

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2018

University of Canberra

1 Equity outcomes and strategies:

The University of Canberra's Strategic Plan, 2018-2022, outlines the university's commitment to leading Australia's Universities in equity, diversity, inclusion and access. UC is recognised as a leader in equity and social justice, and embraces an ongoing commitment to empower individuals to achieve their best, regardless of their circumstances.

The University will continue to embrace its responsibility to achieve equity, enthusiastically seeking and nurturing students from Australia's First Peoples and minorities of race, gender, ability or belief.

Over the period of this plan, the University of Canberra aims to increase the access, participation and success of people from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds.

Access:

The University will build interest in, and capability for, university study for people from low-SES backgrounds through the provision of the *Aspire UC* outreach program in schools and communities across the capital region and south-eastern NSW. *Aspire UC* includes a range of online, in-school and campus-based initiatives.

Additionally, throughout 2018, the University will deliver the *Aspire UC Professional Learning Forum*. The project involves working with schools in the ACT and southern NSW to build the leadership capacity of school teachers and principals to deliver quality educational outcomes to Indigenous students and those from rural, regional and low SES backgrounds.

The University offers a number of entry initiatives via the University of Canberra College which provide flexible access into undergraduate degrees.

A wide range of financial support is available for students from low-SES backgrounds through the provision of specifically targeted equity scholarships. This support is available to undergraduate and postgraduate students across all disciplines and during all stages of their study.

Participation:

The University of Canberra will provide a whole institution approach to targeted support for commencing students from low SES backgrounds. The University will create a safe and inclusive environment that attracts students who have traditionally been disadvantaged in their access to higher education; ensure that inclusive pedagogies are demonstrated in all our courses; and ensure that inclusive practices are demonstrated in all areas across the University. Additionally, the University will continue to offer academic and pastoral support services and programs to meet the needs of people from a low SES background.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy 2017-2021 (the Strategic Plan) demonstrates the commitment of the University of Canberra to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander equity. The first objective of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy is to *Improve the attraction, retention and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and improve completion rates annually.*

The University's Reconciliation Action Plan January 2018-December 2020 commits to increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments and completion. By 2021 the University aspires to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate completion rates in line with the broader UC community.

2 Key activities:

In addition to the programs managed by Widening Participation to ensure greater access to students from low SES backgrounds, the University will continue to provide support services to ensure the ongoing success of students once they have commenced their studies. This includes leaning support through Study Skills (face-to-face and online help for assignment writing, referencing and other tasks), orientation and preparation programs, Intensive English courses, Maths and Stats Help (MASH), the Peer Assisted Learning Support program (PALS) and various other Academic assistance programs.

The University also provides students ongoing support to ensure their health and wellbeing, contributing to the successful participation and outcomes of our students. This includes a dedicated Medical and Counselling Centre (including mental health support services), support through the Student Welfare Team and programs such as UC Belong and peer mentoring.

3 Evaluation:

Evaluations for all programs will be done through a structured evaluation framework. Evaluations will be conducted according to the methodologies that appropriately meet the project aims. The range of evaluation methodologies used will include pre- and post-program surveys to measure aspiration; teacher surveys to measure the utility of the program to support students' learning and aspiration; focus groups; NAPLAN results; attendance data; and completion of University pathways programs.

4 Partnerships and collaboration:

The University of Canberra will work collaboratively on a variety of access pathways with Education partners, including the University of Canberra College and the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). There are also numerous partners offering credit arrangements to articulate in study at UC. Additionally, we will continue to work collaboratively with the ACT Education and Training Directorate and the NSW Department of Education and Communities. We will continue to work in partnership with schools across the region and with organisations such as The Smith Family, the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience and the Country Education Foundation. These collaborations and partnerships will all be designed to break down barriers to accessing higher education for students from low SES backgrounds.