

CQUniversity Australia Indigenous Student Success Program



Indigenous Student Success Program

2024 Performance Report



Organisation: CQUniversity Australia

Contact Person: Professor Adrian Miller

Phone: 07 4726 5382

Email: vp-oie@cqu.edu.au

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 and supportive university, connecting our regions to the world through innovative education, training and research excellence'. Through [CQUniversity's Strategic Plan 2024-2028 We Change Lives](#), 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 training and higher education. Our aim is to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by increasing access to education, training and research for First Nations peoples and providing the support systems for success. The strategies, programs and partnerships reflected in this report demonstrate the progress made in 2024.

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

CQUniversity experienced a minor decrease in First Nations student enrolments in 2024, with four less students enrolled compared to the previous year. This decrease is reflective of the softening in the domestic demand that can be largely attributed to the high cost of living and the strong labour market conditions.

The data shows that in 2024, the greatest number of commencing students fell into the 15 to 19 year age group within enabling courses. The undergraduate level was evenly distributed in the 15 to 19 year, 20 to 24 year, and 25 to 29 year age groups. The postgraduate level also saw evenly distributed numbers in the 20 to 24 year, 25 to 29 year, and 30 to 34 year age groups. Of commencing students, 362 identified as female, 97 students identified as male and one was unspecified.

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

Table 1: Commencing First Nations student data 2022 to 2024.

	Enabling	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Total
2022	131	302	62	495
2023	107	291	66	464
2024	150	256	54	460

2.1.1 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Progress continued with delivering on CQUniversity's [Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022 – 2024](#) (RAP). The RAP encourages a holistic approach to reconciliation in which the 18 actions and 175 deliverables are approached as mutually supportive and together advance Indigenous programs across the University. The development of CQUniversity's Stretch RAP commenced in February 2024 and formal endorsement from both Reconciliation Australia and CQUniversity is expected in early 2025.

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.

Key achievements during 2024 include the approval of the First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy 2024-2028 and the Cultural Safe Space and Place Guidelines, and delivery of cultural competency training as well as master classes on embedding First Nations Curriculum and Research.

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 2024 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 I in Construction
- Certificate III in Education Support
- 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
- Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice
- Diploma of Project Management
- Bachelor of Nursing

CQUniversity also secured Queensland Government funding to deliver the Rural and Remote Pilot in 2025 which will consist of the following courses:

- Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways
- Certificate III in Community Services
- Certificate III in Individual Support
- Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Student must identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander)
- Certificate III in Health Services Assistance

2.1.3 Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS)

In 2024, 175 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in CQUniversity's **Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS)** course. This was an increase of 10 students more than the previous year, and the proportion of First Nations students as part of the overall cohort slightly increased to 12.04%, compared to that of 10.6% in 2023. Of the 175 students, 14 students successfully completed their studies in either Term 1 or Term 2. A further 35 students are due to complete at the end of Term 3 (in February 2025), and 47 students are planning to continue the course through 2025. A total of 80 students withdrew from the course, however based on feedback received it is expected that some of these students will return to study when their personal circumstances permit. Overall, online enrolments were slightly higher with 104 students enrolled online compared to 71 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 has

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)

In 2024 the first cohort of three First Nations students in the **Bachelor of Medical Science - Pathway to Medicine** (Regional Medical Pathway) graduated and transitioned to the University of Queensland under the CQU-UQ Collaboration Agreement. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

The third cohort started their journey in the Regional Medical Pathway (RMP) in March 2024, however there were unfortunately no First Nations successful applicants. To address the lack of enrolments, CQUniversity has now opened this course to allow mature age entry. Welcome Events were held on 4 March in Rockhampton and 6 March in Bundaberg, with addresses to welcome and inspire the students from all partners (The University of Queensland [UQ], Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service [WBHHS], and Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service) including the President and Vice-President of the CQU Medical Society.

The RMP is committed to supporting these students by arranging and sponsoring activities such as:

- CQU students attending UQ Indigenous Medical Students' events and NAIDOC Week celebrations,
- Mentoring opportunities by Indigenous General Practitioners 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.

As part of the Pathway to Medicine three-year curriculum, the health, history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are embedded in all subjects. Students learn about culturally safe care to better understand how to partner and collaborate to meet health needs and improve health outcomes for First Nations people. In addition, as part of their Immersive Learning Experiences, students are placed in units such as the WBHHS First Nations Health Unit in Hervey Bay.

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

The RMP partners have collaboratively drafted and implemented a strategy to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applications and students in the course. One initiative was to amend the entry requirements to accept mature-age students instead of only Year 12 school leavers, and this change has been welcomed in the community. People who have left school and followed a different career trajectory, due to a lack of options for studying medicine in the regions, can now follow their passion and study medicine locally.

2.1.5 Dare2BeDeadly (D2BD) Student Journey

The **Dare2BeDeadly (D2BD) Student Journey** delivered by the Indigenous Student Engagement team assists students to succeed in their studies from first enrolment to graduation.

In 2024 the program delivered 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. Staff from Student Services also attended the sessions to promote relevant services including Accessibility & Equity, Counselling & Wellbeing, Scholarships, Academic Learning and Alumni to encourage students to access services and be aware of mentoring options both during and after the completion of their studies.

The program utilises a case management approach assisted by the University customer relationship management (CRM) system where staff's daily engagements are recorded to understand student needs, both inbound enquiries and proactive outbound support.

In 2024, the D2BD Student Journey recorded 4,011 conversion interactions for acceptance of offers, of which 2,143 students have enrolled or re-enrolled into CQUniversity.

The Indigenous Student Engagement team successfully conducted 5,430 support interactions, providing comprehensive support to students. This support included assistance with letters of extensions, academic progression, leave from study, personalised study plans and facilitating access to subject materials and coursework via the University's learning resources platform "Moodle".

Furthermore, the team made several referrals to enhance student support to the following support teams:

- Academic Learning Centre – provides academic assistance and support,
- Social and Emotional Wellbeing Team – provides counselling, social, emotional, and wellbeing support,
- Accessibility & Equity Team – provides support for inclusive education needs,
- Careers Team – provides career professional development and support with resumé development,
- Student Advocacy Team – provides support with student rights and advice.

Additionally, the team provided support with the Confirmation of Identity process, facilitated referrals for scholarship opportunities, and actively advocated on behalf of students for the review of grades, ensuring fair academic assessment and support.

The framework behind the program is evidenced based on the 5P's model for the transition, participation and retention of students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Kalsbeek, 2013¹; Wood, Gray- Ganter and Bailey, 2016²). The 5P's include **Profile** for students' personal circumstances, finances and support network, **Preparedness** and readiness to undertake study, **Promise** expectation of their university, **Process** awareness of university processes and be able to confidently navigate university systems for success, and **Progress** regular feedback around their experiences on how well the University monitors and supports their studies through to completion.

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.

The **Buralaigm Weiber** (meaning 'place of learning' in Gooreng Gooreng) program continued to engage with and support Years Three and Four Indigenous students from Gladstone West State School. Throughout the year, students benefited from excursions and 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 Queensland Government. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

A total of 20 First Nations Year Eight students from Gladstone attended an annual four-day **Yallarm (place of shells) Monadelphous Indigenous STEM camp**. The program is delivered by CQUniversity and is funded by Monadelphous. It aims to give students a taste of a future STEM career. Students engaged in a series of science, cultural and technology activities that included a visit to CQU's Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre (CMERC). CQUniNews story available [here](#).

The **Mantana Indigenous Girls Academy Leadership Camp** hosted 32 First Nations Year Eight students from Mt Morgan State High School and Baralaba State School, who attended an annual three-day leadership camp at CQU Rockhampton campus in partnership with the Mantana Foundation for Young People. The Leadership Camp aims to encourage First Nations women to stay in school, and support retention, health and wellbeing, and workplace

¹ Kalsbeek, D.H, (2013) *Reframing Retention Strategy for Institutional Improvement: New Directions for Higher Education*, Number 161, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco

² Wood, D., Gray-Ganter, G. and Bailey, R. (2016) 'Pre-commencement interviews to support transition and retention of first year undergraduate students', *Student Success*. Queensland University of Technology, 7(2), pp. 21–31.

readiness. Students attended several experiences aimed at building confidence and aspirations, enabling them to make active choices and discover their full potential. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

The **BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA)** and CQUniversity further progressed their strategic community partnership under which First Nations student scholarships, community research and a First Nations leadership position at CQUniversity are supported until 2028. CQUniNews story available [here](#).

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

The **Whanu Binal Program** continued to support aspiring and emerging First Nations entrepreneurs through online sessions, yarns and mentoring. The program is funded by Arrow Energy. CQUniNews stories available [here](#) and [here](#).

The **Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre (CMERC)** continues to foster mutual learning and capacity-building through strong partnerships with Traditional Owners across Queensland, integrating First Nations knowledge and research expertise in seagrass restoration. Through collaborations with Gidarjil Development Corporation Sea Rangers in the Gladstone and Bundaberg regions, the Ngaro Traditional Owners in the Whitsundays, the Koinmerburra People in the Isaac Region, and the Woppaburra People on Konomie Island, CMERC supports on-the-job training, knowledge exchange, and technical skills development in seagrass nursery operations and restoration practice.

CMERC now hosts two full-time First Nations Sea Rangers seconded from Gidarjil Development Corporation, who are actively involved in developing seagrass restoration protocols and nursery management techniques. Both are enrolled in a Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, gaining formal qualifications alongside hands-on experience. Aunty Marky Sullivan, one of the secondees, not only oversees nursery operations and seed processing but also leads tours and mentors students. In recognition of her contributions, she received the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Person of the Year Award at the Gladstone NAIDOC Awards in July 2024.

In September 2024, CMERC seagrass researchers and Gidarjil secondee Aunty Marky Sullivan attended the YILUM knowledge exchange week, where over 30 Woppaburra Traditional Owners participated in discussions on seagrass meadows, nursery operations, and species identification. This event reinforced the cultural and ecological significance of seagrass and strengthened connections between Traditional Owners and researchers. Additionally, CMERC employs a Ngaro Traditional Owner trainee in Airlie Beach through a project supported by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Lendlease, the Fitzgerald Family, and Reef Catchments, strengthening First Nations involvement in seagrass restoration initiatives.

Workshops and Exchanges: Strengthening Two-Way Knowledge Sharing

In May 2024, CMERC co-hosted a Seagrass and Blue Carbon Workshop in Gladstone with the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and Gidarjil Development Corporation, bringing together Traditional Owners from seven groups, alongside researchers from James Cook University, Charles Darwin University, and Deakin University, and industry representatives from Gladstone Ports Corporation and Monsoon Aquatics. This hands-on workshop facilitated knowledge-sharing on seagrass nursery establishment, seed processing, and restoration techniques, with discussions on scaling restoration, nursery business models, and Indigenous-led entrepreneurship in marine restoration.

A follow-up exchange between Woppaburra Rangers, Gidarjil Rangers, and CMERC staff took place from October 16-18, coinciding with favourable low tides. Gidarjil Sea Ranger nursery secondees visited CMERC's existing nursery and the construction site for a new large-scale nursery, engaging in lab and field activities such as risk assessments, monitoring techniques, and intertidal flower collections. The CMERC team later visited Woppaburra Rangers on

Konomie Island, where discussions focused on nursery operations, record-keeping, maintenance, monitoring, and stock collection, aligning with Certificate III training content in the seagrass restoration stream.

Through these two-way knowledge exchanges, CMERC and its Traditional Owner partners are creating a collaborative model for seagrass restoration, where cultural knowledge and scientific expertise are integrated to achieve effective, Indigenous-led marine restoration and conservation outcomes. These partnerships not only build First Nations capacity in restoration and marine science but also enhance CMERC's research approach, ensuring that seagrass nurseries and restoration practices are ecologically, culturally, and socially sustainable.

2.1.7 Marketing

CQUniversity's ***See It. Believe It.*** 2024 Indigenous student campaign delivered a university-funded recruitment campaign for television, radio and print media that is complementary with CQUniversity's broader 'We See You' campaign activity. It featured current and graduated First Nations students and promoted links to First Nations student specialist support, scholarships and news. The First Nations Student 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 Future Students team provided the following suite of programs, aimed at improving access to university for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These programs included the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funded [CQUni Connect](#), [Start Uni Now](#) and [Start TAFE Now](#) programs.

CQUni Connect is CQUniversity's widening participation program, delivering career and education aspiration-raising programs to students from regional, rural and remote, and low socio-economic backgrounds. According to our survey data, of those surveyed nearly 22% of participants in the program identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, with students originating from schools in Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Western Queensland regions. This is an increase from 19% of participants surveyed identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in 2023. We had a recorded 27,600 engagements recorded with students across those regions, with 13,203 students participating in the CQU Connect program across 151 schools.

The range of activities we led in 2024 for CQU Connect included:

- Presentations,
- Visits and pop-up booths,
- Attendance at school career expos and subject selection events,
- University Experiences.

Additionally, school leavers were supported to make the transition to university through the provision of a Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) Voucher which covers the cost of the QTAC application fee.

CQUniversity partnered with the Queensland Department of Education to host the **Solid STEM Pathways Program**. The program which included 23 high achieving First Nations Students from the Central Queensland Region, aimed to inspire students' passion and aspiration to pursue STEM pathways. It enabled students to develop STEM capabilities and nurtured their scientific curiosity through critical and creative thinking. In 2024, the students participated in Virtual Reality Activities, tested their motor skills, tower building, sugar testing, and joined in a coding activity.

CQUniversity continues to support the **Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation (QATSIF)** through hosting Year 12 graduation ceremonies in the Rockhampton, Mackay and Bundaberg regions. The ceremonies saw participation from Year 12 students, along with their schools, families and the broader community.

In 2024 there was an increase in the **Start Uni Now (SUN) Program** with 22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolling compared to 14 in 2023. Of these enrolments, 17 students passed their units. The majority of participating students enrolled in the Term 1 period with study areas including Medical Sciences, Education, Business, Communication, 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 saw a decline from 137 students in 2023, with only 62 enrolments in 2024 across 18 courses. Popular areas of study included Sport & Recreation, Fitness, Trades and Salon Assistant, with targeted support provided to all students through both CQU support services and partnerships such as Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal.

In 2024 the CQU HEPPP **Deadly Connections Program** was continued under the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). The Deadly Connections program is an Indigenous-led outreach and engagement program aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, who are employed through the local government, public service, industries, community-based organisations and native title holders. The program seeks to inspire participants to further studies and professional development in their careers.

The Deadly Connections program targets these prospective students by:

- Engaging with communities in South-West, Central, North, and Far North Queensland, including Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands,
- Sharing information and experiences regarding study options,
- Developing knowledge and awareness of universities as culturally safe places to pursue their educational journey as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adult learner.

Deadly Connection Workshops are held in communities as well as online, creating a safe space to yarn and build respectful relationships. Connecting with local government, public service, industries, non-government community organisations and native title holders provides opportunities to share knowledge and awareness of professional development through education at university. This resulted in 133 D2BD Student Journey Prospect cases being created. Complimenting the D2BD Student Journey case management program, D2BD Student Journey Prospect aspirations are cases set-up in CRM to record conversations and support provided.

The Deadly Connections position of Indigenous Engagement Officer (IEO) works alongside the Indigenous Student Engagement Team for a culturally safe and warm transition from prospective student to enrolled student.

2.2.2 ISSP Scholarships

In 2024, 100 ISSP Scholarships were awarded, comprised of 54 Education Cost Scholarships, three Accommodation Scholarships, and 43 Reward Scholarships. There was an increase in Accommodation Scholarships in 2024 compared to 2023, which only saw one Accommodation Scholarship awarded, however fewer Education Cost Scholarships and Reward Scholarships were awarded. The fewer Reward Scholarships in 2024 compared to 2023, were to improve student retention by offering higher value Education Cost Scholarships as well as offering over Terms 1 and 2, rather than Term 1 only bursaries. Students who also received a scholarship in Term 1 and/or Term 2 were also awarded a D2BD Term 3 Boost Scholarship to support them through their Term 3 studies. The First Nations Student Success Evaluation project commenced in 2024 to evaluate the effect of ISSP funded scholarships on student pass and re-enrolment rates. This work will continue in 2025 and will result in a more evidence-based approach in distributing scholarships.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of 2024 ISSP scholarships and payments.

Table 2: ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2024 payments¹

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ²	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ³	\$2,000.00	2	0.00	0	\$1,000.00	2	\$3,000.00	4
Undergraduate ⁴	\$126,500.00	49	\$13,695.72	3	\$16,535.45	37	\$156,731.17	89
Post-graduate ⁵	\$7,500.00	3	0.00	0	\$3,187.00	4	\$10,687.00	7
Other	0.00	0	0.00	0	\$-458.05	0	\$-458.05	0
Total	\$136,000.00	54	\$13,695.72	3	\$20,264.40	43	\$169,960.12	100

Table 3: Breakdown of 2024 Scholarships and Bursaries

Dare to Be Deadly Graduation Registration Bursary	5
Dare to Be Deadly Bookshop Bursary	2
Dare to Be Deadly Study Resource Bursary	4
Dare to Be Deadly Start-Up Bursary	1
Dare to Be Deadly Term 3 Boost Scholarship	29
Dare to Be Deadly Industry Placement Bursary	1
Dare to Be Deadly Enabling Scholarship	2
Dare to Be Deadly Accommodation Scholarship	3
Dare to Be Deadly Scholarship	52
Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy Laptop Bursary	1

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, Future Students, Social and Emotional Wellbeing, the Tertiary Education Division and the Office of Research. Key teams such as the Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE) and the Indigenous Student Engagement (ISE) team operate within the Research Division and the Student Success Division respectively. Importantly, both teams are Indigenous led, with all staff in the ISE team and a majority of staff in the OIE team identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The following data shows success rates in 2022, 2023 and 2024 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 2024, the success rate decreased by 3.2% compared to the previous year, as well as the pass rate decreasing by 2.875 EFTSL. The fail rate increased by 1.25 EFTSL, however the withdrawal rate decreased by 0.875 EFTSL compared to the previous year.

Table 4: Success rate for Enabling course.

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew
2022	52.9%	33.25	27	2.625
2023	52.2%	27.25	23.625	1.375
2024	49%	24.375	24.875	0.5

Table 5 shows the success rate for the Undergraduate level. In 2024, the success rate increased by 1.6% compared to 2023. The pass rate in 2024 decreased by 26.75 EFSTL when compared to 2023. The fail rate in 2024 decreased by 13.625 EFTSL as well as the withdrawal rate by 27.5 EFTSL. Enrolment rates increased by 49.75 EFTSL in comparison to the previous year.

Table 5: Success rate for undergraduate courses

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2022	71.6%	279.375	91.5	19.25	0.375
2023	75.7%	323.125	94.125	9.5	0.875
2024	77.3%	296.375	80.5	6.75	54.625

Table 6 shows the success rate for the Postgraduate level. In 2024, the success rate decreased by 4.7% compared to 2023. The pass rate in 2024 decreased by 5.75 EFTSL, compared to 2023. The fail rate in 2024 remained the same as 2023, and the withdrawal rates decreased by 0.5 EFTSL. Enrolment rates increased by 5.25 EFTSL in comparison to the previous year.

Table 6: Success rate for postgraduate level

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2022	73.7%	20	6.75	0.375	3.75
2023	78.6%	18.875	3.875	1.25	5.625
2024	73.9%	13.125	3.875	0.75	10.875

The success rates have increased for undergraduate students, with a decrease for enabling and postgraduate students. Noticeably, the withdrawal rates have decreased for enabling, undergraduate and postgraduate 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)** provides support to First Nations students through the following culturally safe and supportive initiatives.

The **Dare 2 Be Deadly (D2BD) Student Journey** continued in 2024 and was led by the ISE team, providing case management of all First Nation students enrolled online and on campus. Embedding the D2BD cases into current University systems provides information around student progression for success, while identifying risks of withdrawal for earlier intervention and support to continue with studies.

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 providing information on the services available to Indigenous students to study with confidence. **Transition** is the cultural strengths and excellence achieved upon completion of studies and graduation, for employability and lifelong learning.

The ISE **Pre-Orientation Program (POP)** continues to engage students online and face-to-face to assist in preparing them for their studies. This is a culturally safe place to yarn and connect with other students and services available to students across our national footprint. The program aims for staff to develop connections with students and enhance a sense of belonging, to impact upon retention and completion rates through ensuring students' **Preparedness** for studies. In 2024, 115 registrations were received for the POP.

Online yarning circles and the **Student Connect** events are hosted by the ISE team each term at their locations of Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. These events connect students to each other for peer support while also creating opportunities for students to engage with other services and their lecturer's where they live close to a campus. Students studying online can also join in virtually.

The **Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Program (ITAP)** continues to be managed by the 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 ISE 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 ISE 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 ISE team as described above.

3.1.3 Student Health and Wellbeing Programs

The Wellbeing Directorate successfully hosted a series of event days, each designed to engage and support the CQU community, fostering a deeper commitment to health and wellbeing, with five Indigenous students recorded as participating in these Wellbeing-led events. First Nations students also benefited from attending the following programs managed by the Health and Wellbeing team.

Counselling support was provided to 125 self-identified First Nations students, and 7.6% of all counselling referrals were for Indigenous students. The ISSP funded Indigenous Student Counsellor worked closely with the ISE team to manage the referral process.

Programs that continued in 2024 included the provision of Calm Time Sessions, with two First Nations students completing the program, and the Cultivating Wellness Workshop series; 13 Indigenous students actively participated in Connector-led Wellbeing events, creating meaningful connections and furthering their sense of community; and 10 Indigenous students attended Health Promotion workshops, gaining valuable insights and skills to support their ongoing health and wellbeing. A Mind Waves recruitment campaign was undertaken in 2024 and has successfully recruited three First Nations students as Mind Waves Connectors.

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 45 Indigenous students attending the sessions. It is hosted by the Social and Emotional and Wellbeing 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. During 2024, this service was provided to 199 Indigenous students.

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 Mackay City, Rockhampton City and Cairns campuses. A total of 15 non-Indigenous students and two Indigenous students, as well as one Indigenous staff member have completed the training. Community members also participated with a total of 10 non-Indigenous community members and nine Indigenous community members completing the training.

In April 2024, the **Cultural Wellbeing Tour** (aimed at supporting student and staff social and emotional wellbeing) in Mackay with the Traditional Owners of YUWI was cancelled due to Sorry Business. In August 2024, the tour in

Rockhampton North Campus was originally scheduled for Nurim (Mt Archer) but was moved to campus grounds because of inclement weather. Despite the change, the tour proved valuable as it featured collaboration with the Darumbal peoples, with Elder Uncle Wade Mann sharing essential cultural insights. With only two staff members and one student in attendance, the intimate setting fostered deep learning and a lasting respect for Darumbal heritage. In addition, the SEWB team visited the remote community of Woorabinda to engage with local Elders. The visit focused on discussing cultural excursions and supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of staff and students in accordance with community protocols. We are pleased to confirm that this important initiative will resume in 2025.

Wellbeing packs and **First in Family packs** were disseminated to 139 Indigenous First Year undergraduate students in Term 1, 2 & 3 2024 for their wellbeing and encouragement to continue studies, reiterating that the SEWB team are available to support them throughout their learning journey. Positive feedback received from students expressed that they felt grateful, excited, deadly, special, supported and connected. In addition to the above, two Indigenous students were gifted **Gratitude Journals**, empowering them to engage in personal reflection and wellbeing.

The **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.

CQUGlobal supports students to study abroad. In 2024, 11 Indigenous students received a New Colombo Plan (NCP) Mobility Grant to assist with the cost of participating in their program. Four First Nations Bachelor of Nursing students participated in a two-week overseas placement, with two in Fiji and two in Cambodia. Four First Nations Bachelor of Education students spent three weeks in Cambodia as a part of their Service Learning Unit. One First Nations Bachelor of Digital Media student completed a three-week placement in Mongolia. One First Nations Bachelor of Science (Chiropractic) student participated in a two-week study tour in Malaysia, and one First Nations Bachelor of Paramedic Science student completed a two-week program in Nepal. In addition to the above, one First Nations Bachelor of Psychological Science student was awarded a prestigious NCP Scholarship to complete a semester exchange program in Japan; this student was also selected as the NCP First Nations Scholar for 2024.

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 socio-economic background, students from regional and remote areas, and First Nations students.

3.1.4 Research by Higher Degree (RHD) students

First Nations RHD students benefitted 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 (Jilbaybili) clever, likewise making supervisors/fellows (Jilbaymali) more culturally clever. 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 fourth year, during 2024 the Academy welcomed two new RHD candidates and five Graduate Certificate Research students.

In 2024, the **School of Graduate Research (SGR)** made available three Indigenous-specific RHD scholarships (being two doctoral level and one masters level). These stipends are set at a rate of \$35,000 per annum, well above the base-rate Research Training Program stipend value. This stipend supported two First Nations RHD candidates to commence their studies in 2024, with others to commence in 2025. The SGR also partnered with the Cooperative Research Centre for Northern Australia, to make available two rounds of five tuition support scholarships for fee-free study in the Graduate Certificate in Research. As of December 2024, six of these had been awarded, with most candidates commencing their studies. The remaining four will be available until mid-2025.

The inaugural **Guwal Jilbay Yarning Research Conference** was held on Darumbal Country (Rockhampton) during 16-18 July 2024, and provided an opportunity to raise the national profile and impact of regionally-focussed First Nations Research. Jilbaybili (research students) were able to share their research at the conference for feedback and professional development purposes. The event was successful in helping to address the isolation of regional and rural First Nations research students and their supervisors, by promoting their research successes and providing an opportunity to connect, learn and network with other leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. The event was supported by various sponsors including CSIRO, Manna Institute, UniSuper and Morris Family Foundation. Media release and CQUniNews story [here](#).

Weekly writing sessions were hosted online for Jilbay students. Called 'Black and Write', the goal of the weekly sessions was to create community, foster concentrated writing time, and assist with time management and progression. As students are located throughout Australia, social isolation can be a significant factor for disengagement, as well as motivation for connection. Approximately 40 weekly writing sessions were held in 2024.

In 2024, five academic staff representing a range of disciplinary areas were financially supported to undertake the University of Technology Sydney micro-credential in supervision of Indigenous research higher degree candidates. In addition to all participants successfully completing the qualification, the RHD Supervisors Community of Practice held a focus item on supervision of Indigenous research candidates. The Academic Lead – Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy also presents in other forums such as the Accelerate Program, Tertiary Education Division, Research Committee and the RHD Supervision Community of Practice.

The Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy is required to submit a six-month progress brief and an annual report to the University's Research Committee governance group, in addition to its ISSP reporting requirements. The Research Committee also reviews the research higher degree statistics (including the number of commencing Indigenous research candidates) on a regular basis (e.g. eight times annually).

3.2 Tutorial assistance

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

Table 7: Tutorial assistance provided in 2024.

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted ⁶	Total number of tutorial sessions attended ⁷	Total hours of assistance ⁸	Expenditure ⁹ (\$)
Enabling	28	136	308	\$20,958.98
Undergraduate	122	2,519	6,109.75	\$402,727.03
Postgraduate	8	156	343.5	\$21,837.05
Other	0	9	9	\$573.36
Total	158	2,820	6,770.25	\$446,096.42

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

The **Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Program** equips students with study skills, knowledge and confidence to be successful in their studies. The program enhances the student experience as it builds on the 5P's framework where the Indigenous Student Learning Success Officer (ISLSO) connects with students to understand their **Profile**, **Preparedness** and **Processes** while monitoring their **Progress** throughout their studies.

In 2024, 43 Casual Learning Advisors were employed and matched to 158 students (please note that this is calculated on the number of unique students assisted criteria as requested) and conducted tutoring across various fields of study from Start University Now (SUN), Skills Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS) and undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The implementation of the "Chronus" web-based mentoring platform has continued to have positive feedback from students. Chronus provides students and tutors with the opportunity to view each other's profiles and then choose the tutor best matched for their learning needs.

All Learning Advisors are required to have an undergraduate degree to be appointed. Where possible, in Terms 1 and 2 students were matched with a Learning Advisor from their specific field of study. The **D2BD Student Journey** continues to recruit and employ new Learning Advisors due to new applications for fields of study that students have previously not enrolled into. The **D2BD Student Journey** reviews academic results each term for students accessing the service, to showcase the impact and importance of utilising the tutoring program.

The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Program provides consistency where students can continue with a Learning Advisor for the duration of their studies. The contracts for the Learning Advisors are reviewed and renewed every year to ensure they are providing culturally safe assistance. Formal and informal feedback is received from students throughout the term through surveys and check-ins. A yearly, specifically designed workshop for the Learning Advisors promotes the First Nations Cultural Competency training available to all staff, as well as connecting with the Social Emotional Wellbeing Officer (ISSP funded) for ways that they can assist students.

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, BMA 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 OIE. 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.

The Indigenous Student Engagement Team

The Indigenous Student Engagement (ISE) 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 Tutorial Assistance Program (ITAP), 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 ISE 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

In 2024, a mix of new and existing programs and strategies were delivered to provide a culturally safe and enriching environment for our staff and students, these are programs outlined below.

CQUniversity's **First Nations Cultural Competency Framework 2023-2028** 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 2022-2024.

In 2024, a series of workshops were delivered to academics within the University. These workshops included:

- Embedding First Nations Curriculum,
- Embedding First Nations Teaching (Cultural competency practice in teaching),
- Embedding First Nations Research,
- Cultural Awareness Training.

As of December 2024, a total of 918 registrations reflected 459 staff attending multiple classes.

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 for students.

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.

Audio and visual productions produced by the OIE 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. They include the following:

- Talking Culture Podcast Series,
- On Country Video Series,
- Acknowledgement of Country Video Series.

CQUniversity has committed to creating and enhancing culturally safe campuses and has developed the **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.

During National Reconciliation Week 2024, the Mackay Ooralea Cultural Safe Space “Bidyiri Woorwaya – to dream big” successfully opened. Over 70 guests attended, including the full Mackay Regional Council cohort and three Yuwi Traditional Owners. The event featured interactive activities, such as planting a native garden with supplies from Indigenous-owned nursery Bush Tucker Alchemy, and cultural performances including a Welcome to Country, smoking ceremony by Uncle Philip Kemp, and a presentation by student Curtley Quakawoot. CQUni News story [here](#). A shade sail was also erected over the yarning circle to support year-round use.

During October 2024, three University staff members including the Chief Wellbeing Officer, Mindwaves Project Officer, and Indigenous Student Wellbeing Project Officer, as well as Yuwi Traditional Owner Aunty Veronica Ah-Wang, presented at the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA) Conference on their abstract: Bidyiri Woorwaya "To Dream Big, All Rivers Run Forward" – Embedding First Nations’ Knowledges and Cultural Safety in Space and Place.

A culturally safe counselling space was established on the Rockhampton North Campus to provide a welcoming space for Indigenous students to seek support from the Indigenous Caseworker.

As described in previous reports, CQUniversity continues to enhance cultural competency and cultural safety through its promotion of the **2024 Calendar of Significant Indigenous Dates**, awarding of **Cultural Sashes at graduation** and its support of the **Uluru Statement from the Heart**.

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 and early 2025, with the intent of rolling out a new policy and procedure in mid-2025 including expanded information and processes available for Indigenous Enterprise procurement.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) supporting Indigenous procurement are laid out in the CQUniversity Strategic Plan goal 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 (staff intranet) directory of information and resources designed to assist buyer engagement with Indigenous suppliers is available to support staff to meet these KPIs. Furthermore, CQUniversity has been working to improve identification and reporting data quality. In the last quarter of 2024, improved categorisation was implemented in the University's finance system, allowing First Nations Enterprises to be categorised as Registered, Certified (according to Supply Nation's data), or Self-Identified.

CQUniversity also renewed its membership with Supply Nation for a further 12 months at the end of 2024. Access to Supply Nation's directory of suppliers and visibility of their certification program assists CQU's data to be more indicative of the social effect we are having.

The University's annual spend with First Nations enterprises has increased (a ~28% increase) between 2023 and 2024. We have cross referenced our data with Supply Nation's supplier register and identified that of the 2024 expenditure, \$126,219 was with Certified, \$355,897 was with Registered, and \$481,008 was with Self-Identified First Nations enterprises.

The Procurement Advice Team 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 across school visits, hosting trivia nights, recognising Elders at morning teas, holding a painting workshop, attending NAIDOC Week marches, 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 staff intranet StaffNet and the social media pages.

National Reconciliation Week was celebrated by the launch of "Bidyiri Woorwaya – to dream big" Culturally Safe Space on the Mackay Ooralea Campus. Different events were held on campuses across the CQUniversity footprint including the [Reconciliation Choir](#).

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 released to media and shared across websites and social channels throughout 2024.

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 over 400 mentions relating to CQUniversity Indigenous topics published in traditional media outlets. The Corporate Communications team produced eight videos featuring First Nations content in 2024, generating a combined total of 1,104 views from YouTube. Videos were also posted across CQUniversity's social media channels attracting additional engagement, as well as featuring in CQUniversity's weekly news digest, CQUReview.

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.

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

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 Postgraduate completions in 2024, however there was a significant increase in Undergraduate completions. In total, completions increased by 18 First Nations students in 2024 compared to 2023.

Table 8 First Nations student completions

Course level	2022	2023	2024
Enabling	66	54	44
Undergraduate	65	60	89
Postgraduate	21	25	24
Total	152	139	157

Aligning with the Australian Standard Classification of Education (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	2022	2023	2024
Architecture and Building	0	0	0
Creative Arts	1	3	4
Education	8	9	7
Engineering and Related Technologies	2	1	2
Health	36	29	48
Information Technology	2	0	1
Management and Commerce	1	3	2
Natural and Physical Sciences	0	0	4
Society and Culture	15	16	20
Agriculture, Environmental and Related	0	0	2
Total	65	61	90

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	2022	2023	2024
Education	4	6	5
Engineering and Related Technologies	0	2	2
Health	16	11	13
Information Technology	0	1	0
Management and Commerce	2	2	1
Society and Culture	0	4	3
Total	22	26	24

As previously outlined, strategies aimed at improving completion rates include the provision of scholarships, tutoring through the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Program, provision of a culturally safe learning environment, and support programs from Schools and other departments throughout the University.

The **First Nations Student Success Evaluation** commenced in 2024, with a quantitative evaluation examining the effect of ISSP funded scholarships on student pass and re-enrolment rates. This work was approved by the CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number 24831). All ISSP-funded scholarship recipients from 2022 to 2024 were identified, grouped by scholarship type, and their study load and pass rates in the units studied were mapped. A comparative group of students were identified who did not receive any scholarship (ISSP or otherwise) in the matched term of study, but who were enrolled in at least one of the same units as a scholarship recipient. This approach permitted group comparisons between scholarship recipients and non-scholarship recipients for both pass and re-enrolment rates per scholarship type, as well as larger regression analyses. This dataset comprises over 900 student observations, with various subgroup analyses including by enrolment type (part time/full time). Final data analysis is being conducted and a final report will be delivered to the ISSP Indigenous governance mechanism, the First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC), in 2025. These findings will inform the development of the First Nations Student Success Framework.

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 University's [CareerHub](#) and an optional alumni [profile page](#), which currently hosts 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 2024, a First Nations alumna Ms Nareeta Davis was appointed as a member of the University Council. 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 65 First Nations alumni participated in meaningful volunteering and experiential activities in 2024, providing representation in volunteering within the University, and making up over 5.5% of the overall engaged alumni cohort.

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 2024, of the 995 First Nations Higher Education students enrolled, 818 students were recorded as living in regional and remote areas, with the remaining 177 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 Study Hubs partnership centres, situated in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

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

Works previously undertaken through the **Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund (NAIF)** loan have enabled the continuation of 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 Scholarships Team 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 students¹⁰

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2023 Payments	\$180,500.00	91	\$5,635.00	1	\$135,280.44	291	\$321,415.44	383
B. 2024 Offers ¹¹	\$206,000.00	70	\$23,000.00	3	\$34,487.00	70	\$263,487.00	143
C. Percentage ¹² (C=B/A*100)							81.98%	
2024 Payments	\$136,000.00	54	\$13,695.72	3	\$20,264.40	43	\$169,960.12	100

6. Eligibility Requirements

6.1 Indigenous Education Strategy

The [Indigenous Education and Student Success Strategy 2024-2028](#) (FNESSS) was approved by the CQUniversity Council on 17 October 2024. In the latter months of 2024 attention turned to the implementation of this strategy from 2025.

University performance and targets

Between 2013 – 2023 CQUniversity experienced significant increases in the enrolments of First Nations students across Higher Education (a doubling to 962 enrolments) and VET (an almost six-fold increase to 1045 enrolments). While this investment from the First Nations communities has been an extensive investment in tertiary studies, completion rates have and remain well below target completions.

The FNESSS highlights a pattern of low course completion rates in both Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) between 2013 – 2023. An analysis of this pattern was based on completion rates in HE across a four-year undergraduate degree. VET completion rates were subject to a key issue being that many students enrol in specific units, rather than full courses. Against this profile, targets of 11% parity course completions were set across HE and VET, to be achieved by 2028. Approximately 10% of First Nations students across HE in 2023 enrolled through a pathways program, revealing 90% of students possessed the required prerequisite knowledge and skills and study capacity to complete their chosen course.

The nature of the performance pattern points to a combination of external factors (student and societal oriented) and internal institutional factors (to be investigated in 2025 through a research project into this performance profile). Given the low completion rates for First Nations students, this strategy has focused significantly on the learning – teaching interface and the systems design across layers of student support. This strategic investment is based on meta-data research undertaken by Hattie (2003)³ that the main driver of student success is the quality of the teacher and their student feedback. This strategy commenced in 2024 with implementation to begin in 2025, with governance placed within CQUniversity’s Education Strategy and Innovation Committee and linked with the Office of the Deputy Vice-President Education and Quality, and six-monthly progress reports to the First Nations Student Success Committee (FNSSC) and the University’s Student Success Committee (SSC).

The First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy 2024-2028 is enabled through multiple actions delivered through the OIE. These actions in 2024 focused on workforce and institutional development and in addition included:

1	Development and delivery of a series of master classes at 4hrs each.	• Embedding First Nations Curriculum • Embedding First Nations Teaching (Cultural competency practice in teaching) • Cultural Awareness Training • Embedding First Nations Research	Combined staff registrations 2024: 918 registrations reflecting 459 staff registrations across multiple classes. This is reflected against a period of national and intense politicisation of Indigeneity, particularly from 2023.
2	Development and delivery of a staff symposium titled Nunbal Wayu (Teaching to change and transform).	• Focussed on ways to improve First Nations course completion rates.	
3	Implementation of the First Nations Cultural Competency Framework	• All of staff focus, particularly teaching staff across HE and VET. • Ongoing referral in allied strategic actions, including the developing CQUniversity Learning and Teaching Strategy 2025-2028.	Ongoing implementation across the Schools/Colleges.
4	Development of a Centre for First Nations Education Leadership	• A Centre is under development and is focused on (1) Education services, including leadership specialisation; (2) Education and health services consultation on First Nations workforce development and training; (3) First Nations study pathways into VET and HE.	To be operationalised in 2025.
5	Development and commencement of the new Jumbal Research Cluster.	• The Jumbal Research Cluster is the latest cluster located within the Jawun Research Centre. Jumbal is focussed on First Nations education, particularly in north and far north Queensland.	To be operationalised in 2025.
6	Research into First Nations Study Performance	• Research is planned into CQUniversity’s First Nations performance pattern to establish improved understandings of where policy and strategic responses can appropriately respond and improve the patterns highlighted above.	Research project to be undertaken in 2025.

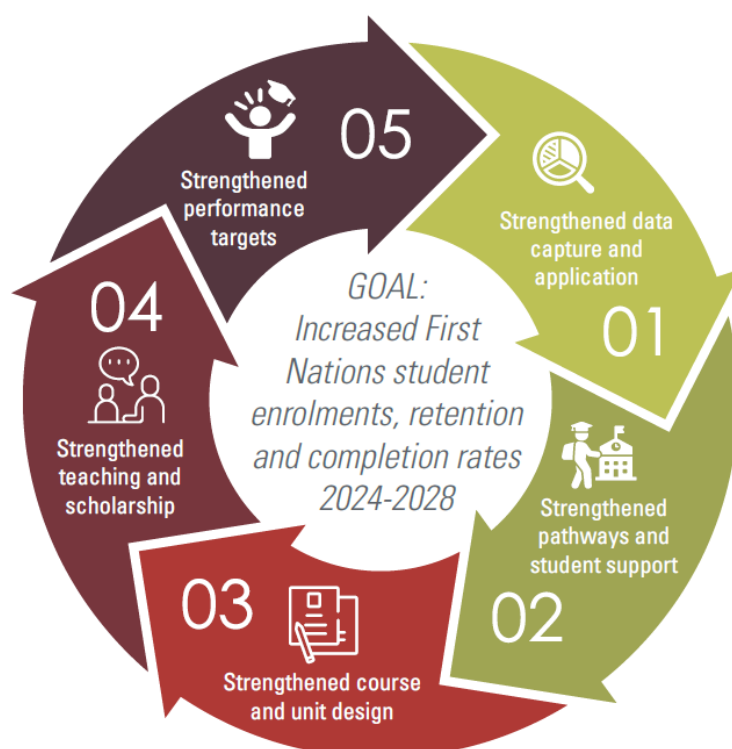
³ Hattie, J.A.C. (2003) *Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence?* Paper presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us? ACER Research Conference, October 2003, Melbourne, Australia
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The strategy has galvanised attention across the University’s governing Council, senior executive staff and the Schools and Colleges. This attention will be further strengthened in 2025 through the CQUniversity Learning and Teaching Strategy 2025-2028, which is expected to be finalised and implemented across the second half of 2025. This recent strategy factors the design features of the FNESSS, particularly reflected in Figure 2: Framework for Strengthening First Nations Student Performance across CQU.

The level of staff engagement with the additional strategic levers and our commitments to improved data collection and application reveals a strengthened commitment and capacities to improving the course completions of our First Nations students across VET and HE. Our commitments carrying forward from 2024 are to continue a trajectory of developing the Indigenous Engagement Division’s focus on building specialised engagement that is relevant, targeted, impactful and measurable-and use our performance to learn and improve future actions. The FNESSS will remain a key strategic guide in the improvement of our First Nations student performance at CQUniversity, especially in building functional responses through the complex anchors that performance patterning is embedded. This pursuit is reflected in the CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2024-2028 We Change Lives, and our purpose of being Australia’s most accessible and supportive university, connecting our regions to the world through innovative education, training and research excellence.

Figure 2

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



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 campus footprints.

The progressive steps incorporated in the First Nations Workforce Strategy 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.

All of the KPIs from the First Nations Workforce Strategy have been included in the Innovate 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 Innovate 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 engage via various platforms.

Table 12 shows the numbers (headcount) of First Nations staff from 2022 to 2023 (data as at 24 December 2024).

Table 12 Number of First Nations staff employed at CQUniversity 2022-2024

Year	Continuing		Fixed Term/Casual		Total
	Academic/Teaching	Professional	Academic/Teaching	Professional	
2022	6	18	20	30	74
2023	9	17	26	36	88
2024	18	24	20	36	98

The number of First Nations staff steadily rose from 74 in 2022, to 88 in 2023 and to 98 in 2024. As of December 2024, we have exceeded our CQUniversity Enterprise Agreement 3.2% employment target, reaching 3.56%. First Nations continuing academic staff numbers have grown by nine in 2024 compared to 2023.

The Talent Acquisition team has played a crucial role in advocating for the consideration of external Indigenous candidates when filling internal vacancies within CQUniversity. This team has 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:

- The University's human resources directorate, 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,
- 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.

To further support CQUniversity's Indigenous staff, alumni, and current students through to postgraduate studies and into academic roles 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.

A new First Nations Workforce Strategy will be developed in 2025 for commencement in 2026.

6.3 Indigenous Governance Mechanism

CQUniversity meets the Indigenous Governance Mechanism responsibilities through the First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC). The FNSSC maintains a majority Indigenous membership, with four of the five current members identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, including the Chair, Deputy Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, Prof Adrian Miller, and the Deputy Chair, Dr Thomas Doering. Members include management, senior academic and professional staff, with union representatives from the University's Joint Consultative Committee also in attendance where First Nations Workforce Strategy matters are being addressed.

The [FNSSC Terms of Reference](#) clearly articulate its responsibility for advising, recommending and monitoring of ISSP funding, as well as monitoring the First Nations Workforce Strategy and First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy, and providing advice on University policy relating to First Nations matters. The Terms of Reference were updated in 2024 to enable improvements to the Committee's responsiveness to its functions and responsibilities. Updates included changes in membership to increase the involvement of senior Indigenous staff for improved capability in the provision of strategic guidance on ISSP funding allocations and advice on high-level policy documents relevant to Indigenous matters within the University. Membership numbers were also reduced to improve the FNSSC's responsiveness to the timeframes of priority Committee business. The FNSSC meets approximately every two-to-three months, with additional meetings scheduled for matters requiring specific or urgent attention.

The FNSSC held four meetings in 2024. In addition to the standard items for discussion listed in previous ISSP reports, the committee also considered, discussed, contributed to and resolved a range of key issues, including:

- Review of the Draft First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy,
- Updates to the First Nations Success Strategies Committee Terms of Reference,
- Undertaking reviews of University policy and related documents including the Confirmation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identity Protocol,
- Matters relating to ISSP-funded scholarships including:
 - Scholarship Eligibility Guidelines
 - Incorporation of requirements for Indigenous student scholarships into the University's Scholarships Program Policy and Procedure,
- First Nations Workforce Strategy matters, including reviewing and monitoring progress in achieving strategic outcomes,
- Discussion, recommendation and approval of graduation support for First Nations students,
- Continuation and expansion of the in-depth analysis of the impact of ISSP-funded Scholarships on First Nations student success.

The annual self-evaluation process undertaken by the FNSSC provided an opportunity for members to review the Committee's performance and suggest areas for improvement. This self-evaluation indicated the majority of respondents felt that the committee performed very well against its Terms of Reference and there was high level of satisfaction regarding the secretariate support. Suggestions for improvement included providing ISSP funding recipients with opportunities to attend FNSSC meetings to present reports and updates on project progress, and including ISSP funding recipients in the committee self-evaluation process.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in a range of decision-making processes at CQUniversity. The Deputy Vice-President Indigenous Engagement held the following roles in 2024:

- Member, University Council,
- Chair, First Nations Success Strategies Committee,
- 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,
- Two members of the Curriculum Committee,
- Member of the Education Strategy and Innovation Committee,
- Attendee with rights of audience and debate, University Management 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,
- 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 representation in 2024:

- Representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the Reconciliation Action Plan Committee through membership of three external community representatives,
- 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) undertakes an ongoing process of self-evaluation and improvement to enhance its oversight of ISSP-funded programs. In 2024 it expanded its monitoring efforts, initiating an in-depth assessment and analysis of the impact of key ISSP funded projects on student success. Enhancements were also made to the Committee's capacity to provide advice on strategic directions for increasing outcomes from ISSP funded projects.

The influence of the FNSSC in University-wide programs and policies that support First Nations students, staff and communities continued to strengthen in 2024 through its involvement in the development of policies such as the First Nations Research Strategy and the First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy. The FNSSC also holds a central role in oversight and monitoring of the First Nations Workforce Strategy, and will be active in the development of the next workforce strategy in 2025. The Committee also continued its consultative role in the review of policies and provision of ISSP funded services and products that are incorporated into general business University-wide.

During this final year of the CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2022-2024 the University further demonstrated its commitment to delivering education, training and research that empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with the majority of the RAP deliverables completed by its conclusion. The ISSP funded programs overseen by the FNSSC contributed significantly to the achievement of those RAP actions and deliverables.

I look forward to working with the FNSSC 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, BMA Chair in Indigenous Engagement, Co-Director of the Jawun Research Centre and Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy. Email: vp-oie@cqu.edu.au

Additional information for completing the template.

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

⁴ Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁵ Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ Only record amounts which required payment during the 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.

¹¹ 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).

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