
» The capacity to understand and implement academic and practice conventions to construct written text in an appropriate manner for the intended audience

3 Justification of inherent requirement:
» The ability to acquire information and to accurately convey messages is fundamental to ensure safe and effective assessment, treatment and professional support

Inherent requirement statements

- » The ability to read, decode, interpret and comprehend multiple sources of information is fundamental for safe and effective professional support in the field placement

- 4 Adjustments must demonstrate a capacity to effectively acquire, comprehend, apply and communicate accurate information. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.

Exemplars:

- 5
 - » Conveying a spoken message accurately and effectively in a field placement
 - » Paraphrasing, summarising and referencing in accordance with appropriate academic and/or professional practice conventions
 - » Producing accurate, concise and clear case notes which meets legal and professional practice requirements

Sustainable performance

Inherent requirement statements

- 1 Social welfare practice in the field placement context requires both physical and mental performance at a consistent and sustained level.

2 Student demonstrates:

- » Consistent and sustained level of physical energy to complete a specific task in a timely manner and over time
- » The capacity to maintain consistency and quality of performance throughout the designated period of time

3 Justification of inherent requirement:

- » Sufficient physical and mental resilience is an essential requirement needed to perform tasks in an assigned period to provide effective, safe and professional support in the field placement context

- 4 Adjustments must ensure that performance is consistent and sustained over a given period. Adjustments specific to the individual can be discussed with the CSU Disability Service.

5 Exemplars:

- » Participating in tutorials and lectures
- » Providing consistent field placement practice over a negotiated time frame



Inherent Requirements <http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/ir>

© University of Western Sydney is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial Share Alike 4.0 International licence.

Inherent Requirements for FedUni Engineering programs

These inherent requirements apply to the following programs:

- Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) (Honours)
- Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical) (Honours)
- Bachelor of Engineering (Mining) (Honours)
- Bachelor of Mechatronic Systems Engineering (Honours)

There are eight domains of inherent requirements for these courses:

1. Ethical Behaviour
2. Behavioural Stability
3. Legal Compliance
4. Communication Skills
5. Cognitive Ability
6. Sensory Ability
7. Strength and Mobility
8. Sustainable Performance

Some of these domains also have sub-domains.

Ethical Behaviour	
Ethical behaviour involves the capacity of thinking and acting in ways consistent with what society, the law, and institutional, organisational and professional bodies state their values are. All behaviour must therefore conform to these stated values.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must think, act and behave ethically because Engineering is governed by the Engineers Australia Code of Ethics . Students are both accountable and responsible for ensuring professional ethical behaviour in all contexts.
2	Students need to demonstrate:
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students must ensure compliance with the codes, guidelines and policies to facilitate safe, competent interactions and relationships stakeholders with whom they engage. This ensures that the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the individual is not placed at risk.</p> <p>Students must declare any conflict of interest in the engineering activity they partake in order to maintain professional integrity and self-respect; be socially and morally responsible and do not carry out tasks for self-gain.</p>
	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, such adjustments must not compromise the codes and standards or result in unethical behaviour.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You will need to comply with academic and non-academic misconduct policies and procedures such as FedUni's Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure, Plagiarism Procedure and Regulation, Higher Education Assessment Policy and Procedure, Higher Education Examinations Procedure and Regulation 6.1 – Student Discipline.</p> <p>You will use your knowledge and skills for the benefit of the community to create engineering solutions for a sustainable future, in accordance with the Engineers Australia Code of Ethics. In doing so, you will strive to serve the community ahead of other personal or sectarian interests.</p> <p>You will demonstrate integrity, scientific and technical competence, exude leadership qualities and promote sustainability, in the course of your engineering</p>

Behavioural Stability	
Behavioural stability involves the capacity of being able to personally function in a consistent and stable manner in a wide range of circumstances and environments with appropriate constructive behaviour.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students must be able to personally function with stable behaviours in <u>engineering practice settings</u>.</p> <p>Students need to demonstrate:</p>
2	<p>Stable behaviours in a wide range of circumstances and environments.</p> <p>Behavioural stability to work constructively in a diverse and changing academic and engineering practice settings.</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students must possess behavioural stability to work individually and in teams in changing and unpredictable environments.</p> <p>Students should be able to adapt to change and be receptive and responsive and not reactive to change</p>
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs. However, they must support stable, effective and professional behaviour in both academic and professional settings.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You are able to be reflective with personal behaviours in relation to professional performance and being positive and receptive to processing constructive supervisor/lecturer feedback or criticism.</p>

	<p>You are able to interact with people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures in a calm and composed manner in difficult to deal with situations.</p> <p>You will approach difficult situations with diplomacy and refrain from using inappropriate words/actions either verbally or in written communication.</p> <p>You are able to accept that engineering practice is a human-centric activity and that you must therefore, develop your ability to work well with others.</p> <p>You will have the desire to solve problems in order to improve the standard of living of the people in the community.</p>
--	---

Legal Compliance

Legal compliance involves the capacity to understand Australian law, as well as layers of institution/organisation rules that apply to almost every context. People therefore, need to function in a responsible manner within the law, as well as within the applicable rules to every situation in their daily interactions.

Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must be able to function with an awareness and understanding that engineering practice is mandated by specific legal/regulatory requirements and standards that entail the professional delivery of their practice.
2	Students need to demonstrate: The ability to know and comply with legislative frameworks and professional regulatory requirements and standards that dictate the safe delivery of engineering practice.
3	Justification of inherent requirement: Engineering students will be working in an environment that is governed by legislative and regulatory requirements and standards, to minimise risks associated with engineering practices. Students need to comply with professional regulations and the Australian Law as they are responsible and accountable for their own judgements and practices.
	<i>Reasonable adjustments</i> for a student's individual needs may be considered,

4	<p>provided that they are consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You will understand and comply with all relevant policies and procedures applicable in engineering practice.</p> <p>You will comply with rules and regulations that apply in your practice location.</p> <p>You will be able to recognise and positively respond to any legal compliance issues that arise and bring them to the attention of the appropriate stakeholders.</p>
<p>Communication Skills</p> <p>Communication skills include abilities in verbal, non-verbal, written, and the use of various Information Technology tools to entail effective communication.</p>	
<p>Verbal Communication:</p>	
<p>Levels</p>	<p>Verbal communication involves the capacity of being able to effectively and appropriately</p> <p>Inherent requirements statements</p>
	<p>Engineering students must be able to effectively and appropriately communicate verbally, in English, in wide variety of contexts to engage in activities related to the course and to provide appropriate delivery of projects and services. Information</p>
<p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>The ability to understand and respond to verbal communication accurately, appropriately and in a timely manner.</p> <p>The ability to provide clear instructions in the context of the situation.</p> <p>The ability to provide timely, clear feedback and reporting.</p>

	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students need highly developed verbal skills for timely, accurate and effective delivery of engineering instructions for the safe execution of projects and delivery of services.</p>				
3	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> for impaired verbal communication may be tailored to meet student's individual needs. However, these must enable verbal communication with clarity and accuracy that facilitates effective communication and safety.</p>				
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You can verbally communicate in the English language with accuracy, appropriateness and effectiveness.</p> <p>You need to be able to listen to other's point of view and actively participate in discussion activities related to the program.</p> <p>You will use language that is appropriate to the context of the individual, group or workplace.</p>				
Non-verbal Communication					
<p>Non-verbal communication involves the capacity of recognising, interpreting and responding to non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, eye contact and body gestures in a variety of contexts.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Levels</th><th>Inherent requirements statements</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td><td> <p>Students must have an understanding of a wide range of non-verbal communication skills that also includes being able to give and receive correct and appropriate non-verbal cues.</p> <p>Non-verbal communication needs to be respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic</p> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Levels	Inherent requirements statements	1	<p>Students must have an understanding of a wide range of non-verbal communication skills that also includes being able to give and receive correct and appropriate non-verbal cues.</p> <p>Non-verbal communication needs to be respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic</p>
Levels	Inherent requirements statements				
1	<p>Students must have an understanding of a wide range of non-verbal communication skills that also includes being able to give and receive correct and appropriate non-verbal cues.</p> <p>Non-verbal communication needs to be respectful, clear, attentive, empathetic</p>				

2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>The capacity to recognise, interpret and respond appropriately to behavioural cues.</p> <p>The capacity to be self-aware of their own use of non-verbal cues during interactions.</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students need to have the ability to observe and understand non-verbal cues to assist with building rapport with people and gaining their trust and respect in academic and professional relationships.</p> <p>Students need to be able to consistently display appropriate facial expressions, eye contact, body movements and gestures while being mindful of personal space and time boundaries promotes trust and respect in others.</p>
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, they must enable the capacity to recognise, initiation and respond to non-verbal communication in a timely and appropriate manner.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You need to be able to use appropriate facial expressions; eye contact, being mindful of space, time boundaries, a range of body movements and gestures.</p> <p>You will be able to recognise and interpret non-verbal cues of others and respond appropriately during activities related to the course, as well as in the engineering practice environment.</p>

Written Communication	
Written communication involves the capacity of being able to competently and appropriately communicate in writing, in a wide variety of contexts.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Engineering students must be able to effectively and appropriately communicate, in written English, in a wide variety of contexts to engage in activities related to the course and in the engineering practice environment. Information can be found on the English Language Requirements webpage.
2	Students need to demonstrate: <u>The capacity to construct and model coherent written communication appropriate to the circumstances of their course of study and workplace contexts.</u>
3	Justification of inherent requirement: Students need to be able to construct a range of written text to academic and professional standards in order to convey knowledge, understanding and skills from relevant subject matter. Students need to be able to produce accurate written communication necessary for the provision of consistent and appropriate professional practice.
4	<i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, they must meet necessary standards of clarity, accuracy and accessibility to ensure effective recording and transmission of information in both academic and engineering practice environment. Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.

	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You will be able to competently and appropriately construct written assessment work in a logical, coherent manner, and with correct grammar and punctuation to the required academic standards.</p> <p>You will be able to express complex and detailed information and knowledge into a logical and legible report, in a timely manner that meets professional standards and clearly communicates the intended message.</p> <p>You will need to be able to accurately convey and document information in a written form that meets legal and engineering requirements.</p> <p>You will need to be able to correctly reference the work of others.</p>
Information Communication Technology involves the ability to demonstrate appropriate and proficient understanding and use of computers and associated technologies in a wide variety of contexts.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students need to be able to competently and accurately incorporate literacy, numeracy and research into ICT skills.</p> <p>Students need to be able to extract, filter, refine and process engineering and scientific information correctly and convert it to easily understandable contexts and language.</p>
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>The ability to apply knowledge and skills associated with the use of information technology.</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students need to be able to understand and competently use computer and associated technologies to engage with their study course.</p>
	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> to address ICT issues may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, they must not compromise functional effectiveness with ICT practices.</p>

4	<p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You will need access to a computer for your studies, and possess basic computer knowledge and skills to engage in the on-line learning environment that may include completing relevant on-line assessments and participating in on-line forums or responding to emails.</p> <p>You will need to regularly access the Internet for research, and email for communication with peers and lecturers.</p> <p>You will need to be able to use a variety of hardware and software applications suitable to your course of study.</p>
<p>Cognitive Abilities</p> <p>Cognitive ability involves the capacities of thinking and processing knowledge to gain understanding; and to function effectively in a wide variety of contexts. Cognition includes knowledge and cognitive skills, literacy and numeracy.</p>	
<p>Knowledge and cognitive skills - the activities of thinking, understanding, learning and remembering.</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students must possess the cognitive capacity to acquire theoretical knowledge as well as develop the cognitive processing skills to successfully undertake the course, its learning activities and assessments.</p>
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>The capacity to acquire, process, integrate and implement a comprehensive body of knowledge and skills in both academic and engineering settings.</p>
	Justification of inherent requirement:

3	<p>Students must be able to demonstrate the mental functioning and thinking capacities to deliver safe and competent engineering practice that is based on comprehensive knowledge that must be sourced, understood and applied appropriately.</p> <p>Students must competently and consistently demonstrate the knowledge and cognitive skills to maintain their ongoing professional accreditation, as they are accountable and responsible for their practice in all settings.</p>
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however they must ensure that a clear demonstration of knowledge and cognitive skills is not compromised or impeded.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You need to be able to conceptualise and use appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment items.</p> <p>You will be able to apply theoretical knowledge, research evidence, policies and procedures in engineering practice.</p>
Literacy (language)	
Literacy involves the capacity to demonstrate appropriate, effective and proficient reading and writing of knowledge in English, in a wide variety of contexts.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to be able to demonstrate effective, proficient and appropriate reading and writing skills in English as these are essential for safe and competent engineering practice.

	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>The ability to search and retrieve scientific and technical information from different sources (digital and print).</p> <p>The ability to accurately read, process and comprehend information from scientific literature and academic publications.</p>
2	<p>The capacity to understand and implement academic conventions to construct written text in a scholarly manner, including accurate grammar, punctuation, clear and logical written expression, and correct referencing.</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students need to be able to acquire information and to accurately convey this information in writing as it is fundamental to ensure safe and effective assessment, treatment and delivery of engineering projects and services.</p> <p>Students need to be able to read, write, decode, interpret, comprehend and analyse multiple sources of information to accurately communicate all aspects of their engineering projects and services in proficient English.</p>
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> to address literacy issues may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, they must demonstrate a capacity to effectively acquire, comprehend, apply and communicate accurate information.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You need to be able to competently read, write and accurately interpret information to convey language effectively in engineering projects and services.</p> <p>You will need to produce accurate, concise and clear engineering documentation which meets legal requirements.</p>

Numeracy	
Numeracy involves the capacity of using numbers in conjunction with mathematical principles and operations.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need to be able to competently and accurately demonstrate strong numeracy skills as they are essential for safe and effective engineering practice.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>The ability to interpret and correctly apply data, measurements and numerical criteria in a range of contexts.</p> <p>The ability to clearly and competently communicate and demonstrate mathematical principles and operations.</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students need to be able to understand and competently apply mathematical principles and operations to facilitate the safe and effective delivery of engineering projects and services.</p>
4	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> to address numeracy issues may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, they must demonstrate a capacity to interpret and apply concepts and processes appropriately in a timely, accurate and effective manner.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.d</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You need to be able to demonstrate competency in applying appropriate mathematical knowledge and skills to make calculations that represent an engineering system</p> <p>You need to be able to demonstrate effective use of numeracy skills to make</p>

Sensory Abilities	
Sensory abilities involves the ability to use the main sensory modalities - visual, auditory and Visual Ability	
Visual ability involves the ability to see, and visual acuity relates to sharpness or clearness of	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need sufficient visual acuity to ensure a safe engineering practice appropriate to the context.
2	Students need to demonstrate: Sufficient visual acuity to perform the required range of engineering tasks and skills.
3	Justification of inherent requirement: Students need the capacity to use sight to obtain, process, interpret and translate information.
4	<i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may include, but are not limited to adaptive equipment, assistive technology, practical assistant personnel or modifications to the task which do not impact upon the academic knowledge and skills required to complete it. Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.
5	Exemplars: You will need to accurately use instruments for measurements. You will need to observe and detect subtle changes in responses to engineering systems using instrumentation.
Auditory Ability :Auditory ability involves the capacity to hear. In relation to inherent requirements, it refers to how hearing might affect the competent delivery of a task or role.	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need sufficient auditory ability to provide consistent, safe and effective engineering practices.

	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>2 Sufficient aural function to perform the required range of engineering tasks and skills.</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students need sufficient auditory ability to enable them to hear warnings on site.</p> <p>Students need sufficient auditory capacity to enable them to interact with stakeholders.</p>
	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, strategies must not compromise safety or functional effectiveness with engineering practices.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You will need sufficient auditory ability to be capable of hearing warnings when on site.</p> <p>You need to be able to interact effectively with stakeholders including clients, members of the community, tradespeople and other members of the engineering team.</p>
<p>Tactile ability</p> <p>Tactile ability involves the capacity of using touch. In relation to inherent requirements, it refers to how touch might affect the competent delivery of a task or role.</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students need sufficient tactile ability to perform competent and safe Engineering practices.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>Sufficient tactile function to competently perform the required engineering skills and practice.</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students need sufficient tactile ability to be able to use a computer and other engineering tools.</p> <p>Students need sufficient tactile ability to be able to, for example, climb a ladder or steep stairs, walk along scaffolding and traverse a construction site depending on discipline</p>
	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however they must have the capacity to perform course requirements at an</p>

	<p>acceptable level.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
4	
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You will need to be able to use a computer and other engineering tools.</p> <p>You will need to be able to climb a ladder or steep stairs, walk along scaffolding and traverse a construction site.</p>
Strength and Mobility	
Gross motor skills	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	If required, students must have the capability to perform gross motor function with physical activities and movement (including but not limited to) walking, lifting, pushing, pulling and maintaining balance during engineering practice.
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate</p> <p>The ability to sufficiently move and perform gross motor skills to function within</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students may be required to undertake some simple engineering tasks requiring some physicality.</p>
	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, they must facilitate functional effectiveness, safety of self and others and a capacity to provide safe engineering services.</p> <p>Adjustments may include, but are not limited to adaptive equipment, assistive technology, practical assistant personnel or modifications to the task which do not impact upon the academic knowledge and skills required to complete it.</p>

	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You may need to supervise appropriate repairs to engineering systems</p> <p>You will need to be able to transport field equipment during the data collection phase of engineering projects.</p>
5	<p>You may need to be able to traverse uneven ground, for example, on construction sites.</p>
Fine Motor Skills	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	Students must have the capability for manual dexterity and fine motor skills to perform many engineering skills and practices.
2	Students need to demonstrate
	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students must have sufficient fine motor skills to complete various engineering tasks that may include (but are not limited to) being able to grasp, press, push, turn, squeeze and manipulate various objects.</p> <p>Students must be able to demonstrate and perform these tasks consistently to ensure a safe environment as well as reduce the risk of injury to themselves and others.</p>
	<p><i>Reasonable adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, they must facilitate functional effectiveness, safety of self and others and a capacity to provide safe engineering services.</p> <p>Adjustments may include, but are not limited to adaptive equipment, assistive technology, practical assistant personnel or modifications to the task which do not impact upon the academic knowledge and skills required to complete it.</p>
	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You will need to be able to manipulate instruments in tests and measurements.</p>

<p>Sustainable performance</p> <p>Sustainable performance is defined as having the capacity to perform with physical and/or mental stamina at a sustained level to consistently deliver competence in a task or role.</p>	
Levels	Inherent requirements statements
1	<p>Students must have the physical and mental stamina to consistently complete engineering tasks in a timely manner, as well as at a sustained level over time.</p>
2	<p>Students need to demonstrate:</p> <p>The capacity to consistently deliver a sustained level of physical energy to complete a specific task in a timely manner and over time.</p>
3	<p>Justification of inherent requirement:</p> <p>Students need sustained physical and mental endurance to consistently perform many tasks over a set period of time to provide safe and appropriate engineering skills and services.</p>
4	<p><i>Adjustments</i> may be tailored to meet a student's individual needs, however, they must ensure consistent and sustained performance over a given period.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will typically be determined as an outcome of the registration process with FedUni Disability and Learning Access Unit.</p>
5	<p>Exemplars:</p> <p>You will need to be able to actively participate in activities related to the course and professional experience.</p> <p>You will need to be able to perform with the required physical and mental energy and endurance in performing engineering skills and services during set time</p>

Persons wishing to enrol in the Diploma of Higher Education should read these requirements in conjunction with the [course handbook](#). The Diploma has a number of streams of study and, depending on individual study plans, subjects will vary. Options may be discussed with Pathways staff by contacting pathways@jcu.edu.au

Students should carefully consider the inherent requirements statements below as a guide to their learning during the course, and as a way to identify early possible challenges they may have in meeting these requirements.

Prospective students who remain interested or engaged in the course should discuss their concerns with Pathways staff (contact pathways@jcu.edu.au) as soon as possible. If the challenges are related to a disability or health condition, students should contact AccessAbility Services to discuss possible strategies and reasonable adjustments.

If inherent requirements cannot be met with reasonable adjustments, JCU staff may provide guidance regarding other study options.

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments must:

Be consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements, and not compromise codes, guidelines and policies. Not result in unethical or unprofessional behavior.

Address the need to perform the full range of tasks involved in the course program, including undertaking learning activities in mixed gender environments, which reflect the Australian context, and

Ensure that performance is consistent and sustained over a given period.

Ethical and professional behaviour

Inherent Requirement	Students are governed by policies, procedures and guidelines and must be accountable and responsible for ensuring appropriate behaviour in all contexts.
Rationale	Compliance with the codes, guidelines and policies facilitates safe, competent interactions and relationships for students and/or the people they engage with. This ensures the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the individual is not placed at risk.
Examples	Comply with academic and non-academic conduct codes, guidelines and

	<p>policies</p> <p>Engage in respectful communications with students and staff</p>
--	--

Cognition: Knowledge and cognitive skills

Inherent Requirement	<p>Students must possess the necessary knowledge and cognitive skills to acquire and communicate effectively in an academic context.</p> <p>Student demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity to locate appropriate and relevant information Ability to process information Ability to integrate and implement knowledge
Rationale	The Diploma of Higher Education is based on knowledge that must be sourced, understood and applied appropriately.
Examples	<p>Ability to conceptualise and use appropriate knowledge in response to academic assessment item</p> <p>Create an academic essay of up to 2,000 words</p>

Literacy

Inherent Requirement	Students must possess sufficient literacy skills required for academic study.
Rationale	The ability to acquire information and to accurately convey messages is fundamental to Diploma of Higher Education studies. Further, the ability to read, decode, interpret and comprehend multiple sources of information is fundamental to the Diploma of Higher Education.
Examples	<p>Engage with an online learning management system to access resources, complete assessment, etc.</p> <p>Convey a spoken message accurately and effectively</p> <p>Paraphrase, summarise and reference in accordance with appropriate academic conventions</p>

Numeracy

Inherent	Student interprets and correctly applies basic numerical concepts in a range
----------	--

Requirement	of contexts.
Rationale	Competent reasoning and reliable accuracy with numerical concepts are essential for academic research.
Examples	<p>Apply numeracy skills to interpret and solve problems in a range of academic contexts</p> <p>Demonstrate competency in applying basic mathematics knowledge and skills in everyday life and in academic tasks</p> <p>Demonstrate effective use of numeracy skills in matters related to their own learning</p>

Communication

Verbal communication

Inherent Requirement	Effective and efficient verbal communication, in English, is an essential requirement for academic work.
Rationale	<p>Interactivity of communication is fundamental to the educational process</p> <p>Adequate verbal communication is essential in developing and maintaining effective relationships with all educational stakeholders</p> <p>Timely, accurate and effective delivery of information provides clear instruction and initiation of learning and understanding</p>
Examples	<p>Communicate in English effectively and appropriately in tutorials, lectures and workshops</p> <p>Conduct an oral presentation for a group</p>

Non-verbal communication

Inherent Requirement	Non-verbal communication skills that enable respectful communication with others.
Rationale	The ability to recognise, interpret and respond to non-verbal cues, to communicate with congruent and respectful non-verbal behaviour is needed to work in a diverse academic environment.
Examples	Recognise and interpret the response of others in a group scenario to ensure a harmonious working environment.

Written communication

Inherent Requirement	Students must be able to acquire, understand, apply and convey information in a written or print format.
Rationale	Construction of written text based assessment tasks to reflect the required academic standards are necessary to convey knowledge and understanding of relevant subject matter for academic practice.
Examples	Construct an essay to reflect academic standards Construct a scientific report to reflect academic standards

Behavioural adaptability

Inherent Requirement	Student demonstrates behavioural stability to work constructively in a diverse and changing academic environment.
Rationale	Behavioural stability is required to work individually and in groups in changing academic environments. Students undertaking language courses and/ or subjects will be required to have behavioural stability to manage their academic responsibilities objectively
Examples	Being receptive and responding appropriately to constructive feedback Maintaining effective working relationships with other students, i.e. participating in group tasks, online discussions, etc.

Appendix 8. Evaluation

Question 1. What was your main interest in attending this forum?

7 responses.

1. New information on this topic, benchmark our own work
2. Evidence based information
3. Member of a participating university and interested to hear the progress of others.

4. To learn more about retention and the 5Ps approach as I am tasked with developing the new CQUni Institutional Retention Strategy.

5. Learning about a 5Ps approach

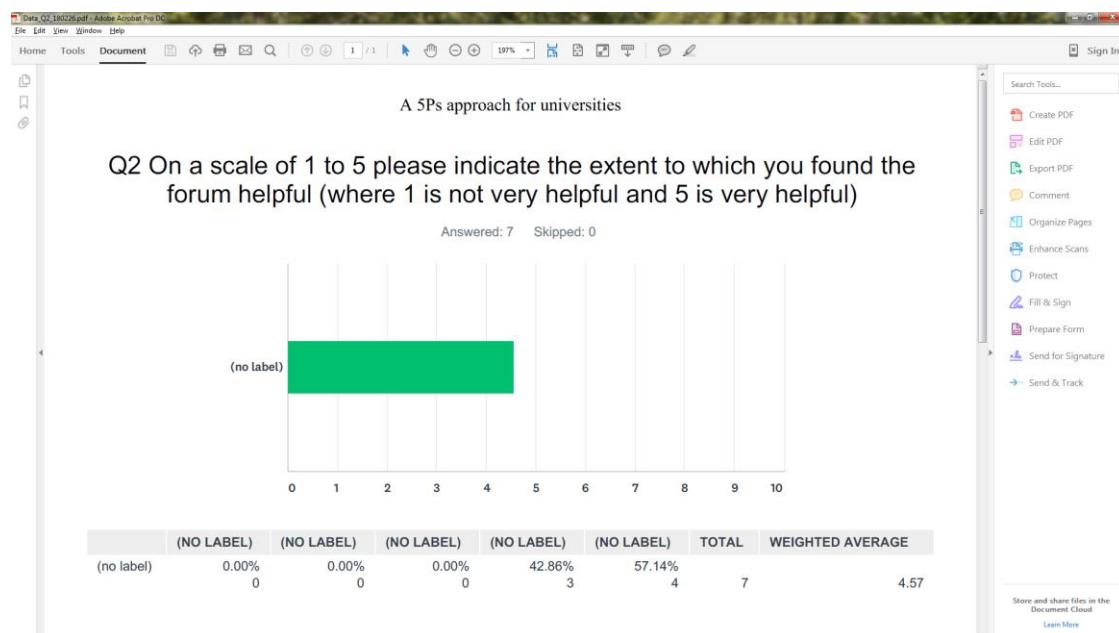
6. Understanding how to best retain students from low SES background

yes

(Summary everyone that responded wanted to understand more about the 5Ps process and how it could be implemented)

Question 2. On a scale of 1 to 5 please indicate the extent to which you found the forum helpful (where 1 is not very helpful and 5 is very helpful)

7 responses



Question 3. What were the main reasons you rated Question 2 in this way?

Responses 7

1. Useful information from case studies, panel and questions
2. Good presentations
3. Sharing of best practice. Collaborative nature of the project.
4. The information presented cemented my understanding and gave me some different perspectives. It highlighted the uniqueness of CQUniversity and its retention challenges.
5. Very informative
6. I felt surprised that these techniques were not already in place.
7. Yes

(Summary: everyone that responded to say it was informative)

Question 4. Please provide any feedback you can share with the team on the 5P's framework presented at the forum.

7 responses

1. Yes it seems like a worthwhile framework. Would be good if applied consistently and if Uni's took it on board formally
2. I like the framework and intend to apply it in NZ.
3. Good venue. Useful series of items on the program. Successful facilitation.
4. As someone new to student experience and retention, it makes a great deal of sense.
5. Understanding that this is a good option to understanding our students and retention
6. I am unsure about how I could apply this in my role.
7. Yes

Question 5. Please share your thoughts on the potential benefits (or otherwise) of the proposed good practice guidelines presented at the forum.

6 responses

1. Useful to trial these and then to be able to provide feedback for all to share - at least within this group
2. Excellent resource.
3. This approach should definitely see improvements in retention rates for regional universities, particularly for at-risk students, but also for those who aren't necessarily disadvantaged.
4. The guidelines will be useful.
5. Need to really emphasise the buy-in and engagement from academic staff.
6. Yes

Question 6. What if any are the potential benefits of the online tool demonstrated at the forum? Would such a tool have potential application at your own university? Please comment.

6 responses

1. Very important way of scaling up so that the provision of the personalised, early intervention is available for everyone - but always with a reliable way of students being able to access the right staff person to speak with - quickly
2. Yes. Another avenue for support of students.
3. Providing students with a "self check" opportunity will, I think, improve the outcomes of direct contact with students and may reduce the resource requirements of more personal contact. It's not for everyone though - so I wouldn't like to see it used as the only option for commencing students.
4. Ease of dissemination to students to give them an understanding of inherent requirements and course requirements.

5. Good idea, but would need to capture metrics and later integrate with current systems.

6. Yes

Question 7. Please comment on the draft recommendations presented at the forum. Please note in particular whether in your view the recommendations can be strengthened and in what ways.

5 responses

1. Need time to think about this. Briefly yes great recommendations
2. Sound and workable as they are
3. The recommendations are appropriate. I don't have any suggestions for improvement at this stage.
4. Recommendations were valuable in their current format
5. Yes

(Summary: All believed that the recommendations were workable.)

Question 8. Any other comments you would like to make regarding the outcomes from this project and/or the work in progress deliverables presented at the forum

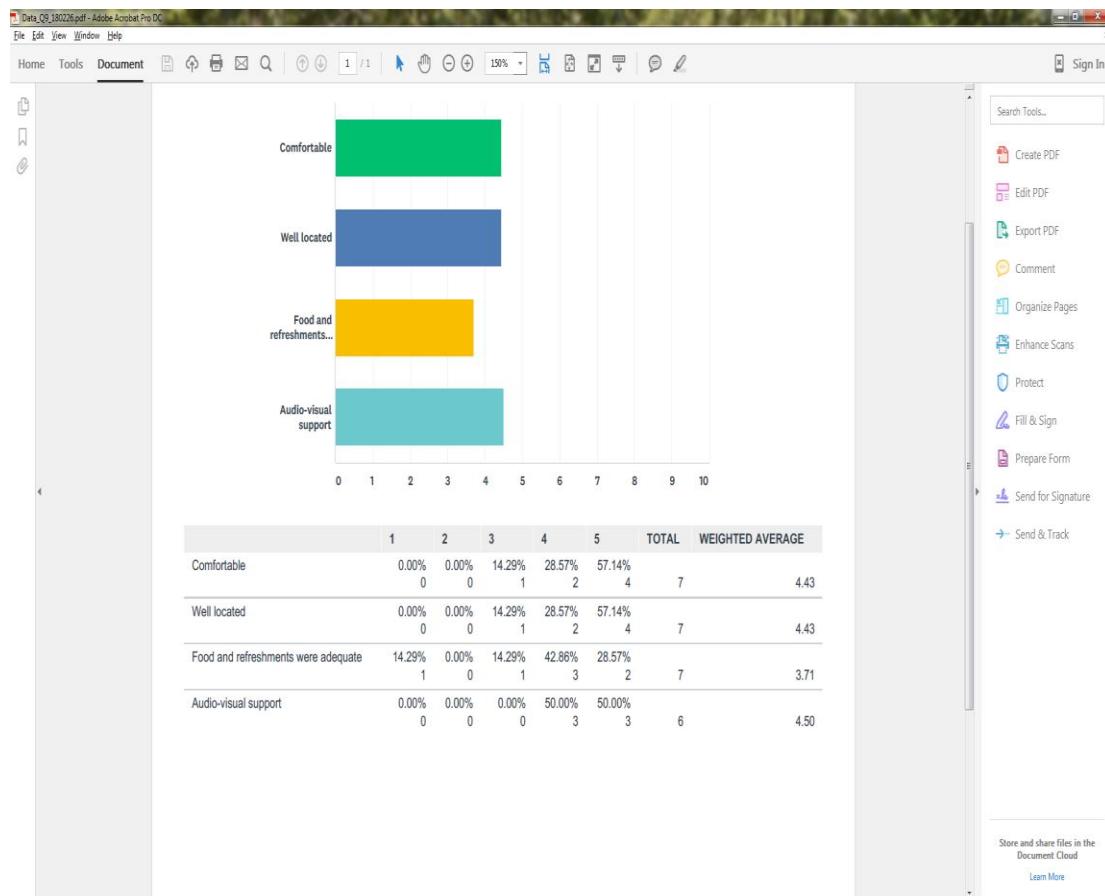
3 responses

1. No
2. No
3. Yes

(No additional comments).

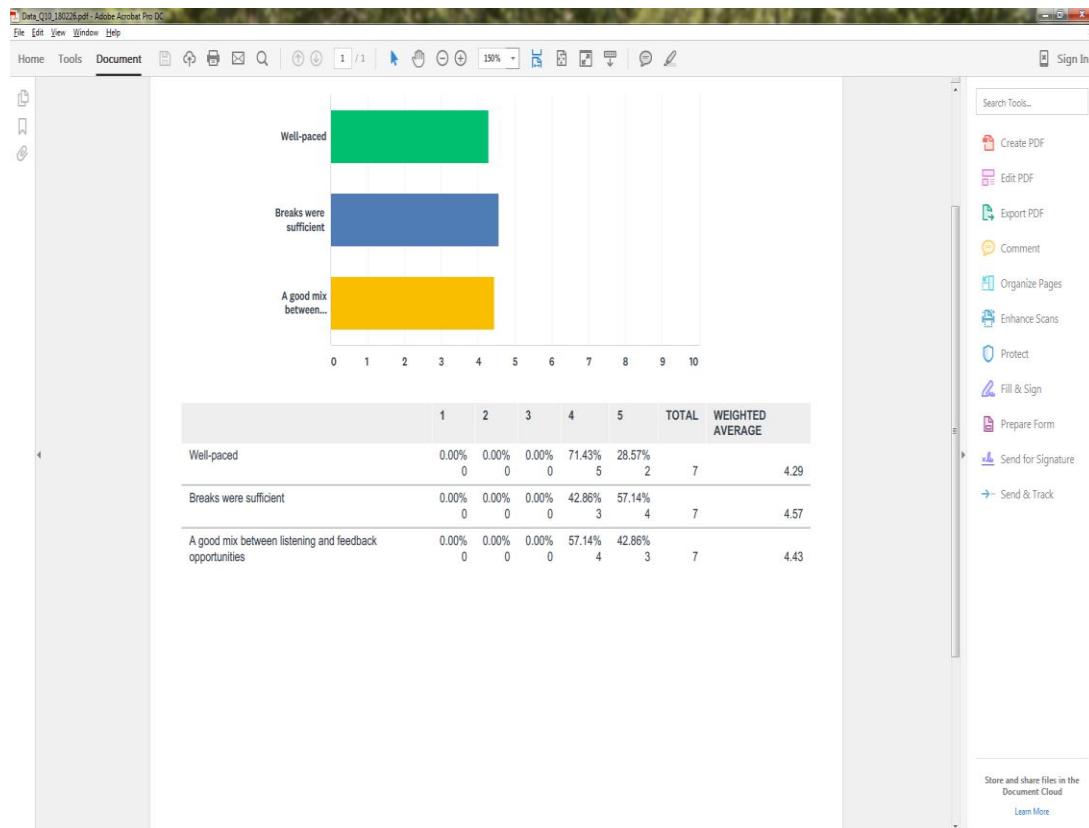
Question 9. On a scale of 1 - 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strong agree please indicate the most appropriate answer. The forum venue was:

7 Responses



Question10. On a scale of 1 - 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree, please indicate the most appropriate answer: The forum was:

7 Responses



Q11. What aspects could be improved for future such events?

1 response

- As noted in comments. That is, extend time of forum by an hour to enable more time for panel discussion & questions.



**Improving the transition and retention of regional
students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds: a 5Ps
approach**

Information was correct at time of printing June 2018