

# ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020

## Victoria University

As the *University of Opportunity and Success*, we are committed to being inclusive rather than exclusive, providing learning experiences and research collaborations that meet the needs of our local communities.

With a culturally diverse population of students and staff from a wide range of backgrounds, Victoria University (VU) has a powerful moral purpose to provide vocational and higher education that transforms the lives of students and the communities it serves.

VU's [Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy 2017-2020](#) outlines our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' opportunity and success, particularly in our heartland, the west of Melbourne.

We are truly a world-class dual sector university, one of only a few in Australia. From our innovative [VU Block Model](#), undergraduate and postgraduate degrees via our [discipline-based higher education Colleges](#), through to our TAFE division, [Victoria University Polytechnic](#), we are delivering on our commitment to offer educational opportunities and access to the diverse communities of the region.

- 1 Equity outcomes and strategies:** for improving outcomes for people from a low SES background.
  - VU's Access and Participation Plan 2020 is underpinned by the university's overall mission and [Strategic Plan 2016-2020](#), [Student Equity & Social Inclusion Policy](#), [Student Retention Strategy 2018-2020](#), [2017-2019 Employability Strategy](#) and the [Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy \(2017-2020\)](#).
  - VU's Learning Hubs will provide targeted and integrated academic support and skills building, to assist students through their units of study and to develop those Global skills crucial to study success.
  - Students will be able to access our 24/7 advice service, Learning Hub Tutoring that provides students with access to academic and career support when and where they need it.
  - VU will continue using analytics to predict students at risk and implement targeted and in-time interventions.
  - Targeted support and interventions for First Year students will be maintained. In 2019 our analytics demonstrated a positive impact on LSES students with average marks increasing by 2% and attendance rates higher than 80%; a direct benefit of the Block Mode, learning support, and early interventions for students at risk of disengagement.
- 2 Key activities:** which will deliver an increase in the access, participation and success of people from a low SES background.

### Access:

- Continue VU's extensive collaboration with more than 140 catchment secondary schools in Melbourne's West, North and South East. The catchment area encompasses secondary schools in metro, urban, outer urban and regional settings. These schools characteristically feature high numbers of LSES students, many of whom are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Conduct Information sessions for parents, school staff and students in VU's catchment secondary schools, Education Expos across the metro area and on VU Campuses.
- VU's Open Day Family Information Day that attracts several hundred participants and inducts students and their family constellations into the demands of student life and how the family can support the student to successfully participate in the student lifecycle. Research shows that students are more likely to succeed when they and their support people have knowledge of how to navigate university life.
- [VU Guaranteed](#) will be offered as an early offer program for eligible schools with large LSES cohorts.
- Pre-entry events to be offered for Secondary School students to foster interest in university as a post-secondary destination. These are particularly impactful for VU students who are characterised by LSES background and high numbers of first-in-family. VU's Learning Hub, in collaboration with VU Secondary College, will deliver a series of workshops linked to study and global skills to create and foster interest in VU as a tertiary education choice. In conjunction with our Future Students team in 2020 we will engage further surrounding and partner schools in this program. Through Learning Hub Online, all students will be able to access [VU Ready](#) with online modules designed for students to complete before commencing

study to assist with transition to university, how to find and access services across VU and how to be successful through their studies.

- Student Mentors will participate in the [VU KickStart](#), a program for first year domestic students who are first-in-family, designed to familiarise students with university life and undergraduate study.

*Participation:*

- Programs to support transition into higher education via a range of sub-bachelor offerings in our VU Polytechnic.
- Pathways and transition programs for students entering second year via a vocational education course. Students from LSES backgrounds who are commencing university courses in second year are targeted to participate in VU's Transition Essentials program which supports students with the foundations for academic and university life success.
- Student Mentors to assist students in Learning Hubs providing transition support to students once they commence study, fostering a sense of belonging to the university and improving student confidence in their own knowledge and study strategies through positive conversation and ongoing support.
- Learning Hubs, through tailored and scaffolded activities and programs for students in each year of undergraduate study, will provide accessible and current workshops, online modules and resources to support and guide them through their studies and as they start to build those global skills crucial to study and work success.
- Learning Hub Tutoring to provide online tutoring and academic & career advice 24/7, for student access as and when needed.

*Success:*

- Expansion of the [VU Employ](#) service that works with a range of industry partners and community stakeholders to offer multiple programs designed to increase student employability, enterprise skills and graduate career success. Programs include career counselling, industry mentoring, employability workshops, career & industry fairs and personal career development skills sessions.
- Delivery of workshops focussed on employability skills in VU's Learning Hubs on every campus as well as providing access to VU Employ programs, where students can access a range of online and face-to-face careers and employment services.
- Embedding of VU's Block Mode of teaching across all undergraduate study years to improve outcomes for LSES students by offering a more intensive timetable that facilitates stronger engagement with peers and teaching staff as well as building time management skills.
- Delivery of a range of academic support and skills-based programs, including Essential Activities, workshops, Student Mentor study spaces mentor sessions, and drop-in sessions in our Learning Hubs that are designed to foster a help-seeking culture, enhance learning, stimulate thinking and build the skills recognised as pivotal to successful study and employability outcomes.

**3 Evaluation:** how the university plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the equity strategies.

- Collection and analysis of LSES student participation and engagement across a range of targeted programs and equity strategies.
- Data analysis of LSES academic progress and outcomes.
- Data analysis of the impact of VU's Block Model for the LSES student cohort.
- Report on outcomes for LSES students against the VU Student Retention Strategy and VU Student Employability Strategy.

**4 Partnerships and collaboration:** who the university will partner and collaborate with and how this will improve equity performance.

- Secondary schools in VU's catchment areas that are characterised by high LSES student cohorts. VU will continue its collaboration with these schools to retain contemporary practice in the school to university transition space.
- A key priority in 2020 for VU is embedding the engagement framework to increase partnerships with industry, schools and philanthropy.
- Internal and external vocational education providers that promote pathway opportunities (some with credit) into higher education programs.
- Collaborative programs involving key industry partners and Alumni Services such as VU's [Talent Connect](#) program which provides industry mentoring and networking initiatives for LSES students and graduates. Industry partners for 2020 include City West Water, Western Health, the Western Bulldogs, Melbourne Victory Football Club and the Malthouse Theatre.