

University of Southern Queensland

As a regionally headquartered university, with a significant proportion of students from low socioeconomic status (LSES) backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from Regional, Rural, and Remote areas, the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) is committed to widening participation and student success in higher education.

1 Equity outcomes and strategies

USQ is committed to ensuring access, participation and success for people from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds by embracing the diversity of our current and future students, and to empower and inspire their ambitions and achievements no matter their background, culture, financial situation or geographical location.

USQ's HEPPP Action Plan aims to assist our current and future students that come from disadvantaged or non-traditional backgrounds become connected, and stay connected to the higher education throughout their student lifecycle and in their life long education journey by:

- Connecting future students' aspiration to career and employment goals
- Culturally connecting with current and future Indigenous students
- Connecting current students to financial supports and assistance
- Connecting current students to support and wellbeing programs, and continuing career development

2 Key activities

	STRATEGY	ACTION	KEY PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES
PRE-ACCESS AND ACCESS	Connecting future student's aspiration to career and employment goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To undertake programs/projects that will aim to assist school students, school staff and parents/carers understanding and awareness of higher education options, build aspiration and awareness of higher education pathways, and available supports (social, emotional and financial) including financial assistance to schools in regional, rural and remote schools to attend on-campus demystification/familiarisation events • To provide career development and career information in regional, rural and remote schools and communities, with strong communication and up to date relevant career information and includes on-campus residential camps, aspiration raising and demystification events, and professional development for career advisors • To provide a selection of enabling and first year courses (including HeadStart courses) at locations in selected regional, rural and remote schools or communities to ensure that students have access to reliable and high speed internet in supportive known physical location, with academic advising support and resources • To deliver Open Access Colleges on-campus Accelerated Entry Pathway Program (AEPP) to Year 12 school leavers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Engagement - Delivers on-campus widening participation and demystification activities targeting LSES, regional, rural and remote high schools • Regional, Rural and Remote Schools Transport Assistance – Financial assistance to schools to attend on-campus events • Drones for STEM – Delivery of drone workshops for students in local schools and to build the confidence and competency of teachers from rural and remote areas in the use of drones as a STEM learning and teaching tool • Making Career Choices - Career outreach service in LSES, regional, rural and remote communities and schools • Regional University Centres Project • Accelerated Entry Program – Flagship enabling program supporting LSES, regional, rural and remote school leavers without an OP or ATAR to gain entry to USQ undergraduate programs

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PRE-ACCESS AND ACCESS – INDIGENOUS</p>	<p>Culturally connecting with current and future Indigenous students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop and enhance high school student's cultural identity and their aspiration for education and employment opportunities post-school, and to reassure them that the University is a culturally supportive environment through on-campus demystification events including camps and literacy programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Ipswich Education Youth Sports Program (IEYSP) - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program working in partnership with Indigenous Community service providers and schools to deliver widening participation activities
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PARTICIPATION AND PROGRESSION</p>	<p>Connecting current students to financial support and assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To offer institutional equity scholarships and residential accommodation scholarships to students from low SES backgrounds and students experiencing financial hardship to ease the financial burden of study or have been impacted by natural disasters including bushfires To provide financial support and to ease the burden of the financial cost of study material and assessment including access to internet, low or zero-cost text books, specialised course equipment and students experiencing financial hardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential Scholarships - Accommodation scholarships to support LSES, Regional, rural and remote students to reside at USQ Residential Colleges Equity Scholarships - Financial assistance to support LSES commencing and continuing students, and incarcerated students Zero cost Textbooks – Adoption, adaption or creation of open textbooks in undergraduate courses, with a preference for first year cohorts
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PARTICIPATION AND ATTAINMENT</p>	<p>Connecting current students to support and wellbeing programs, and continuing career development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide on-going targeted student success and well-being programs, student advising services including targeted mental health programs that develop resilience, self-efficacy and engagement for all equity cohorts To undertake research and analysis to develop deeper understanding of our current student's demographic and sociocultural characteristics, provide on-going coordination, management, evaluation, reporting and financial oversight of the HEPPP allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Success and Wellbeing support services - Suite of services designed to support students in their learning journey and their future careers Indigenous Student Performance and Retention - Targeted initiatives to support the participation, retention and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate students HEPPP and Student Cohort Data Analysis - Performance data analysis and insight initiative aimed at monitoring, evaluation and learning analytics 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.

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

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. These key partnerships include schools, Queensland Widening Participation Consortium, Regional Universities Network (RUN), Regional University Hubs, correctional centres, TAFE and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.