CQUniversity Australia

Indigenous Student Success Program

Indigenous Student Success Program

2021 Performance Report

Organisation: **CQUniversity Australia**

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1. Enrolments (Access)

Introduction

CQUniversity is a dual sector university following its merger with Central Queensland TAFE in 2014, with 16 campuses and study hubs across five states of Australia, including seven regional Queensland locations between Cairns and Bundaberg, along with five CBD campuses in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.   In regional Queensland, the two largest campuses are Rockhampton and Mackay, with a smaller presence in Cairns, Townsville, Gladstone, Bundaberg and Emerald. CQUni also offers Study Centres (small campuses) and a Study Hub (drop-in internet access) at Busselton.

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

CQUniversity's vision is 'to be Australia's most accessible, supportive and engaged university, recognised globally for innovative teaching and research excellence'. Through <u>CQUniversity's Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023</u> ***Our Future is You****,* measures have been put in place to enable CQUniversity to become a recognised leader in removing participation barriers to world-class training, education, and research, particularly amongst underrepresented groups and underserviced communities.

The strategies, programs and partnerships reflected in this report demonstrate the progress made this year.

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

Overall, there has been an increase of 45 students in 2021 compared to the previous year. The table 1 shows the growth in First Nations student commencing numbers.

Other data shows that in 2021, the greatest number of commencing students fell into the 20 to 24 year age group, for the enabling and undergraduate levels, with the majority of students falling into the 40 to 44 year age group for the post graduate level. In 2021, 433 commencing students were female and 123 students were male.

Table 1:   First Nations students' data

	Enabling	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Total
2020	152	299	60	**511**
2021	162	335	59	**556**

1.1.1. The Woorabinda Education, Enterprise and Research Hubs

This new community-driven initiative, resulted in the employment of an ISSP funded, Woorabinda based, Community Engagement Officer. This part-time position supports students and small business enterprise development, promotes awareness of the project and engages with community stakeholders. The Community Engagement Officer also works closely with CQUniversity researchers, who are involved in research partnerships with the community.

In 2021, the provision of office space for CQUniversity in community was realised. Located above the Indigenous Knowledge Centre in Woorabinda, CQUniversity staff utilise the office and adjoining rooms when working with students and community members.

The Community Engagement Officer provided 67 mentoring consultations that resulted in the support of 25 individuals enquiring, enrolling, seeking tutorial support, or completing VET courses. VET students are encouraged to continue their education journey into Diploma and Undergraduate degree courses or enrol in the Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS) program. STEPS is an enabling course provided by the School of Access Education and provides a pathway for people wishing to gain entry to and succeed at university. There were 35 instances of enquiries and information sessions for individuals seeking to enrol into STEPS, resulting in ten enrolments.

Support was also provided to a local undergraduate student, whilst one Woorabinda student graduated from the Bachelor of Nursing Degree.

One of the key community enterprise engagement outcomes was the launch of the Woorabinda Arts and Cultural Centre (WACC) in March 2021. The WACC is an Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander-led Arts and Cultural Centre that is specifically designed around enterprise models to improve social impacts in local community, being managed by, with, and for community. The WACC is hosted in the refurbished Duaringa Community Hall and delivered through the Central Queensland Regional Arts Services Network (CQRASN) in partnership with the CQUniversity Office of Indigenous Engagement. This project is funded by BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA).

The opening was held at the Duaringa Hall Gallery. Click here to view.

1.1.2. Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS)

In 2021, ISSP funds enabled First Nations STEPS students and their tutors to receive a printed copy of their textbooks and study guides. This initiative 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.

192 Indigenous students were admitted to CQUniversity's funded STEPS program. This number equates to 10.3% of all STEPS students and is a 2.1% increase from last year's enrolment numbers. Of these 192 students, 16 have successfully completed their studies, 40 are due to complete at the end of Term 3, 2021 and 47 are continuing the course in 2022. 89 students withdrew from the course. The online enrolments were significantly higher with 124 students enrolled online compared to 68 students on-campus.

STEPS students also continue to receive support from the ISSP funded tutoring service and the careers team.

1.1.3. Bachelor of Medical Science (Pathway to Medicine)

In 2021, CQUniversity introduced a medical school pathway in partnership with the University of Queensland. Professor Miller has played a key role as Chair of the Pathways to Medicine oversight committee in developing the framework for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander admission pathway – CM17 Bachelor of Medical Science (Pathway to Medicine.)

This innovative three-year undergraduate course is available to students graduating from Year 12 in the year of application, for the first time in 2022. Offered at the Rockhampton and Bundaberg campuses, successful completion gives direct entry into UQ's four-year Medical Doctor (MD) program provided at Rural Clinical School sites in Bundaberg, Harvey Bay and Rockhampton.

As Chair of the interview panel, Professor Miller was also active in interviewing First Nations applicants. First round offers will be made in January 2022 to the successful applicants.

1.1.4. Partnerships

The following partnerships are examples of the many ways in which CQUniversity engages with schools, not for profit organisations and industry that result in increased access to university for First Nations students.

The **Buralaigm Weiber** (meaning 'place of learning' in Gooreng Gooreng) **program** is a 20-week program, designed for Years 3 and 4 Indigenous students from Gladstone West State School. The program can cater for up to 20 students each round. Each week, over two school terms, students attended STEM Central to participate in lessons prepared by a team of teachers and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. The program is funded by Australia Pacific LNG. Students participated in many STEM activities, including boat tours of Gladstone harbour, visits to the Botanic Gardens and CQUni's Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre where they learnt about impacts on the environment, food, sustainability, local flora and fauna and waterways through their connection to Country. CQUni news story available [here](.).

Nineteen First Nations year eight students from Gladstone, attended an annual four-day **Yallarm (place of shells) Monadelphous Indigenous STEM camp** at the Boyne Island Environmental Education Centre (BIEEC). The program is developed by the BIEEC in conjunction with CQUniversity and is funded by Monadelphous. It aims to give students a taste of a future STEM career. Students engaged in a series of science, cultural and technology activities that included raft building and a visit to Facing Island. CQUni news story available [here](.).

CQUni Gladstone campus hosted **Pre-QUIP**, a program for Indigenous year 10 students funded by Australia Pacific LNG and Shell QGC. This event forms part of the career development program to investigate potential career opportunities in the region.

CQUniversity remains supportive of the proposal to establish a new Indigenous-curriculum High School based in the Rockhampton region – the proposed **Nullu Badi Ngudybay Academy** (NBNA)**.** Through the efforts of the Central Queensland Indigenous Development (CQID), in conjunction with Bidgerdii Health Service and Darumbal People Aboriginal Corporation, the Board of the NBNA has identified the CQUniversity Rockhampton North Campus as the preferred site for the school. CQUniversity is working with CQID and the NBNA Board to explore initiatives such as bespoke pathway/articulation programs to 'Year 13', student mentor activities, student placement opportunities, research opportunities, co-sharing of facilities, and ongoing CQUniversity representation on the NBNA Board. This model of partnership is similar to the [Kutta Mulla Gorinna](.) Special Assistance School established upon the CQUniversity Mackay (Ooralea) campus in recent years.

The **BHP Mitsubishi Alliance** and CQUniversity five-year strategic community partnership has entered its fourth year. An additional ten, two-year Indigenous scholarships valued at $20,000 each, were awarded to First Nations scholars. CQUniversity is very pleased with the academic achievements and results of the BHP Indigenous scholars in 2020.

The collaborative **Whanu Binal Indigenous Entrepreneur Program**, sponsored by Arrow Energy and delivered by CQUni, supports First Nations entrepreneurs from ideation to growth strategies. The philosophy of the program is to provide an inspirational and culturally safe environment to learn and discuss business concepts and to ensure opportunities for successful business ventures. A total of 103 participants - First Nations business owners or those who have a business idea to develop - were guided by 28 program mentors. Participants also interacted with Indigenous presenters who are in business or have expert knowledge in particular business concepts. The program was originally designed to be delivered face to face. However due to COVID, the program was reimagined and embraced the yarning methodology and delivered entirely on-line.

Recent Whanu Binal media stories are available here:
- https://www.cqu.edu.au/cquninews/stories/engagement-category/2021-engagement/whanu-binal-program-lifts-pauls-crane-business-to-new-heights
- https://www.cqu.edu.au/cquninews/stories/general-category/2021-general/whanu-binal-team-proud-support-indigenous-owned-businesses
- https://www.cqu.edu.au/cquninews/stories/engagement-category/2021-engagement/whanu-binal-program-gives-spark-to-electrical-business

1.1.5. Marketing

An awareness and recruitment campaign aiming to increase the participation of First Nations students in VET and University courses was cooperatively developed with CQUni First Nations employees and an Indigenous advertising company and launched in late 2021. The nationally executed campaign, using social media and online advertising, focusses on the 'See It, Be It' message, building awareness and encouraging First Nations audiences to investigate further education and training. The campaign also utilises a specific landing page which consolidates information on preparatory pathways, support, engagement and access to scholarships. Indigenous Student Engagement website available here and recruitment video available here.

1.2.   Scholarships, bridging/enabling support and outreach activities.

1.2.1. Outreach Activities

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

- **CQUni Connect -** CQUni Connect engaged with over 1700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, who comprised approximately 18% of total student participation. New partnerships included the Smith Family, The Cathy Freeman Foundation and the Clontarf Academy.
- **Start Uni Now (SUN) Program -** In 2021, the SUN Program enjoyed a 36% increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants compared with the previous year. Approximately 64% of Indigenous SUN students undertook a STEM related unit.
- **Start TAFE Now (STN) -** Of the 210 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants, almost 10% of students undertook a course at Certificate III, IV or Diploma level.

The Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME)

A variation to the BHP partnership agreement was signed in June 2021, resulting in a renewed commitment to support the revised delivery model of the Office of Indigenous Engagement managed AIME program. This led the way for the signing of a short-term contract with AIME, that expired on 31 December 2021. AIME delivered its new program designed to be driven by IMAGI-NATION{Presidents}, in Central Queensland, with varying measures of success. AIME staff reached out to all previously engaged schools in the Mackay, Rockhampton and

Gladstone regions to explore possibilities in 2021. Schools noted that COVID-19 made it difficult to engage in any activities in 2021, however showed keen interest in the program's return. AIME appointed a CQUni student and former mentor to the role of IMAGI-NATION{President}, who recruited 20 mentors to support 30 mentees at the Townsville Flexible Learning Centre. AIME was able to deliver an Outreach Program (AIME Rocket program) at Emerald State High School, working with 25 Indigenous High School students. Two AIME staff worked intensely with students over the course of three days, working through AIME sessions that focused on leadership, respect, community, connection and imagination. On the final day, inspired by The Imagination Declaration, the students worked together to produce their own declaration sharing their vision with the school and local community. The video is also set to aired on IMAGI-NATION{TV}. The Emerald State High School declaration can be found here.

1.2.2. ISSP Scholarships

The 2021 scholarships were very well received by students, due to the continuing impact of COVID-19 and the financial implications of study. Table 2 provides a breakdown of 2021 ISSP scholarships and payments.

Table 2: ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2021 payments[1]

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total[2]	
	$	No.	$	No.	$	No.	$	No.
Enabling[3]	8,000	4	-	-	-	-	8,000	4
Undergraduate[4]	128,000	64	4,000	1	-	-	132,000	65
Post-graduate[5]	4,000	2	-	-	-	-	4,000	2
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**140,000**	**70**	**4,000**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**144,000**	**71**

The move to on-line course delivery and students with families who had to study from home, due to COVID restrictions increased the demand for the Laptop Bundle Bursary. 40 Laptop Bundles, valued at approximately $1,500 each, were awarded to students.

Bursaries aimed at providing students with just-in-time financial assistance for expenses encountered at various stages of the study lifecycle, were also made available. These bursaries assisted with the purchase of textbooks, preparation for placements including vaccinations, uniforms, first aid and CPR courses and travel expenses to attend residential school or placement.

In 2021, 300 CQUniversity Bookshop Bursaries were awarded to students, exceeding the previous year's applications. These $250 bursaries assisted students in purchasing textbooks, uniforms and other items the CQUni Bookshop provides.

Changes were made to streamline the graduation registration process for students, resulting in the Scholarships team paying for graduations on the students' behalf. Previously, students received reimbursement for the graduation registration following payment. This was recognised as a financial barrier for some students to attend their graduation. Table three shows a breakdown of the 2021 bursaries.

Table 3: Breakdown of 2021 Bursaries

Indigenous Commonwealth Professional Registration Bursary	13
Indigenous Commonwealth Graduation Registration Bursary	31
Indigenous Commonwealth Laptop Bundle Bursary	40
Indigenous Commonwealth Dare to Be Deadly Bookshop Bursary	300
Indigenous Commonwealth Emergency Grant	5

One Emergency Grant was issued in response to hardship resulting from COVID-19. The student faced a risk of homelessness due to lack of available rental opportunities and the unaffordable costs of motel accommodation.

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

2. Progression (outcomes)

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

CQUniversity is well-positioned to support student requirements for online learning in 2021, due to our extensive experience and past investment in resources and technology. To ensure the continuity and quality of services, financial and study assistance and the provision of health and well-being support, enabled students to continue with their studies.

The following data shows success rates broken down into the three course types; enabling, undergraduate and postgraduate in 2020 and 2021. 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 2021, the success rate reduced by 0.4% compared to the previous year. Whilst the pass rate in 2021 decreased by 5.38 EFTSL and the fail rate in 2021 increased by 0.42EFTSL, the withdrawal rate in 2021 decreased by 4.5 EFTSL compared to the previous year.

Table 4: Success rate for Enabling course

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew
2020	53.1%	43.75	32.7	5.87
2021	52.7%	38.37	33.12	1.37
Total		**82.12**	**65.87**	**7.25**

Table 5 shows the success rate for the Undergraduate level. In 2021, the success rate increased by 0.27% compared to 2020. The pass rate in 2021 increased by 9.63EFTSL compared to 2020. The fail rate in 2021 increased by 7.12 EFTSL, however withdrawal rates in 2021 decreased by 2.87 EFTSL and enrolment rates increased by 4.63 EFTSL in comparison to the previous year.

Table 5: Success rate for undergraduate courses

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2020	69.03%	257.62	101.50	12.37	1.12
2021	69.3%	267.25	108.62	9.50	5.75
Total		**524.87**	**210.12**	**21.87**	**6.87**

Table 6 shows the success rate for the Postgraduate level. In 2021, the success rate increased by 3.6% compared to 2020. The pass rate in 2021 increased by 1EFTSL compared to 2020. The fail rate in 2021 increased by 1.5 EFTSL, however withdrawal rates in 2021 decreased by 2.37 EFTSL and enrolment rates increased by 0.25 EFTSL in comparison to the previous year.

Table 6: Success rate for postgraduate level

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2020	76.7%	19.37	3.25	2.62	3.50
2021	80.3%	20.37	4.75	0.25	3.75
Total		39.75	8.00	2.87	8.87

The success rates have increased for undergraduate and post graduate students, with a very small decrease for enabling students. Noticeably, the withdrawal rates have decreased in all three study categories. The following strategies have been put into place to improve transitions.

2.1.1. Supports for Undergraduate and Coursework students

The *IAS Tutoring Program* continues to be managed by the Indigenous Student Engagement Team (ISE). In 2021, 90 Casual Learning Advisors were employed and matched to 111 students. Please note that this is calculated on the number of unique students assisted criteria as requested. The number of students matched and assisted throughout the year was 231. This program is ISSP funded.

The Indigenous Student Engagement Team also provide support to First Nations Students through the following culturally responsive initiatives that were introduced in 2021.

The *Pre-Orientation Program* (POP) aims to engage students face-to-face and prepare them for their studies. Learning Advisors and Cultural Mentors are matched to students to provide academic and cultural advice and support. This engagement aims for staff to develop connections with students and enhance a sense of belonging and impact upon retention and completion rates.

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

The *Dare 2 Be Deadly (D2BD) Student Journey* is an initiative of the ISE team, that was piloted in Term 3 of 2020 during the global pandemic and officially launched by the Vice-Chancellor in 2021. It is a culturally safe program that offers online yarning circles, as well as collaborations with the Mind Waves University Mental Health Strategy, to meet the cultural diversity of each students' needs.

Responses to surveys sent to participants in the middle and at the end of each term inform program improvements aimed at better meeting student needs.

Online One Mob Yarning Circles were held throughout the year and are led by the ISE team and Wellbeing Officer, actively mentoring participants and providing a culturally safe place for students to yarn with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across the CQUniversity footprint. Themes included:
- social & emotional wellbeing
- cultural mentoring
- two ways of knowing & learning
- cultural identity
- engagement opportunities

In partnership with the Student Counselling and Wellbeing team, 38 Indigenous students received *First in Family Packs Welcome Packs*, as part of the HEPPP funded Equity Eligible program for promoting student mental health. In 2021, this included students experiencing Covid-19 lockdowns, job loss and isolation.

These packs consisted of a gratitude journal, Mind Waves water bottle, multi-purpose pen, CQUni counselling and wellbeing pamphlet, bento box, nutritious recipes, 2021 CQUni academic calendar fridge magnet, student-designed bookmark and 'Letters of Advice' from a HEPPP equity eligible student peer in the second and final terms, as well as tips on keeping well during lockdowns.

2.1.2. Data systems and student engagement

CQUniversity is committed to ensuring student success and upholding the credibility of its offerings by monitoring the academic progress of its students. The Monitoring Academic Progress (MAP) policy and procedures provide a framework describing how the University identifies and engages with students who are

not achieving satisfactory academic progress. The Indigenous Student support Team provide First Nations MAP students with structured opportunities to access support and develop strategies that will assist them to succeed in their study and ultimately make informed decisions. The team also contacts students who have withdrawn from their studies to encourage re-enrolment.

The ISE team's D2BD engagements and events hosted for students throughout each term are captured in the Sugar CRM system. The allows the ISE team to monitor retention and completion rates, while identifying gaps in services to enable referrals and supports to be put in place and keep at-risk students on target with their studies.

Student engagement and progress is monitored through the CQUni Success, Moodle, Sugar CRM, Student One, AIMS and PULSE systems which are university funded.

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

2.1.3. Student Health and Wellbeing Programs

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

Counselling support was provided to 104 self-identified First Nations students. The ISSP funded Indigenous Student Counsellor was instrumental in establishing the warm referral process with the Indigenous Student Engagement team.

New initiatives include:

The draft ***Culturally Safe Spaces and Places Guidelines*** developed in consultation with the Indigenous Student Engagement team has received endorsement. Traditional Owners and Indigenous-owned businesses will be engaged to progress the establishment of culturally safe spaces and places in 2022.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training: the MHFA course teaches tertiary students how to assist a fellow student who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The course content is tailored to the student setting using case studies, videos, and resources tailored to their learning needs. After completing, the training the two First Nations participants have the option to become accredited for three years.

Calm Time: students are taught how to take a study break, reduce stress levels and are introduced to the world of mindful practice. Students also can complete a live mindful meditation session and are provided with a one-year subscription to the Calm App. Overall participant feedback indicated a reduction in stress, as a result of attending the program, with four First Nations students benefitting from this training.

Mind Waves Study Smart: is a dynamic, self-directed e-course designed to help students reach academic, personal, and professional goals. The e-course includes four modules including topics such as time management, goal setting, exam preparation and managing procrastination. The six Indigenous participants were followed up with a phone call by the Indigenous Student Wellbeing Project Officer to check in about study progress and offer a gratitude journal upon completion of the Study Smart Term Planner activity.

Cultivating Wellness Workshop series: led by one of the HEPPP funded Counsellors, these workshops offered HEPPP equity eligible students a brief introduction to Dialectic Behaviour Therapy (DBT). One of the strengths of DBT is that it is skills-based and valuable for anyone looking to build their capacity to regulate emotion, an essential skill during stressful study periods. Skills learnt help improve the participant's ability to regulate

emotions, tolerate distress and negative emotion, be mindful and present in the given moment and communicate and interact effectively with others. Students' capacity to engage in their studies, by building upon emotional regulation skills, was enhanced.

First Nations Toolkit: the School of Access Education developed a series of student toolkits to assist Learning Advisors with the student's academic journey. A First Nations' toolkit was developed and launched late in 2020. In the toolkit's first year, the Academic Learning Advice team are beginning to utilise a better approach to building student's academic self-efficacy.

2.1.4. Research by Higher Degree (RHD) students

In addition to the supports described above, First Nations RHD students benefit from the support provided by CQUniversity's **First Nations Research Higher Degree (RHD) Academy.** In its first full year of operations, having commenced on 1 October 2020, the Academy is reaching its goals of aiming to increase First Nations RHD enrolments and completions, building the research skills of First Nations RHD students, and to further develop the cultural competency of supervisors of First Nations RHD Students.

In 2021, there were:
- five new Indigenous-identified RHD commencements
- a total of 11 RHD candidates now actively studying
- two Indigenous-specific Research Training Program Scholarships awarded, each to the value of $35,000 per annum.

The academy celebrated a significant milestone with the conferral of the first Academy-supported PhD and the first Graduate Certificate in Research. Additionally, a further student submitted their PhD thesis at the end of 2021 and awaits the thesis examination outcome.

One of many new initiatives is the employment of a First Nations academic and researcher to provide additional academic and Cultural advice to students and supervisors.

In 2021, RHD students attended a two-day, online Indigenous research methods workshop with guest lecturer, Adjunct Professor Mike Evans from the University of British Columbia in Canada. Students also attended a five-day face-to-face writing retreat and training workshop. Guidance on how to write an academic paper, thesis and journal articles was provided. Students also learnt how to undertake thematic analysis, use NVivo and SPSS software to analyse their data and literature review. Techniques to write their results and discussion chapters were also shared. All training sessions were recorded and made available for future reference in the Academy Moodle site.

While COVID-19 prevented students from attending a second face-to-face workshop, the flexible program design enabled the training to successfully move online.

In some cases, the students' research activities such as data collection were interrupted due to COVID–19 related travel restrictions. The Academy worked with students to help resolve data gathering issues, by exploring alternate data gathering methods, such as telephone or online interviews or via social media platforms.

Supervisors of First Nations RHD students attended the online Indigenous Research Methods workshop delivered by Adjunct Professor Evans. Discussions focussed on cultural guidance and protocols when conducting research with Indigenous peoples. Participant feedback indicated that the training was enlightening, informative and added to their knowledge base around Indigenous research.

Development and promotions of the First Nations RHD Academy occurred via the [Academy webpage](#), promotion on the CQUni Yarning social media pages, CQUni news stories, University staff and via word-of-mouth.

The Academy is jointly funded by the School of Graduate Research and ISSP.

The **School of Graduate Research** (SGR) continued to provide direct financial support, professional development and additional academic mentoring for RHD students.

First Nations RHD candidates were offered participation in the Thesis Completion Initiative program, which provided group-based coaching support. Two cohorts were offered in 2021. Additionally, extraordinary COVID leave and access to "Pivot Pool" funding resources were offered to enable students to reconfigure their project activities to overcome COVID-related delays and disruptions. Ongoing training and support through the RHD intensives and SGR ad-hoc events also continued, including items such as the monthly Kindness Couch meditation sessions to help support wellbeing.

Media stories about the Academy:
- https://www.cqu.edu.au/cquninews/stories/research-category/2021-research/indigenous-knowledge-and-disability-on-cquni-podcast
- https://www.cqu.edu.au/cquninews/stories/research-category/2021-research/first-nations-scholarship-sets-research-students-up-for-success

2.2. Tutorial assistance

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

Table 7: Tutorial assistance provided in 2021

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted[6]	Total number of tutorial sessions attended[7]	Total hours of assistance[8]	Expenditure[9] ($)
Enabling	38	241	482	28,196.00
Undergraduate	77	2089	4110	240,440.00
Postgraduate	4	127	254	14,858.00
Other	5	28	58	3,393.00
Total	**124**	**2485**	**4904**	**286,887.00**

The Indigenous Student Engagement (ISE) Team continues to manage the IAS Tutoring Program. In 2021, 90 Casual Learning Advisors were employed and matched to 292 students. 38 students withdrew and 124 continued with their tutoring sessions. Please note that the figures in the table are calculated around unique students assisted criteria as instructed.

All IAS Learning Advisors (tutors) have an undergraduate degree, with more than half the Learning Advisors having completed postgraduate programs. Where possible, students are matched with a Learning Advisor from their specific field of study. The D2BD Student Journey has seen an increase in the employment of learning advisors and students utilising the tutoring program.

In addition, four Elders were recruited as mentors to provide spiritual and cultural guidance and to provide a culturally safe learning space for students. All mentors are Elders in their community and hold a university degree.

2.3. 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 provided.

The Office of Indigenous Engagement

The Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE) team is led by Prof Adrian Miller, Deputy Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, BHP Chair in Indigenous Engagement and Director of the Centre for Indigenous Health and Equity Research. The OIE is part of the Research Division and staff are based at the Rockhampton North, Townsville and Cairns campuses.

The OIE continues to develop and lead the implementation of key strategies such as the CQUniversity Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Strategy (ILES), CQUni's support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart the Cultural Competency framework and the draft Reconciliation Action Plan.

Highlights for 2021 include:

- The approval of two new protocols: *Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander/First Nations Identity Protocol* and *Engaging and Communicating with Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander/First Nations People Protocol.* These protocols were created with input from the First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL). This formal advisory committee of First Nations Australians was established as a mechanism to embed First Nations culture and knowledge into the governance and business of the University as part of fulfilling the goals outlined in the Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Strategy (ILES).

- The *Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander/First Nations Identity Protocol* is a reference for determining the eligibility of applicants for special financial support including scholarships, student support and for employment in positions identified to be fulfilled by a First Nations person. This protocol is designed to guide CQUniversity employees responsible for managing application processes that require confirmation of an individual's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander/ First Nations cultural identity and supports education and employment opportunities for First Nations people at CQUniversity.

- This *Communicating with Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander/First Nations People Protocol* provides University employees and students with a practical guide and methods for respectfully engaging and communicating with First Nations peoples and Communities and the University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander internal and external stakeholders.

- The Protocol supports the establishment of reciprocal and respectful in the areas of governance, leadership, teaching, research, staff interaction and student success. The document will inform policies, procedures and platforms in all areas of the University's influence and responsibility in communities in which it operates.

The Centre for Indigenous Health Equity Research

Directed by Professor Adrian Miller, The Centre for Indigenous Health Equity Research (CIHER), sits within the Office of Indigenous Engagement.

This year, CIHER progressed the change of name to the Jawun Research Centre and conducted a strategic review of its direction. As a reflection of its expanding role, CIHER's five research program themes were identified as:

- Social and emotional wellbeing, resilience, and empowerment
- Disaster management and public health
- Process, impact, and economic evaluation
- Community place-based priorities
- Language, communication, and cultural wellbeing

CIHER continues to support current and new collaborative engagement and research projects with a range of research partners. New grant applications to work with Yumba-Meta Ltd, Skills for Life Program, Engaging at the Carceral Interface, juvenile justice interface, hepatitis B reduction were made.

First Nations research capacity of the Centre was strengthened with the employment of two Indigenous researchers. Supervision of new students who are part of the First Nations RHD Academy also continues to grow.

The Indigenous Student Engagement Team

The Indigenous Student Engagement Team functions within the Student Engagement Directorate and provides a direct link between general student support services and Indigenous specific support services. The team, comprising eight Indigenous staff members based on the Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton and Bundaberg campuses, provides mentoring and advice regarding the services available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This includes the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) tutoring program, financial guidance around scholarships, cultural advocacy, safe learning assistance, basic program information and referrals to both internal and external supports. The ISE team work closely with OIE, the Indigenous Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor and other university teams.

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 a culturally safe place to yarn and connect with others in their fields of study while sharing some of the challenges and impacts of life, work, study balance.

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

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

2.4.1. Programs and Projects

The University combats racism through the promotion of its values, policies, procedures and programs. The University Council receives an annual report on all breaches of the CQUniversity Code of Conduct, which includes misconduct such as racism. No incidents related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People were reported in 2021.

A mix of new and existing programs operated in 2021. New initiatives are described below:

As part of the First Nations Cultural Competency Framework, a series of ISSP-funded videos were developed including visuals that:
- explain the meaning of the term '*Country'* for First Nations People
- offer several versions of Acknowledgment of Country for users to choose the most suitable for events or in lecture rooms as recognition prior to the commencement of activities
- offer a short Acknowledgement of Country specifically to introduce a research presentation
- outline how one can deliver an Acknowledgement of Country.

The videos were created through a collaboration of OIE partners, including First Nations students, CQUniversity staff and alumni and filmmakers. Some of the music is original score, written and recorded by Creative Arts students on campus.

These videos have proved a valuable resource during the time of COVID-19 restriction on events, as they are easily used for online meetings, webinars and Zoom presentations.

A podcast series entitled *Talking Culture* was developed and the finished productions will be available for listening by all staff and students through the cultural competency online platform.

The series is based on one-on-one interviews with First Nations individuals who share stories of their private and professional lives and how their Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage plays a part in those aspects of their lives.

Three podcasts have been produced to date. In 2022, the plan to expand the series will include the production of 15 podcasts, each podcast approximately 15 minutes in length.

The ISSP-funded **Virtual Songlines Project** aims to develop an immersive, interactive and authentic cultural heritage game, designed to engage both First Nations and non-Indigenous students, by taking them on an animated and digital reconstruction of the pre-colonial era. This project is divided into four phases. The tool created in phase 1 will enable the cultural exploration of the First Peoples stories on Walgurukaba (Townsville), Darumbal (Rockhampton), and Byeelee (Bundaberg) Country. The program can be screened on 'screen walls' and will also be available on mobile phones via an app, with users able to interact through PC video as well as via augmented and virtual reality.

As of December 2021, 1837 employees had completed CQUni's online **First Nations Cultural Competency induction training.** An online student version of the training has been created and is close to completion. ISSP funds have enabled the development of both the staff and student cultural competency training. We continue to receive positive feedback from staff engaging with the training.

Further cultural competency and learning for staff is prioritised in the Draft Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Training will be structured around a series of short courses and micro credentials in addition to selected training workshops. Advanced cultural competency training will be incorporated in the Performance Enhancement Process for managers and other senior staff.

CQUniversity has committed to creating and enhancing culturally safe campuses and has developed the draft ***CQUniversity Culturally Safe Space and Place Guidelines*.** The establishment of additional Cultural Space and Place 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.

Indigenous Procurement

Sections 4.9 and 4.10 of the CQUniversity's Procurement Policy and Procedure (available from https://www.cqu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/240497/Procurement-Policy-and-Procedure.pdf) includes the University's commitments to Indigenous-focussed procurement.

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

A StaffNet directory of information and resources, plus an Indigenous supplier register designed to assist buyer engagement with Indigenous suppliers, are available to support staff to meet these KPIs. The University's annual spend with First Nations owned businesses has increased in 2021 despite an overall reduction in spending, with an additional 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers engaged.

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

PAT also worked closely with Social Traders and the Office of Social Innovation to deliver an information session to CQUni's Facilities Management team to promote Social and First Nations procurement. It is intended that future sessions with other CQUni buyer areas will be delivered in 2022.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group

CQUniversity is currently developing a new Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2022-2024.

The RAP Working Group met six times during 2021 to oversee development of the RAP, with registration lodged with Reconciliation Australia on 8 March 2021. A Draft RAP document was prepared and endorsed by CQUniversity Council in December 2021. A final RAP that is endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, has a planned launch for mid-2022.

The Draft RAP consolidates and builds on many of the initiatives and programs already underway at CQUniversity and aims to embed reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters across all divisions and work areas. ISSP funding established the positions of the RAP Project Officer and the Governance Officer, who are integral in the development of and committee support for the RAP.

BHP Partners Symposium

The Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE), CQUniversity, hosted the inaugural *BHP Partners Symposium: First Nations Community Engagement* in Brisbane, in March 2021.

The *Symposium* brought together 13 BHP partner organisations and 26 representatives. It provided a unique opportunity to work together to maximise our collective impact when working with First Nations communities, and to improve First Nations community engagement outcomes for our organisations and First Nations communities.

Partners shared 12 case studies about their BHP funded projects over the 3-day *Symposium*. Attendees also heard from Indigenous leaders on authentic First Nations engagement, cultural competency, engagement for training and mentoring and developing meaningful Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP).

Working together over the course of the *Symposium*, partners identified the need to:
- complete the *First Nations Community Engagement: Industry Guide Phase I*, developed by OIE in collaboration with the partners
- gain feedback from First Nation communities to create a community-centric engagement guide – Phase II
- continue collaborative engagement as partners
- compile the rich information generated through discussions at the *Symposium* to provide the basis for a potential training package.

The **BHP Partners Symposium Event Report**, developed to capture the rich information generated through discussions at the symposium, was distributed in November 2021 to BHP executives, partners, CQUniversity executive, and key stakeholders. This report guides university staff, students and researchers in how to engage with First Nations organisations and communities in a culturally appropriate manner.

Existing programs designed to offer a culturally safe and enriching environment continued to operate successfully and were further enhanced:

The **Billabong Camp** brand designed by Balarinji, is increasingly used throughout the University appearing on learning materials, reports and presentations that relate to Indigenous matters and features these designs in buildings. ISSP funds enabled the design to be made available for marketing materials.

The **campus map** featuring the campus Traditional Country names has been recently updated and is available from the marketing image catalogue for staff use. The campus map can be viewed here.

The **Indigenising the Curriculum Community of Practice** (CoP) was active in 2021. The CoP met monthly and covered such topics as reviewing guides to Indigenising the Curriculum and policies on Indigenous leadership and applying First Nations ways of knowing to curriculum. The CoP was supported by an active platform on Microsoft teams, which enabled staff to share ideas and resources. The CoP approach will continue in 2022, with a specific focus on sharing practice within courses offered at CQUniversity in which First Nations perspectives have been embedded. The Community of Practice is University funded.

In 2021, as part of the Festival of Change, the Office of Social Innovation collaborated with Bundaberg alumnus and Bundjalung man, Leslie Lowe, to deliver an online session titled **Social Innovation Through an Indigenous Lens.** The facilitator recognised and appreciated Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, while inviting participants to explore how an Indigenous mindset could address wicked problems facing the modern world, and how they can help drive community understanding of Indigenous social innovations.

97 registrations were received, with participants from all Australian States and internationally from countries such as Kenya, Canada and England.   Feedback received included comments such as:

> *'We need to bring back to our country the First Nations way of doing things'*
>
> *'The breadth of capability and knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and the unrecognised and untapped intelligence and expertise.'*
>
> *'Really opened my eyes about how advanced the Indigenous civilisation was.'*
>
> *'An incredible amount and ways to re look and rework and thinking differently'*
>
> *'Would be great to do something similar with Torres Strait Islander culture.'*

The Indigenous Student Engagement team in collaboration with University Life and the Bookshop team designed new **Cultural Sashes** for use at graduation ceremonies. The cultural sashes are presented as CQUni's commitment to Reconciliation between Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The wearing of the sash enables the community, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to celebrate the achievement of the growing number of Indigenous graduates and to reflect on our University's and nation's Reconciliation goals.

As described in previous reports, CQUniversity continues to enhance cultural competency and cultural safety through its **Indigenisation of the Curriculum** project, **Indigenous Graduate Attributes** and its support of **the Uluru Statement from the Heart.** The **2021 Calendar of Significant Indigenous Dates** was promoted to staff and the **CQU Creates Art competition and exhibition** with an Indigenous Art category once again attracted good quality entries. The **Indigenous Wellbeing Officer** continues to engage with students, staff and community around the ten year Wellbeing Strategy, which will build upon the University's current Mental Health Plan – *Mind Waves*. The strategy is aimed at improving the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students at CQUniversity, as well as the implementation of culturally safe places on campuses and hubs.

All CQUniversity Policy documents are available from https://www.cqu.edu.au/policy/view-all-policies.

2.4.2. Public events

During **NAIDOC** week 2021, CQUni launched the Dare to be Deadly (D2BD) student journey video campaign. Morning teas were held across several campuses to celebrate the launch and support NAIDOC celebrations. Over 347 staff attended from the Rockhampton, Cairns, Mackay, Townsville, Emerald, Adelaide, Bundaberg, Brisbane and Melbourne campuses and the Geraldton Universities Centre. Some campus events included a Welcome to Country and guest speakers.

The Indigenous Student Engagement Team also held a panel discussion on the Rockhampton campus titled 'Heal Country, What does it mean to me?', which was well attended by staff, students and the local community.

Staff across the CQUni footprint also attended other NAIDOC events such as Flag Raising Ceremonies and the NAIDOC march. Sydney campus staff enjoyed a belated NAIDOC week activity in the Blue Mountains in November. An Aboriginal Ranger shared firsthand information about his culture, heritage, stories, traditional medicines, and shared native bush foods, which were a culinary treat.

ISSP funding provided financial support to the NAIDOC events.

National Reconciliation Week was celebrated by promoting the stories of several staff who work with Indigenous communities and contribute to reconciliation. News story here.

On 26 May, the Associate Vice-President of the Rockhampton campus invited staff, students and community members to a morning tea that was followed by the screening of the film *High Ground*.

Digital screens across all campuses, including all staff and student computers lock-screens featured special artwork promoted both NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week respectively. Video and email messages were sent to all staff regarding the significance of these events and staff were encouraged to participate in campus, online and community activities.

On the Cairns campus, respected Elder and student Aunty Kathy Lakatos was invited as guest speaker for students and staff. Aunty Kathy shared the importance of commemorating days like Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Day to recognise the pain, loss and sadness of the stolen children and the trauma of the past in Australia. Aunty Kathy shared knowledge on the struggles that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face around identity, broken families and communities. Students and staff that attended the day were encouraged to share their art and words on hand and footprints.

Digital and social media

CQUniversity showed continued commitment to sharing Indigenous content both to internal and external audiences throughout 2021, with more than 60 Indigenous-related stories pitched to media and shared across websites and social channels.

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.

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-focussed news stories are available here.

3. Completions (outcomes)

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

Table 8 below shows the number of CQUniversity First Nation student completions. The data shows an increase in Undergraduate and post graduate completions in 2021, compared to 2020 and a decrease in the number of enabling level completions in 2021 compared to the previous year. In total, completions increased by 16 First Nations students in 2021 compared to 2020.

Table 8   First Nations student completions

Course level	2020	2021
Enabling	72	61
Undergraduate	55	72
Postgraduate	10	20
Total	**137**	**153**

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

Table 9   Undergraduate First Nations student completions by discipline

Discipline	2020	2021
Agriculture, Environmental and Related	1	0
Architecture and Building	1	0
Creative Arts	4	4
Education	4	6
Engineering and Related Technologies	2	2
Health	27	39
Information Technology	1	1
Management and Commerce	5	5
Natural and Physical Sciences	0	1
Society and Culture	10	14
Total	**55**	**72**

Table 10 shows completions by discipline for postgraduate students. The greatest number of graduations occurred in the Health Discipline for both undergraduates and postgraduates, with numbers increasing in 2021 in comparison to the previous year.

Table 10   Postgraduate First Nations student completions by discipline

Discipline	2020	2021
Education	0	2
Engineering and Related Technologies	1	2
Health	4	14
Information Technology	0	1
Management and Commerce	2	1
Society and Culture	3	0
Total	**10**	**20**

As previously outlined, strategies to facilitate the improved completion rate, include the provision of scholarships; tutoring through the Indigenous Assistance program; provision of a culturally safe learning environment and support from Indigenous Student Engagement Officers and the Office of Indigenous Engagement. Professional and academic staff have received professional development to improve cultural safety and appropriate support to First Nations students.

The impact of COVID 19 has seen an increase in student's requests for additional hours for tutorial assistance for exams, deferred exams, and assignments. Students, (particularly those in their final units of study) were appreciative of the granting of additional hours and provided positive feedback.

The D2BD Student Journey's online One Mob Yarning sessions centred on exam preparations, maintenance of wellbeing and tips to reduce stress. Another session focused on the ISSP funding to assist with graduation tickets, professional fees and connecting students to the Mentoring program.

The flexibility of university systems and past investment in online infrastructure have enabled staff and students to develop resilience and feel supported to adapt to a remote learning and working model with minimal impact.

First Nations Alumni and recent graduates receive support from the Alumni team through career support, a profile page unlimited access to the CareerHub and are encouraged to join the CQUConnect Mentoring Program. The platform has over 390 mentors available, including 12 Indigenous mentors in a dedicated 'First Nations Mentors Group', to support students and graduates. Additionally, the quarterly Indigenous Alumni e-newsletter '*CQUni Yarning*' informs alumni of about further study and scholarships, volunteering, and professional development opportunities at CQUni or through university networks, and features research news into First Nations matters, and alumni and student success stories.

Contact information for alumni is retained in Sugar CRM, the University's recordkeeping system. Lecturers are encouraged to utilise First Nations alumni as guest experts in lectures.

ISSP funding partially funds OIE staff to work with the Alumni Relations Team to provide content for the newsletter and engage with Indigenous alumni. The cooperative work with the alumni program is HEPPP funded.

4. Regional and Remote Students

CQUniversity is well established in the delivery of distance education with almost half of the current student cohort made up of students studying off-campus, many of whom are based in regional and remote areas. In 2021, of the 952 First Nations higher education students enrolled, 791 students were recorded as living in regional and remote areas, with 159 residing in metropolitan areas. The data for two students was not entered. As previously described, the University services regional and remote students through the strong delivery of online teaching, support services, scholarships and bursaries. Ongoing initiatives such as the Woorabinda Indigenous Education, Enterprise and Research Hub, enable regional and remote students to continue to live, work and study without the need to relocate. Students who must study internally or at a particular campus are able to access the 12 campuses, several study hubs and the Regional University Centre partnerships, situated in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

Scholarships and bursaries are available 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 HEPPP funded First Nations Scholarships Officer supports students with information regarding available ISSP, external and donor-funded scholarships and can provide students with information about how to access Abstudy relocation assistance.

In 2021 the Dare to Be Deadly (D2BD) program reached out to students who were unable to access a campus. Increased online support measures for student wellbeing and financial assistance ensured that students impacted by COVID-19 were given strategies and practical support to enable the continuation of their studies.

A Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund (NAIF) loan has enabled the delivery of asset maintenance on regional campuses including campus upgrades and refurbishments (physical works) as well as construction of new digital platforms and upgrades to existing digital platforms (digital works). The digital works include new digital experience platforms and learning spaces for students, as well as upgrades and enhancements to student administration, finance and other core systems and associated hardware. These upgrades and enhancements will ensure regional and remote students are provided the facilities and access to support equivalent to those being provided on the metropolitan campuses.

Table 11 shows the scholarship data for remote and regional students. Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships maintained a steady and stable level of demand. The need for Indigenous Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships was less than the previous year, due to lower demand as students didn't need to relocate away from home to study. COVID may have been a contributing factor, given travel restrictions, border closures and course delivery being moved online.

Table 11   ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students[10]

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	$	No.	$	No.	$	No.	$	No.
A. 2020 Payments	150,000	75	12,000	3	-	-	162,000	78
B. 2021 Offers[11]	146,000	73	4,000	1	-	-	150,000	74
C. Percentage[12] (C=B/A*100)							92.59%	
2021 Payments	**140,000**	**70**	**4,000**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**144,000**	**71**

5.   Eligibility Requirements

5.1.   Indigenous Education Strategy

5.1.1.   How CQUniversity has met its requirements under section 13 of the ISSP guidelines

CQUni has developed a draft *First Nations Education Strategy*, that aims to provide guidance for a whole-of-university approach to Indigenous training, higher education and research and reflects the university requirements within the ISSP Guidelines. Consultations have continued with the Deans and the University Management Committee; however, the University restructure and financial impact of COVID-19 has necessitated a review of targets. It is intended that the Strategy will be approved in 2022.

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

- improving linkages with schools and VET providers to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enrol at CQUniversity. This is evidenced by staff attendance at Indigenous careers expos, university open days and programs undertaken by the CQUni Connect and Indigenous student success teams.
- Indigenous student outreach, well-being and support, is embedded throughout the university through the provision of the enabling programs, tutorial assistance and the employment of Indigenous Student

Engagement Officers, the Office of Indigenous Engagement staff, the Indigenous Wellbeing Project Officer, the Woorabinda Hubs Co-ordinator and the Indigenous Scholarships Officer

- the First Nations RHD Academy that aims to grow and develop First Nations RHD students and their supervisors
- the Indigenisation of the Curriculum program and the Community of Practice (CoP). Indigenising the Curriculum facilitate Academics to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content into the CQUniversity curriculum
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Attributes that are embedded in the Student Graduate Attributes policy
- a standardised template for online courses that enables an Acknowledgement of Country in the introduction tile for all units offered online at CQUniversity
- the CQUniversity Acknowledgement to Country videos, podcasts and palm cards
- the online First Nations Cultural Competency Training for staff
- NAIDOC week, Reconciliation week and celebration of other significant days
- the use of dual language signs on the Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Brisbane and Perth campuses. Murals painted on Rockhampton North campus buildings and Yarning Circles situated on the Bundaberg and Rockhampton North campuses
- specific Cultural spaces at Townsville, Rockhampton and Bundaberg campuses
- the Billabong campfire motif has been utilised in briefs, advertising, presentations and on campuses to promote Indigenous culture and symbolism
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks that have been acquired and displayed across all CQUni campuses.

First Nations curricula: The draft RAP proposes a series of new activities to prioritise the inclusion of First Nations knowledge in the curricula, graduate attributes, and teaching practices. This includes development of a new framework and pedagogies to embed curricula across disciplines; benchmarking existing courses and providing accreditation of new material and teaching practices; increased resources and training to support academic staff to develop curricula; and prioritising First Nations knowledge in course design, review and accreditation through relevant committees for approval by Academic Board. A process and timeframe will be implemented to integrate CQUniversity's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate attributes into degree programs, and for accreditation through the University's Academic Information Management System.

5.1.2.   The practical implementation and evaluation of the Indigenous Education Strategy:

The CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 *Our Future is You*, outlines the University's commitment to providing access to world class education, research and employment opportunities. The Plan links key performance indicators (KPI's) to the strategic goals. Departmental strategic and operational plans have been developed with these KPI's in mind. Four monthly, six monthly and annual reports are submitted to the Academic Board, the University Management Committee, and CQUniversity Council on performance measurement against the KPI's.

The adoption of the First Nations Education Strategy in 2022 will bring these strategies and programs under one umbrella and will provide a focussed and practical approach to improving and reporting on First Nations Education outcomes at CQUniversity. The Strategy will fall under the auspices of the CQUni RAP and it's reporting requirements.

5.2.   Indigenous Workforce Strategy

5.2.1.   How CQUniversity has met its requirements under section 12 of the ISSP guidelines.

The First Nations Workforce Strategy *(FNWS)* was approved in February 2021 and can be found here.

This whole of university stratagem sets a strategic approach to maintaining and further growing the University's First Nations workforce. This will be achieved through targeted recruitment, professional development and retention in all employment categories and levels. The FNWS strives for significant outcomes of social and economic benefits for First Nations trainees, staff, alumni, and communities. In turn, the University will be positioned as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A First Nations Employment Officer has been appointed to co-ordinate and report on the First Nations Workforce Strategy. Six-monthly progress reports are presented to the First Nations Success Strategy Committee and shared with the Joint Consultative Committee and the University Management Committee.

CQUniversity provides a significant amount of support for all staff in career advancement and professional development opportunities. Impacts of COVID-19 have been challenging for employees, both personally and professionally. In response, CQUniversity People and Culture Directorate have introduced additional formal and informal programs to address employee concerns. Webinars have made available to staff by our Employee Assistance provider. Informal drop-in sessions with CQUniversity Executive, to provide employees with an opportunity to ask questions and connect with others in a similar situation, have also been offered.

The freeze on recruitment for all roles in the University due to the budgetary impacts of COVID-19 and the organisational restructure have been major barriers to increasing the employment of First Nations staff. This will continue into 2022. As a result, CQUniversity's target for the total workforce represented by First Nations people was reduced to 2.5%.

CQUni has developed the First Nations Employment webpage that contains information for prospective First Nations staff and encourages job applicants or employees to contact the First Nations Employment Officer for further assistance.

CQUni also provides First Nations Employees with access to Benestar's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Line. Clinicians who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander can provide free, culturally appropriate support and counselling.

The University continues to meet its requirements under section 12 of the ISSP Guidelines through the following additional documents and strategies:
- the First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC)
- the Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Strategy (ILES), which will be replaced by the CQUniversity Innovate RAP
- the Central Queensland University Enterprise Agreement 2017, Section 44: Indigenous Employment, that commits CQUniversity to the responsibilities outlined in Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy. CQU Enterprise Agreement
- the Recruitment and Selection procedure – Special measures (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, women in science and research).

Table 12 shows the levels and positions and employment type of First Nations staff. The number of First Nations staff rose from 40 in 2020 to 59 in 2021, representing 1.79% of the CQUniversity Workforce, despite the restrictions placed on the recruitment of new staff. This increase has largely been driven by the employment of casual/fixed term non-Academic staff, however more work must be done to reach the 2.5% employment target set in the CQUniversity Strategic Plan.

Table 12 Indigenous workforce data (2021 breakdown)[13]

Level/position	Permanent		Casual/contract/fixed term	
	Academic	Non-academic	Academic	Non-academic
Academic Level A	2	0	0	0
Academic Level B	4	0	0	0
Academic Salary Package	0	0	1	0
Casual Academic Job Profile	0	0	12	0
HEW Level 1	0	0	0	1
HEW Level 2	0	0	0	5
HEW Level 3	0	0	0	2
HEW Level 4	0	1	0	1
HEW Level 5	0	5	0	7
HEW Level 6	0	3	0	2
HEW Level 7	0	0	0	1
HEW Level 8	0	1	0	0
Professorial Research Fellow	0	0	1	0
Research Officer/Postdoc Research Fellow	0	0	1	0
Research Worker Level 5	0	0	0	1
Research Worker Level 6	0	0	0	5
Teacher	0	2	0	0
Trainee Skill Level A Year 12	0	0	0	1
Total	**6**	**12**	**15**	**26**

5.3.1.   Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

As evidenced by the performance and financial reports, the First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC) has successfully overseen the ISSP-funded programs and strategies that have supported First Nations students, staff and communities. The Committee continues to provide strategic guidance and take responsibility for wider University initiatives funded by internal and external sources. Greater accountability in program reporting has enabled the committee to commit funding in alignment with the University's strategic goals and vision and has also helped to inform the RAP. An internal review of the FNSSC has highlighted the committee's strengths and has also provided direction regarding its ongoing improvement.

Professor Adrian Miller, Chair First Nations Success Strategies Committee, Deputy Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, BHP Chair in Indigenous Engagement and Director of the Centre for Indigenous Health & Equity Research. Email: dvp-oie@cqu.edu

5.3.2.   The University's Indigenous Governance mechanism: The First Nations Success Strategy Committee (FNSSC)

The FNSSC comprises of the following positions: the Chair, two Indigenous Academics, one of whom also holds the Deputy Chair position, a senior Indigenous employee, two Indigenous Professional employees, the Director Student Engagement, the Executive Officer, Office of Indigenous Engagement, a representative from the Directorate People and Culture and a Joint Consultative Committee nominee. The Committee is chaired by Professor Adrian Miller, Deputy Vice-President (Indigenous Engagement) and is supported by a Management Accountant Support Officer and a Committee Secretary. Seven of the ten committee members are Indigenous and hold senior management or co-ordinator roles within the university. The Committee's Terms of Reference are publicly available here.

5.3.2. The First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC)

The FNSSC held 5 meetings and the FNSSC Executive Committee (4 members and 1 observer) held 5 meetings throughout the year. Items for discussion included:
- amendments of the TOR to better reflect committee operations and responsibilities and the role and functions of the Executive Committee
- ISSP funding requests and reporting forms updated to improve effectiveness and efficiency of processes
- development of administration procedures to manage ISSP funding requests, including processes for assessment of requests
- development of resources for applicants to assist in preparation of funding requests and reporting on funded projects
- committee minutes submitted to the University Management Committee for noting as scheduled
- regular review of student enrolment, attrition and graduation data and Learning Advisor recruitment and number of students receiving assistance, as reported by the Senior Coordinator, Indigenous Student Engagement
- Blue Card requirements and risk analysis review for Working with Vulnerable people
- the RAP Working group progress and draft RAP
- development of podcasts and Acknowledgement of Country videos
- presentations – RAP and the Virtual Songlines project
- the 2020 ISSP Performance report
- 2021 Funding request round and reviews
- Dare to be Deadly video launch in NAIDOC week 6 July 2021
- progress on the First Nations Workforce Strategy
- regular budget reports.

A self-evaluation, undertaken by a round table discussion provided members an opportunity to review the committee's performance and suggest areas for improvement. It was agreed that that the committee met its terms of reference with decisions on ISSP funding matters carried out efficiently and adhering to ISSP guidelines. The meetings provided a culturally safe space for members, who were found to be committed to achieving positive outcomes for First Nations staff, students and communities. Members were proactive, with a diverse range of skills, and expertise. Respondents also commented on the knowledge, experience and capability of both the Chair and Deputy Chair.

Recommendations for further improvement:
- to improve meeting effectiveness in addressing all agenda items, meetings will be scheduled with increased frequency and a shorter meeting length.
- to improve levels of engagement in Committee business, an induction process will be developed further which will reiterate member responsibilities
- ISSP funding and reporting processes will continue to be improved and enhanced.
- to ensure consistency in understanding of program management and effective reporting amongst both the Committee and ISSP funded project coordinators, the FNSSC will introduce or develop further:
  - training for ISSP-funded project coordinators in reporting processes and requirements
  - feedback to ISSP-funded project coordinators on applications and reports
  - regular updates from ISSP-funded project coordinators to the Committee.

5.3.3. Activities that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decisions of the university, curriculum development and or evaluation /review

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are involved in a range of decision-making processes at CQUniversity. The DVP (Indigenous Engagement) currently holds the following roles:
- Member of the CQUniversity Council
- Member of Academic Board
- Member of Research Committee
- Member of the University Management Committee
- Member of the Research Committee of Academic Board (with full rights of audience and debate)
- Chair of the BHP Community and Indigenous Scholarships panel
- Director of CQUniversity's Centre for Indigenous Health and Equity Research

Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from throughout the University are active participants in a range of other decision-making activities at CQUniversity including:
- Member of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
- Representation on scholarship and job recruitment panels
- Support for activities associated with representation within the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)
- Campus Life Committees for several CQUniversity campuses
- Membership of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)
- Representation in lead roles in the First Nations Research Higher Degree Academy

The ***First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders*** (FNCEL) was initiated under the *Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Strategy 2019-2021* (ILES) and in 2022 will migrate to the auspices of the new CQUniversity *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024* (RAP). The FNCEL acts as a mechanism for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledge in the governance, engagement and educational structures of the University. As previously mentioned, in its inaugural six-month trial period, the FNCEL provided guidance and input into two strategic protocols, now part of the CQUniversity policy bank: the *Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and First Nations Identity Protocol* and the *Engaging and Communicating with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and First Nations People Protocol.*

Additional information for completing the template

[1] This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2021. The figures for students should include the actual number (headcount, not the EFTSL). Scholarship figures (headcount and costs) should include the university award scholarships from the flexible finding pool as well as any preserved scholarships. Only payments made during 2021 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] This 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 would/did require payment during the 2021 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.

[11] Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2021 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2020 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2021 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships and preserved scholarships).

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

[13] While universities report on the number of Indigenous staff members through mainstream reporting requirements, the additional information provided in this section provides enhanced monitoring of the university's efforts in building its Indigenous workforce.