

# CQUniversity Australia Indigenous Student Success Program



# Indigenous Student Success Program

## 2023 Performance Report



Organisation: CQUniversity Australia

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### 1. Declaration

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

### 2. Enrolments (Access)

#### Introduction

CQUniversity is a dual sector university encompassing the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) sectors with 15 campuses and study hubs across five states of Australia.

Figure 1 below shows the locations of CQUniversity campuses and study hubs.



The University is recognised as a pioneer and leader in the delivery of distance education, with 80% of the current student cohort made up of students studying off-campus, many of whom are based in rural and remote areas.

CQUniversity's vision is 'to be Australia's most accessible, supportive and engaged university, recognised globally for innovative teaching and research excellence'. Through [CQUniversity's Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 Our Future is You](#), and the [CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022 – 2024](#), CQUniversity has delivered a series of sector-leading programs that have increased the access, participation and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in vocational and higher education. Our aim is to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by delivering education, training and research that improves lives and offers pathways to meaningful careers. The strategies, programs and partnerships reflected in this report demonstrate the progress made in 2023.

## 2.1 Strategies to improve access to university for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

CQUniversity experienced a decrease of 32 students enrolled in 2023, compared to the previous year. This decrease is reflective of the softening in the domestic demand that can be largely attributed to labour market pressures and is being experienced across the wider sector.

The data shows that in 2023, the greatest number of commencing students fell into the 20 to 24-year age group, for the enabling courses. Most students were evenly distributed in the 20 to 24 year, 25 to 29 year and 30 to 34 year age groups at the undergraduate and post graduate level. Of commencing students, 342 identified as female, 113 students identified as male and 3 were unspecified.

Table 1 shows the reduction in First Nations student commencing numbers.

**Table 1:** Commencing First Nations students data 2021 to 2023.

	Enabling	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Total
<b>2021</b>	167	350	59	<b>576</b>
<b>2022</b>	131	298	61	<b>490</b>
<b>2023</b>	106	285	67	<b>458</b>

### 2.1.1 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Progress continued with delivering on CQUniversity's [Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022 – 2024](#). The RAP encourages a holistic approach in which the 18 actions and 175 deliverables are approached as mutually supportive and together advance Indigenous programs across the University.

The RAP commits CQUniversity to a range of activities and outcomes designed to increase First Nations peoples' access to university, including: increasing participation in scholarships and awards programs; increasing philanthropic funding for awards; expanding engagement programs with schools and communities to increase access and participation; integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and pedagogies into the University curriculum; prioritising new pathway programs into vocational education; and implementing a marketing strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments.

The RAP Champions program was launched in July 2023. The aim of establishing this program is to engage interested staff and students in promoting reconciliation initiatives and actions within their regions and divisions. RAP Champions will work with regional leadership teams and local Traditional Owner groups to advance reconciliation outcomes through the delivery of culturally and regionally relevant education, knowledge and events that help to

progress reconciliation, not only on our campuses but within the communities in which the University operates. RAP Champions will also help to support the delivery and implementation of actions and outcomes of the University's RAP.

The RAP Project Officer and the Governance Officer positions are integral in the oversight of, and committee support for the RAP and are ISSP funded.

### **2.1.2 The Woorabinda Education Hubs**

The CQUniversity campus hub in Woorabinda continues to provide the community with direct support from CQUniversity staff working with students and community members. A Mackay-based Indigenous Student Engagement Officer visited Woorabinda for one week every month throughout 2023 to provide enrolment and education support for current and prospective higher education and VET students. This activity has delivered excellent support for remote Woorabinda students, with a wide variety of VET and undergraduate courses being accessed and supported through the Hub including:

- Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways
- Certificate III in Education Support
- Certificate I in Construction
- Certificate III in Business
- Certificate III in Plumbing
- Certificate III in Engineering – Fabrication Trade
- Certificate III in Carpentry
- Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management
- Diploma of Project Management
- Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice
- Bachelor of Nursing

The visiting Indigenous Student Engagement Officer, along with virtual and in-person support from the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) counsellor, supported students and community during the significant Sorry Business experienced during the year.

### **2.1.3 Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS)**

In 2023, 165 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were admitted to CQUniversity's funded STEPS program. Although this was 22 students fewer than the previous year, the proportion of the overall cohort remained consistent at 10.6%. Of the 165 students, 38 students successfully completed their studies in either Term 1 or Term 2. A further 30 students are due to complete at the end of Term 3, and 41 students are planning to continue the course in 2024. A total of 53 students withdrew from the course, but it is expected that some of these students will return to study when their personal circumstances permit. Overall, the online enrolments were slightly higher with 89 students enrolled online compared to 76 students on-campus.

First Nations STEPS students and their tutors continue to receive printed copies of their textbooks and study guides. This initiative is enabled through ISSP funds and has alleviated the financial costs of the learning materials and increased student engagement with study. Learning Advisors have reported that the printed material is helpful when working with students. STEPS students also continue to receive support from the ISSP funded tutoring service and the careers team.

### 2.1.4 Bachelor of Medical Science (Pathway to Medicine)

The second cohort started their journey in the Regional Medical Pathway (RMP) in March 2023. Two applications were received from Aboriginal students through the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Pathway. Both applicants, however, withdrew their applications to pursue other opportunities.

The 2023 welcome events were held on 3 March on both the Bundaberg and Rockhampton campuses. There were addresses to welcome and inspire the students from all partners (The University of Queensland, Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service and Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service) as well as current Pathway to Medicine students and early career doctors. The Bundaberg Health Services Foundation and the CQ Hospital Foundation provided the students with personally engraved stethoscopes as a symbol of the community's support for them as future doctors.

The Regional Medical Pathway (RMP) is committed to supporting the students by arranging and sponsoring activities such as:

- CQU students attending UQ Indigenous Medical Students' events and NAIDOC Week celebrations.
- Mentoring opportunities by Indigenous GPs in the local community and between CQU and UQ students.
- Presentations from organisations such as The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACCRM) and junior doctors such as Dr Emma Hodge, the Medical Education and Wellbeing Principal House Officer at Wide Bay Hospital.

During 2023 both Year 1 and 2 students were requested to enrol for the micro-credential *First Nations Cross Cultural Competency for Students*. All students are required to complete the course before they undertake work placements in Year 1 and Year 3.

As part of their curriculum, Year 1 students are introduced to the health, history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Students learn about culturally safe care to gain a better understanding of how to partner and collaborate to meet health needs and improve health outcomes. In addition, as part of their immersive learning experiences, first year students visit the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Department of the CQHHS and WBHHS where they meet and interact with health workers who share their inspirational journeys, offering an opportunity to build understanding, respect and equity in communities.

The RMP First Nations Working Group is focusing on First Nations recruitment and an action plan is being considered to ensure that marketing material will be taken into the communities in an easy and accessible format. The Regional Medical Pathway Steering Committee considered a business case for the appointment of an Indigenous School Engagement Officer. The partners recognised that such specific engagement would have a longer-term translation of talent into the Medical Pathway. The Universities are investigating the feasibility of a joint appointment to expand the recruitment strategy of the CQU provisional pathway and the UQ graduate entry pathway.

Our current First Nations students are passionate ambassadors for the course and are involved with recruitment and engagement activities whenever possible.

### 2.1.5 Dare2BeDeadly (D2BD) Student Journey

The **Dare2BeDeadly (D2BD) Student Journey** is supported by the Indigenous Student Engagement (ISE) team to assist students to succeed in their studies, from prospect through to graduation. In 2023, the program continued to deliver online pre-orientation sessions, creating a culturally safe place to yarn about systems and processes of the university so they are confident prior to beginning their course. These sessions also included staff from Accessibility & Equity, Counselling & Wellbeing, Scholarships, Academic Learning Centre and Alumni to promote their services.

Throughout 2023, the ISE team recorded 2144 Conversion interactions for acceptance of offers, of which 1886 students have enrolled into CQUniversity, as well as conducting 4,628 Cultural Check-Ins. These check-ins provide

comprehensive support to students including assistance with letters of extensions, academic progression, leave from study, personalised study plans and facilitated access to Moodle. The ISE team also made several referrals to the Academic Learning Team, SEWB Counsellor, Accessibility & Equity, Student Advocacy and the Careers Team.

### 2.1.6 Partnerships

The following partnerships demonstrate the variety of ways in which CQUniversity engages with schools, not-for-profit organisations and industry. These partnerships are aimed at increasing students' aspirations and facilitating improved access to university for First Nations students.

**Buralaigm Weiber** (meaning 'place of learning' in Gooreng Gooreng) is a 20-week program, designed for Years 3 and 4 Indigenous students from Gladstone West State School. The program can cater for up to 20 students each round. Each week, over two school terms, students attended [STEM Central](#) to participate in lessons prepared by a team of teachers and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. The program is funded by Australia Pacific LNG and the QLD Government. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

A total of 18 First Nations year eight students from Gladstone attended an annual four-day **Yallarm (place of shells) Monadelphous Indigenous STEM camp** at the Boyne Island Environmental Education Centre (BIEEC). The program is developed by the BIEEC in conjunction with CQUniversity and is funded by Monadelphous. It aims to give students an understanding of the link between STEM and future careers. Students engaged in a series of science, cultural and technology activities that including raft making, shelter building and investigation of ecosystems.

A grant from **Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal** funded PPE equipment, white card training, assistance towards transport costs and contributions towards laptops for 24 Mackay-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander TAFE students, the majority of whom were enrolled in the Certificate II in Engineering course. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

Support of the **Kutta Mulla Gorinna Special Assistance School (KMG)** established on the CQUniversity Mackay (Ooralea) campus continued through a partnership involving sharing of facilities, study and pathway options and outreach activities. KMG students undertook courses in Certificate II in Engineering Pathways, Certificate II in Hospitality, Certificate II in Salon Assistant and the White Card Short Course. Career education activities were delivered to 153 students as part of CQUni Connect.

The **Indigenous Girls Academy** is a partnership between CQUniversity, Baralaba State School and Mount Morgan State High School. The academy is committed to supporting and enabling young First Nations women in making active choices towards realising their full potential in all aspects of their development and wellbeing. In 2023, Academy participants engaged in a wide range of cultural, educational, leadership and well-being related activities and initiatives including two leadership camps in February and November. The Academy celebrated school graduations, transition to work and further education for a number of the Academy participants. The program is primarily funded by the NIAA, with additional contributions received from QCoal Foundation, CS Energy and Matana Foundation. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

The **BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA)** and CQUniversity 5-year Partnership Agreement was renewed in July 2023, with a celebratory launch held in Mackay in October. BHP/BMA has partnered with CQUniversity over the past decade to encourage healthy, resilient, connected communities. To date more than \$7,000,000 has been invested under the BHP/BMA and CQUniversity Tertiary Agreements, providing vital funds that facilitate opportunities for education, training, community-led research, and educational inclusiveness for First Nations Peoples throughout regional Queensland. BMA funding maintains the position of BMA Chair of Indigenous Engagement; offers scholarships to Indigenous undergraduate, postgraduate and vocational education students; and ensures research projects are developed in partnership with Indigenous communities and BHP industry partners. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

The **2023-2028: First Nations Tertiary Education and Research Partnership** will continue to deliver valuable support and scholarships for Indigenous students in undergraduate, postgraduate, and vocational education (VET) courses,



and will be expanded to include Indigenous research higher degrees. Other opportunities arising from the partnership include community-led research projects directed towards systemic and grass-roots outcomes in health, housing, children's access to equal education, language revival and supporting cultural opportunities.

In 2023, CQUniversity and BHP/BMA awarded 14 two-year Indigenous scholarships valued at \$20,000 each. These CQUniCares BHP/BMA scholarships include disciplines such as Physiotherapy, Nursing, Education, Social Work, Medical Science and Paramedic Science. Furthermore, three BHP/BMA Indigenous scholars graduated in December 2023 including an occupational therapist, a nurse and a social worker, to continue to contribute to the prosperity of regional communities across Queensland. CQUniversity is delighted with the academic success of the BHP/BMA Indigenous scholars.

Further information on the CQUniCares BMA Indigenous vocational education and training (VET) scholarship is available [here](#) and the CQUniCares BMA Indigenous undergraduate and postgraduate scholarship [here](#).

In addition to the above, several industry and community partners continued to offer generous scholarships restricted to First Nations students. These include partnerships with Acumentis, Arrow Energy, BHP, Central Queensland Indigenous Development, Downer, Ecosure, Ergon Energy, Glencore Clermont, Holding Redlich, Kate Mullin Association, and Queensland Ambulance Service. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

### 2.1.7 Marketing

CQUniversity's ***See It. Believe It.*** 2023 Indigenous student campaign delivered a university-funded recruitment campaign for television, radio and print media. It featured current and graduated First Nations students and promoted links to First Nations student specialist support, scholarships and news. The Indigenous Student Engagement website is available [here](#) and the recruitment video is available [here](#).

## 2.2 Scholarships, bridging/enabling support and outreach activities.

### 2.2.1 Outreach Activities

The Widening Participation and Partnerships team provides the following suite of programs, aimed at improving access to university for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These programs include the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funded [CQUni Connect](#), [Start Uni Now](#) and [Start TAFE Now](#) programs.

**The CQUni Connect program** is CQUniversity's widening participation program delivering career and education aspiration-raising programs to students from low SES backgrounds. From a survey of 3500 students conducted in 2023, just under 19% of participants in the program identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Over 13,200 students have participated in the CQU Connect program across 46 schools in Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Western Queensland regions. School leavers were supported to make the transition to university through the provision of a QTAC voucher, which covers the cost of the QTAC application fee.

Compared to the previous year, there was unfortunately a notable decrease in the **Start Uni Now (SUN) Program** participation with only 14 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students enrolling in 2023 (approximately 50% less than the participation figures in 2022). The majority of participating students enrolled over the CQU Term 3 period (November to February) with study areas of interest being Medical Sciences, Education, Business, Nursing, Psychology and Information Technology. Throughout their studies, SUN students had access to the full range of support and resources available at CQUniversity as well as personalised and culturally safe support through the Schools Engagement team and Indigenous Student Engagement team.

**Start TAFE Now (STN) Program** participation was similar to that of 2022, with 137 students enrolled across 22 courses. Popular areas of study included Community Services, Trades and Salon Assistant with targeted support provided to students through both CQU support services and in partnership with external donors such as Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

A total of 15 Darumbal children from years 5 – 12 attended a two-day **Brolga Camp** that was run in partnership with CQU and Darumbal Enterprises. Students attended a mix of on-campus and on-country learning experiences that aimed to increase student awareness of study and career options after school, incorporating elements of community, Country and culture, as well as support and study options at CQUniversity Australia. Students were empowered and familiarised themselves with our CQUniversity Rockhampton campus, learning new things and meeting new friends. Additionally, two CQU Pathway to Medicine students yarned with the group about their journey into a medical degree.

CQU partnered with the QLD Department of Education to host the **Solid STEM Pathways** program. 30 high achieving First Nations Students from the Central Queensland Region participated in the program which aims to inspire students' passion and aspirations to pursue STEM pathways. The program enabled students to develop STEM capabilities and nurture their scientific curiosity through critical and creative thinking. In 2023 the students participated in Virtual Reality Activities, tested their motor skills, tower building, sugar testing, and joined in a coding activity.

Six Indigenous high school students joined us for a day of activities on the Mackay Ooralea campus while they were on break from the **NQ Athletics Carnival**. Students were exposed to a range of activities held by various academic schools including sessions with our Exercise and Sports Science, Chiropractic, Nursing, Hospitality, and Trades teams, as well as a session facilitated by the SEWB team.

CQUniversity continues to support the **QATSIF Foundation** through hosting Year 12 graduation ceremonies in the Rockhampton, Mackay and Bundaberg regions. Year 12 students, schools, families and community participated in the ceremonies.

CQUni Gladstone campus hosted **Waalijt Foundation** in partnership with Shell QGC, an immersive program for Indigenous year 10, 11 and 12 students funded by Shell QGC. This event forms part of a career development program enabling students to investigate a broad range of potential career opportunities in the region. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

Implemented in 2023, the **CQUni Deadly Connections** program is an Indigenous-led outreach and engagement program aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Adult Learners from low SES backgrounds who are employed through local government or public service, working in industries, community-based organisations and native title holders which may lead them to aspire to further studies and professional development in their careers. Deadly Connection Workshops were held in communities in South-West, Central, North, and Far North Queensland including Cape York and Torres Strait Islands. These workshops were for sharing information and experiences regarding study options and to promote knowledge and awareness of universities being culturally safe places to pursue their educational journey. The workshops held in 2023 resulted in 53 D2BD Prospect cases of which seven 7 students have been enrolled and will commence study in 2024. The Deadly Connections program and associated position of Indigenous Engagement Officer (IEO) are supported under Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)



### 2.2.2 ISSP Scholarships

In 2023, 383 ISSP Scholarships were awarded, comprised of 91 Education Cost Scholarships, one Accommodation Scholarship and 291 Reward Scholarships. There was an increase to Education Cost Scholarships in 2023 compared to 2022, which had 82 Education Cost Scholarships awarded, however fewer Accommodation and Reward Scholarships were awarded.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of 2023 ISSP scholarships and payments.

**Table 2:** ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2023 payments<sup>1</sup>

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total <sup>2</sup>	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling <sup>3</sup>	14,000.00	7	-	-	4,185.00	3	18,185.00	10
Undergraduate <sup>4</sup>	158,500.00	80	5,635.00	1	28,824.54	214	192,959.54	295
Post-graduate <sup>5</sup>	8,000.00	4	-	-	7,833.90	11	15,833.90	15
Other	-	-	-	-	94,437.00	63	94,437.00	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>180,500.00</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>5,635.00</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>135,280.44</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>321,415.44</b>	<b>383</b>

Demand remained high for ISSP Scholarships, the Scholarships team pre-purchased 68 laptops for the **Dare to Be Deadly Technology Bursaries** and five were awarded to students. Term 1 **Dare to Be Deadly Scholarships** had 154 applicants and out of those 91 students were eligible and were offered scholarships. The **Dare to be Deadly Bookshop Bursary** is a \$250 bookshop credit designed to support 143 students as well as two postgraduate students who received the \$500 Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy Bookshop Bursary, as per the table below.

**Table 3:** Breakdown of 2023 Scholarships and Bursaries

Indigenous Commonwealth Dare to Be Deadly Technology Bursary	68
Indigenous Commonwealth Dare to Be Deadly Bookshop Bursary	143
Indigenous Commonwealth Professional Registration Bursary	1
Indigenous Commonwealth Graduation Registration Bursary	13
Indigenous Commonwealth Dare to Be Deadly Remote Placement Bursary	1
Indigenous Commonwealth Dare to Be Deadly Residential Bursary	1
Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy Laptop Bursary	2
Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy Bookshop Bursary	2
Indigenous Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship	1
Dare to Be Deadly (D2BD) Scholarship	91
Dare to Be Deadly Term 2 Support Scholarship	60

For a list of scholarships visit: [List of current scholarships](#)

### 3. Progression (outcomes)

#### 3.1 Strategies to improve unit success rates and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The responsibility for student support has been embedded university-wide amongst a number of departments and all schools. Strategic partnerships have been developed to facilitate a shared knowledge and skills base across the University. Teams that work closely together include, but are not limited to, the Office of Indigenous Engagement, the Indigenous Student Engagement team, the Scholarships Office, the Academic Learning Centre, Marketing, Governance, Widening Participation, Student Health and Wellbeing, the Tertiary Education Division, the Strategic Engagement Directorate and the Office of Research. Key teams such as the Office of Indigenous Engagement and the Indigenous Student Engagement team operate within the Research Department and the Student Engagement team respectively. Importantly both teams are Indigenous led, with all staff in the Indigenous Student Engagement team and a majority of staff in the Office of Indigenous Engagement team identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The following data shows success rates in 2021, 2022 and 2023 broken down into the three course types: enabling, undergraduate and postgraduate. Success rate measures academic performance by comparing the equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) of units passed to the EFTSL of units attempted.

Table 4 shows the success rate for the Enabling course. In 2023, the success rate decreased by 2.4% compared to the previous year, as well as the pass rate decreasing by 12.62 EFTSL. The fail rate decreased by 7.5 EFTSL as well as the withdrawal rate, decreasing by 1.75 EFTSL compared to the previous year.

**Table 4:** Success rate for Enabling course.

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew
2021	53.5%	40.37	33.50	1.62
2022	53.3%	33.12	26.37	2.62
2023	50.9%	20.5	18.87	0.87

Table 5 shows the success rate for the Undergraduate level. In 2023, the success rate increased by 4% compared to 2022. The pass rate in 2023 remained similar when compared to 2022 at 277.25 EFSTL. The fail rate in 2023 decreased by 6.62 EFTSL as well as the withdrawal rate by 12.5 EFTSL. Enrolment rates increased by 50.75 EFTSL in comparison to the previous year.

**Table 5:** Success rate for undergraduate courses

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2021	69.30%	280.37	112	12.25	0.62
2022	71.5%	274.00	91.37	17.75	1
2023	75.5%	277.25	84.75	5.25	51.75

Table 6 shows the success rate for the Postgraduate level. In 2023, the success rate increased by 2.6% compared to 2022. The pass rate in 2023 decreased by 3.87 EFTSL, compared to 2022. The fail rate in 2023 decreased by 2.75 EFTSL, and the withdrawal rates increased by 0.75 EFTSL. Enrolment rates increased by 5.63 EFTSL in comparison to the previous year.

**Table 6:** Success rate for postgraduate level

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2021	78.3%	21.25	4.87	1	6.25
2022	74.8%	18.87	6	0.37	5.12
2023	77.4%	15	3.25	1.12	10.75

The success rates have increased for undergraduate and postgraduate students, with a decrease for enabling students. Noticeably, the withdrawal rates have decreased for enabling and undergraduate students due to the following supports and strategies which have been put into place to improve transitions.

### 3.1.1 Supports for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Coursework students.

The **Indigenous Student Engagement Team (ISE)** provide support to First Nations students through the following culturally responsive initiatives:

The ***Dare 2 Be Deadly (D2BD) Student Journey*** continues to be led by the Indigenous Student Engagement team, and was embedded into the wider University system, providing case management of all First Nation students enrolled online and on campus. Embedding the D2BD cases into the current systems provides information around student progression for success, while identifying risks of withdrawal for earlier intervention and support to continue with studies. Online yarning circles and the Student Connect events are hosted by the Indigenous Student Engagement Officer (ISEO) each term at their locations of Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. Connecting students to each other enables peer support while also creating opportunities for students to engage with other services and their lecturers where they live close to a campus, and online students can also join in virtually. The student journey within the D2BD case management program has connections from pre-access through cultural engagement within communities, informing prospects of accessible pathways to make an informed decision to study. Access is inclusive of students' wellbeing, cultural safety, tertiary preparedness and affirming their decision to study. Participation in the program includes Commencement Check-In, Pre-Census Check-In, Mid Term Check-In, Cultural Check-ins, Cultural Advocacy, monitoring of Academic Progression and all the services available to them to study with confidence.

The ***Pre-Orientation Program (POP)*** continues to engage students online and face-to-face preparing them for their studies. This is a culturally safe place to yarn and connect with other students and services available to students across the national footprint. This aims for staff to develop connections with students and enhance a sense of belonging and impacts upon retention and completion rates through ensuring students are well prepared for their studies.

In week three of each term, the ***Oh My Goodness (OMG)*** program engages with students to ensure that they connect with social and academic support, are reminded of census date, and are supported to complete relevant paperwork.

The ***IAS Tutoring Program*** continues to be managed by the Indigenous Student Engagement Team (ISE). Program details can be found in section [3.2 Tutorial Assistance](#). This program is ISSP funded.

### 3.1.2 Data systems and student engagement

CQUniversity has invested in software systems that record and monitor engagements with students aimed at providing support and increasing completion rates. Students are surveyed on their experiences and this feedback informs improvements to university support and programs.

**CQUniSuccess** is a system designed for academics to monitor student engagement with Moodle and other platforms for success. **MYCQU** is a portal for students to engage with their studies, and with academic and professional staff for assistance as required.

The Indigenous Student Engagement team have embedded the D2BD Student Journey into the Sugar CRM (customer relationship management) system, where student relationships can be built to best support their needs, including letters of support or cultural advocacy.

The team also provides support and strategies to First Nations students who are not achieving satisfactory academic progress and have been placed into the Monitoring Academic Progress (MAP) system. The team also contacts students who have withdrawn from their studies to encourage re-enrolment.

Student engagement and progress is also monitored through the Moodle, Student One, AIMS and PULSE systems which are university funded.

Strategies directly funded by ISSP include all programs and support provided by the Indigenous Student Engagement team as described above.

### **3.1.3 Student Health and Wellbeing Programs**

First Nations students benefited from attending the following programs managed by the Health and Wellbeing team.

**Counselling support** was provided to 99 self-identified First Nations students with 1181 occasions of service, and 6.24% of all counselling referrals were for Indigenous students. The ISSP funded Indigenous Student Counsellor worked closely with the Indigenous Student Engagement team to manage the referral process. A new initiative in 2023 saw the counselling service add the **additional report codes** of Loss of Culture to reflect other reasons Indigenous students seek counselling support.

Programs that continued in 2023 included the provision of Calm Time Sessions, the Mind Waves Study Smart program, with four First Nations students completing the course, and the Cultivating Wellness Workshop series, which 12 First Nations students completed, an increase of seven students compared to the previous year. A recruitment campaign was also undertaken in 2023 and has successfully recruited three First Nations students as Mind Waves Connectors. 13 Indigenous students also participated in Uni Mental Health Day events and activities.

**Virtual Cuppa & Yarn** is a weekly online space for First Nations staff and students to catch up and take time out of their busy lives to yarn with other mob in a safe space. The initiative had 41 Indigenous students attending. It is hosted by the Social and Emotional and Wellbeing (SEWB) student counsellor and the Indigenous Student Wellbeing Project Officer.

**Social and Emotional Well-Being (SEWB) Check Ins** are an additional student support which increases support contacts in addition to or in the place of ongoing counselling sessions.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid (AMHFA) Training.** The Indigenous Student Wellbeing Project Officer delivered seven training sessions for staff, students and community across the Bundaberg, Mackay City, Rockhampton North and Townsville campuses. A total of 16 non-Indigenous and five Indigenous staff members have been trained, as well as 33 non-Indigenous students and 12 Indigenous students. Community members also participated with a total of two non-Indigenous community members and nine Indigenous community members completing the training.

**The Wellbeing Excursion Program** is aimed at supporting student and staff social and emotional wellbeing. The SEWB Counsellor held a cultural awareness training session that was facilitated by local Darumbal Elder Uncle Wade Mann in October 2023. The excursion went to Nurim “Mt Archer” in Rockhampton, where students learnt about Darumbal Culture, bush tucker and lore. Seven students and two staff members were in attendance, and all reported feeling engaged and grounded, and considered the Cultural Wellbeing Tours were extremely important to First Nations Students.

**CQU Out of Hours Student Support Line** established in September 2021, provides out of hours (including weekends and public holidays) counselling and crisis support for students living in Australia.

183 **Wellbeing packs** were disseminated to Indigenous First Year Bachelor students in Terms 1 and 2 for their improved wellbeing and encouragement to continue studying. The packs include products sourced from First Nations suppliers and are aimed to promote well-being, provide information about access to internal support services and build a sense of belonging with the University. Positive feedback received from students showed that they felt grateful, special, excited, supported and connected to CQUniversity due to receiving the Wellbeing Pack.

**CQUGlobal** supports students to study abroad. In 2023 five Indigenous students received a New Colombo Plan Mobility Grant to assist with the cost of participating in their program.

One First Nations Bachelor of Education (Primary) student participated in a Service-Learning experience in Cambodia, as well as one Bachelor of Public Health student who spent three weeks in Cambodia on the Public Health and Sustainability Challenge. Two Bachelor of Nursing students joined a three-week placement program in Nepal providing health services at the local hospitals and health camps while learning from Nepalese health professionals, and in turn providing locals with insight into the Australian health care system. CQUniNews story available [here](#). One Bachelor of Physiotherapy student participated in a five-week placement experience in Vietnam, providing much-needed health checks and physiotherapy services to remote villages and schools in the region. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

One Bachelor of Sciences (Chiropractic) student received a \$3,000 **CQUGlobal** Grant to attend the Pacific Australian Youth Association Leadership Summit in Tonga. This was an extra-curricular experience that the student self-arranged.

**The Academic Learning Centre (ALC)** provides support to students in the discipline areas of Academic Communication, Computing, Science, Mathematics and Statistics.

The ALC Advisors collaborate with lecturers and unit coordinators in the Embedding Academic Skills project. ALC staff plan activities and deliver workshop sessions that assist students to develop academic literacy and numeracy skills needed to be more successful at the unit assessment tasks. This project is Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funded and focuses on supporting domestic undergraduate students from a low SES background, students from regional and remote areas and First Nations students.

### **3.1.4 Research by Higher Degree (RHD) students**

First Nations RHD students benefit from the support provided by CQUniversity’s **Jilbay First Nations Research Higher Degree (RHD) Academy**. Jilbay is a Jirrbal word from Far North Queensland gifted by the Jirrbal Elders to Professor Adrian Miller, the Academy’s Director. Jilbay means ‘old people’s wisdom’ and in every essence of the word, it is the sharing of old people’s wisdom that makes students clever (Jilbaybili), likewise making supervisors/fellows more culturally clever (Jilbaymali). Therefore, Jilbaybili (students) and Jilbaymali (supervisors) are the two critical components of the Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy.

The Academy is supported by an Academic Lead to provide cultural support and build research skills for First Nations RHD Students as well as developing the cultural competency of supervisors for First Nations RHD Students. Now in its third year, during 2023 the Academy grew by four new enrolments, bringing the total number of Jilbay RHD students to 18.

In 2023, the **School of Graduate Research (SGR)** expanded the number of Indigenous Research Stipend Scholarships from one to three. These stipends are valued at \$35,000 per annum for three years, and were awarded to two Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy Doctoral students and one Master of Research student. In addition to this stipend, the School of Graduate Research and Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy rolled out the *Jilbay Jina* (walking with wisdom) support funding scheme. This was designed to support RHD candidates in undertaking best-practice research with Indigenous Australian communities. The Research Support Fund provides additional resources, beyond the standard project support funding made available to all RHD candidates, to enable candidates to directly involve and/or consult with First Nations knowledge holders in their project design, implementation and dissemination phases. A total of \$30,000 in funding was made available in 2023 with a maximum of \$1,500 available per RHD candidate.

In both May and October of 2023, RHD students were given the opportunity to attend a four-day skill development workshop on Darumbal Country (Rockhampton North Campus). These workshops gave the Jilbay First Nations RHD students the opportunity to build their research connections, showcase their individual research projects, and gain more detailed insights into research practices, processes and protocols, as well as Indigenous research methodologies. Each workshop also featured a Community Showcase Day, where invitations were extended to members of the research community, Jilbay alumni and the local Indigenous community. Students were given the opportunity to present their research projects to a small, supportive audience and it served as a valuable platform for students to receive feedback from experienced researchers and community within the room. Each workshop included cultural support from CQUniversity's Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor to facilitate yarning circles and a wellness session on Imposter Syndrome, as well as an Elder in Residence to provide cultural advice, mentoring, and support.

In November 2023, the Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy and Jawun Research Centre hosted a five-day writing retreat at Mt Glorious on Jinabara Country. This was a pilot initiative and an investment in inter-generational academic learning and writing. The retreat outputs included writing skills, responding to reviewers' comments, collaboration and relationship strengthening, four papers for peer reviewed journals worked on, as well as the following PhD process progressions:

- 1x PhD topic confirmed
- 1x Confirmation of Candidature revision completed
- 2x chapters completed
- 1x PhD revision in response to assessor comments

Throughout 2023, six academic staff were financially supported by the **School of Graduate Research (SGR)** to undertake the UTS micro-credential in supervision of Indigenous research higher degree candidates, with all successfully completing the qualification.

The **School of Graduate Research (SGR)** continues to provide direct financial support, professional development and additional academic mentoring for Indigenous RHD students. The Academy is required to submit a six-monthly progress brief and a 12-monthly annual report to the University's Research Committee governance group. It is jointly funded by the School of Graduate Research and ISSP.

Development and promotions of the Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy occurred via the [Academy webpage](#), as well as promotion on the CQUni Yarning social media pages.



## 3.2 Tutorial assistance

Tutorial assistance provided through the ISSP funded program is detailed in Table 7 below.

**Table 7:** Tutorial assistance provided in 2023.

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted <sup>6</sup>	Total number of tutorial sessions attended <sup>7</sup>	Total hours of assistance <sup>8</sup>	Expenditure <sup>9</sup> (\$)
Enabling	20	227.25	715.25	\$43,368.98
Undergraduate	133	2395.20	5134.85	\$311,350.18
Postgraduate	6	141.75	295.5	\$17,917.56
Other	0	0	49	\$2,971.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>2765</b>	<b>6194.60</b>	<b>\$375,607.82</b>

Please note that the figures in the table are calculated around unique students assisted criteria as instructed.

Throughout 2023, a total of 80 Casual Learning Advisors (tutors) were employed by the Indigenous Student Engagement (ISE) Team who manage the IAS Tutoring Program. They were matched to 330 students, with a total of 616 units across Terms 1, 2 and 3. An appointment booking system 'Interact' was put in place allowing students to apply for tutoring for the three terms and advise if they wished to continue with their current Learning Advisor.

The D2BD Student Journey continues to recruit and employ learning advisors to fill vacancies for applications in new fields of study being undertaken by students. The tutorial assistance program provides consistency where students can continue with a Learning Advisor for the duration of their studies. Term 3 saw the introduction of the CHRONUS software program, which has allowed students to personally select and connect with their preferred Learning Advisor, based on the Learning Advisors' areas of knowledge and expertise. Contracts for the Learning Advisors are reviewed and renewed every year to ensure they are providing culturally safe assistance, with formal and informal feedback received from students throughout the term.

An annual workshop for Casual Learning Advisors is conducted in which the on-line First Nations Cultural Competency training for staff is promoted. A presentation by the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Officer on ways in which the Advisors can assist students was also well received.

## 3.2 The Indigenous Support Unit and other Indigenous student support activities

Indigenous student support is embedded across several units within the University. The following programs of student support, engagement, advocacy and strategic direction are described.

### The Office of Indigenous Engagement

The Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE) team is led by Professor Adrian Miller, Deputy Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, BHP Chair in Indigenous Engagement and Co-Director of the [Jawun Research Centre](#). The OIE is part of the Research Division and staff are based at the various campuses across the CQUniversity footprint.

The OIE continues to develop and lead the implementation of key strategies such as the [CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024](#), the [First Nations Cultural Competency Framework](#) and the [First Nations Workforce Strategy 2020-2025](#).

### **Jawun Research Centre**

Co-Directed by Professors Adrian Miller and Janya McCalman, the Jawun Research Centre sits within the Office of Indigenous Engagement. The Jawun Research Centre capabilities are in system sciences, public health equity research, impact assessment and evaluation, health economics, genomics and evidence reviews and translation/advocacy.

In July 2023, a prominent Indigenous research team led by Greg Pratt transferred from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) to CQUniversity's Jawun Research Centre, in a move that saw Jawun expand its reach into southeast Queensland. The team forms a new research cluster known as '*Jingay*' (jin-guy), which means 'telling each other something important' in the Dyirbal language of North Queensland. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

### **The Indigenous Student Engagement Team**

The Indigenous Student Engagement Team functions within the Student Engagement Directorate and provides a direct link between general student support services and Indigenous-specific support services via the **Dare to be Deadly (D2BD) Student Journey**. The team, comprising eight Indigenous staff members based on the Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton and Bundaberg campuses (with outreach to Woorabinda), provides mentoring and advice regarding the services available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Individual case management provides one-on-one supports and referrals for the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) tutoring program, financial guidance around scholarships, cultural advocacy, safe learning assistance, basic program information and referrals to other areas such as Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Counselling, Accessibility and Equity and Student Advocacy. Students also have access to academic and personal enrichment programs offered by numerous teams across the University, such as the Peer-Assisted Study Scheme (PASS), the Student Representative Council (SRC) and Student Mentoring.

Staff also participate in University and STEPs orientation days, open days and events such as NAIDOC Week and are members of recruitment and scholarship panels. Staff continue to host on-campus and online events to connect with students in creating culturally safe spaces to yarn and connect with others in their fields of study, while sharing some of the challenges and impacts of life, work, and study balance.

ISSP funds partially subsidise salaries of OIE and Indigenous Student Support staff.

## **3.3 The strategies to improve cultural competency of staff and/or to ensure the university offers a culturally safe and enriching environment.**

### **3.3.1 Programs and Projects**

A mix of new and existing programs operated in 2023. New initiatives are described below:

#### **First Nations Cultural Competency Framework**

CQUniversity launched the First Nations Cultural Competency Framework 2023-2028 early in 2023 and commenced recruitment to implement the deliverables within the Framework. The Framework outlines the three levels of cultural competency education required for all staff and students at CQUniversity - introductory, intermediate and advanced/graduate - and provides a series of training activities and courses to be completed. Staff cultural competency will be incorporated within professional development and targeted to the role

(academic, teaching and professional), and for students the training was integrated within the First Nations course curriculum required under the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

In 2023, a series of workshops were delivered to academics within the University. The workshops were developed to support staff around the embedding of First Nations cultural content and perspectives across the CQUniversity curriculum and its delivery within a First Nations Cultural Competency Framework. These workshops ran fortnightly from May to December 2023 and resources have been placed online for staff to access. Moving forward in 2024, the work will continue focusing on teaching and professional staff.

An introductory online module in First Nations Cross Cultural Competency for staff was implemented in 2020 and is now available as a non-credit bearing micro-credential. The **First Nations Cross Cultural Competency for Students: It Starts with Understanding** is a short online module delivered as a non-credit bearing micro-credential which commenced in 2023. Further courses and programs will be developed for the next stages of cultural competency training, as outlined in the First Nations Cultural Competency Framework. These will combine online courses with workshops and engagement with community organisations and other intercultural experiences.

As of December 2023, a total of 1664 employees had completed CQUniversity's online **First Nations Cultural Competency Training**.

### **First Nations Research Strategy**

CQUniversity has developed a First Nations Research Strategy under the broader remit of our institutional Reconciliation Action Plan. This strategy provides further structures and support for research capacity building by Indigenous research students and their supervisors. The deliverables include increasing scholarships, and seeking placements, cadetships and exchange programs for our First Nations RHD students. As well as supporting students, the strategy also covers career development of First Nations Researchers.

Existing programs designed to offer a culturally safe and enriching environment continued to operate successfully and were further enhanced with additional programs outlined below.

Audio and visual productions produced by Office of Indigenous Engagement are available for individual listening or lecturer inclusion as teaching aids in classroom presentations. Production of both series began in 2021 and was finalised in 2023. They are located for viewing on Echo360 which is only available for university staff and students.

The series of podcasts titled **Talking Culture** was developed to increase staff and student awareness of First Nations people, through listening to a collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' voices that relay personal accounts of Country, history, cultures and knowledges and how these aspects of life are active in the lives of the storytellers. A total of seventeen podcasts have been produced to date. Storytelling voices include those of an artist, a filmmaker, a cultural museum curator, a CQU academic, a private businesswoman and a corporate manager.

Production of an **Acknowledgement of Country Video Series**. This series currently includes four videos. Cultural protocol and copywrite restrictions allow for use by CQUniversity staff only. These videos deliver individual approaches to acknowledging Country and may be used to begin online events or meetings or introduce lectures. The videos are not tied to a specific region, cultural knowledge or Country and are designed to be used across the University's national footprint.

The **On Country Video Series** includes three videos. Cultural protocol and copywrite restrictions allow for use by CQUniversity staff only. In this video series we see and hear how and why Aboriginal peoples hold Country with respect and deep feeling. The messages they convey are useful as subjects for discussion in the classroom to facilitate increased understanding of the importance of acknowledging Country and creating cultural awareness at CQUniversity.

## Cultural Safe Spaces

CQUniversity has committed to creating and enhancing culturally safe campuses and has developed the draft **CQUniversity Culturally Safe Space and Place Guidelines**. The establishment of additional Cultural Spaces and Places at campuses is designed to welcome, engage, support and promote the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, alumni, and visitors.

Cultural gardens and a yarning circle were established at Mackay Ooralea campus, and 2023 saw the completion of bespoke signage for this Cultural Safe Space and Yarning Circle. The naming for the space was provided by Traditional Owner Auntie Veronica Ah-Wang and she named the space in Traditional Yuwi language – **“Bidyiri Woorwaya”**: to dream big. The Indigenous Mural at the Cultural Safe Space and Yarning Circle at the Mackay Ooralea Campus was completed with assistance from a Regional Arts Development Fund grant from the Mackay Regional Council. Traditional Owner Kimba Fatiaki was engaged to paint the mural and hosted a workshop for staff and students in NAIDOC Week. The Channel 7 news story can be viewed [here](#).

The indoor Culturally Safe Space was officially opened in November 2023 at the Mackay City campus. The naming for the space was provided by Traditional Owner Auntie Veronica Ah-Wang and she named the space in Traditional Yuwi language – **“Yinda Bidhi Yamba”**: Your Dream Place. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

The **Billabong Camp** brand (designed by Balarinji) is increasingly used throughout the University, appearing on learning materials, reports and presentations that relate to Indigenous matters. ISSP funds enabled the design to also be made available for marketing materials. buildings. The artwork is featured on relevant spaces across University buildings, including on campus information signs and window frosting. For example, the Rockhampton North campus has signs at several entrances welcoming students, staff and visitors in language and provides an acknowledgement of the Darumbal Traditional Owners of the land on which that campus is situated.

The **campus map** featuring the campus Traditional Country names is available from the marketing image catalogue for staff use. The campus map can be viewed [here](#) and on page 2 of this document.

As described in previous reports, CQUniversity continues to enhance cultural competency and cultural safety through its promotion of the **2023 Calendar of Significant Indigenous Dates**, awarding of **Cultural sashes at graduation** and its support of **the Uluru Statement from the Heart**. The **SEWB Team** continues to engage with students, staff and community delivering different workshops such as Attitude for Gratitude.

All CQUniversity Policy documents are available on our [website](#).

## Indigenous Procurement

Sections 4.8 and 4.9 of the CQUniversity’s Procurement Policy and Procedure (available online [here](#)) includes the University’s commitments to Indigenous-focused procurement. The CQUniversity Procurement Policy and Procedure is being reviewed through 2024 with the intent of rolling out a new policy and procedure in the last half of 2024, including expanded information and processes available to increase procurement from Indigenous Enterprises.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) supporting Indigenous procurement are laid out in the CQUniversity Strategic Plan, under Our Communities: increasing social and Indigenous procurement activities of CQUniversity.

In addition to the KPIs outlined in the CQUniversity Strategic Plan, our Corporate Procurement Plan (CPP) translates the KPIs from the Strategic Plan into a procurement context. The CPP outlines our commitment to Indigenous Enterprise procurement and assists individual departments and schools to adopt socially responsible practices into their procurement planning and strategies.

A StaffNet directory of information and resources, plus an Indigenous supplier register designed to assist buyer engagement with Indigenous suppliers, are available to support staff to meet these KPIs. CQUniversity engaged with Supply Nation for membership at the end of 2023. Access to Supply Nation’s directory of suppliers and visibility of CQUniversity ISSP Report 2023

their certification program assists CQU's data to be more indicative of the social effect the University is having. Staff are also encouraged to utilise the databases freely available online from [Black Business Finder](#) and the [Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations \(ORIC\)](#).

The University's annual spend with First Nations-owned businesses has decreased significantly (a ~70% reduction) between 2022 and 2023. This sharp decrease has been attributed to a change in reporting definition for First Nations Enterprise for the University. Prior to End-Of-Year 2023, any business that self-identified as First Nations owned or managed was included in the data. With CQUniversity's membership of Supply Nation, we have cross-referenced our data with their supplier register and are now only reporting spend that meets the classification of Supply Nation Certified or Registered. This has led to ~\$233,500 of expenditure being struck from the tally (these suppliers have identified as First Nations owned or registered, but do not have a Supply Nation certification).

The Procurement Advice Team (PAT) continues to act as a conduit between potential suppliers and our buyers, putting organisations in touch with appropriate university divisions for potential and upcoming opportunities.

### **3.3.2 Public and campus events**

Staff celebrated **NAIDOC Week** by connecting with students and communities across the CQUniversity footprint. Events ranged from school visits, hosting trivia nights, recognising Elders at a morning tea, holding a painting workshop, attending the NAIDOC Week march, and hosting stalls at the Family Fun Day Expo.

ISSP funding provided financial support to host the NAIDOC Week events. News stories were published on the internal website StaffNet and the social media pages.

**National Reconciliation Week** was celebrated by the launch of the RAP Champions campaign - further information on the RAP Champions program can be found on page 2. Different events were held on campuses across the CQUniversity footprint.

#### **Digital and social media**

CQUniversity showed continued commitment to creating and sharing Indigenous content to both internal and external audiences, with numerous Indigenous-related stories pitched to media and shared across websites and social channels throughout 2023.

Indigenous students and staff were featured in profiles, podcasts, publications and videos, with those stories generating significant engagement across all mediums from traditional to social media, gaining more than 500 mentions relating to CQUniversity Indigenous topics published in traditional media outlets.

Many CQU-generated stories were picked up and published by various Indigenous-focused and mainstream media outlets including Seven News, WIN News, First Nations Telegraph, Koori Mail, Koori Radio, National Indigenous Times, The Australian, Australian Defence Magazine, Gladstone Today, Bundaberg Today, CQ Today, Hit100.3 Mackay, Triple M Mackay, Hit102.5 Mt Isa, Hit103.5 Cairns, Triple M Cairns, [resourcereview.com.au](#), [cairnslocalnews.com.au](#), [southburnett.com.au](#), Torres News, Bumma Bipperra Media – Cairns National Talk Black, Daily Mercury, ABC Capricornia, NITV and Cairns Post to name a few.

Indigenous-focused news stories, published on CQUniversity's news site are available [here](#).

The CQUni Yarning Facebook group and LinkedIn profile continued to grow and promote CQUniversity's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-related activities, job opportunities, research, staff and student success stories and events.

## 4. Completions (outcomes)

### 4.1 Strategies to improve award course completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Table 8 below shows the number of CQUniversity First Nations student completions. The data shows a decrease in Enabling and Undergraduate in 2023, however there was an increase in Postgraduate completions. In total, completions decreased by 12 First Nations students in 2023 compared to 2022.

**Table 8** First Nations student completions

Course level	2021	2022	2023
Enabling	68	66	55
Undergraduate	72	64	60
Postgraduate	16	21	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>139</b>

Aligning with the ASCED Broad Field of Education groupings, Table 9 below shows completions by discipline for undergraduate students.

**Table 9** Undergraduate First Nations student completions by discipline

Discipline	2021	2022	2023
Architecture and Building	1	0	0
Creative Arts	4	1	3
Education	7	8	9
Engineering and Related Technologies	1	2	1
Health	39	36	29
Information Technology	1	2	0
Management and Commerce	6	1	3
Natural and Physical Sciences	1	0	0
Society and Culture	12	14	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>61</b>

Table 10 shows completions by discipline for postgraduate students. The greatest number of graduations occurred in the Health Discipline for both undergraduates and postgraduates.

**Table 10** Postgraduate First Nations student completions by discipline

Discipline	2021	2022	2023
Education	3	4	6
Engineering and Related Technologies	3	0	0
Health	7	16	11
Information Technology	1	0	1
Management and Commerce	1	2	2
Society and Culture	1	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>



As previously outlined, strategies aimed at improving the completion rate include the provision of scholarships, tutoring through the Indigenous Assistance program, provision of a culturally safe learning environment, and support programs from Schools and Departments throughout the University.

The Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy, in partnership with the School of Graduate Research, is focused on supporting First Nations Research Higher Degree Students and their supervisors with the aim to increase graduation rates.

Professional and academic staff have received professional development to improve cultural safety and the provision of appropriate support to First Nations students.

First Nations Alumni and recent graduates receive support from the Alumni team through career support, unlimited access to the [CareerHub](#) and an optional alumni [profile page](#), of which there are currently 42 Indigenous Alumni Profiles. The updated website has a dedicated search function to enable people to specifically view profiles of First Nations graduates, making their success stories more visible. Alumni are also encouraged to join the CQUConnect Mentoring Program. In 2023 a new platform was released which resulted in a reduction in the number of First Nations mentors available to students, however this is expected to rebuild during 2024.

The Alumni team have recruited several First Nations alumni as guest speakers for a First Nations perspectives unit in the Bachelor and Masters Education programs. Further to this, over 40 alumni participated in meaningful volunteering and experiential activities in 2023, providing representation in volunteering within the University at the same percentage that they are represented in the overall alumni population.

In 2023, the Alumni Award for Industry Achievement was awarded to Patrice Brown for recognition of her business partnership with the Darumbal People with the creation of the Indigenous business “Tunuba”. Uncle George James spoke positively about the Tunuba partnership in his Welcome to Country at the Rockhampton Graduation ceremony where Patrice accepted her alumni award. Information on alumni awards is available [here](#).

## 5. Regional and Remote Students

CQUniversity is well established in the delivery of distance education with more than half of the current student cohort made up of students studying off-campus, many of whom are based in regional and remote areas. In 2023, of the 936 First Nations Higher Education students enrolled, 770 students were recorded as living in regional and remote areas, with the remaining 166 residing in major cities. Students who must study internally or at a particular campus are able to access the 11 campuses and the Regional University Centre partnerships, situated in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

As previously described, the Woorabinda Indigenous Education Hub supports students in Woorabinda to continue to study and live in their community and travel to campus for residentials.

Works undertaken through the **Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund (NAIF)** loan have enabled the continuation of new digital platforms and upgrades to existing digital platforms (digital works). These upgrades and enhancements have provided regional and remote students with opportunities to access facilities and support services equivalent to those being provided on the metropolitan campuses.

CQUniversity services regional and remote students through the well-established delivery of online teaching, support services, scholarships and bursaries to assist students with start-up costs, including textbooks, uniforms, technology and equipment. Accommodation scholarships, travel bursaries, industry placement scholarships and work readiness bursaries are also available. The First Nations Scholarships Officer supports students with information regarding available ISSP, external and donor-funded scholarships and can provide students with information about how to access Abstudy relocation assistance.

Table 11 shows the scholarship data for remote and regional students. Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs and Reward Scholarships showed an increased level of demand.

Please note that bursaries and emergency grants are identified in the 'Reward' category in Table 11 below.

**Table 11** ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students<sup>10</sup>

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2022 Payments	\$178,775.00	82	\$19,762.00	4	\$125,824.50	332	\$324,361.50	418
B. 2023 Offers <sup>11</sup>	\$196,000.00	98	\$5,635.00	1	\$156,108.00	374	\$357,743.00	473
C. Percentage <sup>12</sup> (C=B/A*100)							110%	
<b>2023 Payments</b>	\$180,500.00	91	\$5,635.00	1	\$135,280.44	291	\$321,415.44	383

## 6. Eligibility Requirements

### 6.1 Indigenous Education Strategy

[CQUniversity's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024](#) includes a commitment to a First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy. Specifically, the focus is on growing student enrolments in all degree categories and improving student retention and completions through dedicated engagement and innovative learning and teaching. This strategy responds to Action 12: Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes by increasing the access, participation and completion of programs and degrees, and more specifically Action 12.1: Finalise and commence implementing the First Nations Education Strategy 2022-2025.

In 2023, the Office of Indigenous Engagement undertook a review of the strategy including consultation sessions with various departments and schools within the University. The redesigned draft document was retitled to '**First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy 2024-2028**' to better reflect the focus on First Nations students' location within the Teaching and Learning exchange across Higher Education and Vocation Education, including those enrolled in non-award courses. By early December 2023 this strategy was fully redesigned and further consultations have commenced. Subject to the consultation phase, it is anticipated that the Draft First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy 2024-2028 will be submitted to Curriculum Committee for endorsement to Academic Board, and then to the University Management Committee (UMC) for final approval by June 2024, to be implemented in the second half of 2024.

The strategy focuses on the following:

- What is the problem?
- What does the performance data over the recent decade say around First Nations enrolments and completions?
- What does this performance suggest about the nature of the problem against key institutional variables?

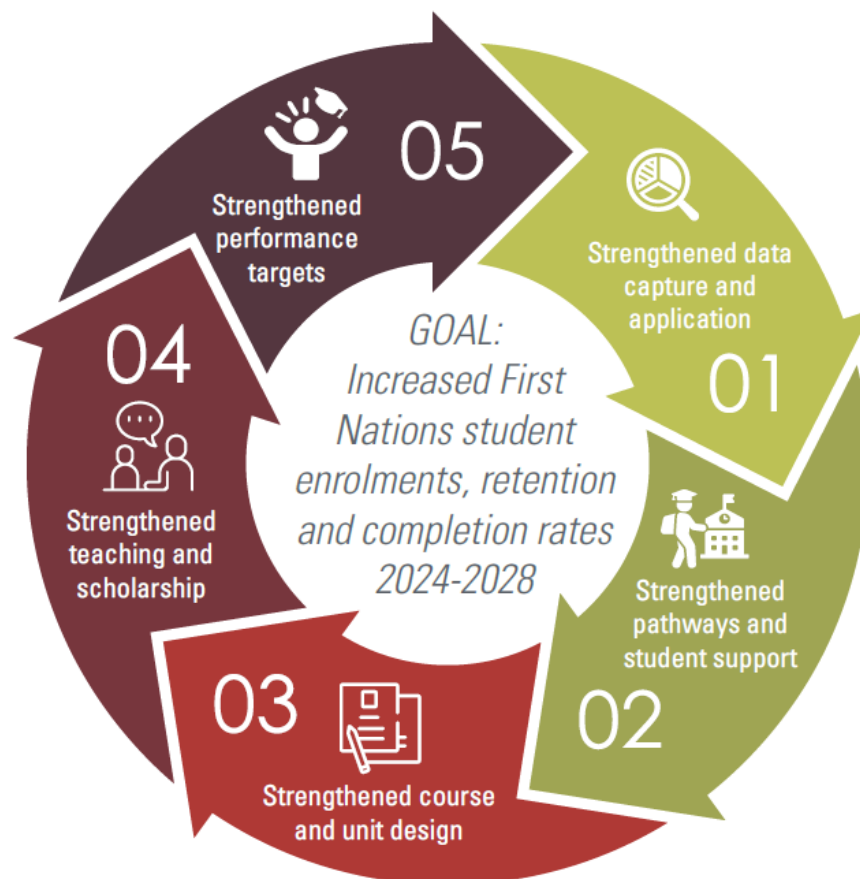
- What is a functional response design that can be practically implemented across the Schools in ways that value-add to progressive responses?
- What reliable method can be sourced in building targets?

Further, the Draft First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy 2024-2028 has several key design features. These include:

- The overall design looks more closely at the teaching/learning exchange where students succeed or not.
- The strategy is couched within a Learning and Teaching sub-committee at Tertiary Education Division level, reporting via Tertiary Education Advisory Committee.
- The paradigm behind the strategy seeks to fill in the gaps in respect to what are presumed steps and what is actually happening across CQUniversity.
- Figure 2 (p.16 of the strategy) below provides an overview of the design, which has been placed within an action learning/research design. The key elements arrived out of a synthesis of consultations to date.
- A key outcome of the data targets within the strategy is to bring First Nations students to the foreground and when this happens within an action learning/research design (shown below), visibility and accountability are strengthened against a functional roadmap. A key element of the targets is that this will enable more nuanced and operationalised responses to emerge through the internal institutional tensions and competing priorities.

Figure 2

**Strengthening First Nations student performance through an action learning and research framework.**



CQUniversity's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate attributes were formally embedded into the University's Academic Information Management System in mid-2022, and all new courses or those being updated

are required to specifically address how they incorporated First Nations knowledge within curriculum. By the end of 2023, an additional 13 courses had been approved or renewed to include this information. All CQUniversity online units include an Acknowledgement of Country within the Learning Management System.

In 2023, cultural competency micro-credentials for students were delivered via CQUniversity's online 'Be Different' platform, and a Professional Certificate in First Nations Learning, History, and Culture was also approved by Curriculum Committee as a non-award micro-credential.

The University meets its requirements under Section 13 of the ISSP Guidelines through the following programs:

- Established linkages with schools and VET providers to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enrol at CQUniversity. This is evidenced by staff attendance at Indigenous careers expos, University open days and programs undertaken by the CQUni Connect and Indigenous Student Success teams.
- Indigenous student outreach and well-being and support is embedded throughout the university through the provision of enabling programs, tutorial assistance and the employment of Indigenous Student Engagement Officers, the Office of Indigenous Engagement staff, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Team, and the Indigenous Scholarships Officer.
- The Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy that continues to grow and develop First Nations RHD students and their supervisors.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Attributes that are embedded in the Student Graduate Attributes policy.
- A standardised template for online courses that enables an Acknowledgement of Country in the introduction tile for all units offered online at CQUniversity.
- The CQUniversity Acknowledgement to Country videos, podcasts and palm cards.
- The online First Nations Cultural Competency Training for staff.
- NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week and celebration of other significant days.
- The use of dual language signs on the Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Brisbane campuses. Murals painted on Rockhampton North, Mackay Ooralea and Bundaberg campus buildings and Yarning Circles situated on the Bundaberg, Mackay Ooralea and Rockhampton North campuses.
- Culturally safe indoor spaces at Townsville, Rockhampton and Mackay campuses.
- The Billabong Camp motif has been utilised in briefs, advertising, presentations and on campuses to promote Indigenous culture and symbolism.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks that have been acquired and displayed across all CQUniversity campuses.

## 6.1 Indigenous Workforce Strategy 2020 to 2025

The [First Nations Workforce Strategy 2020-2025](#) is a whole-of-university approach aimed to reflect parity across the geographic and demographic catchments of the University's national footprint. In November 2023 the Office of Indigenous Engagement commenced a review of the strategy. The review is timely with the release of new key documents such as:

[CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2024-2028 We Change Lives](#)

[Central Queensland University Enterprise Agreement 2023](#)

[CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan July 2022-July 2024](#)

The review included a consultation session engaging members of the University's leadership teams and gathering insights, feedback and suggestions. ensuring a collaborative and inclusive approach.

Once the internal review is completed, the updated First Nations Workforce Strategy will be submitted to both the First Nations Success Strategies Committee and Joint Consultative Committee for endorsement, then to the University Management Committee for final approval. The updated document should receive approval by end of May 2024 and will be made publicly available.

These progressive steps not only signify CQUniversity's commitment to the First Nations Workforce Strategy but also reflect the University's dedication to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all members of our community. The University is optimistic that the First Nations Workforce Strategy will contribute significantly to the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the University workforce.

In 2022, the University employed a dedicated full-time First Nations Employment Officer. This University-funded position is responsible for coordinating, reporting on implementation and assisting with achieving outcomes as outlined within the [First Nations Workforce Strategy](#), the [CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024](#) and the [CQUniversity Strategic Plan](#). The Officer provides regular updates and six-monthly progress reports to the First Nations Success Strategy Committee, which are shared with the Joint Consultative Committee and the University Management Committee.

All of the KPIs from the First Nations Workforce Strategy have been included in the RAP, with some additional activities including encouraging professional development and career advancement, targeted recruitment programs, and reviewing Human Resources policies to remove barriers to participation. All RAP actions/deliverables include KPIs for all executive members (Vice-Chancellor and President, Vice-Presidents), as well as Deputy Vice-Presidents, Directors, Deans and Deputy Deans, and staff in management positions.

The [First Nations Employment webpage](#) contains information for prospective First Nations staff and encourages job applicants or employees to contact the First Nations Employment Officer for further assistance.

Table 12 shows the numbers (headcount) of First Nations staff from 2022 to 2023 (data as at 4 December 2023).

**Table 12** Number of First Nations staff employed at CQUniversity 2021-2023

Year	Continuing		Fixed Term/Casual		Total
	Academic/Teaching	Professional	Academic/Teaching	Professional	
2021	6	12	15	26	59
2022	6	18	20	30	74
2023	9	17	26	36	88

The number of First Nations staff steadily rose from 59 in 2021, to 74 in 2022 and to 88 in 2023. On-going recruitment restrictions caused by the budgetary impacts of COVID-19 continue to be a barrier to reaching the 3.2% target. First Nations continuing academic staff numbers have grown by nine in 2023 compared to 2022, and fixed term numbers have increased year on year.

The Talent Acquisition team has played a crucial role in advocating for the consideration of external Indigenous candidates when filling internal vacancies within CQUniversity. They have been instrumental in fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion within the recruitment process by actively engaging with hiring managers to discuss the benefits of considering external Indigenous candidates. Other reasons for increases include:

- People and Culture diversifying their networks to advertise roles in various Indigenous and community print media, social media platforms and increased professional and Indigenous community networks to ensure more coverage.
- Staff consistently encouraging First Nations community members to apply for all CQUniversity roles, not only Identified roles.
- Internal only vacancies being open to external First Nations applicants.

- First Nations Employment Officer attending Divisional Leadership meetings to promote First Nations Employment and identifying employment opportunities.
- Including at least one Indigenous panel member in all interviews of known-to-be-Indigenous candidates, ensuring culturally sensitive and inclusive assessment processes.
- Completion of the First Nations Onboarding Package which was specifically tailored to new First Nations employees.

In 2023, the First Nations Talent Pool has expanded to encourage applications from all First Nations peoples who are interested in working for CQUniversity. This database includes detailed information about candidate's qualifications, expertise, employment preferences and availability, enabling hiring managers to easily access information through the Talent Acquisition Team and review potential candidates for relevant job openings. Candidates within the Talent Pool can also request support and guidance from the First Nations Employment Officer throughout the recruitment process. This may include assistance with resumé writing, interview preparation, and navigating the University's employment procedures, ensuring that candidates are well-prepared and supported in their job search endeavours.

The First Nations Workforce Strategy is committed to nurturing CQUniversity's Indigenous staff, alumni, and current students through to postgraduate studies and into academic roles, representing a key initiative within the University's broader efforts to develop and recruit academic staff. The strategy aims for a five per cent increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who hold a vocational or tertiary qualification. To further support this action and encourage career development, the University has included support within the new [Central Queensland University Enterprise Agreement 2023](#) as per below:

*In order to facilitate progression of existing Indigenous employees who wish to pursue careers in Academia or VET Education, the University provides staff study support for the requisite training qualifications including the Graduate Certificate Tertiary and Adult Education and/or Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (howsoever named) through CQUniversity. Upon successful completion of the above and as availability arises, existing Indigenous employees will be eligible to apply for suitable vacancies and be considered on a merit basis.*

This approach, often referred to as "Grow our Own", aims to cultivate talent from within the University's First Nations alumni pool, particularly in competitive fields of expertise in research and academia such as health and education.

### 6.3 Indigenous Governance Mechanism

CQUniversity meets the Indigenous Governance Mechanism responsibilities through the First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC). The FNSSC currently has a membership of ten with eight members identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, including the Chair, Deputy Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, Professor Adrian Miller, and the Deputy Chair, Dr Thomas Doering. Members include staff from the University's senior executive and management, senior academics and professionals, and the First Nations Employment Officer, with union representatives also in attendance where First Nations Workforce Strategy matters are being addressed. The FNSSC meets approximately every 2 months, with additional meetings scheduled for matters requiring specific attention. The FNSSC holds key decision-making responsibility and authority for advising, recommending and monitoring use of ISSP grant funding, with these responsibilities clearly articulated within the FNSSC Terms of Reference. The Committee's Terms of Reference are publicly available [here](#).

The FNSSC held seven meetings throughout 2023, and membership attendance remains high. In addition to the standard items for discussion listed in previous ISSP reports and the improvements made by the committee as outlined below, the committee also considered the following items:

- Providing support for a Review of First Nations Policy within CQUniversity.



- Attending the NIAA Review of ISSP Guidelines Workshop.
- First Nations Workforce Strategy matters, including commencement of a review of the strategy.
- Discussed, recommended and approved remote area placement bursaries for First Nations students.
- Monitored and reviewed policy development including:
  - Monitoring Academic Progress Policy
  - Workplace Harassment, Workplace Bullying and Unlawful Discrimination Policy and Procedure
  - Equity Policy.
- Increased monitoring of ISSP funded projects, including Scholarships and Social and Emotional Wellbeing.
- Commenced an in-depth analysis of the impact of ISSP-funded Scholarships on First Nations student success.

A self-evaluation survey undertaken by members provided an opportunity to review the committee's performance and suggest areas for improvement. Survey results indicated the majority of respondents felt that the committee performed very well against its terms of reference and there was high satisfaction regarding the secretariate support. Suggestions for improvement included developing a policy review process to assist both committee members and other departments within the University.

### **Activities that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decisions of the University, curriculum development and or evaluation /review**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are involved in a range of decision-making processes at CQUniversity. The Deputy Vice-President (Indigenous Engagement) currently holds the following roles:

- Member, University Council
- Chair, Student Equity and Amenities Funding Committee
- Co-Chair, Reconciliation Action Plan Committee
- Member, Academic Promotions Committee
- Ex-officio member of the University Management Committee
- Ex-officio member of the Academic Board
- Ex-officio member of the Human Research Ethics Committee
- Nominated member of the Research Committee
- Co-Director of CQUniversity's Jawun Research Centre
- Director of Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy.

Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from throughout the University are active participants in a range of other decision-making activities at CQUniversity including:

- Member of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
- Two members of the Curriculum Committee
- Member of the Education Strategy and Innovation Committee
- Representation on scholarship and job recruitment panels
- Support for activities associated with representation within the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)
- Campus Life Committees for several CQUniversity campuses
- Membership of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)
- Representation in lead roles in the Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy.

The Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan also has a dedicated action to 'Ensure active participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and representatives in CQUniversity's institutional decision-making and planning processes.' The below details current representation:

- The First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) (renamed First Nations Advisory Council in April 2024), whose membership is entirely Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- Representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the Reconciliation Action Plan Committee through membership of three external community representatives, including the Chair, FNCEL.
- First Nations representation within the membership of the University Council.
- First Nations representation on the Student Representative Council
- First Nations Vocational and Educational Training Representative and First Nations Academic Representative required on Curriculum Committee.

### **6.3.1 Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism**

The First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC) continues to improve its overview of ISSP-funded programs and strategies through regular process reviews and improved strategic direction.

Its influence in University-wide programs and policies that support First Nations students, staff and communities has broadened through its increased consultative role in the review of policies and offer of ISSP funded services and products that are incorporated into general business University-wide.

The adoption of the CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024 has provided a vehicle for the University to demonstrate its commitment to delivering education, training and research that empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The ISSP funded programs overseen by the FNSSC contribute significantly to the achievement of the Reconciliation Action Plan actions.

I look forward to working with the Committee as it continues to encourage and oversee successful and innovative programs and products aimed at providing rewarding and culturally safe study, employment and engagement experiences for First Nations staff, students and the wider community.

Professor Adrian Miller, Chair - First Nations Success Strategies Committee, Deputy Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, BHP Chair in Indigenous Engagement, Co-Director of the Jawun Research Centre and Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy. Email: [dvpe@cq.edu](mailto:dvpe@cq.edu)

## Additional information for completing the template.

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

<sup>4</sup> Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

<sup>5</sup> Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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