

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2019

University of Southern Queensland

As a regionally headquartered university, with a significant proportion of Low Socioeconomic status (LSES) students, Indigenous students and students from Regional, Rural, and Remote areas, the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) is committed to widening participation and ensuring accessibility to higher education that embraces difference and supports, values and respects the unique perspectives and approaches of all individuals.

The University's Access and Participation Plan 2019 is aimed at improving participation, retention, success and completion of all students from disadvantage and underrepresented backgrounds and aligns with the 2019 University's core priorities to:

- Drive improvements in student success through the implementation of the University's *Student Success and Retention Action Plan 2019-2021*;
- Strengthen strategic partnerships with schools, VET providers and our communities; and
- Coordinate University-wide effort to improve retention, including a focus on core equity cohorts.

1 Equity outcomes and strategies

The *Social Justice Strategic Plan (2016-2020)* sets out USQ's core cultural values and states that equity and fairness is achieved through the positive recognition of difference and enhanced participation which will drive USQ forward as a socially responsible higher education enterprise.

USQ is committed to ensuring access, participation and success for people from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds through:

- Investing in and supporting diversity at USQ through a range of widening participation activities;
- Implementing *USQ Student Success and Retention Action Plan 2019-2021*;
- Implementing USQ's *Incarcerated Student Strategy*;
- Maintaining the career development approach to raising aspirations for higher education in regional, rural and remote communities;
- Continuous improvement of USQ's suite of enabling and pathway programs;
- Engaging with schools and students from low socioeconomic status and disadvantaged backgrounds, that are underrepresented in higher education;
- Finalisation of our *Reconciliation Action Plan*, with endorsement by Reconciliation Australia;
- Evaluate equity performance data to enable the University to focus effort and resources in key priority areas;
- Continue to analyse USQ's frameworks, systems and operations for areas of structural inequality to ensure the implementation of continuous improvement activities; and
- Continue the provision of existing support programs including orientation, learning support and other critical intervention programs that enable early detection of students at risk.

The initiatives and activities are supported by other strategies and plans including the *USQ Strategic Plan 2016-2020*; *Disability Action Plan 2017-2020*; *Reconciliation Action Plan 2019-2021 (Draft)*; *Indigenous Education Strategy 2019-2020 (Draft)*; *Incarcerated Student Strategy*, *USQ Employment Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2020*, and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Workforce Strategy 2018-2020*.

2 Key activities

Pre-Access – Outreach to Schools and Communities

- Deadly Ways (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program delivering widening participation activities to high school students and communities in LSES, regional, rural and remote areas)
- Indigenous Connections (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program working in partnership with Indigenous Community service providers and schools to deliver widening participation activities)

- Making Career Choices (Career outreach service in LSES, regional, rural and remote communities and schools)
- School Engagement (Delivers on-campus widening participation and demystification activities targeting LSES, regional, rural and remote high schools)

Access – Pathways and Admissions

- Accelerated Entry Program (Enabling program supporting LSES, regional, rural and remote school leavers without an OP to gain entry to USQ undergraduate programs)
- Incarcerated Student Strategy (Development of offline course content to support USQ's Incarcerated Student Strategy)

Participation – Transition, engagement and progression of undergraduate students

- Residential Scholarships (Scholarships to support, LSES. Regional, rural and remote students to reside at USQ Residential Colleges)
- Scholarships & Bursaries (Financial assistance to support LSES commencing and continuing students)
- Indigenous Student Performance and Retention (Targeted initiatives to support the participation, retention and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate students)
- Student Success and Retention Initiatives (To deliver targeted USQ Student Success and Retention Plan initiatives to LSES, regional, rural and remote students)
- Students Success and Wellbeing support activities (Suite of services designed to support LSES students learning journey)
- USQ HEPPP Student Equity Performance Data Insight initiative (Targeted monitoring, evaluation and learning analytics initiative to enhance LSES at-risk interventions)

3 Evaluation

USQ's evaluation framework is a two-tiered approach embedded within the project management framework that incorporates assessment of institutional impact as well as evaluating effectiveness of initiatives at program/project level using evaluation methodologies and tools which are applicable to each initiative or activity. This includes both quantitative and qualitative data. The evaluation process is based on program logic modelling methods¹, using the three key elements of input, output, and outcomes in order to plan, communicate, implement and evaluate at program or project level.

At an institutional level, equity performance data and other key indicators are analysed and benchmarked to ensure resources are directed to areas of need across the student life cycle stages.

4 Partnerships and collaboration

USQ will continue to invest in and strengthen partnerships with local, regional and national, government and not-for-profit organisations to ensure equitable, fair and targeted opportunities for engaging and supporting prospective and current LSES students.

Key stakeholders include:

- Regional Universities Network (RUN)
- National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education
- LSES schools in our regions
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students and community members
- TAFE
- Indigenous health and service providers
- Correctional centres
- Not-for-profit service providers

¹ Frechtling, J.A. (2015). *Logic Models. International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Elsevier (2nd Edition). pp. 299–305