

DIVERSITY, GENDER AND EQUITY IN PRACTICE



BE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE
cqu.edu.au



Introduction	3
Diversity at CQUniversity	4
Gender Diversity	6
First Nations.....	8
People Living with Disabilities	11
Low Socio-Economic Status	12

Introduction

CQUniversity is deeply committed to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and diverse environment where all students can thrive. The university diligently tracks student success metrics by cohort type to identify emerging disparities and to inform strategic improvements. The university collects detailed data on student demographics through the application and enrolment process, ensuring that key equity groups, such as gender, Indigenous status, socio-economic background, and disability, are accurately represented. This data is then analysed through the DataSmart platform, which allows for comprehensive tracking of student success metrics, including attrition, retention, and completion rates.

This data not only aids in internal evaluation but is also reported to the Australian Government, ensuring transparency and accountability. By analyzing this information, CQUniversity can refine its strategies to better support underrepresented student groups and to close equity gaps. The university's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion are underpinned by targeted programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing student experiences and outcomes, ensuring that all learners, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed.

The data is reported to the Australian Government and is publicly available through the links below. To explore CQUniversity's results, click on a link below, select the type of information to explore on the left-hand side of the screen, then search for CQUniversity:

- Cohort analysis- completion rates
- Attrition, retention and success rates
- Equity performance data
- More information is available on the Department of Education website.

Diversity at CQUniversity

CQUniversity prides itself as being one of Australia’s most inclusive universities. As a leading regional university in Australia, CQU is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community where students from all walks of life can succeed. Our student body is a rich reflection of this commitment, drawing individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, and experiences.

In 2023, the university's student cohort was made up of the following:

- 59% female- 4% were females in a non-traditional areas
- 3% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island origin
- 3% were from a non-English speaking background
- 5% identified as living with a disability
- 16% were the first in their family to attend university
- 19% from low socio-economic status

This diverse composition is not only celebrated but actively supported through strategic programs and initiatives designed to enhance access, retention, and success for all students. Through its inclusive approach, CQUniversity strives to ensure that every student, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to thrive in their academic journey.

The following data tables present the percentage of students who have identified as belonging to one or more relevant student equity groups. This information, collected and analyzed through our internal DataSmart system, is continuously tracked and monitored. It plays a crucial role in shaping strategies aimed at enhancing the student experience, while also improving retention and completion rates for the diverse cohorts of learners at CQUniversity. These insights allow us to make informed decisions that support our commitment to fostering equity and inclusion across the university.

<i>Student Equity Group</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>
Yes	84.38	86.19	87.73	88.5
No	15.62	13.81	12.27	11.5

Table 1.1 – Students that are part of a student equity group by year

<i>Socio-Economic Status</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>
Low SES	37.31	38.36	38.69	39.48
Not Low SES	62.52	61.54	61.17	59.96

Table 1.2- Percentage of students that are low socioeconomic by year

Non-English Speaking Background	2021	2022	2023	2024
Yes	5.32	5.46	6.29	6.97
No	94.61	94.43	93.6	92.91

Table 1.3- Percentage of students that are from non-English speaking background by year

<i>Regional or Remote</i>	2021	2022	2023	2024
Yes	67.25	68.87	69.93	70.75
No	32.34	30.8	29.74	28.56

Table 1.4- Percentage of students that live in regional or remote areas by year

Gender Diversity

Tracking gender and equity diversity at CQUniversity is crucial for ensuring that our institution promotes an inclusive and equitable environment for all students. In 2024, female students accounted for 63% of the total student population, reflecting strong overall representation. However, there is a notable decline in female completions, with women representing 66% of the completion rate, indicating the need for further support to improve retention and success.

Additionally, women in non-traditional areas, such as STEM fields, comprised only 8.54% in 2023, down from 8.75% in 2021. This trend highlights the importance of targeted initiatives to encourage and support female students in traditionally male-dominated areas. Promoting gender equity in all fields is essential for fostering a more diverse and dynamic learning environment at CQUniversity.

<i>Student cohort by Gender</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Female- all</i>	19242	17717	19306	20084	63
<i>Male- all</i>	11920	11415	12244	11903	37
<i>Female- commencing</i>	7219	6354	5994	5725	62
<i>Male- commencing</i>	3113	3991	4142	3544	38
<i>Female- completion</i>	3277	2792	2686		66
<i>Male- completion</i>	2176	1381	1383		34

Table 2.1- Number of female vs male students per year, and percentage of most recent year

<i>Women in Non-Traditional Areas (%)</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>Yes</i>	8.75	8.67	8.54	8.02
<i>Not applicable</i>	31.04	30.35	29.29	28.51
<i>No</i>	59.96	60.75	61.76	63.05

Table 2.2- Percentage of female students in non-traditional areas by year

CQUniversity is actively working to increase female participation in non-traditional fields, such as STEM, through a range of targeted programs and initiatives. Programs like the Women in STEM Ambassador Program and STEM Girls provide mentorship, hands-on learning experiences, and networking opportunities to encourage more women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Additionally, initiatives such as scholarships for women in engineering and coding workshops aim to break down barriers and create supportive pathways for female students in these fields. By fostering an inclusive culture and providing resources for success, CQUniversity is committed to closing the gender gap and empowering women to thrive in traditionally male-dominated disciplines.

Despite the challenges in certain areas, the overall retention and success rates for female students are higher than those for their male counterparts. In 2021, female students had a success rate of 80.18%, compared to 76.27% for male students, reflecting the positive impact of gender equity initiatives across the university. Retention rates also favour female students, with a 78.44% retention rate in 2020, compared to 75.33% for male students. These statistics demonstrate that CQUniversity's efforts to support female students are yielding results, particularly in terms of overall participation and academic success.

Moving forward, CQUniversity remains dedicated to addressing the gender disparities that persist, particularly in STEM fields. By promoting gender equity and providing tailored support to female students, the university aims to empower women to succeed across all disciplines, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive academic community.

<i>Retention (%)</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Indeterminate/ Intersex/ Unspecified</i>	<i>Male</i>
2020	78.44	60.00	75.33
2019	78.88	64.29	75.00
2018	75.85	100.00	72.88
2017	76.49	40.00	72.98
2016	78.09	Not reported	73.779

Table 2.3- Percentage of domestic bachelor students by gender by year who returned after the first year of study.

<i>Success (%)</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Indeterminate /Intersex/ Unspecified</i>	<i>Male</i>
2021	80.18	36.84	76.27
2020	81.84	63.64	78.12
2019	80.41	73.61	76.36
2018	78.34	100.00	74.00
2017	78.85	41.18	73.86

Table 2.3- Unit of study pass rate for domestic bachelor students by gender by year

First Nations

CQUniversity demonstrates a strong commitment to reducing inequalities for First Nations students by actively tracking and improving their participation and success rates. In 2024, Indigenous students represented 6.26% of the total student population, marking an increase from 5.18% in 2021. This steady rise reflects the university’s ongoing efforts to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for Indigenous students. Importantly, alongside this increase, there has been a significant reduction in the percentage of students who prefer not to disclose their Indigenous status, from 3.25% in 2021 to 2.1% in 2024. This positive trend suggests that students are becoming more comfortable identifying as First Nations, demonstrating their growing trust in the university’s commitment to Indigenous recognition and support.

(%)	2021	2022	2023	2024
<i>Indigenous</i>	5.18	5.64	5.81	6.26
<i>Non-Indigenous</i>	71.38	69.55	67.19	64.34
<i>Not specified</i>	20.19	21.8	24.47	27.3
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	3.25	3	2.53	2.1

Table 3.1- Percentage of students identified as indigenous by year

In addition to increasing enrolment, CQUniversity is working to address the complex issues surrounding the retention and success rates of Indigenous students. While retention rates for Indigenous students have improved over recent years, they still lag behind their non-Indigenous peers. For example, Indigenous student retention was 77.29% in 2020, compared to 87.31% for non-Indigenous students. Furthermore, success rates, which refer to the proportion of subjects passed by Indigenous students, remain a key challenge. In 2021, the success rate for Indigenous students was 62.48%, compared to 79.86% for non-Indigenous students, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to close this gap.

<i>Retention (%)</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>
2020	77.29	87.31
2019	76.45	86.77
2018	73.76	85.36
2017	72.37	85.03
2016	75.42	85.55

Table 3.2- Percentage of domestic bachelor students by Indigenous status by year who returned after the first year of study.

<i>Success (%)</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>
<i>2021</i>	62.48	79.86
<i>2020</i>	59.78	81.73
<i>2019</i>	66.45	79.70
<i>2018</i>	65.33	77.52
<i>2017</i>	71.25	77.43

Table 3.3- Unit of study pass rate for domestic bachelor students by Indigenous status by year

As part of its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), CQUniversity has implemented several strategic initiatives aimed at improving the educational outcomes for First Nations students. One of these key initiatives is the Nunbal Wayu symposium. The symposium's name, "Nunbal Wayu," is a Jirrbal language phrase meaning "teaching to transform," and it reflects the event's goal of addressing the comparatively low course completion rates of First Nations students. The symposium will bring together university staff to explore the internal and external factors that impact Indigenous student performance, with a focus on developing strategies to enhance both higher education and vocational training outcomes.

The symposium is also a direct response to the Australian Universities Accord – Final Report 2024, which calls for significant improvements in enrolment, retention, and course completion rates for equity groups, especially First Nations students, by 2035. The event will focus on two key goals: first, to better understand the patterns of Indigenous student performance and how they relate to the university's teaching and student support services; and second, to develop actionable steps that will strengthen CQUniversity's efforts to close the educational gap for First Nations students, particularly in north Queensland.

CQUniversity's commitment to Indigenous students is further demonstrated through its broad range of support services, including the Indigenous Student Support Team, which provides culturally safe and personalized assistance, such as academic mentoring and tutoring. The Gunggari Indigenous Student Engagement Program also offers networking, leadership development, and cultural activities to foster a sense of community among Indigenous students. These initiatives, along with targeted scholarships and financial assistance, are crucial in helping reduce financial and academic barriers for First Nations students.

With more than two thousand First Nations enrolments across Vocational Education and Higher Education in 2023, CQUniversity is seeing increasing engagement from Indigenous communities. However, the university acknowledges that further efforts are needed to improve course completion rates. By hosting the Nunbal Wayu symposium and implementing long-term strategies such as the Draft First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy (2024–2028), CQUniversity is committed to making substantial progress in reducing inequalities and ensuring success for its First Nations students.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

July 2022-July 2024

DRAFT FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION & STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGY

2024 - 2028

OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

NUNBAL WAYU

SYMPOSIUM 2024

TEACHING TO CHANGE & TRANSFORM

Key Presentations & Workshops

Day 1

Dr Karen D'Aiety Lecturer Indigenous Studies - Education, School of Education and the Arts	Dr Michele Wolfe Deputy Dean Learning & Teaching HMAS Leadership Team, School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences	Anne Braund Head of Services/ Associate Lecturer, School of Access Education	Dr Vicki Pascoe Lecturer Indigenous Studies - Arts, School of Education and the Arts

Day 2

Kay Pearson Teacher Horticulture, Applied Sciences, School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences	Dr Bethany Mackay Chief Wellbeing Officer Counselling, Wellbeing and Safer Communities	Mel Taggart Project Officer Indigenous Student Wellbeing Counselling, Wellbeing and Safer Communities	Thalep Ahmat Therapeutic Caseworker Indigenous Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counselling, Wellbeing and Safer Communities

Dr Trixie James Lecturer School of Access Education	Laurence Armstrong Associate Lecturer School of Access Education	Dr Fiona Wirror-George Lecturer First Nations Research Office of Indigenous Engagement	Madeline Stewart Lecturer First Nations Studies Office of Indigenous Engagement

(workshops available face to face only, Rockhampton campus)
12 - 13 NOVEMBER 2024

People Living with Disabilities

CQUniversity is committed to supporting students with disabilities by carefully tracking and monitoring their participation and success rates. In 2024, 9.53% of the student population identified as having a disability, a slight increase from 8.91% in 2021. The university continues to enhance accessibility and provide tailored support services to ensure these students can fully engage in their studies. Additionally, the percentage of students whose disability status is unknown has significantly decreased, from 16.63% in 2021 to just 3.23% in 2024, demonstrating the university’s efforts to better understand and address the needs of students with disabilities. This data helps CQUniversity refine its strategies to foster an inclusive environment for all students.

<i>Students with a disability (%)</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>Yes</i>	8.91	9.42	9.61	9.53
<i>No</i>	74.46	82.17	85.24	87.24
<i>Unknown</i>	16.63	8.41	5.15	3.23

CQUniversity offers a wide range of support services to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to education and opportunities. The Inclusion and Accessibility Service provides tailored support plans, including reasonable adjustments for assessments, specialized learning resources, and access to assistive technology. Students can also receive one-on-one support through Disability Advisors, who help coordinate accommodations like note-taking, alternative exam arrangements, and physical accessibility solutions. In addition, programs like peer mentoring and well-being workshops are designed to enhance the student experience, promoting a supportive and inclusive campus for students with diverse needs. These services empower students with disabilities to thrive academically and personally during their time at CQUniversity.



Low Socio-Economic Status

The retention and success rates for students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds at CQUniversity have shown consistent improvement over the years, though they remain lower than those of their peers from high SES backgrounds. In 2020, the retention rate for low SES students was 83.84%, compared to 90.37% for high SES students. Similarly, the success rate—defined as the proportion of subjects passed—was 83.84% for low SES students, slightly lower than the 90.37% success rate for high SES students. This data highlights the ongoing challenges faced by low SES students in maintaining academic success and staying enrolled, underscoring the importance of targeted support initiatives.

To address these challenges and reduce financial barriers to education, CQUniversity offers a variety of support services tailored to low SES students. Scholarships are available to assist with tuition and living costs, while initiatives like the CQUni Cares fundraisers provide additional financial aid to students in need. The university also offers free services such as academic mentoring, counseling, and well-being programs to ensure that all students, regardless of their financial background, can access the resources they need to succeed. These programs play a critical role in helping low SES students overcome barriers and improve their retention and success rates.

<i>Retention (%)</i>	<i>High SES</i>	<i>Low SES</i>	<i>Medium SES</i>	<i>SES Not Available</i>
2020	90.37	83.84	86.23	88.85
2019	89.52	84.28	85.61	89.39
2018	88.23	82.55	84.26	88.67
2017	88.00	82.00	83.91	88.08
2016	88.25	83.18	84.45	87.83

<i>Success (%)</i>	<i>High SES</i>	<i>Low SES</i>	<i>Medium SES</i>	<i>SES Not Available</i>
2020	90.37	83.84	86.23	88.85
2019	89.52	84.28	85.61	89.39
2018	88.23	82.55	84.26	88.67
2017	88.00	82.00	83.91	88.08
2016	88.25	83.18	84.45	87.83