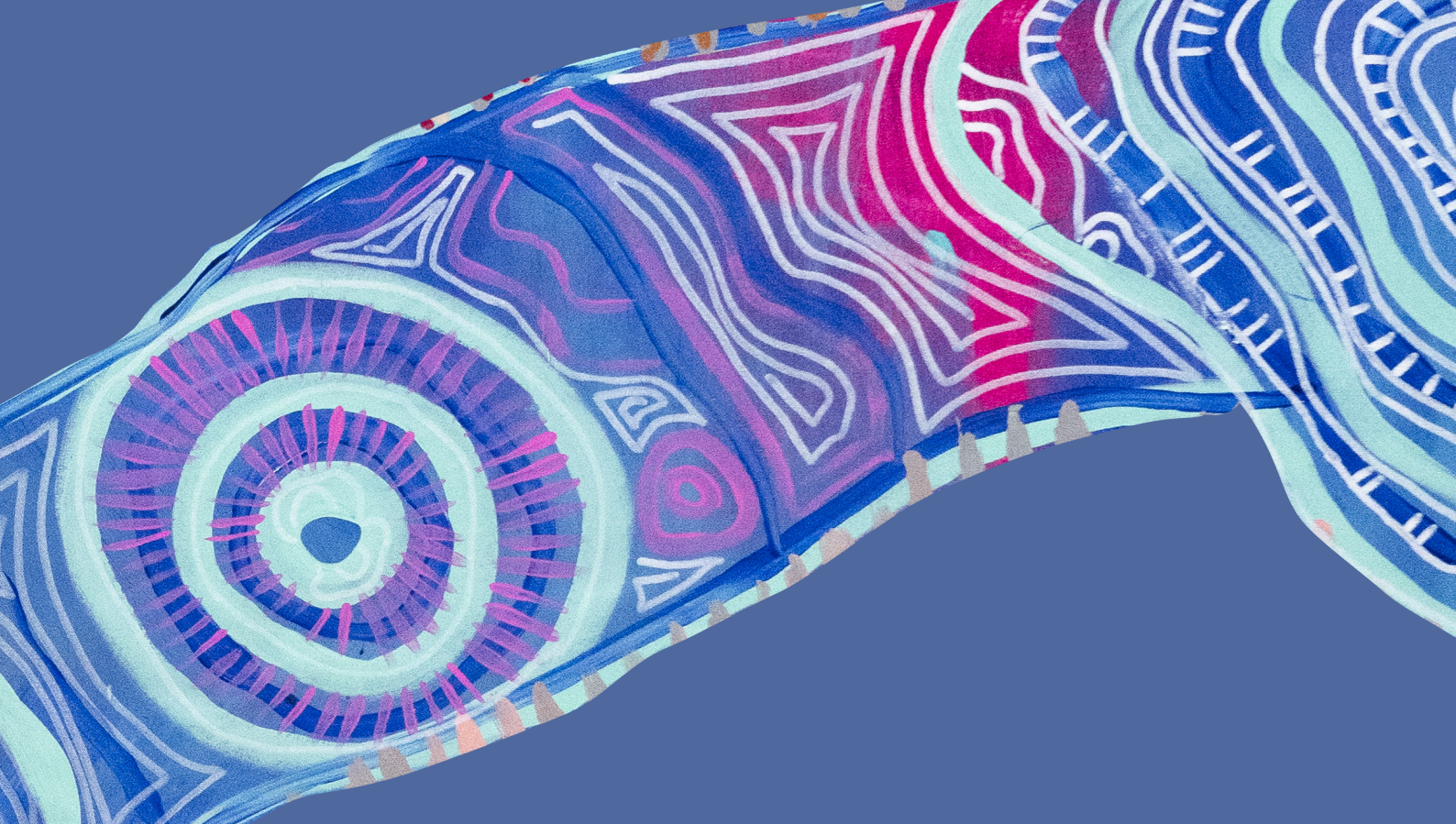




FEE-FREE UNI READY PATHWAYS

*A Best Practice Guide to Developing Stronger,
More Equitable Universities and Communities*



Australian Government
Department of Education

UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE 



ATEC
Australian Tertiary
Education Commission

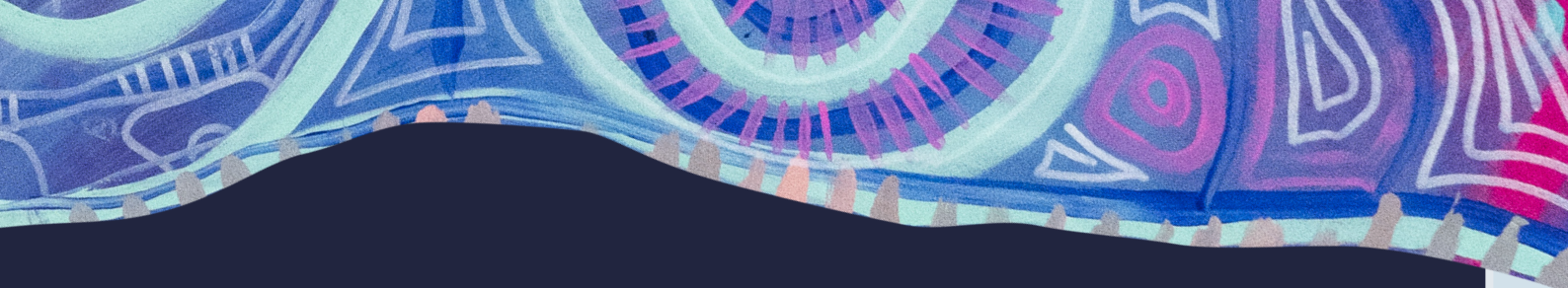


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The authors of this *FEE-FREE Uni Ready Best Practice Guide*, including representatives from the University of Newcastle and the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

We recognise and honour their continuing connection to land, waters and community, and their ongoing commitment to learning and teaching. We pay our respects to their knowledge and culture, and to Elders past and present.

Acknowledgements

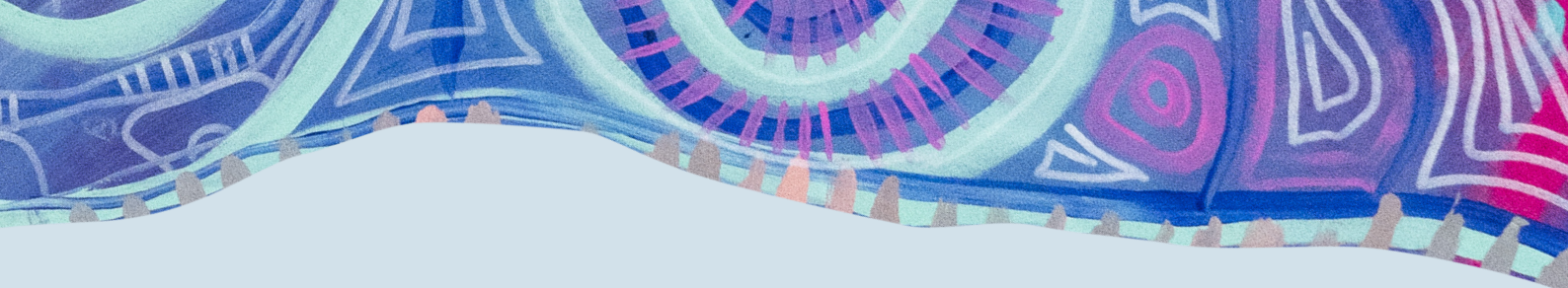
Thank you to the Australian Government Department of Education for funding this work under the National Priorities Pool Program. Special thanks to the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and particularly to our colleagues from the ATEC, Amanda Brown, Andy Russo, Thomas Jones and Jun Lee for the generosity of your time, insights and advice across the course of the project.

Gratitude is also extended to the members of the National FFUR working group, including the ATEC colleagues Mr David Turvey, Mr Daniel Frewer and Ms Beck Daly and the university co-Chairs Professor Alex Zelinsky A.O. and Professor Rufus Black. The project greatly benefited from the thoughtful contributions of Nathan Towney and the Project Reference Group members, Karen Seary, Professor Sharron King, and Professor Andrea Carr, who provided advice, feedback and direction throughout.

The authors of this *Best Practice Guide*: Associate Professor Anna Bennett, Dr Kristen Allen, Dr Michelle Mansfield, Dr Emma Hamilton, Dr Bronwyn Relf, Nicole Garske, Georgia Way, Dr Jennifer Irwin, Dr Heath Jones, Dr Ryan O'Neill, Rebecca Smith, Shondell Williams, Dr Zoë Griffiths, Catherine Burgess, Dr Scott Sciffer, Sam Doherty, Hannah Pipe and David Thompson greatly appreciate the valued work of contributors, Dr Treesa Heath, Dr Milo Kei, Dan Collins, Cheryl Burgess and Selina Darney.

We are also so appreciative of the work and care that Caitlin Moriarty contributed as copywriter, editor and designer, as well as our editors Dr Jo Hanley and Kirsty Richards.

Thank you to University of Newcastle staff who supported the project, including Fiona Bastion, Lou Morrissey, Simon Bush, Elizabeth Bridges, Ruth Cameron, Anthony O'Brien, Fiona Jones and Tracey Cox.



The inspiring images and video content crafted by filmmaker Conor Ashleigh enriched the project's storytelling, and the web development expertise of Out of the Square Media is also acknowledged, with thanks.

This project would not have been possible without the FFUR students and graduates who generously shared their stories and experiences; their voices form the heart of this work.

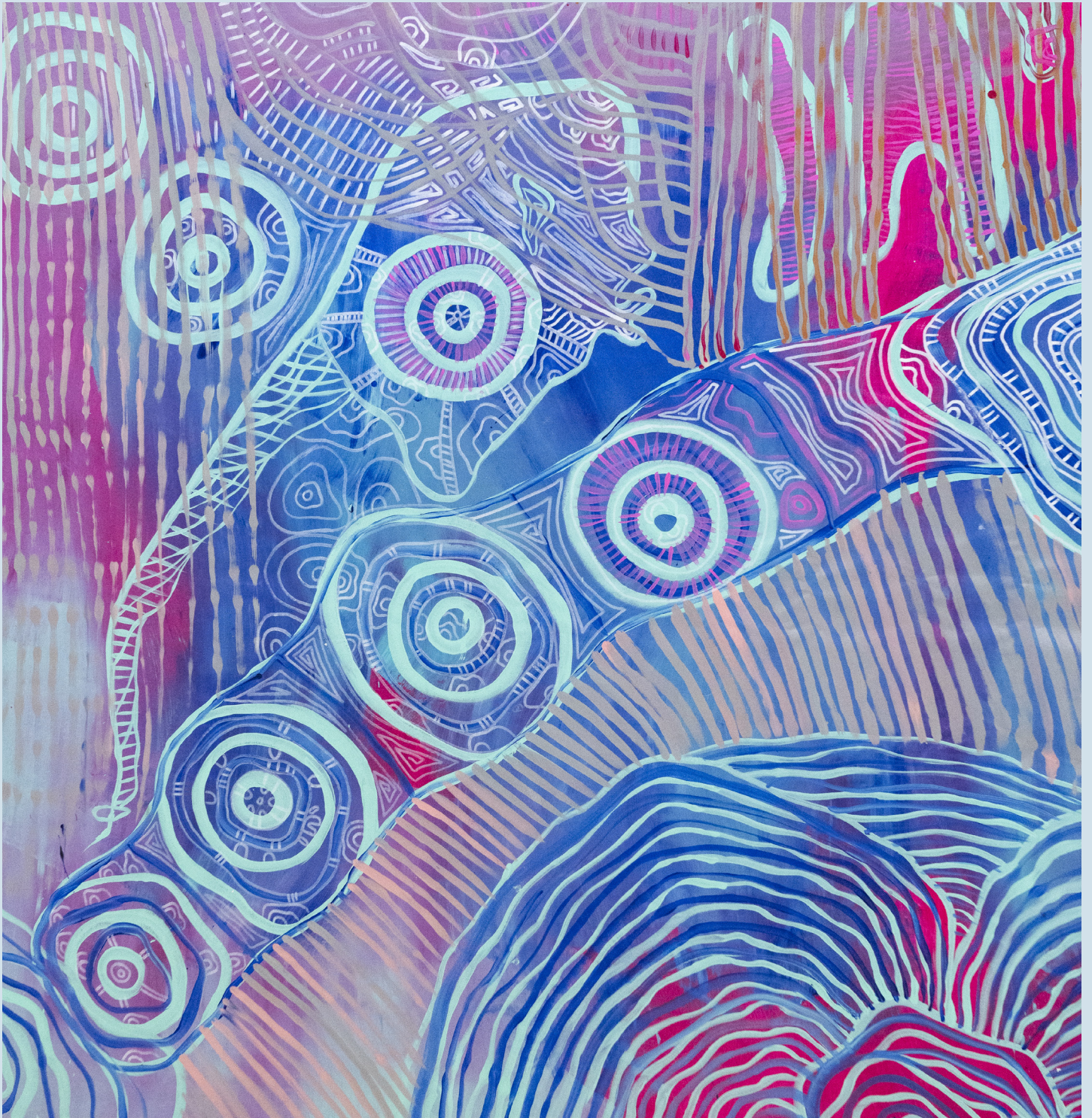
We are also very thankful for the contributions of colleagues from the following institutions and organisations who generously shared time and insight through the research consultation:

- Central Queensland University
- Charles Darwin University
- Edith Cowan University
- Griffith University
- James Cook University
- Murdoch University
- Southern Cross University
- Swinburne University
- University of Newcastle
- University of South Australia
- University of Southern Queensland
- University of Tasmania
- University of Technology Sydney
- Universities Admissions Centre
- Open Universities Australia



Please cite this FEE-FREE Uni Ready (FFUR) Best Practice Guide as:

Bennett, A., Allen, K., Mansfield, M., Hamilton, E., Relf, B., Garske, N., Way, G., Irwin, J., Jones, H., Griffiths, Z., Burgess, C., Smith, R., O'Neill, R., Williams, S., Sciffer, S., Doherty, S., Pipe, H., & Thompson, D. (2026). *FEE-FREE Uni Ready Project: Best Practice Guide*. The Australian Government Department of Education and Australian Tertiary Education Commission.



Project Artwork

Thank you to Renae Lamb for the beautiful and evocative artwork and design from 'Gilli Watta'. 'Gilli Watta' is a word from the local Gathang language meaning 'sparking the flame.'

“

I am proud to present ‘Gilli Watta’ as a reflection of my journey as a Wiradjuri, Wongaibon woman, and mother of three proud Worimi, Wiradjuri, and Wongaibon children. It is important for me to showcase the significance of cultural building in our communities, especially for future generations.

In the context of Aboriginal women, ‘sparking the flame’ symbolises a powerful and sacred practice of lighting the flame within – of igniting the fire in the mind, body, and soul.

In the artwork, the women’s symbol represents our Ancestors connecting, and always guiding us upon Country and within our learning journey to Country. The river lines show– through the river ways we learn. Through the stars in the sky– we learn. Through our stars, we understand our stories and connection. As everything in the stars, in the sky, is here on Country and alive. We are always connected, we are always strong, and we are always learning as one.



WATCH: Renae Lamb, artist and UON Alum

Renae Lamb is a proud descendant of the Wiradjuri/Wongaibon people of central-west New South Wales. Her ancestral community ties stretch widely across central-west NSW, yet she and her family deeply identify with the Dubbo, Tangie, Dandaloo, and surrounding areas. These communities hold profound cultural and family significance.

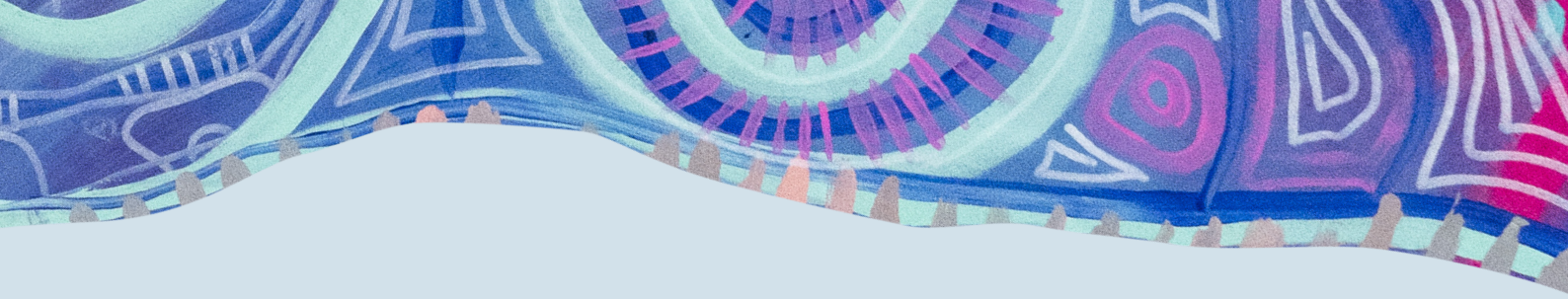
Renae was born and raised on the homelands of the WANNARUA, AWABAKAL, and WORIMI communities—lands that shaped her upbringing, where she attended school and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Global Indigenous Studies and minoring in Education from the University of Newcastle. Renae is a mum, the founder of [Midnight Dreaming](#), an educator and an inspiring, visionary artist for change.



About FFUR

In 2025 the Australian Government under the National Priorities Pool Program (Department of Education, Australian Government, 2025) commissioned the 'National FEE-FREE Uni Ready Project: Report and Best Practice Guide' led by the University of Newcastle to deliver two distinct pieces of work and associated outputs, as follows:

1. Provide a **Report on Policy Settings** with advice on FFUR national policy regarding future implementation, including: information about design and transferability of FFUR offerings; recommendations for what constitutes a FFUR course of learning; how FFUR fits into the broader pathways landscape; and how to achieve optimal outcomes and improved access for students from underrepresented backgrounds; and
2. Guide Higher Education practitioners in the design and delivery of high-quality FFUR courses through a **Best Practice Guide**.



FFUR pathways have become a cornerstone of equity in Australia's higher education system over the past half-century (Department of Education, 2025). As highlighted in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report 2024, these pathways have enabled hundreds of thousands of students to access higher education and contribute their knowledge and expertise to the benefit of Australian communities, professions, industries and the economy (Australian Universities Accord Panel [AUAP], Department of Education, 2024a). The success of FFUR pathways so far, lies in place-based, contextualised approaches which are supported by flexible national policy settings, that allow institutions to tailor FFUR courses to local needs.

FFUR courses are free-of-cost, non-Award courses that prepare students, particularly those from disadvantaged or non-traditional backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to meet the requirements and academic demands of undergraduate study. FFUR pathway courses have been operating for over 50 years in Australia and are key to achieving equity of participation in higher education, through supporting students to develop essential capabilities like academic literacies, critical thinking, discipline knowledges and study skills.

Historically, these courses have evolved from localised community-focused programs to later become a formal part of the university system as 'Enabling'

pathways with funding provided by the Commonwealth.

In 2025, these fee-free 'Enabling' courses were renamed 'FEE-FREE Uni Ready courses' or FFUR.¹

This Best Practice Guide draws on FFUR and widening participation knowledge from across the country to enable equity into and through higher and further education. It reflects the input of colleagues who have engaged in the project consultation about the contextualisation, flexibility and innovation required to achieve targets for educationally disadvantaged peoples.

The accompanying *Report on Policy Settings* proposes a FFUR Framework that provides advice for future policy both nationally and at an institutional level to enhance accessibility of FFUR courses to students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. The FFUR Framework includes a taxonomy, minimum standards, and national access criteria. While the taxonomy outlines four categories of FFUR offerings, this guide focuses mostly on the design and delivery of Type 1 FFUR courses, although the ethos and educational principles outlined span all types.

Given this recent development, in this Best Practice Guide and accompanying *Report on Policy Settings* (forthcoming), the Federal policy nomenclature of FFUR is utilised where referring to the offerings (rather than 'Enabling').

In addition, 'course' of study (often composed of multiple units or subjects), is used, which means a full 'program' of study at many institutions. Please note that many Universities use the term 'program of study' for a 'course of study' both of which are composed of individual units or subjects.



Throughout all sections of the Best Practice Guide, we emphasise the importance of embedding a commitment to, and implementation of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing within all principles and practices. While specific approaches are outlined in individual sections, this commitment must underpin all approaches. This enriches the learning and outcomes for all students, and particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as was highlighted through the research and consultation undertaken for this project.

a note on...

BEST PRACTICE

In this guide we use the term “**best practice**” to reflect the FFUR sector’s commitment to excellence and the sharing of evidence-based approaches, as outlined in the literature and as gained through consultation. It is important to note that:

- The practices described here are not the only examples of “best practice.” Many effective principles, pedagogies, and strategies exist across the sector, and we encourage further sharing and identification of these as part of continuing professional development and as a sector.
- “Best practice” is not a fixed end point. It is iterative, responsive, and constantly evolving. It is a process of striving rather than achieving.
- External factors, including structural and individual constraints, employment and workload, for both students and staff, impact on learning and what is achievable in “best practice.”

Articulating “best practice” is important and valuable, despite and because of such contextual factors and limitations, which we can work on incrementally together to recognise and address where possible.



*WATCH: Why we
know FFUR works*

HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY TIMELINE

Below is a timeline which outlines the development of these types of courses. The existing impacts of FFUR pathways which have emerged across the country over time and as identified in the Accord, are key to enabling equity in the tertiary system. The equity achieved thus far has been enabled because of the place-based, contextualised approaches and national policy settings which enable the flexibility for offering this rich diversity of approaches (Bennett et al., 2015; 2024). Pitman et al. (2016) highlight that Australian ‘Enabling’ (FFUR) courses significantly increase access to university for underrepresented students and improve retention and success rates for students from equity groups compared to other forms of alternative entry.



1950s & 1960s: Post-War Growth in Higher Education

After World War II, Australian universities began expanding rapidly, following global trends in higher education (Forsyth, 2014). In recognition of the rising demand for university places, the Commonwealth Government released two key reports in the decades that followed to guide policy, including:

- The Murray Report ([Report of the Committee on Australian Universities](#), 1957); and
- The Martin Report (Tertiary education in Australia: report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities Commission, 1965).

Both reports emphasised how a university-educated population could benefit the economy and recommended increased federal funding (Manathunga, 2016).

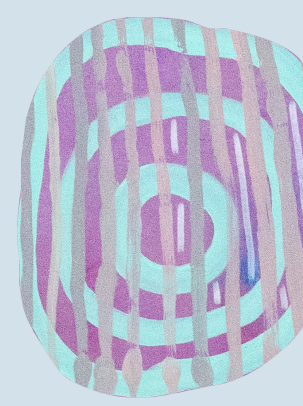
The Martin Report stressed the need to support capable students who face systematic barriers in accessing higher education, with a particular focus on students from underrepresented backgrounds (Anderson, 1990 ; Sanders, 1965).

1970s: Opening Access to More Australians

In 1974 the Whitlam government abolished university fees, making higher education more accessible to a wider range of Australians (May & Bunn, 2015). Australia's longest serving preparatory access course, the Open Foundation program, was also launched in 1974 at the University of Newcastle, NSW.

1980s: Reform and Inclusion

In 1987, Education Minister John Dawkins argued that growing university enrolments — like in other OECD countries — could strengthen Australia's economy (Dawkins, 1987). Around this time, many universities in Australia began shifting from elite institutions to being more inclusive of students from diverse backgrounds. This was in step with similar changes in the US, UK, and India (Anderson, 1990).





1990s: *'Enabling' Education Gains Recognition*

The Dawkins reforms led to the further development of equity and access programs across Australian universities (Hodges et al., 2013). In the 1990s, 'Enabling' courses became recognised as an important part of broader equity reforms, designed to provide a pathway for students who did not meet the standard entry requirement such as an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). At this point in time there were few pathways into university. A key milestone was the Federal Government's 1990 report on equity in higher education titled *A Fair Chance for All*, which called for better support for underrepresented groups and more inclusive university access. In this decade, six targeted equity groups were identified, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from regional and remote areas, students with a disability, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, and women in non-traditional backgrounds. The Martin Indicators (Martin, 1994) were then designed to measure fairness and access for these groups.

2000s: *Formal Support and Funding*

The Higher Education Support Act (2003) provided formal funding for 'Enabling' courses and acknowledged their role in increasing participation and success. These courses were mostly free for domestic students and focused on building essential academic skills like literacy, communication, and numeracy in preparation for further university study in undergraduate degrees (Hodges et al., 2013). The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education (Australian Government, 2008) set ambitious goals for university participation, including a target for 20% of students to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds by 2020. 'Enabling' courses were again seen as key to achieving this target and offerings increased across Australian universities.



2010s: National Targets and The Enabling Association

In 2012, the seminal ‘Behrendt review’, the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People report was published (Behrendt et al., 2012), which recommended improving the reach and effectiveness of enabling courses for disadvantaged learners, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Also in 2012, the formation of the [National Association of Enabling Educators Australia \(NAEEA\)](#) represented an important step in providing a forum for policy debate and professional development in the ‘Enabling’ field in higher education. Through conferences and networking opportunities, NAEEA supports educators across Australia and New Zealand to connect and share their research on best practice and continues to grow in importance for informing equity policy.

In 2018, the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE) funded the report [Enabling Pedagogies](#) (Bennett et al., 2018). The report was the first of its kind in Australia to explore the ethos, values, and teaching practices that underpin ‘Enabling’ education. Grounded in Freirean principles (Freire, 1970), and inspired by the extensive work of Burke (2012) and other key theorists on theorising widening participation in UK access courses, Bennett et al. showed how ‘Enabling’ pedagogies move beyond viewing programs as simply academic preparation, and instead frame them as transformative learning experiences where students experience many other positive outcomes including an increased sense of belonging and self-efficacy (Relf et al., 2017; Bennett et al., 2018; Allen, 2025).





2020s: Renewed Commitment through the Universities Accord

The **Australian Universities Accord 2024** (Australian Universities Accord Panel [AUAP], Department of Education 2024a) became the most significant higher education reform in over 15 years, setting out 47 recommendations to reshape the sector. It aims to lift tertiary attainment from around 60% to at least 80% by 2050, while improving affordability and better integrating universities with vocational education. Importantly, it reinforced the importance of ‘Enabling’ education, noting that around 25,000 students take part in these courses each year. Crucially, the Accord emphasised equity by expanding access for regional, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and educationally disadvantaged students and called for more high-quality, fee-free courses, properly funded to reflect their full delivery costs.

As of 2025: Future Directions



Currently, there are 36 providers offering FFUR (former ‘Enabling’) courses in Australia. The Federal Government has committed over \$350 million to support their continued development under the framing of “**FEE-FREE University Ready**” (FFUR), reflecting a strengthened national focus on equity and access in higher education. While FFUR courses are not currently included in the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#), offerings have undergone significant changes in response to higher education reforms and student demand. Along with the significant body of research and scholarship which has developed about pathways, especially over the past decade, this field of work has also become recognised as contributing important knowledge and expertise on how to achieve inclusivity within higher education. What became known as ‘Enabling’ education approaches have also been described recently as an important sub-discipline in higher education for achieving access and equity into and through higher education (Davis, 2023).



The ‘Enabling’ Heart

ENABLING PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Approaches to FFUR offerings (from first engagement with communities, admissions, pedagogy, course content and assessment), must all be focused on clearly valuing the diversity and difference of all people across our communities (Hattam et al., 2024), particularly Indigenous perspectives, which are required within the teaching and curriculum of all FFUR pathway programs (Fredericks et al., 2026), to ensure best practice. As Fredericks et al. (2026) explain, “these pathways are central to preparing and transitioning Indigenous students into university ... [and] improving the readiness of

prospective Indigenous students” (p. 1).

Open-access provision for type 1 FFUR courses, (as explained in the Fee-Free Uni Ready Report on Policy settings), reduces barriers with no tests or selection requirements for entry. This is critical for reducing barriers to university access which have impacted students in previous educational settings.

FFUR offerings must also be continuously considered and evaluated to minimise any sociocultural biases and exclusions, which are often unintended and inadvertent, and come from culturally embedded and then individualised taken-for-granted assumptions and values. It is when judgements of others (how they present and behave) are not



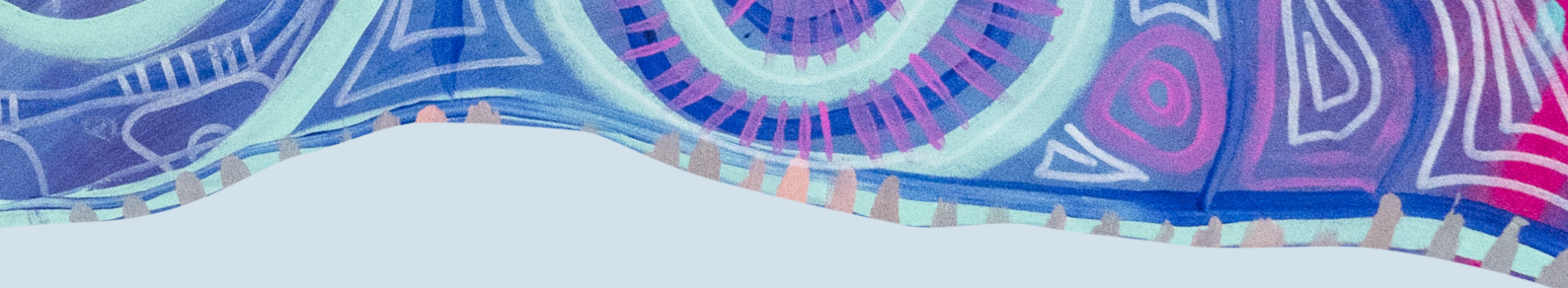
continuously reflected on as situationally constructed through each of our own circumstances and according to the structures and wider relationships which shape them, that educational opportunities become limited for people (Bennett & Burke, 2024).

Fudge et al. (2022) explain that acculturating to the higher education environment is itself a learning curve for students but is “even more so for students who have past negative and/or limited educational experience” (p.3).

Thus, FFUR offerings must “explicitly unpack all of the expectations and cultural expectations of the higher education system... fostering [an] ‘ethos of care’ in order to enhance a student’s sense of belonging” (p.11).

As Bennett and Stone (2025, pp.175–176) write, inclusive FFUR provision requires:

1. **A Clear Strengths-Based Approach** which recognises the unique skills, perspectives, and assets that each student brings to higher education. Every person learns and has a right to learn. By valuing difference and focusing on individual strengths, we place students at the centre of the learning experience.
2. **Inclusive Curriculum and Teaching Methods** which simultaneously build students’ learning capabilities, excitement about learning, and navigational capacity for enabling next steps at university.
3. **Appreciation for and Building on Students’ Existing Knowledge and Experiences** involves applying concepts in ways that resonate with students’ lives and makes the material relevant and engaging.
4. **A Research and Evidence-Based Approach**, which is actively engaged with ongoing, sector-leading evidence-based research and data. This ensures that courses remain impactful and effective in a dynamic educational landscape.

- 
5. **Continuous Development, Evaluation and Quality Assurance**, enabling the pathways to remain responsive and engaging, which ensures both rigour and relevance for students.
 6. **Student Support and Empathy** for all situations and backgrounds, with the recognition that disadvantage can persist even after students enter their degrees. Therefore, this support and empathy must be clearly conveyed to students, so that they feel connected to study and staff. Normalising support services for all students is important, so they feel comfortable with accessing them. Time flexibility, especially for assessments — such as providing structured alternative due dates — is shown to be highly valued by students. This includes flexible approaches to assessment focused on enabling optimal learning opportunities for all students' needs.
 7. **Enabling Long-Term Commitment** is a contextualised and ongoing commitment to an inclusive and equitable philosophy and function. It recognises that everyone benefits from inclusion and equity in higher education and appreciates that this extends beyond individual students. This enables the education to positively impact families, communities, economies and professions, over generations.

a note on...

A NOTE ON UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) AND EQUITY

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) principles — recently embedded as an important component under disability support funding — are very important to integrate into practice. Unfortunately, UDL is sometimes presumed to be limited to students with disabilities rather than seen as important for all students. Similarly, if educators are only focusing on inclusive approaches for defined equity groups, there is a risk of exclusion of other students not perceived to benefit from inclusive education approaches. Best practice approaches clearly highlight and incorporate into UDL strategies strong equity principles to enable all students to thrive and achieve. The [Inclusive Teaching Guide](#) (2024) developed in partnership by University of Sydney, UNSW and University of Newcastle is a useful resource for refining inclusive teaching practices (using UDL principles) for diverse student cohorts.

BUILDING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE, BRAVE AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

FFUR courses adopt inclusive approaches to teaching and learning. Fostering genuine, inclusive spaces are fundamental to FFUR courses as “inclusion carries extra importance in rendering learning environments accessible” (Stokes, 2024, p.676). Inclusive spaces produce safe teaching and learning spaces, which are particularly important for students who have had negative prior experiences with education (Hattam, et al., 2024), and students who do not see themselves represented strongly within the higher education space (Hockings, 2010, cited in Stokes, 2024).

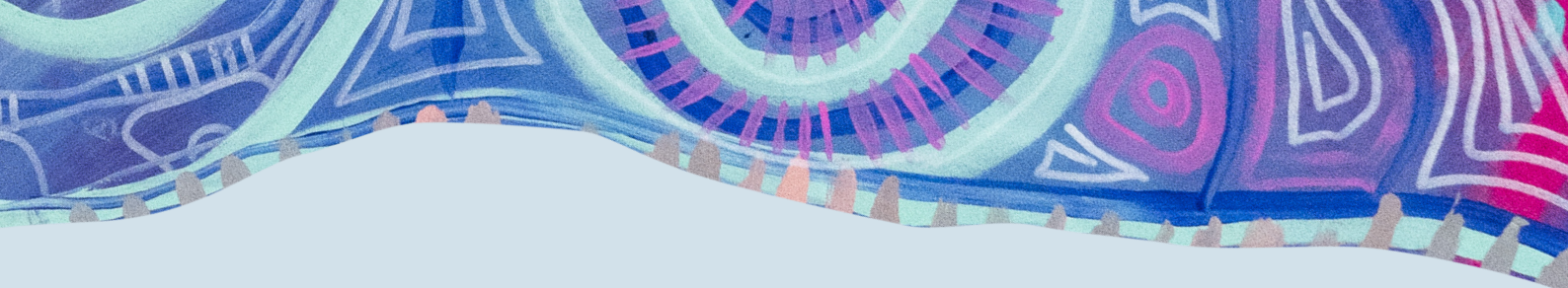
Inclusive principles that underpin the teaching and learning in FFUR courses are predominantly designed to address barriers for engagement produced by students’ life circumstances, so that all may participate on equal grounds (Hattam, et al., 2024; Stokes, 2014). Academics in the FFUR space draw on student-centred pedagogies grounded in respect for individuals and for diversity (Cocks and Stokes, 2013, cited in Stokes, 2014). These pedagogies aim to “break down overly ‘vertical’ didactic pedagogies which homogenise students and staff and foster a deficit understanding of students as merely recipients of expert knowledge, information and skills” (Bennett et al, 2018, p.28). By being inclusive, rather than



 **WATCH: FFUR Educator Treesa talks about Trauma Informed Practice**

exclusive, teachers enact commitments to challenging elitism in higher education.

Fundamental to the production of inclusive spaces are brave spaces and cultural responsiveness. Brave spaces in higher education foster trust-filled, collaborative relationships between staff and students, especially those from non-traditional pathways. Brave spaces encourage open dialogue, discomfort, and reflection, allowing diverse aspirations to be shared and supported. This approach helps create a university environment that is inclusive,



“

“A lot of our students have never been validated. They’ve often been excluded in a school situation or educational situation. So, it is really important to show that we value them and value their experience.”

– FFUR Provider

authentic, and responsive to all learners—not just those who fit conventional norms (O’Shea, 2018).

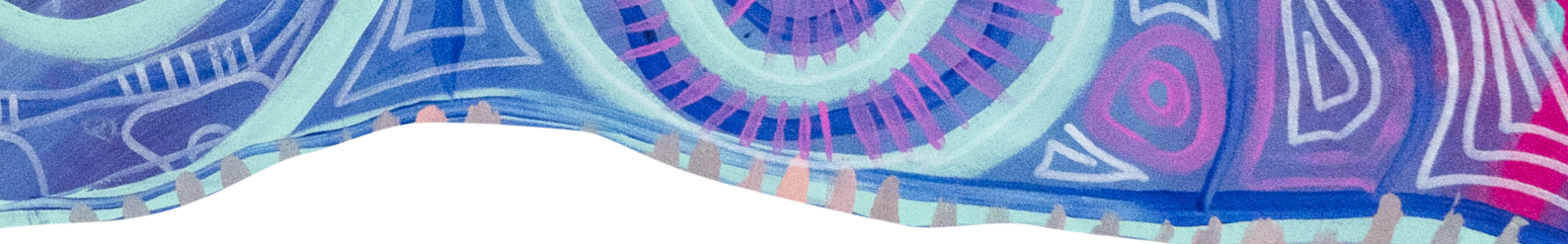
Cultural responsiveness is about creating a learning space that values the knowledge that students bring with them (Hall & Wilkes, 2015). Being culturally responsive involves drawing on multiple knowledge systems, particularly Indigenous knowledges, to help students from all cultures re-imagine and strengthen their own knowledge positions. It is within this culture of respect and diversity that students are better supported to continue their higher

education journey feeling “safe and confident in their own intellectual and cultural knowledge” (Hall & Wilkes, 2015, p.121).

Building a culture of inclusivity aligns with the social justice aspect of widening participation (Hattam et al., 2024); “underpinning the concept of inclusive learning and teaching are values of equity and fairness” (Hockings, 2010, p.3). This is achieved through “care-full” (Motta & Bennett, 2018) and informed approaches to pedagogy that challenges homogenising practices and principles, that respects and showcases diverse ways of knowing and doing, and fosters collaborative, dialogical relationships between teachers and students.

A study by Stokes (2024) found that in the context of ‘Enabling’ courses, “Inclusive attitudes support access and dialogue, students are empowered and build knowledge through purposeful tasks, which support their transformation as university students, who embody positive learner identities and carry forward effective learning and self-management strategies for undergraduates and beyond” (p.677).

Pedagogies used in the FFUR space democratise and contextualise access to powerful forms of knowledge. Our research has identified that additional ways through which to achieve this aim include “attentiveness, creativity and criticality towards the conventional dynamics of pedagogical practice” (Bennett et al., 2018, p.28).



Guide to Creating Brave Learning Spaces

A brave learning space is a community where people can take risks, lean into discomfort, and engage with others respectfully and authentically. Brave learning is cultivated when participants listen actively, share openly, respect differences, and commit to growth. By taking risks, practicing compassion, and holding ourselves accountable, students and educators co-create a supportive environment where everyone can learn and belong.

The following principles provide guidance for fostering such a space:

Speak from Your Own Experience

- Use “I” statements to ground your contributions in your own lived experience.
- Honour that others’ experiences may not reflect your own.

Strive to Learn from Others

- Seek to understand experiences beyond your own.
- Ask permission before inquiring about others’ identities or stories (e.g., “*Would you be willing to tell me more about...*”).
- Recognise and challenge your own assumptions, avoiding stereotypes and generalisations.

Own Your Intentions and Impacts

- Use the space to recognise and

investigate your privilege.

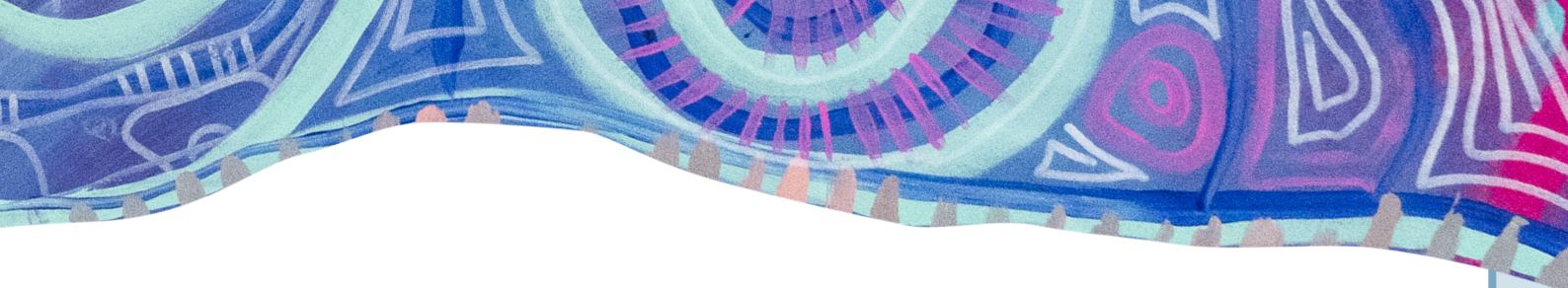
- Take responsibility for how your words and actions may affect others, regardless of intent.
- Reflect: How does your power show up? What is your relative power in this specific group/environment?
- Remember that impact matters as much as intent.
- Practice forgiveness and generosity — we are all learning together.

Respect Others’ Identities and Privacy

- If you don’t know how someone identifies, ask respectfully (e.g., “*How do you identify?*”), rather than making assumptions.
- Do not share another person’s private story outside the space without their explicit consent.
- Be mindful not to “out” others (e.g., sexual orientation, political affiliation, gender identity).

Validate and Support Others

- Listen actively and wholeheartedly.
- Acknowledge others’ ideas, feelings, and experiences.
- Avoid debating or attacking the validity of someone’s lived experience.



Address Conflicts Peacefully

- Seek clarification before reacting (e.g., “What I heard you say is... Is that correct?”).
- Support others who intervene when something is offensive or hurtful.
- Request support when conflicts cannot be resolved within the group.

Share Space and Step Back

- Be mindful of how much space you take up in conversations.
- Share speaking time, inviting those who haven’t spoken.
- Resist the urge to immediately fill silences; allow for reflection.

Take Risks and Embrace Discomfort

- Push yourself to participate, even if imperfectly.
- Recognise that learning may involve discomfort.
- Work to identify and understand your privileges, and how they shape your role in the group.

Be Mindful of Language and Behaviour

- Avoid assumptions about majority groups (e.g., heterosexuality, political affiliation, religion).
- Be thoughtful with controversial, sensitive or emotive topics or

humour, recognising cultural and personal boundaries.

- Use language that is clear, respectful, and accessible. The Diversity Council of Australia outlines [5 steps to inclusive language](#).

Build Community with Care

- Be considerate of others’ activities and mindful of noise in shared spaces.
- Welcome others and contribute to a sense of belonging.
- Respect confidentiality and privacy requests.
- Help maintain the space by cleaning up, recycling, and returning borrowed items.

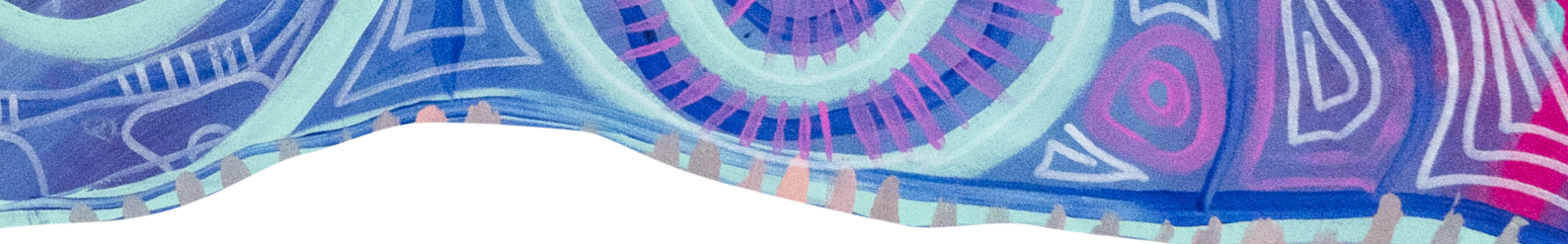
Allow for Emotions

- All emotions are welcome.
- Remember that your emotional expressions may affect others based on their lived experiences.

Intend to Act on Learning

- Leave with a commitment to apply what you’ve learned.
- Use insights gained in the space to inform actions beyond it.

(Pillar Nonprofit Network, n.d.; Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, 2024; University of California San Diego, n.d.).



Guide to Creating Culturally Responsive Spaces

1. Core Principles

Reflexive practice: Educators should engage in continuous self-reflection—using tools such as culturally responsive checklists, bias audits, and reflective journals—to interrogate their own assumptions, values, and worldviews.

Curriculum integration: Learning materials should meaningfully embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogies, such as the 8 Ways of knowing, being, and doing, the both-ways philosophy (Ober, 2009) and path+ways approach (Cajete, 1994; Fredericks et al., 2015), alongside diverse cultural perspectives across disciplinary contexts (e.g., history, science, law, health and sociology).

Strengths-based orientation: Teaching should foreground and celebrate the diverse strengths students bring, including multilingual abilities, cultural knowledge, and community-based expertise, and incorporate these into assessment and classroom discussions.

2. Commitment to Cultural Responsiveness

Continuous process: Understand cultural responsiveness as an ongoing, relational practice requiring sustained engagement rather than a single training activity.

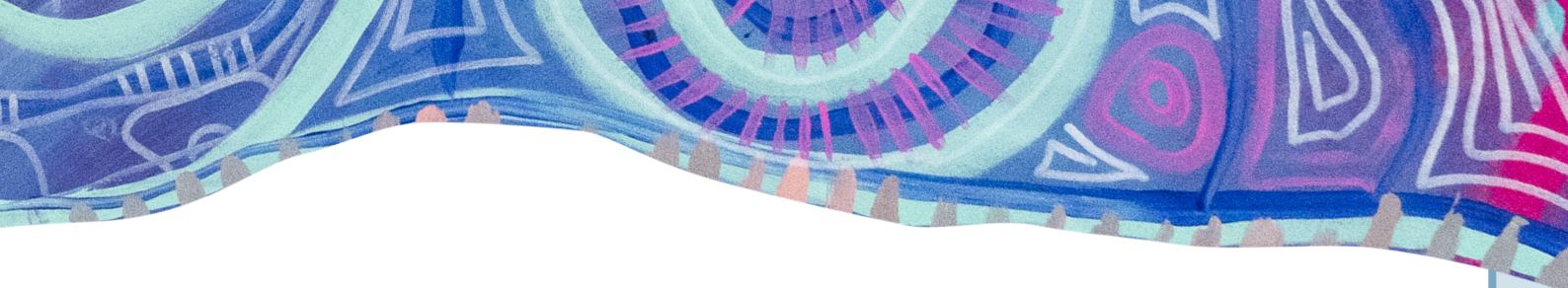
Respectful engagement: Follow appropriate cultural protocols when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and diverse communities, ensuring respectful and ethical collaboration. **See Learning From and With: Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.**

3. Practical Strategies for Educators

Inclusive openings: Start classes with student-led Acknowledgements of Country or other recognitions of cultural knowledge and contributions. Use the Learning Management System (LMS) to talk about your approach to teaching and learning — perhaps including some information about your own cultural origin and any cross-cultural teaching/learning experience you may have had. Use inclusive language that doesn't assume Western name forms. (e.g. 'family' name, not 'last' name - 'given' name, not 'Christian' name).

Dialogic learning: Employ yarning circles or structured dialogue groups to promote equitable participation and shared meaning-making.

Two-way learning: Design collaborative activities that pair students across cultural backgrounds to explore areas such as language, kinship, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ecological knowledge.



High-expectations relationships:

Maintain consistent academic and behavioural expectations while nurturing trust, mutual respect, and positive identity formation.

4. Reflexive and Responsive Practice

Critical self-awareness: Educators should interrogate how their own biases, norms, and assumptions influence pedagogy and student engagement.

The [Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia](#) highlights the benefits for educators in reflecting on their beliefs and behaviours,

Recognition of difference: Diverse cultural identities and knowledges should be valued without presuming uniformity within any cultural group.

Commitment to ongoing learning: Participation in professional learning communities, reflective practices, and peer collaboration should be sustained to continually refine culturally responsive pedagogies.

Feedback-informed practice: Actively seek and respond to feedback from students, families, and communities, ensuring transparency and responsiveness in teaching adjustments.

5. Building Relationships

Trust and respect: Develop authentic, reciprocal relationships through attentive listening, consistency, and transparency.

Contextual awareness: Engage with the histories, languages, and lived experiences of students and their communities to inform teaching approaches.

Shared recognition: Celebrate achievements in ways that acknowledge both individual accomplishments and collective community contributions.

6. Data

Critical data use: Analyse academic and behavioural data reflexively to avoid deficit interpretations, identify inequities, and respond with contextually appropriate strategies.



BUILDING TRUST, CONFIDENCE & ACADEMIC CAPABILITIES

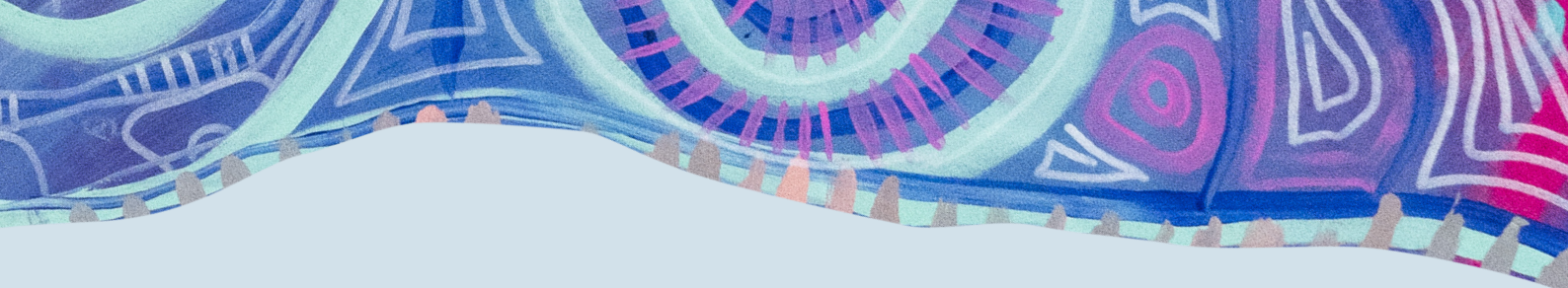
Many students enter FFUR courses with low levels of academic skill and self-confidence, often due to previous negative schooling experiences (Hattam, et al., 2024) and compounded by wider deficit views that students who enter university via non-traditional pathways lack valued mainstream student qualities (Allen, 2025). Addressing confidence-building in FFUR offerings is critical to improving chances of success and transition into further studies (Nicolson et al., 2013).

FFUR courses are therefore specifically designed to support students to develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed at university (King et al., 2019). Pedagogies that underpin courses in FFUR courses (**see section 'Teaching in Practice'**) foster student familiarity, preparedness, and empowerment, to help combat histories of exclusion of students from underrepresented or non-traditional backgrounds (Bennett et al., 2018; Bennett, et al., 2015) and bolster student confidence (Allen, 2025). FFUR students often rationalise their success in the courses through changing feelings about themselves and their own capabilities including their self-confidence (Allen, 2020). Students who enter undergraduate study via FFUR courses frequently express greater satisfaction with their experience in comparison to other pathways, particularly in terms of their levels of



case study

Tracking student progression in undergraduate courses over the years led to FFUR unit development within University of Newcastle's FFUR course. In response to increasing numbers of students progressing into Nursing and Education Undergraduate degrees, the FFUR team recognised the need for specific discipline preparatory units, to maximise student success. As a result, two new units were introduced into the FFUR offerings covering an introduction to Education and Human Bioscience for Nursing. These units continue to attract large enrolments since their inception.



preparedness, feelings of confidence and sense of belonging to the institution (James, 2013; Pitman et al., 2016).

These findings highlight the critical role FFUR courses play in not only equipping students with academic skills but also in rebuilding their self-confidence and sense of belonging within the university environment. By intentionally addressing the emotional and psychological dimensions of learning, FFUR courses foster transformative educational experiences that empower students to see themselves as capable, valued members of the academic community.

REMAINING RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY

FFUR courses originally emerged to respond to the needs of individual universities and the varying local cohorts that they served (Davis, et al, 2023a). The future of FFUR courses must retain this place-based responsiveness to ensure they remain relevant and continue to serve the needs of the communities in which they are located. Nationally, each institution's FFUR course curriculum design should reflect the needs of the community members, as well as address local industry and workforce demands,

support strategic goals and boost community development and capacity.

Research shows that students enrolled in FFUR courses often have diverse learning needs influenced by geographical, community, and contextual factors (Lisciandro et al., 2023). FFUR development should understand the unique learning needs of participants and be tailored accordingly. For example, the [University Preparation Pathways \(UPP\) at Murdoch University](#) offers five different FFUR courses across regional and metropolitan campuses designed to meet the specific needs of different cohorts. While learning outcomes are consistent across courses and with other FFUR courses nationally, Lisciandro et al. (2023) report that there is a need to retain diversity and flexibility in approaches to do justice to the learning needs of distinct student cohorts.

Engagement with community is vital in understanding the learning and development needs of the communities in which FFUR courses operate. Additionally, co-design of FFUR with community helps to foster genuine inclusive practices (Ramos et al., 2024) and supports longevity of courses enrolments and delivery.

“Viewing students for their strengths and moving away from the deficit lens. It’s crucial that this thought underpins curriculum.”

– FFUR Provider

“



case study

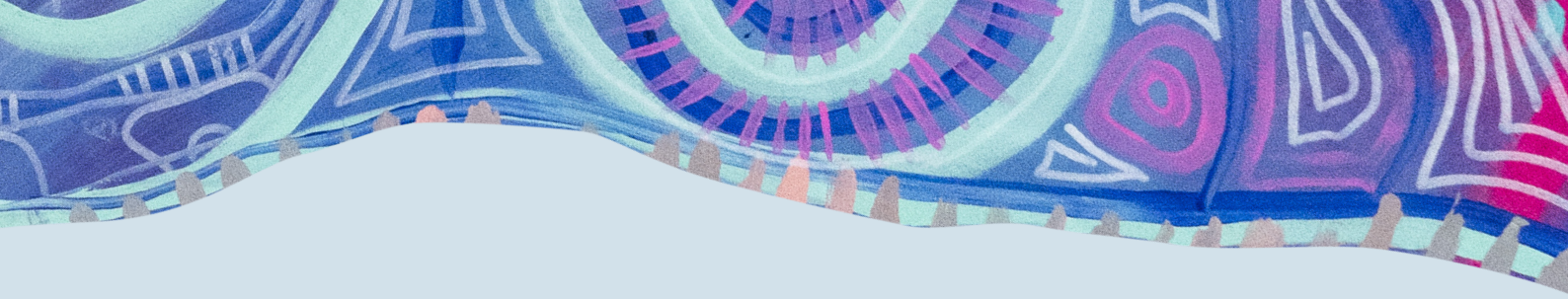
Tasmania records one of Australia's lowest Year 12 attainment rates (around 53% compared with a national average of ~76%, using RoGS measures) *

As a result, there are lower numbers of university-educated citizens in Tasmania and “almost a resistance to education” in the community. The FFUR team at UTAS are responsive to this context, attending many community events and even shopping centres, and welcoming the community onto the campus to alleviate misconceptions about university life.

When a local mine began shutting down, many of the miners were in distress as they did not have the literacy

or numeracy skills to understand documentation regarding their rights as workers, including redundancy packages. UTAS FFUR staff were able to support the miners by bringing them onto the campus library, helping them to understand their situation, and at the same time, offer possible alternative futures for the workers through the FFUR courses that they had not before considered.

* Note- comparisons across jurisdictions should be interpreted cautiously because certification requirements and counting rules differ between states.



case study

the University's Partnerships and Engagement Framework, UTS consulted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups, the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and Uniting (who support foster and out of home children) in the design and development of their FFUR course. As a result of collaboration and co-design, the FFUR access criteria was refined, curriculum was developed through and embedded with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and a FFUR Indigenous Graduate Attribute plan was developed.

"The easiest part was actually doing the community consultations and getting buy in.... there's a huge need for it, that we were quite surprised by ourselvesbecause they've been involved in the co-design. They were asked what do you need, what will go in an enabling course, tell us and the input has led into the co-design." (UTS)

The newly designed UniReady course at University of Technology Sydney (UTS) serves as an example of FFUR community co-design. Responding to the university strategic goal to improve participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, UTS consulted widely in the development of their FFUR courses to meet their needs and the needs of other educationally disadvantaged people. Following

Community and cross-University collaboration and consultation is also important in building trust in the higher education system, breaking down misconceptions and building early aspiration for many communities historically excluded from higher education. **For more on this see Increasing Equity and Success.**



► Click to watch

Course Structures and Governance

A FFUR FRAMEWORK: COMPONENTS FOR BEST PRACTICE

The accompanying *FEE-FREE Uni Ready Report on Policy Settings*² proposes a FFUR Framework for effective and nationally consistent FFUR course development, implementation and evaluation.

Delivered to the Department of Education and the ATEC, the proposed Framework consists of the types of elements important for establishing further understanding, consistency, portability and, importantly, the equity and diversity of FFUR offerings to meet the needs of different cohorts across the country.

Central to the FFUR Framework is **flexibility**. It consolidates the national consultation, key sector reports and literature, including by the National Association of Enabling Educators Australia (NAEEA), and recent research into FFUR and equity. The proposed Framework is designed to leverage cohort and place-based strengths which have developed across the country, over time.

As summarised below, this Framework includes key information about typical FFUR cohorts, categorises FFUR offerings into four main types, and advises on FFUR course learning outcomes, minimum standards of achievement, and evaluation approaches. Understanding these elements is crucial to best practice.

². Provided to Department of Education and the ATEC. To be publicly released at later date.

1. Understanding FFUR Cohorts and Educational Disadvantage

It is important to understand the diverse range of disadvantaged and underrepresented learners who seek access to further learning through FFUR pathways. In addition to the [six targeted equity groups](#), typical FFUR learners include individuals impacted by issues such as financial hardship, regional isolation, carer responsibilities, health and learning difficulties, or trauma, preventing access to higher education. It is essential to acknowledge that individuals' engagement, academic performance, and decision-making within higher education are significantly influenced by their personal experiences as well as the broader social inequalities they encounter outside of it (Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), 2015; Mayne, 2001; Stenhouse, 1980; Whitty et al., 2015). Recent work continues to emphasise the importance of recognising intersectionality and cumulative disadvantage in shaping student outcomes (Dean, 2024). Understanding the wide breadth of cohort diversity is essential for designing responsive and inclusive FFUR offerings which do not lock individuals out of participation because of rigid equity categories (Allen, 2025; Bennett et al., 2018).

The following list of factors that impact educational disadvantage was originally conceptualised by members of the NAEAA Executive Group as a guide



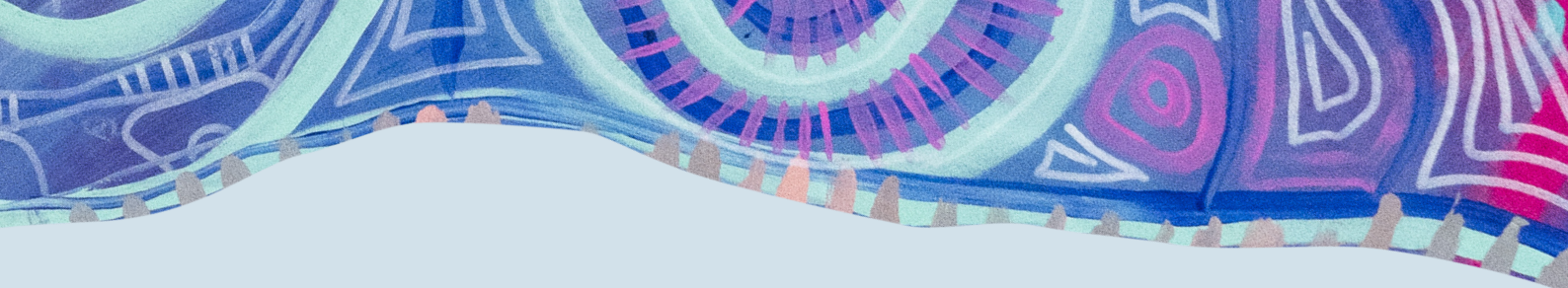
***WATCH:** What is the most misunderstood thing about students who enrol in FFUR programs?*

to better understanding FFUR cohort demographics. It has been refined further below, to convey understanding of the increasingly wide breadth of FFUR cohort diversity and the challenges they face/ have faced in their education. This is important to capture, especially as other higher education admissions schemes and pathways continue to develop and grow over time. Understanding the participants and their backgrounds is essential when designing engaging, responsive and inclusive FFUR offerings.

FACTORS THAT IMPACT EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Socioeconomic Status	The student resides at a residential address as identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as being in the lowest 25% of socioeconomic disadvantage in Australia.
Financial Hardship	The student has experienced various forms of financial hardship in the past which has impacted schooling/learning development in specific areas or currently. They may have no current fixed address.
Regional, Rural, Remote or Isolated Area	The student lived in a rural, remote or isolated area during schooling and/or are currently living in a rural, remote or isolated area.
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	The student identifies as Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
First in Family	The student is the first in their immediate family to attain a higher education qualification.
Refugee or migrant background or status	The student is an Australian Permanent Resident or a holder of a Permanent Australian Humanitarian visa who may have experienced or be experiencing discrimination as a result of their background.
A non-English speaking background or English language difficulty	The student originally came to Australia from a non-English speaking country or didn't undertake any formal education at an institution where the language of instruction was English.
Carer Responsibilities or Sole Parent	The student holds primary responsibility for care of dependent child/ren and/or other family members while studying. Or, in the past the student has held long-term carer responsibilities that have significantly impacted educational opportunities.
Personal illness or disability	The student has experienced a medical/psychological condition or disability. or a learning, sensory, physical, psychological or other disability/disorder that has impacted on study.

TABLE 1: Factors of educational disadvantage in FFUR Pathways

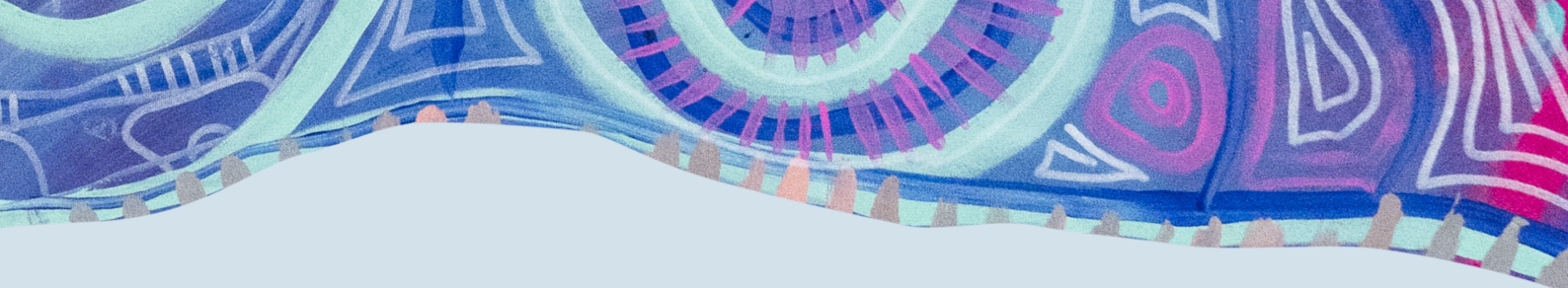


Experience of Domestic and Family Violence and/or trauma	The student has experienced ongoing effects of domestic and family violence and/or other significant forms of trauma, including bullying or other forms of abuse.
Out-of-home care experience	The student is currently living in out-of-home or foster care or lived in out-of-home or foster care during schooling.
School type/environment/ alternative educational environment	The student attended a disadvantaged school (according to the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) or alternative or low performing school which impacted on educational opportunities. The student attended an Australian rural or regional school during formative years. The student was home schooled for all or part of their schooling.
Prior inability to access educational pathway or gaps in knowledge and skills	The student has not previously been able to achieve entry requirements to access desired university program or has gaps in knowledge or skills as a result of their educational background.
Undesired changes in employment type or unemployment	The student has experienced undesired changes in their employment type or was/is unemployed.
Suffered discrimination in educational history	The student has been impacted by significant forms of discrimination or adverse events in educational or occupational history, including discrimination (race, background, gender and sexual identity), stereotyping, bullying, and physical/mental health issues.
A childhood history of disadvantaged (parental/carer/ family) circumstances	The student's education has been disadvantaged as a result of personal circumstances or parental/carer/ family circumstances.

TABLE 1: *Factors of educational disadvantage in FFUR Pathways*

Institutions should aim to gain a nuanced understanding of their FFUR cohorts and the associated diversity of their needs, through confidentially collecting and analysing student data of various types. This information should

be viewed through an intersectional lens and consider how the above characteristics may compound, resulting in more complex levels of educational disadvantage.



2. FFUR Types: Contextualised and Calibrated to Cohort Needs

Despite the longstanding presence of access pathways within Australian Higher Education, there is currently no nationally recognised taxonomy of ‘Enabling’ (FFUR) education types. The proposed Taxonomy (as part of the Framework) is intended to share understanding of typical FFUR course structures. They build on the NAEAA’s Three Components of Enabling (2019b) and feedback from consultation.

There has been significant innovation over time as part of a place-based and cohort-specific approach to FFUR pathways, since other university entry schemes have developed and changed, and especially as prerequisites for awards have reduced and been removed in many locations. FFUR courses have been critical to empowering students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and non-traditional pathways, including lower levels of VET, portfolios and recommendation schemes, to access and succeed in higher education (Department of Education, 2024b).

As outlined in the Taxonomy, there are currently four main types of FFUR courses delivered nationally:

1. **FFUR Courses:** In-depth programs of learning with multiple units for students who require longer forms of preparation. Enables uni-readiness and grants access to higher education study.

2. **FFUR Micro Units:** Shorter-form FFUR units/modules to support students in learning foundational skills and knowledge development for specific degrees. Often taken prior to, or concurrently with first-year higher education study.
3. **FFUR Embedded Units:** One or two FFUR units which provide transition and support for students within a pathway award (typically a pathways Diploma course.)
4. **FFUR Community Projects:** Community or school-based projects in institutions with significant areas of demonstrated need. Offers flexibility of delivery of FFUR units in external settings.

Across the sector, FFUR courses are offered in a variety of types and formats. While best practice pedagogy principles are relevant to all types of FFUR courses, subsequent sections of this guide, including Curriculum Design, apply predominantly to Type 1: FFUR Courses.

“If we are teaching people how to prepare for a course in nursing in Mount Isa, that’s probably going to be very different from teaching somebody to prepare for a course in Sydney” – FFUR Provider.

The proposed FFUR Framework suggests a consistent approach to institution-specific FFUR delivery, which has developed over time, whilst allowing for flexibility in delivery.

STUDENT JOURNEYS

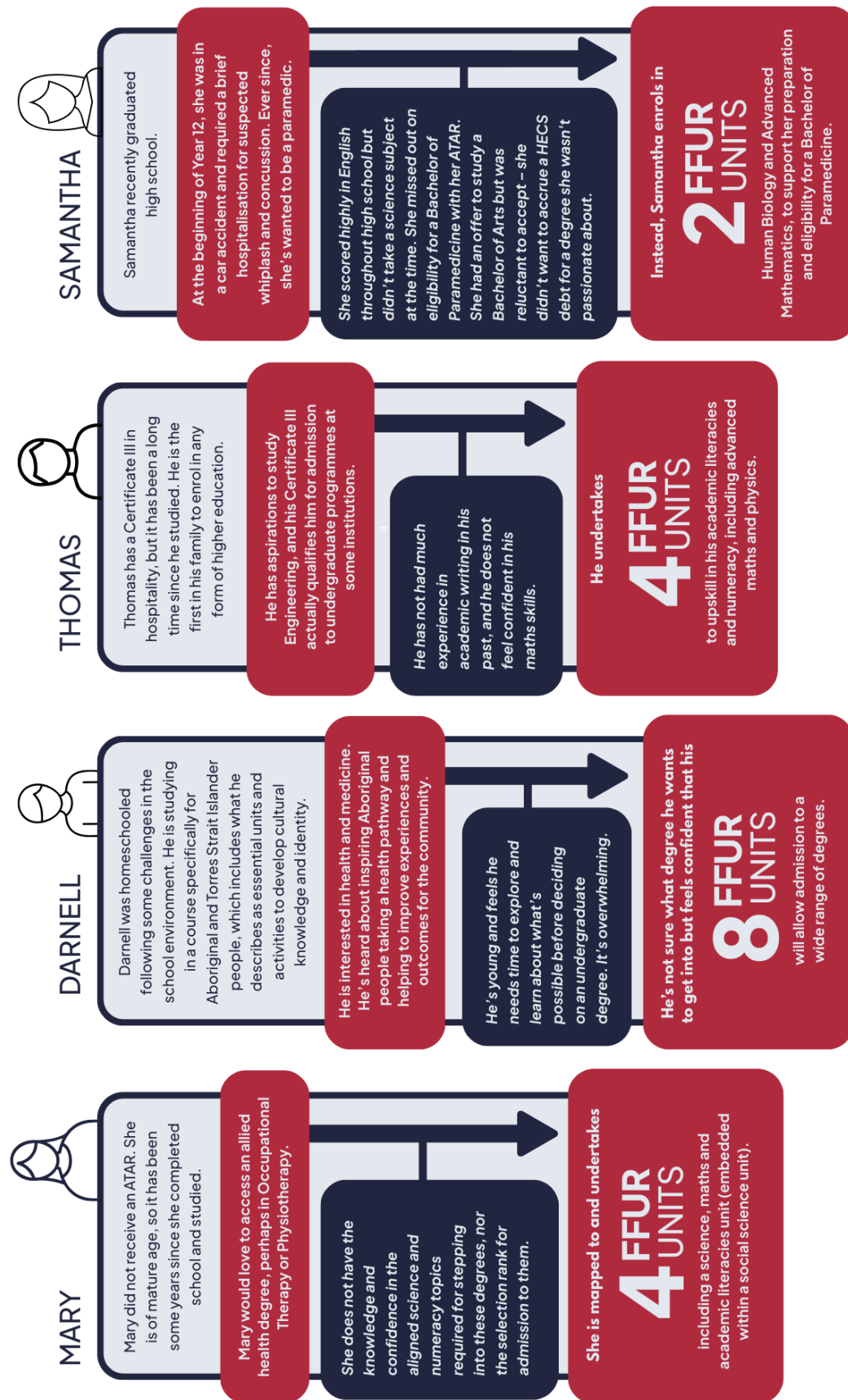
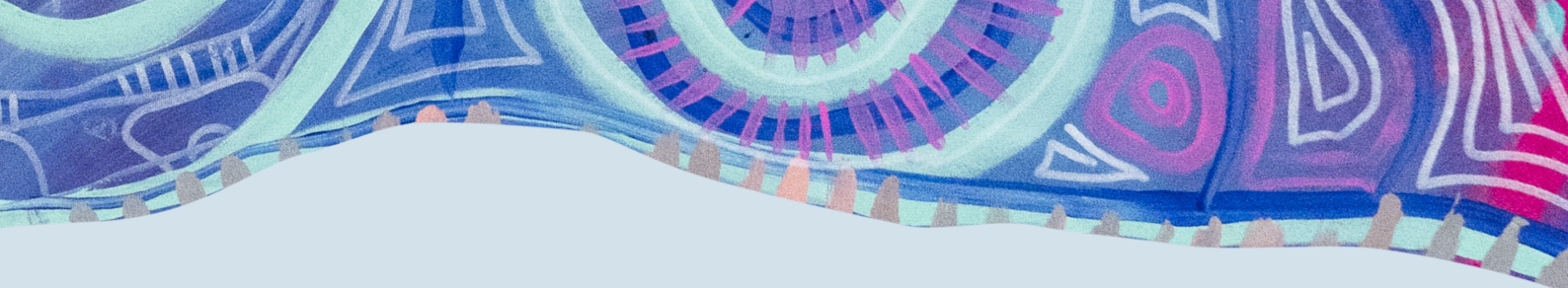


Figure 2. Examples of four student journeys through different FFUR Type 1 offerings, tailored for their particular needs



3. Leveraging NAEEA Common Learning Outcomes

To optimise national consistency, it is proposed that all FFUR types should align with the [NAEEA Common Learning Outcomes](#) (NAEEA, 2019a).

The NAEAA Common Learning Outcomes outline the shared academic and skill outcomes expected across all FFUR types. These learning outcomes include knowledge of higher education environments, and development of academic literacies, critical thinking, and independent learning skills. Moreover, they provide a consistent blueprint for FFUR course delivery, irrespective of type, location, length or mode of delivery. It is recommended that providers ensure that their FFUR courses, irrespective of type, meet these common learning outcomes, that they are communicated clearly to students, and this information is included in the course/unit handbooks.

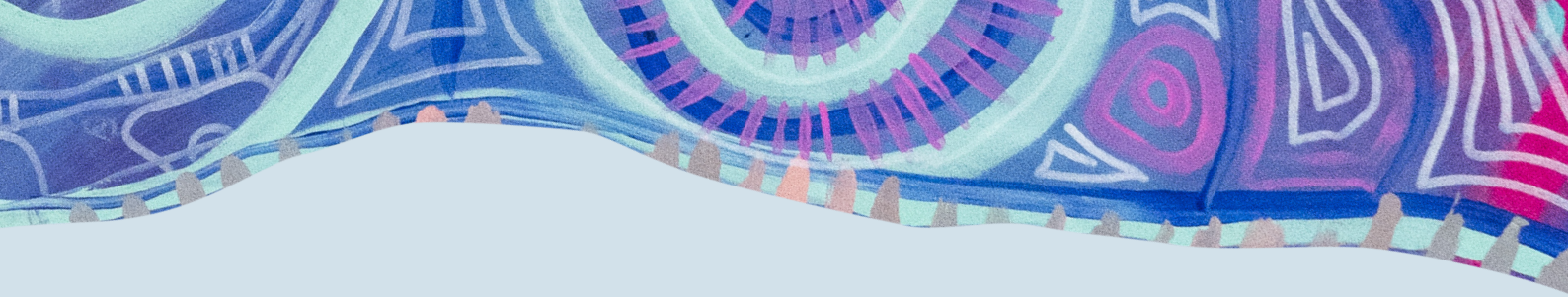
The Common Learning Outcomes cover three domains (knowledge; skills; application of knowledge and skills), and detail FFUR learner achievement across these domains. Applying these outcomes would ensure consistency and quality across the full spectrum of FFUR Types 1–4, nationally.

4. Proposed National FFUR Standards and Governance Guidelines

To assist with improved national recognition and portability, the proposed Framework includes recommendations on:

- FFUR Minimum achievement standards
- FFUR course governance guidelines for access courses
- Suggestions for a national FFUR access registry for portability
- Suggestions for consistent attainment ratings to assist with student mobility

Project consultation demonstrated the need for consistency in student competencies in academic literacies and across a range of fields of education. The achievement level descriptions (minimum standards) outlined in the *Report on Policy Setting* are proposed to provide a guide to the typical performance of students in academic literacies (reading and writing) and numeracy. FFUR providers would assure the standards, including the integrity, depth and breadth of study, which the student has achieved.



The **Teaching in Practice section below** outlines best practice approaches to assist students in reaching minimum standards required for further study in higher education, including recommended design and rigour of FFUR unit types. Guidance on skills, knowledge and achievement level descriptions are also provided.

Further, the proposed FFUR Framework suggests formalising the institutional governance guidelines, as recommended and produced by the NAEAA in [Declaration on Enabling Education in Higher Education](#), which draws on the Higher Education Standards Framework (NAEEA, 2019b), including:

Quality assurance measures: Courses must be approved and accredited through the university policies, monitored and reviewed in accordance with university policy and contain appropriate academic integrity processes in line with policy (NAEEA, 2019b).

The *Report on Policy Settings* also includes approaches to enable more FFUR portability nationally.

For more advice on quality assurance and institutional policy for FFUR, **see [Institutional Policy & Advocacy below](#)**.

5. FFUR Evaluation Principles

The FFUR Evaluation Principles provide approaches for assessing and improving FFUR offerings.

Evaluation supports continuous

improvement through monitoring, benchmarking, and feedback, ensuring that FFUR courses remain effective and responsive to student needs. Evaluation should capture a range of data, including student outcomes and experience, and be designed in such a way as to be comparable across the sector.

As highlighted by Biesta (2010) and other theorists (see e.g., Burke & Lumb, 2018) who convey the importance of values-based approaches in education, evaluation methodologies must enable identification of the multiple complex variables involved in generating outcomes that matter to the groups they are intended for. They must also respond to changing contexts and needs over time in ways that are valuable to all participants.

A dynamic and iterative process, which integrates delivery with evaluation, is important for ensuring responsiveness to changing contexts and participant needs (Bennett, 2018). An evaluation approach — which considers what matters to the people the courses are intended to serve, and which prioritises understanding the diverse experiences, goals, and outcomes of participants — enables reach, engagement, and success of students in the variable ways which are valuable to them. Evaluations must be focused on the diverse experiences and outcomes of student cohorts, e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This enables understanding of the continuously



[Re-imagining Evaluation](#), produced through a collaboration between the NSW Department of Education, University of Newcastle, NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and principals from Connected Communities schools (NSW Department of Education, 2023), provides an important, culturally responsive evaluation framework, which embeds illuminating Aboriginal perspectives and values. This work shows how conventional evaluation methods often fail to capture the lived experiences and aspirations of Aboriginal students, families, and communities, as well as serves to reproduce cultural biases in education systems. Implementing the following approaches ensures that both educational practices, and the evaluation of it, is:

- Culturally responsive and educative for all
- Community-driven
- Co-designed with those impacted
- Able to recognise success through student and community-defined outcomes
- Narrative and student experience-based, rather than purely data-driven

changing external pressures, inequalities and prejudices, including racism, that people face in accessing, continuing, and completing all forms of education.

This is so that inequalities and other important knowledges are not erased from both consideration and inclusion in education.

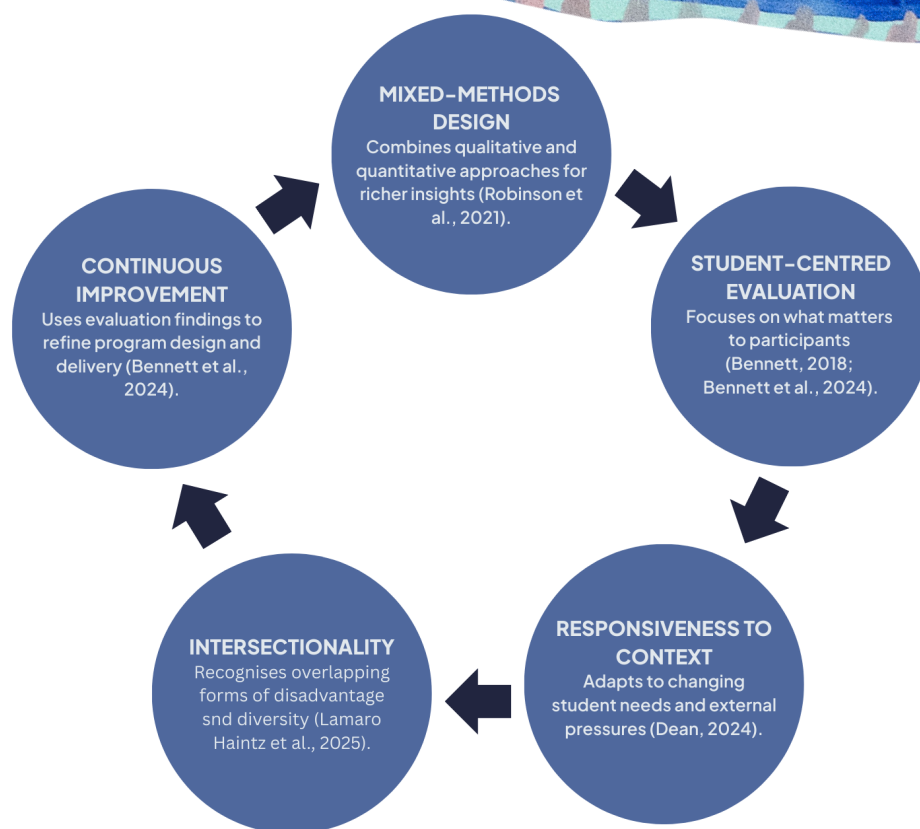


Figure 3: Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF)

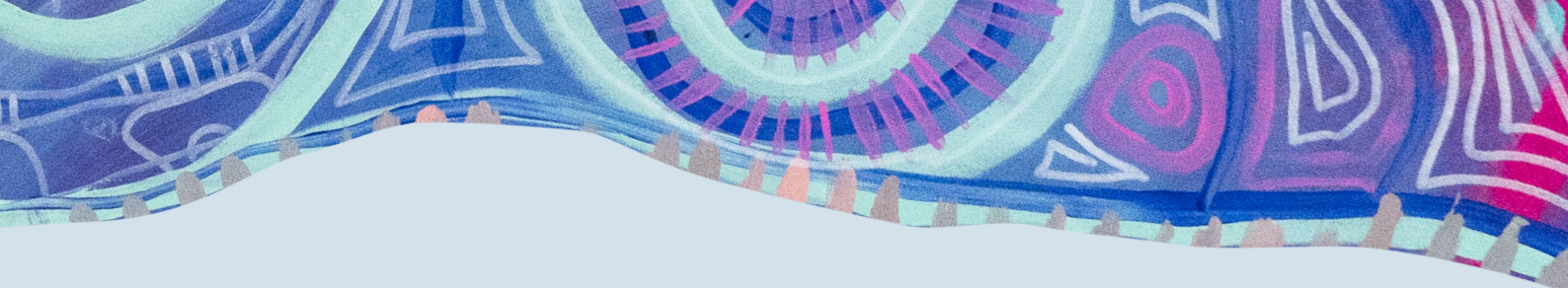
The steps that FFUR evaluators should engage in are:

1. **Engagement and Trust Building:**
Establish and maintain relationships with school communities and stakeholders.
2. **Fieldwork and Data Collection:**
Conducted through interviews, discussion groups, and yarning circles.
3. **Validation and Co-development:**
Sharing findings with communities and collaboratively developing recommendations.

Treating units and courses as works in progress, continuously mapping aims and activities to outcomes, and reconsidering how outcomes reflect

back on their design is essential (Bennett, 2018). The differential experiences across demographic subgroups, modes of study, and learning environments, and feeding evaluation findings into curriculum planning, reporting, and staff development, fosters innovation and systemic improvement.

Evaluation frameworks such as the [Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework \(SEHEEF\)](#) (Robinson et al., 2021) provide structured, context-sensitive approaches to assessing equity initiatives. These frameworks emphasise mixed-methods evaluation, embedded design, and student-centred metrics that reflect what matters to participants. The SEHEEF promotes mixed-methods evaluation, combining quantitative impact evaluation



(QIE) and theory-based impact evaluation (TBIE). This supports the iterative and context-sensitive evaluation processes, allowing for both statistical analysis and deeper qualitative insights. Figure 3 captures these key points from this literature.

The [Equity Initiatives Framework 2.0](#) from the Critical Interventions Framework Part 3 (Bennett et al., 2024) offers a mapping of impactful initiative types and tools for evaluating impact in ways that are inclusive and responsive to diverse student needs.

Evaluating FFUR offerings using these approaches ensures that offerings are not only accessible but also meaningful and effective for those they aim to support.

In terms of approaches to evaluation, the [Critical Interventions Framework](#) (Bennett et al., 2015; 2024) project studied access and the impact of equity courses and found:

- Evaluation is undertaken most frequently through mixed-methods approaches that utilise quantitative and qualitative data;
- Multiple effects and outcomes, including: increased access, retention and performance; improved student experiences, connectedness and engagement; informing aspirations for higher education;
- Collaborations that join course

“

“Every lesson that we teach, we are reflecting on what worked and what didn’t, and we are ready to make change.”

– FFUR Provider

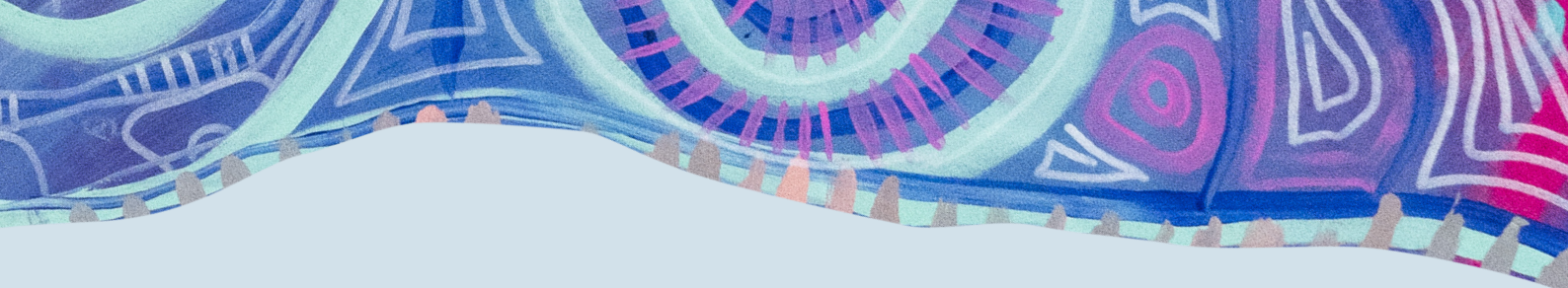
providers’ specialist knowledge with evaluation and research expertise promote rigorous forms of evaluation and high-quality provision.

- Programs that demonstrate impact use evaluation that is stakeholder centred, context specific and iterative.

Rich information may be gained from a mixed-methods approach (usually combining qualitative and quantitative methods) to understanding the impact of an initiative/suite of interventions.

The following are examples of evaluation methods and data sources relevant to equity interventions:

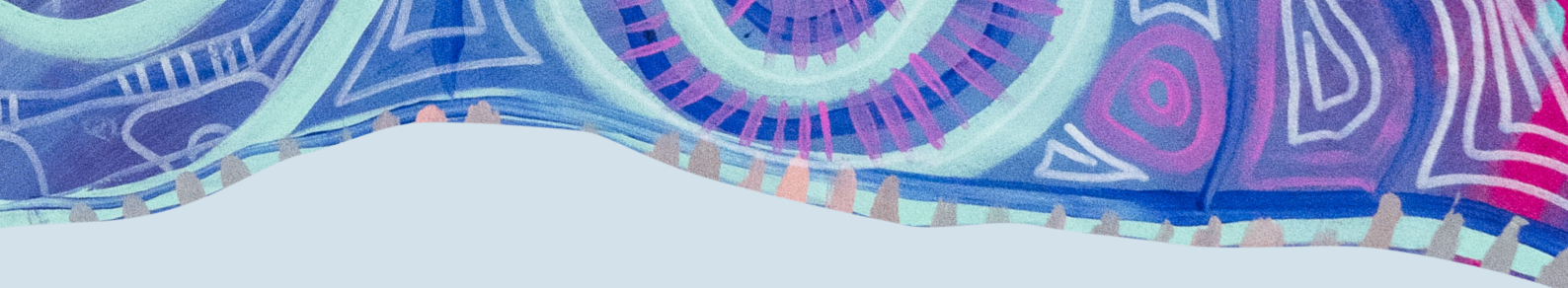
- Course logic analysis (including plausibility analysis, needs analysis



and input/output requirements)

- Surveys of student and other stakeholder characteristics and experiences (using qualitative and/or quantitative designs)
- Focus groups with students and other stakeholders (for eliciting targeted feedback and information)
- One-to-one interviews with students and other stakeholders (for exploring more detailed or complex issues) N.B. Focus groups and interviews may be conducted online or by telephone to overcome challenges of distance and cost
- Documentary/narrative/discourse analysis of course information and resources
- Documented reflective activities, which may be conducted before and after an initiative to explore its impact (**see self-efficacy questionnaire in Resources**)
- Creative forms of feedback from participants (via journal entries, illustrations, responses to narratives, mentors and other stimuli)
- Participant observation of courses in action (e.g. in learning contexts)
- Benchmarking (through external course review or comparisons with other interventions or sectoral and/or institutional norms)
- Case studies of specific interventions (which may involve comparisons between different interventions)
- Analysis of input/output measures (e.g. numbers of participants, qualifications, numbers of scholarships awarded, etc.)
- Longitudinal tracking of individual student experience and outcomes
- Cohort analysis (comparing course offers, admissions, enrolments, attrition, retention, success and completion rates)
- Service process tracking (e.g. changes in contact waiting times)
- Web analytics (using the increasing amount of online data to track and analyse student and/or course performance)
- Randomised control trials (initially designed for testing new drugs but now being used for educational interventions)
- Economic modelling (to estimate economic and community-wide or individual benefit from participating in a course).

The [Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success \(ACSES\)](#) also provides support and development for evaluations through various schemes, and particularly for developing large, quantitative trials.



SECTOR BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking is an important tool for comparing the diversity of FFUR sector offerings, especially given the localised and nuanced nature of the courses that have emerged across Australian higher education over time. Whilst there are broad similarities across many of the offerings in terms of purpose and approach, specific detail on commonalities and divergences assists in understanding the FFUR landscape. The NAEAA Benchmarking Project, [*Report on Benchmarking of Enabling Programs across Australia to the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia \(NAEEA\)*](#) (Davis et al., 2023b) is a comprehensive cross-institutional initiative aimed at sharing academic ‘good practices’ for FFUR education courses in Australia. Nine universities collaborated on the project.³

The NAEAA Benchmarking Project identifies the following common ‘good practices’ as having significant positive influences on student learning (Davis et al., 2023b pp. 8–10):

Supporting Student Learning and Engagement

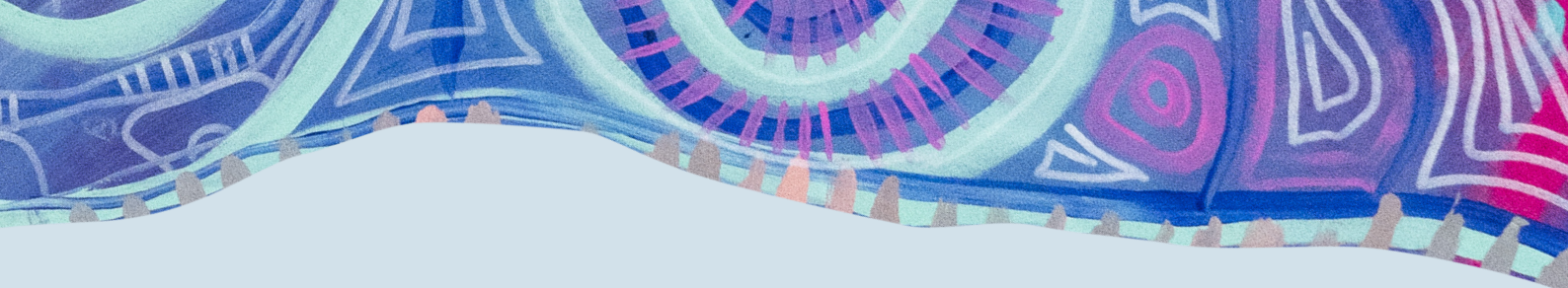
- Explicit teaching of how to navigate academic culture, expectations, and conventions

- Opportunity to reflect and build resilience
- Low-stakes and early assessment to build confidence
- Scaffolded assessments to build students’ confidence in attempting to write an academic essay
- Scaffolding of knowledge and skills
- Commitment to weekly student engagement through varied approaches (e.g. quizzes)
- Student-centred learning and teaching practices that are meaningful and relevant to students’ academic futures
- Approachable, knowledgeable, and skilled lecturers and tutors
- A pedagogy of care combined with a strengths-based curriculum, reflected in student evaluations

Designing Curriculum and Assessment

- Explicit statements of learning outcomes in accessible language, describing required knowledge, skills, and attributes for further study
- Learning outcomes clearly aligned with assessments and curriculum
- Common learning outcomes embedded across multiple subjects within courses

3. Charles Darwin University, CQUniversity (Central Queensland University), Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Federation University, Southern Cross University, University of South Australia, University of Southern Queensland, University of Tasmania



“

“Through the benchmarking, it was clear that students were all learning the same skills and that staff were on the same page as to what constituted a pass or fail. The portability of these qualifications is an important factor.”

– FFUR Provider

- Assessment design that enables students to demonstrate common standards of achievement across courses
- Effective assessments that include context and clear, specific guidelines
- Real-life problem-solving activities and assessment

Feedback, Marking, and Consistency

- Feedforward (offering constructive suggestions for improvement rather than critiquing at the assessment stage) to improve students' final essay
- Presentation of marking that allows students to interpret feedback and use it to improve future assessments
- Rubrics that facilitate tutors' marking consistency and allow for transparency of the grading process for students
- Effective rubrics written in accessible language, supporting shared interpretations among students and markers
- Ensuring markers have a shared understanding of assessment requirements, marking criteria, and standards
- Processes for multiple markers to compare sample marking outcomes before assessment
- Mechanisms to check marking consistency before releasing grades

MEASURES OF STUDENT SUCCESS

Perceptions of student success in FFUR courses, particularly in political and institutional contexts, are often influenced by dominant views that quantify success through pass rates, course completions and matriculation to undergraduate study. Gauging the success rates of students in FFUR courses by metrics alone, however, often produces inauthentic results.

As FFUR courses are fee-free and open-access, they offer a valuable opportunity for students to explore university study without financial risk. However, this low-risk environment can sometimes result in different student behaviour, including lower levels of engagement than in fee-bearing courses, as there are no direct financial consequences associated with non-participation. Because of this, FFUR courses typically experience higher levels of student attrition than undergraduate courses.

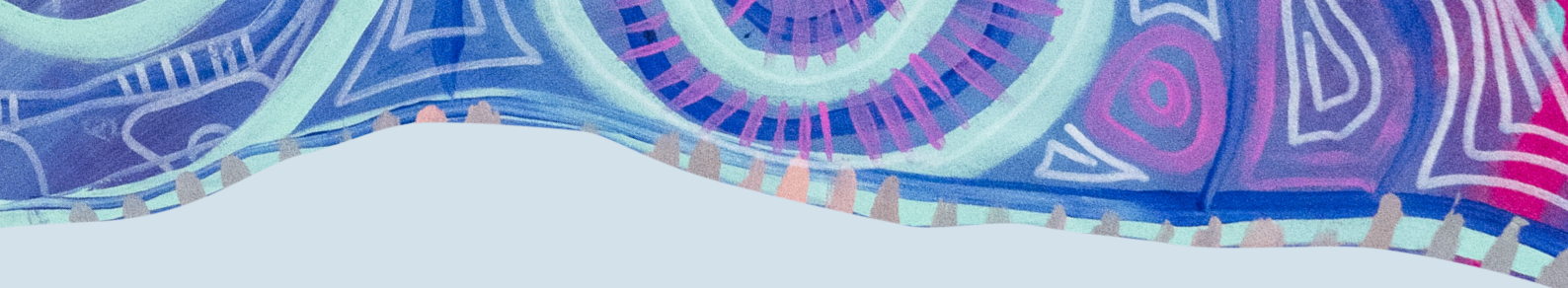
Furthermore, students from underrepresented backgrounds often measure success in ways other than grades, and these measures can be more difficult to quantify. Notions of success frequently relate to the validation of students' rightful place in higher education (O'Shea & Delahunty, 2018), 'defying the odds' to attend university, or in terms of their capacity for resilience when faced with a range of social and emotional barriers to engagement (Burger & Naude, 2020). Equity students



more frequently experience a sense of disconnection or lack of belonging to the university environment and feel the pressure to 'prove themselves worthy'; as such, many of these students view success through personal transformations into confident, capable, and empowered individuals (Allen, 2025). Success is viewed in emotional terms, including feelings of personal empowerment and increased self-efficacy (Bennett et al., 2018; Hodges et al., 2013). The acquisition of knowledge, including knowledge about themselves as learners, is commonly viewed as a successful education outcome, regardless of the accompanying grades (Allen, 2025).

RESOURCE

**PRE-COMMENCEMENT
SURVEY
ON STUDENT EFFICACY**



case study

DO I BELONG AND AM I GOOD ENOUGH?

An investigation into perceptions of self-efficacy, capability and belonging in FFUR

The University of Newcastle sought to better understand the experiences of students enrolled in FFUR health units. The cohort included a significant proportion of mature-aged learners, first-in-family students, and individuals returning to study after extended absences. Many participants reported feeling underprepared and overwhelmed, noting low self-efficacy and limited confidence, particularly in relation to navigating university systems and meeting academic expectations.

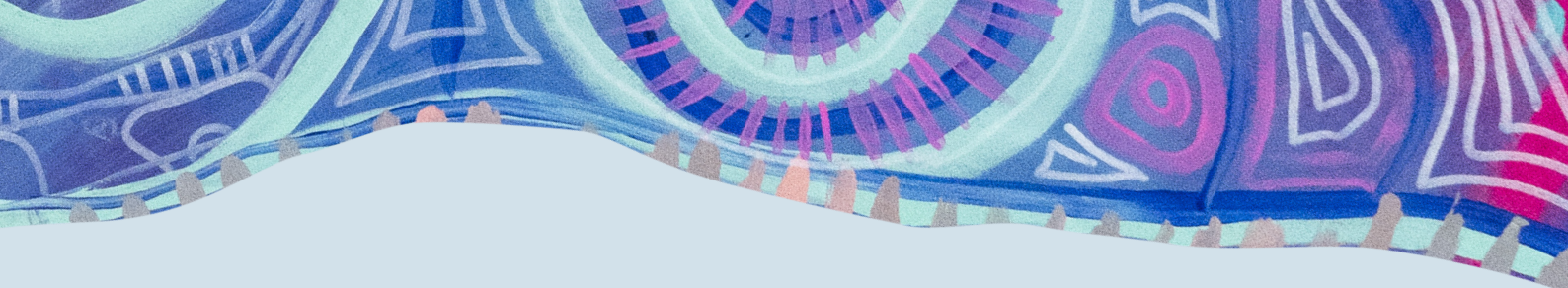
To track how these perceptions changed over time, students completed a short questionnaire at three key points: prior to commencement, mid-semester, and at the end of semester. This repeated-measures approach allowed the teaching team to monitor shifts in students' self-efficacy, sense of capability and belonging as they progressed through the course. This data provided insight into both the challenges students experienced early on and the effectiveness of teaching strategies designed to support their transition into university learning.

The **pre-commencement survey** revealed four primary areas in which students felt least confident:

- Asking questions in lectures
- Time management and independent learning
- Seeking assistance from peers
- Developing a sense of belonging

At the beginning of the semester, 50% of respondents indicated that they did not feel a sense of belonging within the university community and reported low levels of self-efficacy. By the end of the semester, data from the repeated questionnaires and focus group findings demonstrated substantial improvements, with all participating students reporting an increased sense of belonging and higher self-efficacy.

Many students described the development of a renewed academic identity and expressed greater confidence in their capacity to succeed. One participant reflected on this transformation, stating that the teaching “*made this very nervous and anxious gal into someone who (although still has a lot to learn) is going to miss uni over the summer, someone who is gaining more confidence in herself and her abilities to learn and even ask questions, and doesn’t feel like a total moron, or that I shouldn’t even be at uni in the first place.*”



Understanding the impact on student confidence, sense of belonging and self-efficacy is important when considering success in FFUR. Because students can exit FFUR courses without financial risk, it highlights the importance of designing courses that foster motivation, connection, and a strong sense of purpose to encourage active participation and meaningful learning. At a unit level, it is useful to contact students who do disengage to ascertain their reasons for withdrawing. This is important not only to evaluate the effectiveness of the pathways in supporting students and to outline ways to re-engage with learning in the future, but also to potentially understand the varied forms of success that students experienced because of their course. Students who fail or withdraw from their FFUR courses often explain their departure from the pathway as successful on their own terms (Allen, 2025).

By diversifying higher education and supporting access for students from non-traditional backgrounds, it is important that FFUR practitioners are open to exploring and advocating for practices that challenge singular and dominant approaches, methods, ideologies and knowledges (Allen, 2025). This includes challenging teaching and learning frameworks that are homogenous, static, or prescriptive about what kinds of outcomes are ‘best’ for students” (Bennett et al., 2018), and inauthentically represent the wide range

of individual experiences, contexts, and motivations of a diverse student body (Allen, 2025).

“

“Education shouldn’t be something that is separate from the people that you’re working with. If students can see themselves in their content, they’re more likely to engage... with that, we get higher levels of learning at a quicker rate than what students are used to.”

– FFUR Provider



► Click to watch

Teaching in Practice

PEDAGOGY: DIALOGICAL AND STUDENT CENTRED

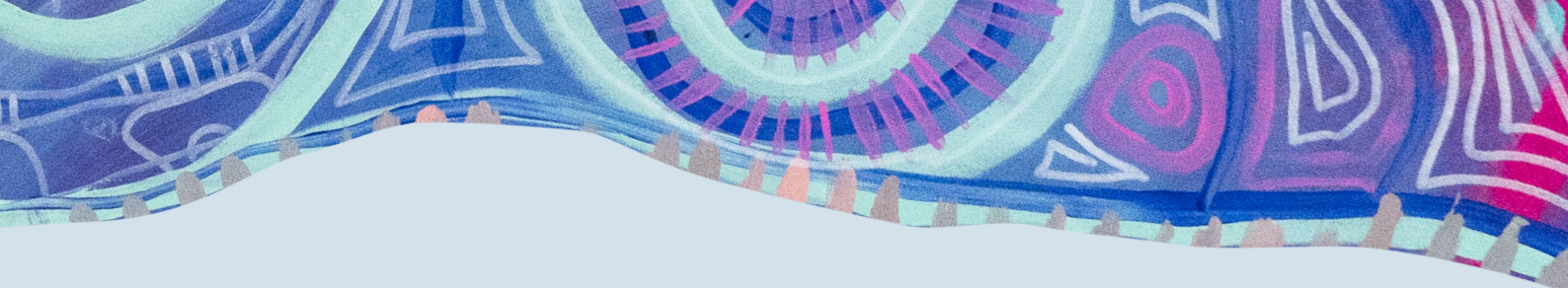
As discussed in this guide under [Enabling Principles for Equity and Inclusion](#), FFUR offerings draw on ‘Enabling’ pedagogies which focus on approaches that value students’ diverse existing knowledges, voices and contributions (Bennett, et al., 2018). This diversity is recognised and sought after for enriching the development of both learning and knowledge in higher education.

1. Dialogical approaches

Enabling pedagogies work with the critical recognition that all people are knowledgeable (Bennett & Burke, 2018) and have a wide range of knowledge

and skills to share in and through higher education. This approach stands in contrast to what has been described as ‘monological’ one-way models of education (Freire, 1970) where a teacher largely transmits pre-defined and static sets of information to students. Instead, ‘dialogical’ approaches (constructing the learning in dialogue with the students) encourage students to learn and contribute to the process of learning as much as they wish to (Bennett et al., 2018).

Carter and Sallis (2019) describe this type of student-centred, dialogical pedagogy as a dynamic and flexible process where students and teachers “learn together” and teach each other in ways that are flexible, dialogical and relational (p.87).



This helps students “achieve particular outcomes and meet specific challenges – for example, overcoming anxieties of expressing their opinions in class and practising engaging with different stakeholders” (p.91).

“Some students can be quite hesitant, especially in week one, it’s very daunting. And again, coming from particular diverse backgrounds and equity backgrounds might not want to speak up. So, I just sort of go around, have a little chat, try and make us more human, and bring in that social connectedness with the students and myself” (Zoë - FFUR Educator).

A growing body of literature (Stone, 2017; Adlington et al., 2024) also emphasises the importance of teacher-student and peer-to-peer learning in online courses as a mechanism both to improve learning experiences for students and to increase student engagement and retention within these courses.

2. Student-Centred Approaches

[Dollinger et al.](#) (2022), describes a student-centred pedagogy with co-designed approaches where educators strive “to build relationships with our participants and transition them from being simply ‘sources of feedback’ to the role of ‘co-researchers’” (p.14).

Rather than conveying the knowledge

of the powerful and advantaged, FFUR pedagogies work to provide access to, as well as to further develop, more and diverse forms of ‘powerful knowledge’ which can benefit all people (Young, 2009). Knowledge and skills learnt in FFUR courses empower learners by providing the intellectual tools for them to think analytically, critically and creatively, and to participate in higher education in sophisticated ways, enabling their competencies through disciplinary rigour. The emphasis on student-centred approaches is key. For example, Burke’s (2001; 2002) doctoral research about UK access courses highlights the importance of negotiating curricula and pedagogy with students and encouraging them to pursue their own interests and development of knowledge—an approach that was foundational to early access courses.

The [ADEPT framework \(Accessible, Dialogical, Empowering, Purposeful, Transformational\)](#) developed by Stokes (2024) highlights that such inclusive practices, clear expectations, and relational teaching all enable students to develop effective learning strategies and foster a sense of belonging.

RESOURCE

**STRATEGIES
FOR INCLUSIVE
PRACTICE**

“Viewing students for their strengths and moving away from the deficit lens. It’s crucial that this thought underpins curriculum, as well as the dialogic method.” – FFUR Provider

In their benchmarking research, Davis et al., (2024) report a shared commitment to student-centred teaching across ‘Enabling’ (FFUR) education. This commitment is reflected in efforts to help students confidently engage in academic communities through inclusive and responsive pedagogy. In this work, Davis et al. (2024) highlight the significance of student-centred practices. These include approachable and skilled educators, a pedagogy of care, and a strengths-based curriculum—all contributing to high levels of student satisfaction during transitions into tertiary study (Davis et al., 2023a).

3. Care-full and Supportive Approaches

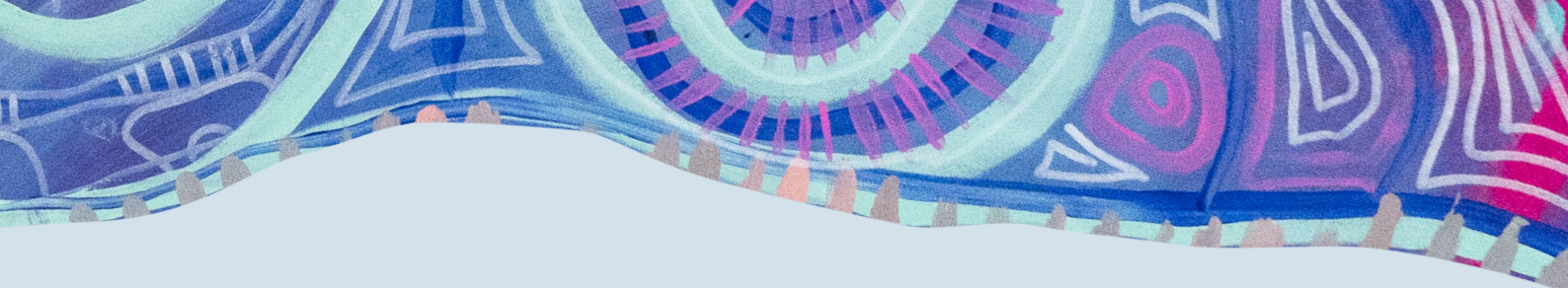
Integral to FFUR pedagogy is “care-full”, supportive teaching. However, this must be led through a strengths-based philosophy, which does not frame students as being in deficit of knowledge or skills, but instead understands that they bring a wealth of important and valuable diverse forms to the classroom and higher education. Clearly valuing students existing sets of knowledge and skills and taking the students from these ‘knowns’ to ‘unknown’ concepts and skills during the learning, is an important skill of an educator.



WATCH: Ways FFUR educators can support their students

“A lot of our students have never been validated. They’ve often been excluded in a school situation or educational situation. So, it is really important to show that we value them and value their experience.” – FFUR Provider.

FFUR teaching is rooted in an ethics of care. FFUR educators provide supportive pedagogical practices. Motta and Bennett (2018), Larsen et al. (2025) and Oldham (2024) all underscore the importance of “care-full” approaches that prioritise student engagement and wellbeing as a core teaching and learning issue.



A proportion of the educators' support also occurs outside formal curriculum and classroom settings. Here they address a range of student needs and experiences related to learning, while 'triaging' students to other support services where they do not have the expertise and training, such as to financial, counselling and other health services. 'Formal classroom settings' also include online synchronous classrooms, where similar practices of support and care, enacted in online spaces, are also important. Stone's (2017) "[Opportunity Through Online Learning](#)" provides key strategies for online and blended approaches, emphasising the importance of just-in-time, embedded student learning support. **For more on this, see Mode Considerations.**

Educator support is focused on academic and related issues, and where other issues are impacting, educators can refer students to where they can receive help and development. This is important, as Crawford and Johns (2018) explain that non-academic issues directly impact academic success, making such care a vital part of educators' roles.

Educators who spend the most time with students can draw on initiatives such as Mental Health First Aid training which provides staff with the tools to provide students with effective care (Crawford et al., 2020). This is important because, as Nieuwoudt (2023) highlights, students from marginalised groups often experience multiple challenges, such as ongoing financial and mental health issues.

Larsen et al. (2025) and Seary and Willans (2020), drawing on Hamblin (1978), emphasise that care and pastoral support should be embedded in routine educational practice. This helps students to identify any issues impacting their learning and/or to find strategies to realise and maximise their learning goals and success.

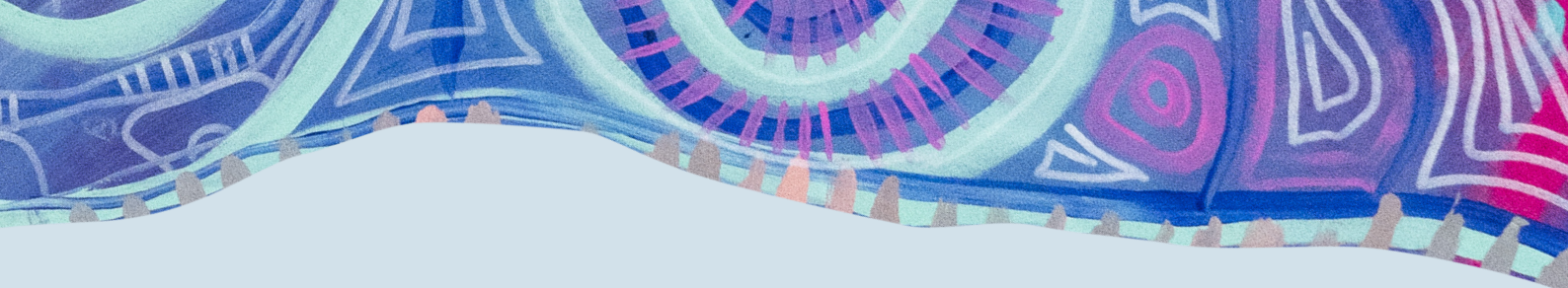
***"An initiative that I've been doing is developing what I like to call the safe space lunch. ... so it's an hour where they can ask questions about the course if they need. But it's that nice safe space where they can come and have lunch. ... it's really beautiful to watch the students develop relationships with each other..., just talking about their day-to-day life outside of the university, which is really wonderful"** (Zoë – FFUR Educator).*

For more information on effective FFUR student support, see Increasing Equity and Success.

Both-ways + path+ways

Ober (2009) explains that learning should be conceptualised as a shared journey among students, families, peers, Elders and staff who exchange knowledge through discussion, debate, and reflection, both in and beyond the classroom. This is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

In framing a pedagogical approach



that integrates traditional Indigenous Australian knowledges with Western academic positions and contexts, Ober devised the both-ways approach (2009). Underpinned by the values of respect, tolerance, and diversity (Batchelor Institute, 2007, as cited in Ober, 2009), the both-ways approach incorporates such dialogical and student-centred pedagogies, while focusing on strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student identity, building academic capability and fostering belonging through relational, culturally responsive approaches to curriculum and teaching (Fredericks et al., 2015; Ober, 2009).

Fredericks et al. (2015) build on Ober's both-ways (2009), and Cajete's (1994) work on pathways in Indigenous education, and explains that student success emerges when a well-structured *Path*, such as the curriculum and institutional landscape, are woven together with the learner's *Way* (including their personal journey, responsibilities, identity, and aspirations). Drawing on the work of Cajete (1994), in Fredericks et al.'s (2015) model, which they call *path+ways*, the student is central to a transformation process that aligns program design and the learning environment with the personal.

Both-ways and *path+ways* concepts are often applied together, as they thread the wider systemic elements of both Indigenous and Western knowledges together with the personal (Fredericks et al., 2015) to create culturally enriching

“

Some students can be quite hesitant, especially in week one, it's very daunting. And again, coming from particular diverse backgrounds and equity backgrounds might not want to speak up. So, I just sort of go around, have a little chat, try and make us more human, and bring in that social connectedness with the students and myself.

– FFUR Provider

and responsive approaches to educational design and delivery.

Both-ways and *path+ways* as Student-Centred Pedagogy for FFUR courses

- **The Shared Learning Journey**

The classroom is a relational learning space in which expertise is distributed and co-constructed across community and university (Ober, 2009).



WATCH: The “Safe Space Lunch” Initiative 

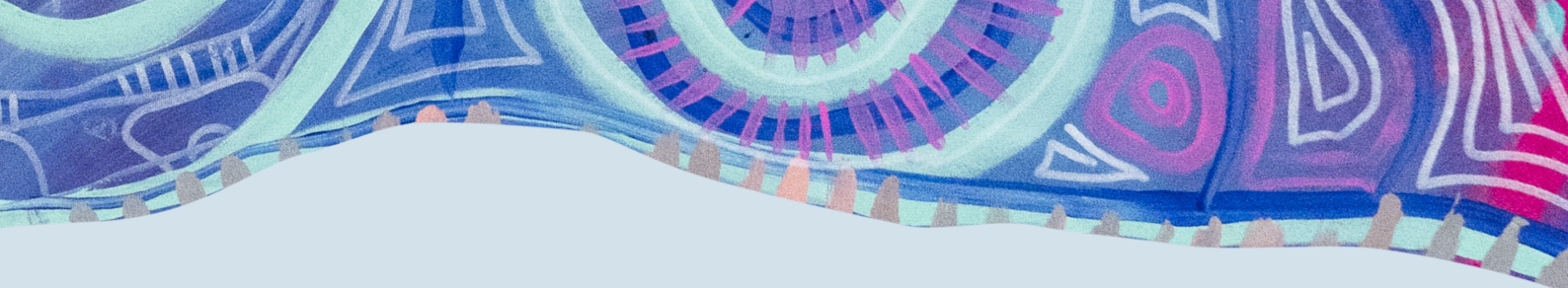
- **Student-Centred Learning Anchored in Lived Realities**

Both-ways directs educators to begin from students’ lived experiences and issues, and move “from the known to the unknown” (Ober, 2009, p. 39), using existing knowledge as the springboard to disciplinary concepts. In FFUR settings, this translates into assessment and teaching sequences that foreground real-world problems, value multilingual and multimodal expression, and scaffold academic discourse without erasing voice (Ober, 2009; Fredericks et al., 2015).

- **Strengthening Indigenous Identity through Curriculum**

Curriculum that includes Indigenous languages, histories, and local protocols affirms identity and increases a sense of place and belonging; students link this affirmation to self-acceptance and persistence (Fredericks et al., 2015; Ober, 2009; Cajete, 1994). Strengthening identity is therefore not an adjunct to academic development; it is constitutive of it within both-ways pedagogy (Ober, 2009).

For more information on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and approaches in curriculum, **see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Spaces of Knowing & Learning.**



CURRICULUM DESIGN

FFUR curriculum re-engages people with education, preparing them for success in future university study by providing “the opportunity for non-traditional students to learn skills to navigate the academic conventions and expectations of higher education and transition successfully into undergraduate study” (Syme et al., 2021b, cited in Davis et al., 2023a, p. 42). It is a participatory and holistic curriculum, developing the whole student – a curriculum where who teaches and how it is taught is as important as what is intended to be learnt (Relf et al., 2017, O’Rourke et al., 2019).

It is important to recognise that FFUR curriculum design differs from first year curriculum design and Year 12 curriculum design (Kift, 2009; Relf et al., 2017). FFUR curriculum has a transition and preparatory focus on developing both content knowledge and academic skills for successful engagement with undergraduate content. It is student-centred, scaffolded, has relevance to real-life examples and experiences and is designed to develop students’ confidence and capability to undertake university study (Burke et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2023a; Davis et al., 2023b; Lisciandro et al., 2023; Relf et al., 2017). It should offer learning activities based on students’ interests and experiences, embed academic literacies and critical analysis into discipline-based courses (Bennett et al., 2018, p.13) and explicitly teach the rules, values, knowledge and

academic skills necessary for successful undergraduate study (Relf et al., 2017).

FFUR curriculum is comprised of four separate yet integrated parts:

- The intended curriculum – the course and unit content and planned learning outcomes
- The experienced curriculum – what the students say they have learnt
- The enacted curriculum – how the curriculum is taught by FFUR educators
- The hidden curriculum – the explicit teaching of the values and norms of higher education building navigational capacity for students

Evaluation of the alignment between these four parts should occur regularly to ensure courses continue to serve the needs of both students, educators and institutions. Relevant, experienced and enacted curriculum are required to develop student confidence to succeed in their higher education studies.



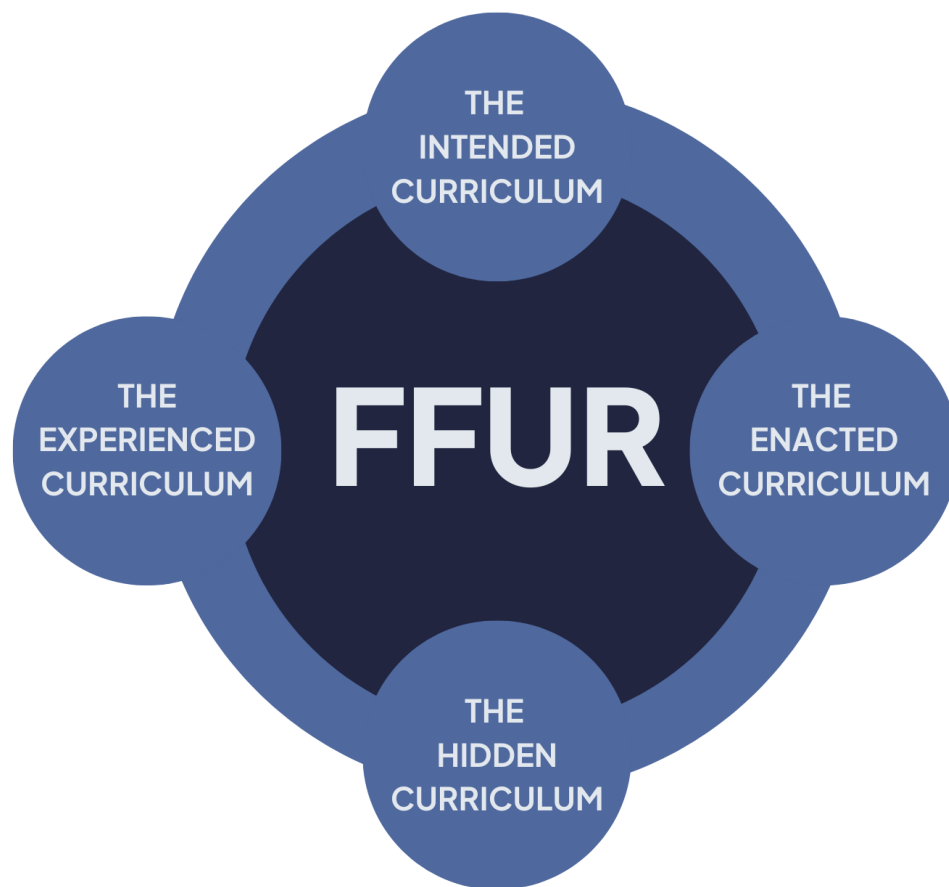


Figure 4 : FFUR curriculum is comprised of four separate yet integrated parts:

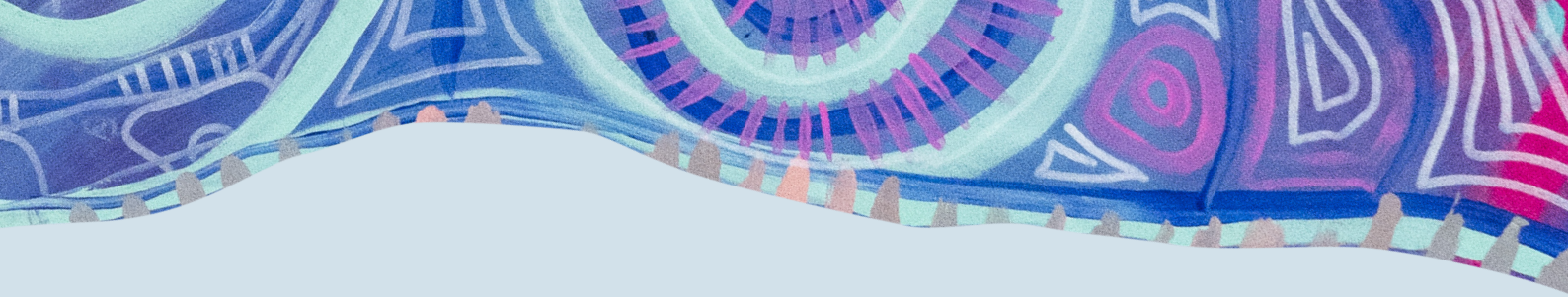
FFUR Curriculum Design Principles

The following principles, derived from project consultation and cross-institutional studies in the field, act as a guide to inform providers on the development of their FFUR courses. Rather than a rigid national curriculum (which limits providers from tailoring offerings to local contexts, students and needs) these curriculum principles highlight key approaches and important considerations, building on the Enabling Principles and pedagogical approaches covered in earlier sections.

1. Preparation for university study:

The main aim of FFUR courses is to prepare students for success in their desired undergraduate studies. This includes offering units that develop students' academic skills alongside discipline-specific content. The level of effort and volume of content should be carefully designed to reflect the foundational and developmental nature of FFUR offerings.

In addition, FFUR units/courses help students not only develop academic skills but also understand and navigate the culture of university study by



fostering digital literacy, introducing available support services, and clarifying academic expectations. To achieve this, FFUR offerings must provide authentic, scaffolded learning experiences, aligned with the types of assessments and expectations students will encounter in undergraduate degrees.

2. Student-centred and holistic approach:

FFUR curriculum design adopts a participatory and holistic approach that supports the development of the whole student. Who teaches and how the curriculum is enacted is as important as what is intended to be learned (Relf et al., 2017).

To achieve this, FFUR course curriculum design should include embedded or wrap-around support that enables students to develop their learning identity (Relf et al., 2017).

***“My approach to teaching?
Number one: way more important
than my knowledge of the content,
is being inclusive to everyone”
(Dave, FFUR Educator).***

3. Explicitness:

FFUR course documentation should explicitly detail the alignment between course and unit learning outcomes and assessments (Davis et al., 2023a; Davis et al., 2023b; O’Rourke et al., 2019; Relf et al., 2017).

Educators should explicitly model and teach university and discipline-specific expectations, providing students with opportunities to practice and receive feedback of their progress. This includes unpacking discipline-specific terminology, values, and norms to ensure clarity and understanding.

4. Establishing inclusive and respectful learning communities:

FFUR curriculum design should incorporate multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement, reflecting [Universal Design for Learning principles](#). Teaching should be dialogical, relational, and responsive, creating spaces where students and educators learn together and co-construct knowledge (Carter & Sallis, 2019).

These principles reflect a shared understanding of the importance of developing curricula based upon “care-full” pedagogic practices that foster inclusive and brave learning spaces. These are spaces where the values and norms of higher education can be explicitly taught, providing epistemic access to powerful knowledge (Motta & Bennett, 2018; Shay, 2015; Young & Muller, 2013).

5. Fostering transformative experiences:

FFUR curricula provides transformative educational and life experiences that respectfully challenge students’ beliefs about education, knowledge and their



own capability for study (Relf et al., 2017).

Through reflective and critical thinking activities, FFUR courses help students develop an image of themselves as successful learners (Relf et al., 2017).

While unit/course structure may vary across institutions, best practice reflects a shared recognition that FFUR units/

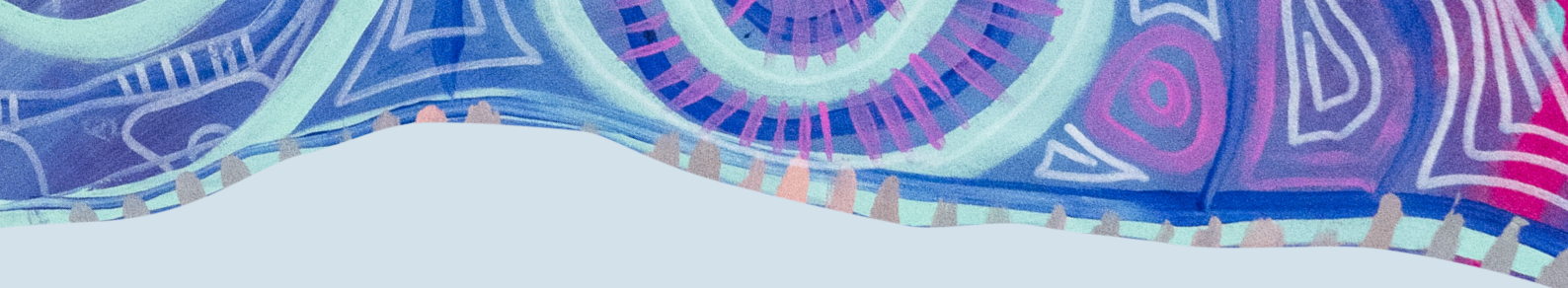
courses provide students with cultural and academic resources that extend beyond university (Millman & McNamara, 2018).

FFUR Course Outcomes

FFUR course outcomes are separate and distinct from undergraduate degree outcomes and reflect the developmental and transitional nature of FFUR courses. They should emphasise academic literacies skills and discipline-specific knowledge, aligning with NAEAA Common Learning Outcomes (NAEEA, 2019a) and other relevant FFUR elements. Outcomes should address the assumed knowledge requirements of undergraduate degrees and aim to bridge gaps for students entering from diverse educational backgrounds.

FFUR Unit Curriculum

The knowledge included in FFUR units should align with their preparatory purpose. Content volume, level, and pacing should reflect foundational level learning outcomes — developing students without overwhelming them — while balancing essential knowledge acquisition with opportunities for deeper engagement. Activities should connect to students' interests and experiences to foster relevance and motivation (Bennett et al., 2018). Rather than covering many concepts superficially, a focused exploration of a small number of key ideas provides a stronger base for future learning and skill development.



Development of Academic Literacies

Approaches to teaching academic literacy in FFUR units/courses are informed by key theoretical perspectives (Lea & Street, 1998, 2006; Wingate, 2015; Burke, 2012) that question the effectiveness of traditional ‘remedial’ models.

Traditional literacy instruction tends to treat academic skills as isolated techniques, delivered through decontextualised remedial support such as language workshops or study skills classes (Burke, 2012). This focus tends towards individual students who need additional help to overcome their literacy ‘barrier’ to higher education.

In contrast, FFUR offerings acknowledge the diverse backgrounds and experiences that shape students’ academic literacy development (Baker & Irwin, 2015). While they emphasise core skills— reading, writing, speaking, critical thinking, academic integrity, and digital literacy — they also advocate for the contextualisation of these skills within the broader social, cultural, political, and historical context of academia (Murtic, 2024). These approaches draw on pedagogies and assessments that value the “funds of knowledge” students bring from their own lives (Moll et al., 1992).

FFUR offerings that teach academic literacies recognise that drawing

on students’ own experiences and aspirations helps them develop an ‘authorial voice’ (Burke, 2012). Academic literacy is not simply about developing skills but is integrated into discipline-specific contexts in inclusive ways that recognise the strengths of diverse student populations (Wingate, 2015; Wingate, 2011), diverse ways that academic literacies can be constructed, and the diverse disciplinary contexts in which they formed.

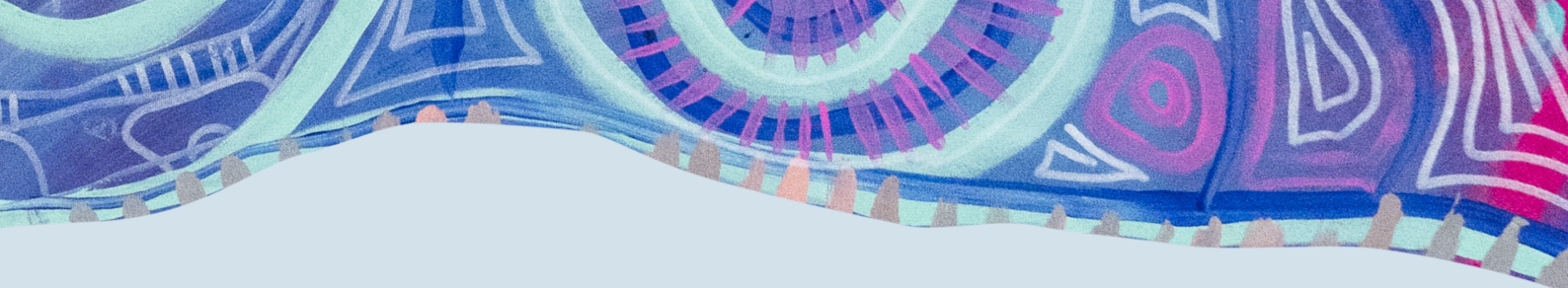
From this context, we can derive a set of key best practice principles.

Key Academic Literacy Principles

1. Central, not peripheral, business (Baker & Irwin, 2015):

Academic literacies should sit at the heart of curricula, not as a ‘bolt on’ or as divorced from ‘content’ (Baker and Irwin, 2015).

Clear literacies outcomes should be entwined with disciplinary based learning outcomes and explicitly discussed with students. This includes explicit discussion of literacy content in learning materials (e.g., weekly videos, pages, or dedicated resources), opportunities for student reflection, and application of literacy concepts in disciplinary assessments. Rubrics and feedback should assess both disciplinary knowledge and academic literacies, with teaching staff modelling these literacies throughout materials.



2. Taught within disciplinary context:

Academic literacies are most effective when taught alongside disciplinary content and skills. This is because academic literacies are discipline-specific and form part of the process of becoming familiar with the norms and practices of a particular academic community. In this sense, they are not separate from disciplinary knowledge but an integral part of it. Teaching academic literacies as generic ‘study skills’ or in isolation from disciplinary contexts is far less effective (Wingate, 2011).

Curricula and assessment should therefore embed relevant literacies (and numeracies) — such as reading, writing, referencing, and critical thinking — within the text types, key concepts, and expectations of the discipline students are preparing to enter. While academic literacies are often associated with humanities and essay writing, it is important to recognise that academic numeracies and STEM literacies are equally essential, as are institutional and digital literacies.

Academic numeracies might involve applying mathematical reasoning, interpreting statistical data, or understanding units of measurement. STEM literacies could include using scientific reasoning in inquiry-based learning and writing discipline-specific texts such as laboratory reports.

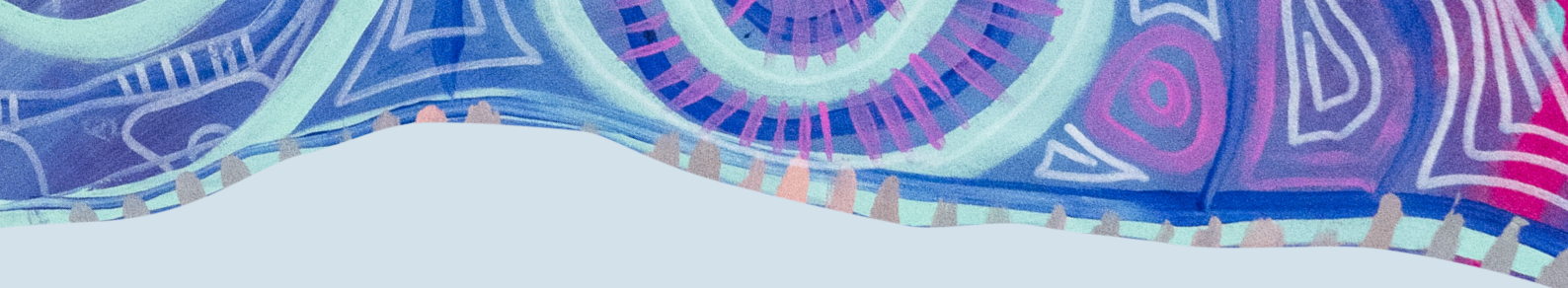
For more specific examples on embedding academic literacies and numeracies into disciplinary contexts, **see Fields of Education**.

3. Strengths-based and inclusive:

Teaching academic literacies should adopt a strengths-based, inclusive approach. This means avoiding deficit language that frames students as lacking skills they must ‘acquire’ to succeed. Instead, following Motta and Bennett’s (2018) “care-full” epistemologies, academic literacy work values students’ existing knowledge and experiences, building on these rather than replacing them.

Lea and Street (1998, 2006) remind us that academic cultures have their own practices and ‘rules,’ which all learners must navigate through orientation, practice, and feedback. Recognising this helps students to consider what constitutes powerful knowledges in academia and understand academic literacies as socio-cultural, context-dependent practices—not fixed or immutable skills.

Inclusive strategies include peer learning, reflective activities, and opportunities to unpack and apply feedback. These dialogical approaches create spaces for students to explore academic literacies collaboratively and meaningfully.



4. Make academic practices explicit and scaffolded:

Academic literacies teaching should make the ‘taken for granted’ assumptions of academic work clear and accessible. This includes understanding academic text types, reading and responding critically, and showing worked solutions—and understanding why these practices matter.

Tasks that build in depth learning and complexity, the use of models and exemplars, practice-feedback-practice cycles, and modelling academic language and conventions in teaching material and in the classroom are mechanisms that scaffold the explicit teaching of the ‘hidden’ components of academic literacies provision (Baker & Irwin, 2015).

5. Access, flexibility, and equity:

Academic literacies provision must be accessible, flexible and equitable in a way that acknowledges the diverse realities and competing commitments in students’ lives. Offering learning opportunities in multiple modes and formats, at different times and as an embedded component of the curriculum, helps remove barriers to student learning.

This might include formal instruction during class time and within teaching material, asynchronous resources, and informal spaces such as drop-

ins. Without such provision, variability between courses risks perpetuating inequities rather than reducing them (Baker & Irwin, 2015; Davis et al, 2024).

6. Build staff capacity and collaboration:

Teaching staff do not necessarily have a background in academic literacies provision, which is its own specialised educational strand. Effective provision therefore requires collaboration between literacy specialists and discipline experts, and/or ongoing professional development. Building a shared culture and consistent practices across teaching teams strengthens the integration of academic literacies into curriculum (Baker & Irwin, 2015).

7. Recognise academic literacies as relational, emotional, and cultural:

Academic literacies are not neutral; they are shaped by ideology and contested norms, such as what counts as ‘good’ writing (Wingate, 2011). They are not simply technical skills but represent epistemologies: ways of thinking that inform academic practices (Wingate, 2011; Lea & Street, 1998).

Because of this, academic literacies teaching should encourage critical engagement with the very literacies students are expected to learn. This helps students understand that these practices are ideological rather than

fixed or value-free. Such criticality also supports metacognition, enabling students to reflect on how academic literacies influence identity formation — sometimes creating tension or discomfort as new academic identities emerge (Wingate, 2011; Lea & Street, 1998, 2006).

Academic literacies acquisition is closely tied to belonging and confidence within academia, yet it can also disrupt existing identities. For FFUR cohorts, this process often carries emotional weight, particularly for students with prior negative educational experiences. Feelings such as imposter syndrome, fear, or anxiety — expressed in terms like ‘maths anxiety’ or sentiments like “I can’t write” — are common.

Understanding and responding to these emotions requires relationally responsive pedagogy. Building trust, acknowledging emotional challenges, and creating supportive spaces are essential for helping students navigate the ideological and identity-based dimensions of academic literacies (Wingate, 2015; Lea & Street, 1998, 2006).

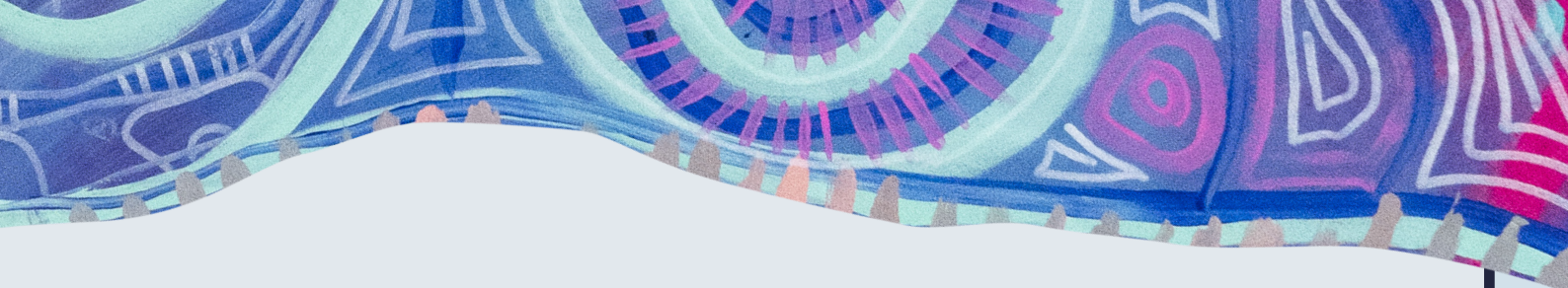
Academic Literacy achievement level descriptions

Academic Literacies are embedded within a range of courses, whether offered as stand-alone FFUR units or within other discipline-based FFUR units, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pathways units. They are



designed to provide in-depth knowledge and skills to equip students with the levels of complexity of understanding required for entry into undergraduate study. Academic Literacies instruction aims to engage students in the processes and practices of reading, writing, and speaking in the higher education context. Academic Literacies units aim to develop students’ thinking and critical reasoning, as expressed within the types of written language forms included at a commencing undergraduate level.

The following proposed achievement level descriptions (proposed as minimum standards in the Report on Policy Settings) provide an understanding of the typical performance of students in academic literacies to facilitate a shared knowledge across the country of the achievements of students who have completed FFUR offerings.



Students who complete these units are typically adept in:

- A range of academic writing skills and practices, including those involved in the production of different text types important at the introductory undergraduate level.
- Analysis and implementation of the principles of academic integrity and their application.
- Critical reading aimed at developing student capacity for deeper understanding of a variety of texts, with scaffolded introduction to academic text types.
- Research skills and effective use of evidence from scholarly literature to support an argument, including referencing.
- Digital Literacies, including effectively navigating digital systems, platforms and tools.
- Understanding of, and effective, ethical use of artificial intelligence tools.
- Effective communication for a range of audiences and purposes, including oral presentations.
- Critical thinking.

Upon completion, students should:

1. Apply the technique of critical reading to a variety of texts.

2. Demonstrate academic skills of close analysis.
3. Demonstrate the ability to source, critically analyse and evaluate information in support of an argument.
4. Demonstrate the required depth and breadth of knowledge of the conventions of conveying information in an academic context through a range of relevant written reports, essays or other relevant methods.
5. Demonstrate membership in an academic community by adhering to the principles of academic integrity and referencing.

For more information on the recommended design and rigour of FFUR unit types (e.g. Sciences, Health, Humanities and Social Sciences) including **minimum achievement standards for Numeracy (as proposed in the FFUR Framework in the Report on Policy Settings)**, see FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines below.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Sciences & Health

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Mathematics, Information and Technology

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Humanities, Education and Social Science

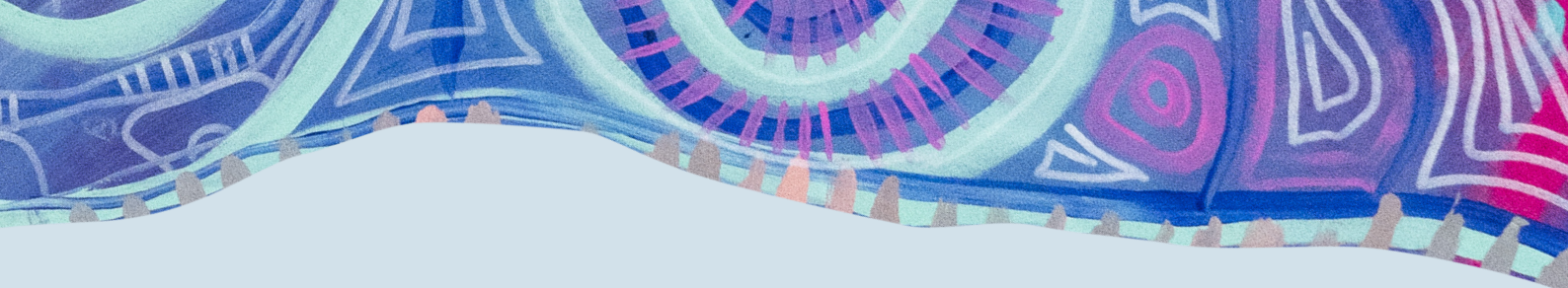


Assessment Approaches

Goode et al (2025) have provided the first scoping review of assessment in FFUR courses in Australia. From their scoping review Goode et al were able to clarify a range of primary and secondary design principles that were core to good practice in assessment in these courses. Goode et al note that despite assessment being key to how FFUR courses enact pedagogies into practice, a lack of literature exists about assessment in this sector and that “a clear need exists for more robust articulations of the philosophical and conceptual ideas underpinning approaches to assessment in enabling education, alongside examples of how this translates into specific assessment practices and student outcomes” (p. 12). The impetus for such research is even greater in a contemporary context where GenAI challenges traditional assessment design and prompts examination of how students can best demonstrate their acquisition of learning outcomes. **See GenerativeAI in Equity Education section for more.**

The assessment design principles identified in their scoping review (pp. 8–10) are:

- **Core Design principles:**
 - ⇒ Scaffolding – assessments build on each other in depth and complexity; low to high stakes; and additional considerations



like scaffolding to build learning behaviours (like self-awareness) and scaffolding to build in feed-forward.

present: transition pedagogy, equity, feedback literacy, fun, socialisation and manageable volume.

- ⇒ Authenticity – assessments should build connections to student’s own lives. This can include their interests, backgrounds or future aspirations.
- ⇒ Flexibility – can refer to flexible deadlines or forms of submission, linked to [UDL frameworks](#).

- **Secondary design principles:**

- ⇒ Transformation – assessments form part of self-transformation (e.g. growing a sense of belonging, self-efficacy and confidence).
- ⇒ Academic literacy – assessment builds student understanding of university guidelines and processes and allows for practice and demonstration of literacies developed over time.
- ⇒ Inclusivity – meaning social inclusion and UDL principles.
- ⇒ Constructive alignment – assessments should be constructively aligned with course content and learning outcomes.

- **Peripheral:**

- ⇒ These were referenced less in the literature, but remain

Ultimately, assessment in FFUR education should differ from assessment in undergraduate study because the cohorts, purpose and context of learning differ. FFUR cohorts are more likely to be returning to study from a hiatus, balancing study with a range of other forms of labour and be from backgrounds with prior educational disadvantage or educational marginalisation. As a result, assessment is more likely to emphasise flexibility, scaffolding, relationality, academic literacies development as part of disciplinary content and anchor assessment within the context of the whole person, rather than in grading outcomes alone.

Expanding on sources like Goode et al., 2025; Stone, 2017; ACODE benchmarks (Sankey et al., 2024) and ‘Enabling’ pedagogy scholarships, there are recommended principles of best practice in assessment design in FFUR courses:

1. Human-centred and relational (Goode et al., 2025; Bennett et al., 2018).

Assessments are not just a mechanism to measure content knowledge; assessments have a profound impact on how students see themselves and transition, not just into an undergraduate discipline, but into new understandings of themselves and their capabilities

(see, for example, Moloney & Jankowski, 2023). Human-centred and relational assessment also recognises that conditions for completing assessment are not always ideal; assessments require equitable, accessible and flexible design that reflect the actual lived reality of student's lives.

2. Iterative and scaffolded (Goode et al., 2025; Stone, 2017).

Assessments build in depth, complexity and weighting over time, giving students the opportunity to practice formal responses in lower-stakes conditions first. This reduces the emotional risks, allows for early wins and allows educators to identify where students may need additional support or interventions.

3. Authentic and discipline aligned (Goode et al., 2025).

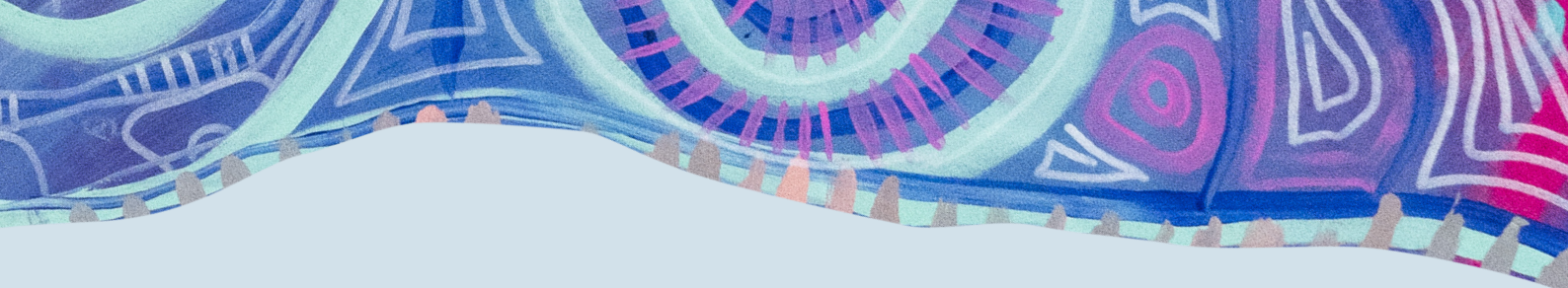
Assessment should reflect the practices, epistemologies, and text types of their discipline, to prepare students for their undergraduate pathway and to assess literacies in context, rather than as generic 'study skills'. Students should understand the purpose of the assessment and how it relates to them and their transitions into, through and out of a FFUR offering.

4. Academic integrity is approached educatively, as an academic literacy.

Academic integrity as an academic literacy should be embedded holistically and transparently within teaching and assessment practices (Fudge et al.,

2022). Secure forms of assessment, as well as detection methods for academic integrity breaches have become more sophisticated, proactive and educative in approach. This is essential for both teaching students about why academic integrity must be upheld, and to do so. At the same time, educators should provide a range of engaging, scaffolded and flexible curricula, and continuously examine assessment approaches to minimise misconduct opportunities.





“

“One of the things I’ve learned is never to assume things, ... You’ve got to really peel back everything ... imagine starting from the beginning and going, well, what if I didn’t understand that?”

– Dave, FFUR Provider

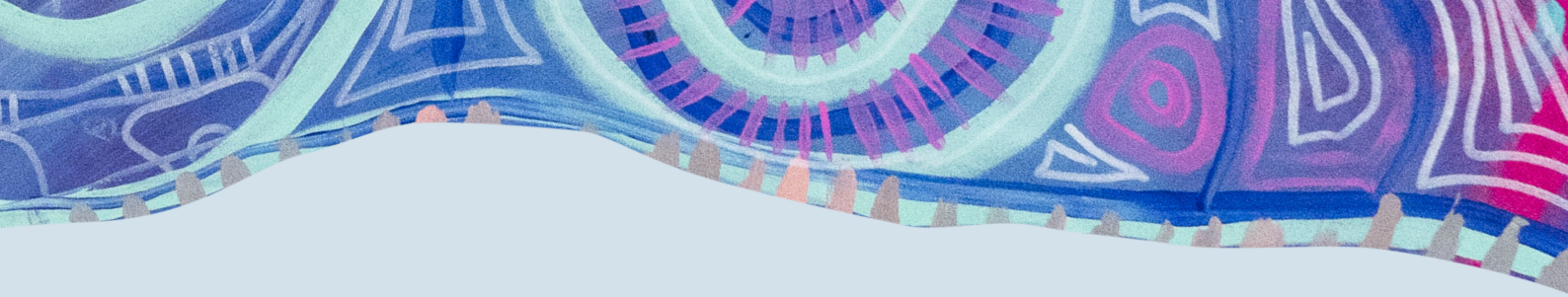
1. Student-Centred and Inclusive Pedagogy
2. Skills-Focused and Scaffolded Learning
3. Feedback and Assessment for Growth
4. Real-World Relevance and Application
5. Reflective and Responsive Teaching
6. Structural Support and Accessibility

While FFUR offerings share these core principles, disciplinary content shapes unique contexts, and how these principles are enacted within teaching and learning spaces. Drawing from literature outlined in the chapters above, and decades of collective experience of academics teaching FFUR, the following provides recommendations for best practice in curriculum and unit design and pedagogical approaches in:

FIELDS OF EDUCATION

Principles of equity and inclusion underpin the design and delivery of FFUR courses; best practice is achieved through the implementation of FFUR pedagogies, “care-full” curriculum design and assessment, and embedding of academic literacies. This next section brings these principles together into **six key categories** to provide practical examples of how these can be applied to different fields of education within FFUR units:

1. **Sciences & Health**
2. **Mathematics & Technology**
3. **Humanities, Education & Social Sciences**



Field of Education: Sciences & Health

Despite increasing diversity in higher education, the discipline of science continues to reflect limited demographic representation (Ramiah et al., 2022). Students from underrepresented and equity backgrounds face additional barriers and are particularly vulnerable to attrition within science pathways, often withdrawing from undergraduate courses at disproportionately high rates (Department of Industry, Science and Resources 2024). One of the key contributing factors identified in the literature is lower levels of self-efficacy, which acts as a significant barrier to persistence and success for

many students from underrepresented backgrounds (Edwards et al., 2023). In the context of FFUR courses, which attract higher numbers of students from underrepresented backgrounds, pedagogical approaches must be inclusive and supportive to foster confidence and engagement. In this context, the adoption of caring and inclusive pedagogical approaches is critical to support student aspiration and retention and help students develop the skills and dispositions required to access a range of future study options that foundational knowledge of science can provide.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Sciences & Health

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
BIOLOGY		
An introductory biology unit explores fundamental biological concepts, from molecular biology to ecology, with hands-on activities and discussions that encourage students to connect theory with real-world applications. Students should learn about cellular processes, genetics, evolution, and ecosystems, forming a strong base for further studies in biology and related fields such as environmental science, agricultural science, zoology, animal science and plant science.	Individuals who study biology are typically adept in: • Introduction to biology and the scientific method • Molecules of life • Macromolecules • Animal and plant cellular structure • Cellular function: metabolism and the role of enzymes • Cellular respiration and photosynthesis • Cell division: mitosis, meiosis, and patterns of inheritance • Evolution and natural selection • Viruses, bacteria, and protists • Animals and plant evolution • Ecology and ecosystems	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Define, explain and apply key concepts relating to biology. • Recognise the diversity of the form and interpret the origin and evolution of biological complexity at a cellular level. • Explain the concepts of evolutionary processes and population and community ecology. • Summarise the key concepts of biology from a cellular level to ecosystems. • Apply critical thinking and the scientific approach to interpret biological information in the form of diagrams, graphs, tables and text.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Sciences & Health

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
CHEMISTRY		
Foundational chemistry introduces fundamental chemical concepts of relevance to the physical and life sciences. Students should develop skills in observation, critical thinking, research and communication.	Individuals who study chemistry are typically adept in: • Atoms and elements • Electrons and the periodic table • Compounds and chemical bonds • Chemical reactions and equations • The mole and chemical formulas • Stoichiometry • Molecular shape • Solids, liquids and phase changes • Solutions • Acids and bases	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Identify and explain how a knowledge of chemistry relates to everyday life, living organisms and technology in general. • Describe atoms, elements, molecules and compounds and how they react using chemical language. • Solve simple chemical problems in both a practical and theoretical context. • Apply theoretical knowledge and laboratory based experimental observation to predict and describe chemical change. • Identify and choose appropriate sources of chemical information using the library catalogue. • Prepare a scientific report to address a chemical question, citing the sources of chemical information used in the instructed referencing format. • Apply chemical knowledge in an examination setting.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Sciences & Health

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
PHYSICS		
Physics units should be designed to prepare students for undergraduate study in science and engineering by developing an introductory understanding of physics and its fundamental principles. The unit should cover the basic concepts of mechanics, forces, energy and waves.	Individuals who study physics are typically adept in: • Measurement in physics • Motion and forces along a line • Forces and Newton's Laws of Motion • Work, energy and energy conservation • Vectors and vector operations • Motion in 2-dimensions • Forces in 2-dimensions • Momentum and impulse • Circular motion and gravity • Waves and sound • Oscillations and simple harmonic motion • Experimental methods	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Identify, describe and explain the fundamental principles of physics. • Solve problems using the principles of physics with appropriate mathematics. • Communicate problem solving ideas and methods through diagrams, words and logical mathematical processes. • Develop hands-on experimental skills of measurement and analysis in a laboratory setting.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Sciences & Health

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
HEALTH SCIENCE		
An introductory health science unit should introduce students to the major body systems and the fundamental science principles underpinning their role in health and disease. Students should learn about basic anatomy (structure), physiology (function) and biochemistry (molecular interactions) of the major systems. Using relevant examples, students should understand how changes to normal functioning are involved in health, medicine and disease.	Individuals who study health science are typically adept in: • Basic cell structure and function, homeostasis and metabolism • Basic biochemistry • Cardiovascular system • Respiratory system • Digestive system • Renal system • Nervous system • Endocrine system • Immune system • Reproductive system	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Recall and describe key scientific concepts explaining normal function and health problems for the major human bodily systems. • Define and explain the relationship between structure and function in the major human bodily systems. • Conduct research relevant to understanding the science behind human health, disease, nursing practice and interventions. • Communicate scientific knowledge in a range of formats related to human health sciences. • Summarise, and interpret scientific information related to the scientific basis of health and disease.

FFUR Principles in Practice – Sciences & Health

The following provides recommendations for best practice in unit design and pedagogical approaches when teaching FFUR science disciplines:

1. Student-Centred and Inclusive Pedagogy

- In devising a pedagogy of care, teaching should be grounded in understanding students' backgrounds, goals, and needs.
- Teaching should promote safe, inclusive spaces to foster belonging and reduce barriers to engagement.
- There should be flexibility in learning and assessment to support diverse learners and promote equity.

2. Skills-Focused and Scaffolded Learning

- Scientific and theoretical concepts should be broken down into manageable steps.
- Learning should be scaffolded to build progressively from foundational to complex ideas.
- Workload should be spread evenly across the semester to offer the most equitable experience for those with prior caring/work/other commitments.
- Worksheets, examples, and guided practice help consolidate skills and reduce fear of failure.



“

“In my chemistry unit, I normalize struggle and mistakes. Science is primarily an experimental field and as such, you will get things ‘wrong’. This has nothing to do with your past or your capability, it’s just science. But you need to persevere to find an answer.”

FFUR Provider

READ

**MORE INSIGHTS FROM EDUCATORS
ON TEACHING IN THE FFUR SCIENCE
AND HEALTH DISCIPLINES**

3. Feedback and Assessment for Growth

- Units should offer frequent, low-stakes assessments (quizzes, lab reports, midsemester exams) and provide formative feedback.
- Feedback should be timely, respectful, and constructive, helping students track progress and build confidence.
- Assessments should be designed with opportunities for students to self-improve and turn their grades around while the course is in progress. This means a move away from a singular, final exam with a large weighting.

4. Real-World Relevance and Application

- Learning should be connected to real-world scenarios and future university disciplines.
- Laboratory sessions and analogies help students link theory to practice and develop transferable skills.

5. Reflective and Responsive Teaching

- A strong teaching presence should be maintained through availability, timely communication, and respectful interactions. This should be combined with being responsive to student needs, both in and beyond class, to reinforce a sense of value and belonging.

WATCH

**USING
TRAUMA-INFORMED
PRACTISE**

WATCH

**HOW THE T.E.A.C.H
METHOD HELPS STUDENTS
MASTER CHEMISTRY**

RESOURCE

**STRATEGIES
FOR INCLUSIVE
PRACTICE**

WATCH

**HOW ONE FFUR
PROVIDER USES ANALOGY
IN CHEMISTRY**

RESOURCE

**HOW TO BUILD
PHYSICS CONCEPTS
PROGRESSIVELY**

- Teaching should be continuously adapted based on student feedback and classroom dynamics.
- Teachers should be reflective of their practices to ensure pedagogy remains inclusive, relevant, and responsive to evolving student needs.

6. Structural Support and Accessibility

- Visual aids and analogies should support comprehension and engagement.

Field of Education: Mathematics, Information and Technology

Mathematics and technology subjects in FFUR courses provide essential foundations for pathways into computing, engineering, data science, and health disciplines. Students entering these units often present with highly diverse prior knowledge and confidence levels. Many experience maths anxiety and low self-efficacy (Emanet & Kezer, 2021), while others may overestimate their digital skills due to everyday technology use (Öncül, 2021). These factors can create barriers to engagement and persistence if not addressed through inclusive and supportive pedagogical approaches.

Best practice requires “care-full” curriculum design that scaffolds learning, embeds academic literacies, and connects content to real-world applications. Teaching strategies should focus on building confidence through structured progression, practical skill development, and opportunities for autonomy. Responsive feedback and flexibility are critical to support students from underrepresented backgrounds and ensure equitable access to learning.

The following provides recommendations for best practice in unit design and pedagogical approaches when teaching in the mathematics and technologies disciplines in FFUR courses. These strategies align with ‘Enabling’ pedagogies that foreground care, equity, and epistemic access (Bennett & Burke,

2024; Motta & Bennett, 2018), ensuring that students not only acquire disciplinary knowledge but also develop the confidence and skills needed for success in higher education.



FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Mathematics, Information and Technology

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY		
Information and communication technology is designed to develop computing knowledge and skills for university study and beyond. Units should cover a range of digital literacies that will assist students entering any field of study. There should be an emphasis on developing practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge.	Individuals who study ICT are typically adept in: • Digital literacies: coverage of key computing concepts; exploration of teaching and learning tools that support tertiary study • Essentials of computer-supported presentations and/or digital video production • Introduction to widely used and/or emerging technologies in the computing industry • Foundations of professional practice and ethics in computing • Group work skills for tertiary and IT team contexts	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Describe the tertiary computing environment and use it proficiently. • Recall, describe, explain and apply a range of computer terminologies and concepts. • Deliver professional computer supported presentations and/or produce digital videos. • Utilise a diverse range of software applications to meet study, communication, or business needs. • Apply group work skills effectively in an ICT context and evaluate group performance.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Mathematics, Information and Technology

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
PROGRAMMING		
Programming can be considered a literacy for the 21st century, with an increasing number of roles requiring some programming knowledge. Learning to program also develops logical thinking and analytical problem-solving skills that are valued across industries. Students should be introduced to programming using object-oriented programming languages and apply computational thinking to a range of problems and learn to code, test, and document solutions at a foundational level.	Individuals who study programming are typically adept in: • Introduction to programming concepts • Overview of software design and development • Foundations of computational thinking and problem solving • Essentials for coding in object-oriented programming languages • Documentation techniques • Software testing and debugging	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Recall, identify and apply programming concepts. • Recognise and discuss issues related to software development. • Apply computational thinking to real-world problems and draft solutions. • Code using object-oriented programming languages at a foundational level. • Document and test object-oriented code.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Mathematics, Information and Technology

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
FUNDAMENTAL MATHEMATICS		
Fundamental mathematics is a partially non-calculator introductory mathematics unit which should cover mathematical skills relevant to degrees requiring a basic level of mathematical knowledge and ability. These competencies align with the proposed Minimum Standards in Numeracy as part of the FFUR Framework (forthcoming in the Report on Policy Settings).	Individuals who study fundamental mathematics are typically adept in: • Numeracy, place value, arithmetic algorithms, mental arithmetic, order of operations, directed numbers • Fractions, decimals and percentage calculations and approximation of numbers • Calculator use • Basic statistics • Ratio and scale measurement • Scientific notation, units of measurement, prefixes, unit conversions	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Demonstrate a sound knowledge and an understanding of numbers and arithmetic • Use the skills of basic arithmetic without the use of a calculator competently and accurately. • Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of mathematics relevant to degrees requiring a basic level of mathematical ability • Apply basic mathematical and statistical concepts in real world problems.

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
ADVANCED MATHEMATICS		
Advanced mathematics units typically have a longer duration than other FFUR units due to the breadth and complexity of topics. They should prepare students for the commencement of undergraduate study relevant to degrees that require a sound knowledge of mathematical principles, such as mathematics, engineering, computer science, surveying and biotechnology. The depth and content should align to HSC 2–unit Mathematics and cover number systems, basic algebra, simultaneous and quadratic equations, functions and graphs, sequences and series. There should be a focus on the algebraic and graphical skills necessary for calculus. These competencies align with the proposed Minimum Standards in Numeracy as part of the FFUR Framework (forthcoming in the Report on Policy Settings).	Individuals who study advanced mathematics are typically adept in: • Number systems: natural numbers, rationals, integers, surds and real numbers. • Basic algebra: expanding, factoring, simplifying, solving equations and inequalities, quadratic equations, simultaneous equations. • Sequences and series: arithmetic and geometric progressions. • Trigonometry: sine and cosine rules, graphing trig functions, trig identities. • Differentiation: definition, derivatives of standard functions, product rule, quotient rule, chain rule, optimisation and other applications. • Integration: definition, integration by antidifferentiation, integration by substitution, exponential growth and decay, and other applications	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Explain the different number systems and how they are used within various scientific disciplines. • Use algebraic skills to solve real world problems. • Use graphical skills to solve real world problems. • Communicate mathematics in oral and written forms. • Determine the correct use of mathematical notation. • Formulate and solve real world problems in the language of mathematics. • Identify and use trigonometric skills sufficient for the understanding and practice of calculus. • Use differentiation theory and skills to solve real-world problems. • Use integration theory and skills to solve real-world problems. • Communicate mathematics in oral and written forms. • Determine the correct use of mathematical notation.

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
STATISTICS		
A statistics unit should provide a foundation for concepts in statistics and probability. It should prepare students wishing to proceed with further study in statistics or in a field where statistics is an important component.	Individuals who study statistics are typically adept in: • Descriptive statistics • Types of data • Representing data in tables and graphs • Measures of central tendency • Measures of dispersion • Percentiles • Stat mode on the calculator • Probability • Types of probability events • Complementary events • Conditional probability • Contingency tables • Tree diagrams • Probability distributions • Binomial formula • Bi-variate data • Statistical independence • Linear correlation and regressions • Introduction to statistical inference • The normal distribution • Z-scores • Confidence intervals • Normal approximation of other distributions	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Apply probability theory to solve specific problems. • Present data and conduct analysis of statistics at basic level.

FFUR Principles in Practice – Mathematics, Information and Technology

The following provides recommendations for best practice in unit design and pedagogical approaches when teaching FFUR Maths and Computing Discipline.

1. Student-Centred and Inclusive Pedagogy

- Humanise learning concepts through dynamic teaching and peer connection.
- Recognise diversity by providing a choice of topics. This gives students ownership of learning and builds confidence and curiosity.

2. Skills-Focused and Scaffolded Learning

- An emphasis should be placed on developing transferable academic and study skills rather than overwhelming students with content.
- Concepts and assessments should build in complexity over time, supporting gradual skill development to build confidence.
- Modularisation and self-paced learning let students take control of their own learning, builds responsibility and reinforces positive study habits.
- The inclusion of low-stakes,



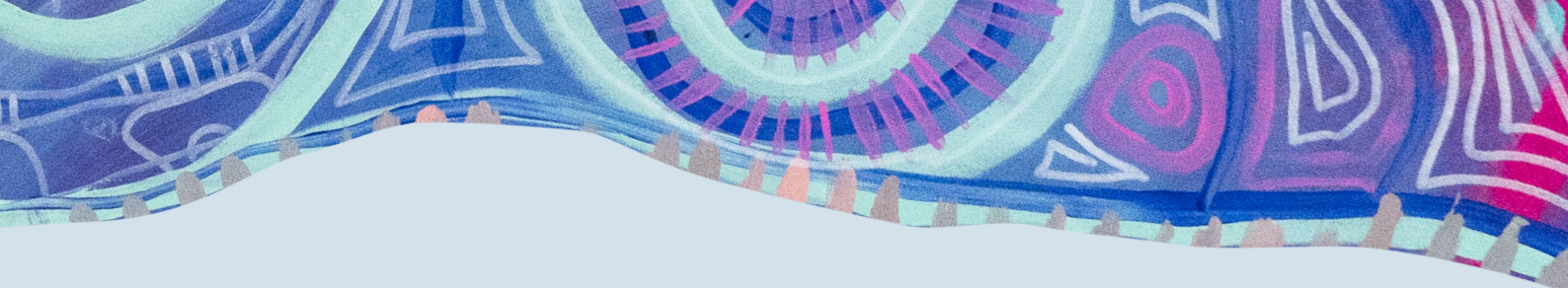
“

“Students have to see that maths is a thing you do... I can make it much more lively and entertaining if I am free to strut around, wave my arms...”

FFUR Provider

READ

**MORE INSIGHTS FROM EDUCATORS
ON TEACHING IN THE FFUR MATH AND
COMPUTING DISCIPLINES**



formative assessments is important for keeping students engaged without the pressure of high-stakes grading.

3. Feedback and Assessment for Growth

- Build gradual autonomy. Start with teacher-led approaches and transition to student-centred learning, supported by structured feedback.
- Assessments should be seen as learning opportunities.

4. Real-World Relevance and Application

- Connecting content to real-life contexts makes learning meaningful.
- Connect content to students' intended future study pathways.

5. Reflective and Responsive Teaching

- Teachers should adapt their methods based on student needs and feedback.
- Offer flexible deadlines to accommodate student needs and life circumstances
- Be responsive in communication. Quick feedback via email and discussion boards fosters a supportive environment for growth.

RESOURCE

STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

WATCH

LINKING MATHEMATICAL CONCEPTS TO STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

WATCH

CREATING SAFE SPACES IN MATHS

RESOURCE

OFFER A CHOICE OF TOPICS FOR A MATHS ESSAY

RESOURCE

THE "PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT" RULE

6. Structural Support and Accessibility

- Teachers should be available outside class, reinforcing student value and connection.
- Providing appropriate support is essential when working with students from diverse backgrounds or students with a disability.

Field of Education: Humanities, Education and Social Science

Humanities, education and social science offerings play a vital role in FFUR education by fostering critical thinking, cultural competency, and expanded worldviews. Enrolling into humanities, education and social science units helps students develop skills and competencies that can assist with a range of future study areas including sociology, history, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, and philosophy (Edwards & Ritchie, 2022). Students who study humanities, education and social sciences report increased confidence, improved analytical skills, and a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives (Edwards & Ritchie, 2022). These units help students become active and informed citizens and more capable of understanding complex social, cultural, and political contexts. Humanities, education and social science units encourage questioning, problem-solving, and communication — skills essential for success in higher education and beyond (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2025).

However, some students entering FFUR courses experience significant anxiety around academic literacy, particularly in reading, writing, and research. While FFUR courses across Australian universities share a commitment to developing academic literacy, students often struggle with confidence,



WATCH: FFUR Educator Milo talk about sociology as a framework for life



“

What sociology is really good at doing is sort of reflecting what’s happening in our culture back to us in a meaningful way that we can then analyse. Giving students a framework from which they can pull apart and analyse their own lived experience is in some ways the most fulfilling part of what we can teach here at university level.”

– Milo, FFUR Educator

academic language, and research conventions. These anxieties are especially pronounced among students from underrepresented backgrounds, who may not have had prior exposure to academic writing expectations (Davis, Lawson, and Duffy, 2024), or who have had negative prior experiences with writing expectations in high school (Allen, 2025).



In FFUR, humanities, education and social science offerings help provide essential academic literacy skills and tools for critical engagement and personal growth. Studying humanities, education and social sciences can help students from underrepresented backgrounds understand their place in the world, empowering them to draw upon their own rich knowledges and experiences to enable epistemic access to new forms of powerful knowledge (Bernstein, 1971; Young & Muller, 2013, cited in Bennett et al., 2018). At the same time, addressing anxieties around reading, writing, and research is crucial for students to articulate these knowledges. A pedagogy of care that includes scaffolded instruction, inclusive practices, and responsive feedback, can help students overcome these barriers and thrive in their academic journeys (Bennett et al., 2018).

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Humanities, Education and Social Science

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES: CULTURES AND HISTORIES		
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: Cultures and Histories students should develop a comprehensive knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and histories through Australia's development. The content examines the early encounters between British colonisers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, through to the Federation of Australia and its impacts, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, experiences, and responses.	Individuals who study Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: Cultures and Histories are typically adept in: Examining issues such as identity, cultural heritage, family structures, invasion and changing lifestyles.	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: - Develop an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, histories and cultural heritage. - Disseminate introductory level information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their historical relations with non-Indigenous Australians. - Describe the range of ideas about treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. - Research unfamiliar topics using a range of research tools.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Humanities, Education and Social Science

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
SOCIOLOGY		
Sociology should provide a clear understanding of the forces shaping societies – both locally and globally. It should involve critical thinking about issues such as inequity, power, and culture. A sociology unit should explore historical transformations and their impact on contemporary society. It should develop the ‘critical imagination’ – the ability to question common-sense explanations and view society from new perspectives, strengthening students’ academic skills along the way.	Individuals who study sociology are typically adept in: • The sociological imagination • Introductory sociological theory • Inequality and society • Social determinants of education • Social determinants of health • Gender and sexuality • Youth sociology • Sociology of technology • Media and communications • Indigenous, national, ethnic and racial identities • Power and the state • Research methods • Presentation skills • Environmental Sociology	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Apply academic planning, research and referencing skills to academic work at a foundational level. • Identify and evaluate social issues, institutions and social structures which exist in everyday life using a social scientific approach. • Use library research skills for academic research. • Critically analyse social problems using theory in written and oral forms.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Humanities, Education and Social Science

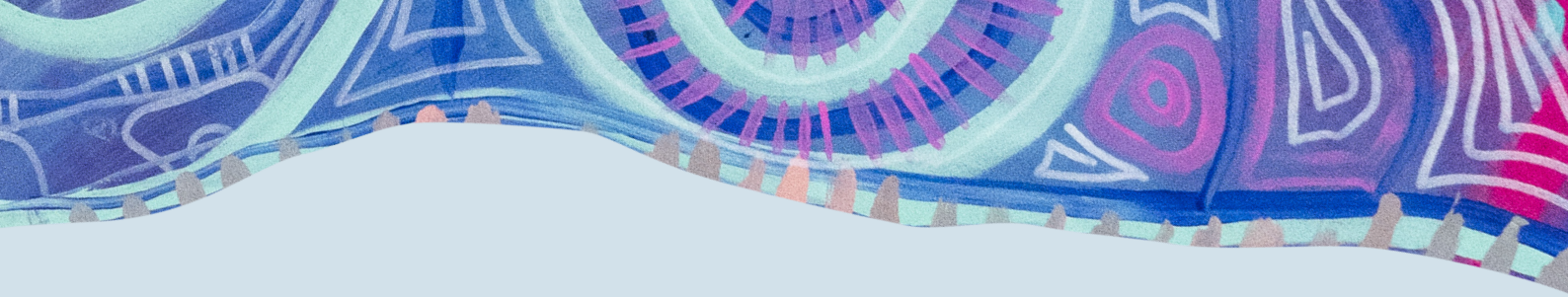
DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
CREATIVE WRITING & READING		
A creative writing and reading unit should guide students through a close reading and discussion of texts. This should familiarise students with the techniques and strategies used by creative writers and train them to apply these techniques to produce a range of creative written forms. The work of Australian and international writers, as well as the original writing of students, should be used to analyse and critique literary form.	Individuals who study creative writing and reading are typically adept in: • Examination and discussion around key exemplars in poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction • Foundation creative writing skills required to complete their chosen creative projects	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Identify a range of writing techniques in poetry, creative nonfiction and fiction. • Apply the conventions of editing and refining written language in terms of grammar and sentence construction. • Develop and practice skills in critiquing other people's work and through this, develop the ability to recognise issues within their own writing. • Create projects that reflect an understanding of the literary conventions and techniques of creative writing in its relevant form.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Humanities, Education and Social Science

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
PSYCHOLOGY		
An introduction to the study of psychology and human behaviour, and how it can be applied in the understanding of everyday life, should cover the key conceptual and theoretical approaches to psychology. It should provide students with an overview of the discipline and psychology and an understanding of how the study of the mind and human behaviour can be applied in various real-world contexts. Emphasis should be placed on a scientific understanding of human behaviour and psychology.	Individuals who study psychology are typically adept in: • Foundational concepts and theories of psychology • The biological bases of behaviour, perception, psychological disorders and social behaviour	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Recognise the historical and contemporary approaches to the psychological investigation of the interaction between mind, body, and society. • Apply scientific reasoning for the evaluation of psychological research. • Recognise foundational concepts in selected content areas of psychology. • Apply psychological concepts, theories, and research findings to interpret various aspects of everyday life. • Use critical thinking to effectively evaluate the scientific evidence in the digital world. • Employ a range of academic reading, writing, and research skills, including analytical and critical thinking, at a level suitable for successful university study at the undergraduate level.

FFUR Unit Competencies Guidelines – Humanities, Education and Social Science

DISCIPLINE	KEY KNOWLEDGES & SKILLS	LEARNING OUTCOMES
EDUCATION		
An Education unit should provide students with foundational knowledge, skills and insights relating to the academic study of education, teachers, and teaching. It should include an exploration of philosophical, historical, psychological, and sociological influences in education. While embedding the development of essential academic literacies, the unit should cover three interrelated topics in education: understanding learning, understanding teaching, and understanding schooling. Woven throughout these topics are various philosophies of education.	Individuals who study Education are typically adept in: • The important work of past scholars • Introductory knowledge of the fields of educational psychology and philosophy • The role of the teacher in Australian society • Key concepts related to pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment • The development of teachers as professionals • Historical foundations of Australia's school system • Current issues in Australian schooling • The sociology of education including Issues of diversity and equity	Upon completion of this unit, students can typically: • Employ a range of academic reading, writing and oral skills and attitudes, including reflective, analytical and critical thinking, at a level suitable for successful university study at the undergraduate level. • Reflect knowledgeably and critically on their own and others' educational experiences using insight gained during the unit. • Define key introductory concepts in the fields of educational sociology, philosophy, and psychology and explain the contribution of seminal thinkers to the study of education. • Define basic features of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. • Recount key points in the historical development of schooling and education policy in Australia including Indigenous knowledges.



FFUR Principles in Practice – Humanities, Education and Social Science

The following provides recommendations for best practice in unit design and pedagogical approaches when teaching FFUR Humanities, Education and Social Sciences units. The recommendations draw from current literature and decades of collective experience of academics teaching in academic literacy, research and creative writing in FFUR units:

1. Student-Centred and Inclusive Pedagogy

- There should be a variety of different activities to cater for different

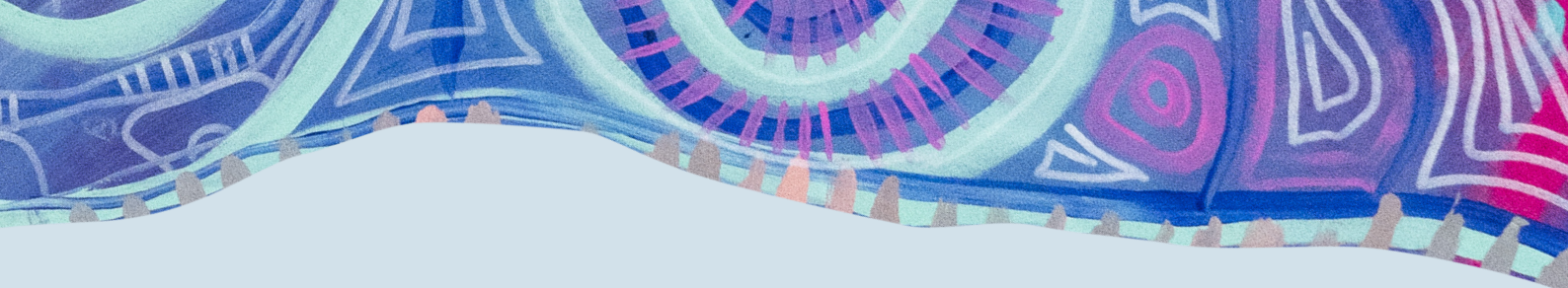
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In the first tutorial we have a think/pair/share activity on ‘*what makes a good tutorial?*’ I divide this into the tutor’s role and the students’ role. Students usually say that good tutorials are when students are engaged. If there are activities where students are too shy to interact or speak up, I refer back to that brainstorm to encourage them. I also use their ideas on what makes a good tutor to make myself accountable. For example, I’ll say to the class “I’ve made lots of different types of activities today as this is what you told me a good tutor does.”

FFUR Provider

READ

**MORE INSIGHTS FROM EDUCATORS
ON TEACHING IN THE FFUR
HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCIPLINES**



learning styles and responsiveness to individual needs should be prioritised.

- Teachers should help students to feel valued and seen. This can be achieved by learning students' names, respecting diverse opinions, and building rapport to foster a sense of belonging.
- Teachers should aim to create environments where students feel comfortable asking questions and making mistakes, which is central to engagement.

2. Skills-Focused and Scaffolded Learning

- An emphasis should be placed on developing transferable academic and creative skills rather than overwhelming students with content.
- Concepts and assessments should build in complexity over time, supporting gradual skill development.
- Skills should be introduced, practised, and then applied in meaningful tasks.

3. Feedback and Assessment for Growth

- Assessment tasks should increase in length and difficulty, with feedback

“

In week 5 we schedule a 3–5-minute one-on-one interview with every student in the tutorial. In this interview we personally hand back the mark for the student's first written assessment task and provide personalised feedback and encouragement tailored to the needs of the student... Student feedback has confirmed that this process strengthens rapport with staff and affirms that teacher feedback is delivered to help students, not penalise them.

– FFUR Provider

RESOURCE

KEY POINTS TO SUPPORT PROACTIVE ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

from one task informing the next.

- Assessment design should avoid scenarios where failing one task results in failing the entire course. This includes assessments with high weightings and high stakes.
- Students should be encouraged to reflect on their learning journey, reinforcing growth and self-awareness.

4. Real-World Relevance and Application

- Units should align with undergraduate expectations, preparing students for future study. This requires course designers to be in collaboration with similar undergraduate course coordinators.
- Assessments and activities should connect academic skills to students' interests, aspirations and real-world applications.

5. Reflective and Responsive Teaching

- Teachers should adapt their methods based on student needs and feedback.
- Teachers should model curiosity and openness, showing students that learning is ongoing and collaborative.
- Teachers should bring an enthusiasm for the subject and active

WATCH

**PROVIDING
EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK
FOR CHANGE**

WATCH

**UTILISING STUDENTS'
“BACKPACKS OF
KNOWLEDGE”**

RESOURCE

**STRATEGIES
FOR INCLUSIVE
PRACTICE**

RESOURCE

**‘FEEDBACK ON
FEEDBACK’
ASSESSMENT ITEM**

RESOURCE

**CREATIVE WRITING
ACTIVITIES FOR
BOOSTING CREATIVITY**

engagement in tutorials to enhance student motivation.

6. Structural Support and Accessibility

- Students should be guided toward academic and wellbeing support when needed.
- Teachers should be available outside class, reinforcing student value and connection.



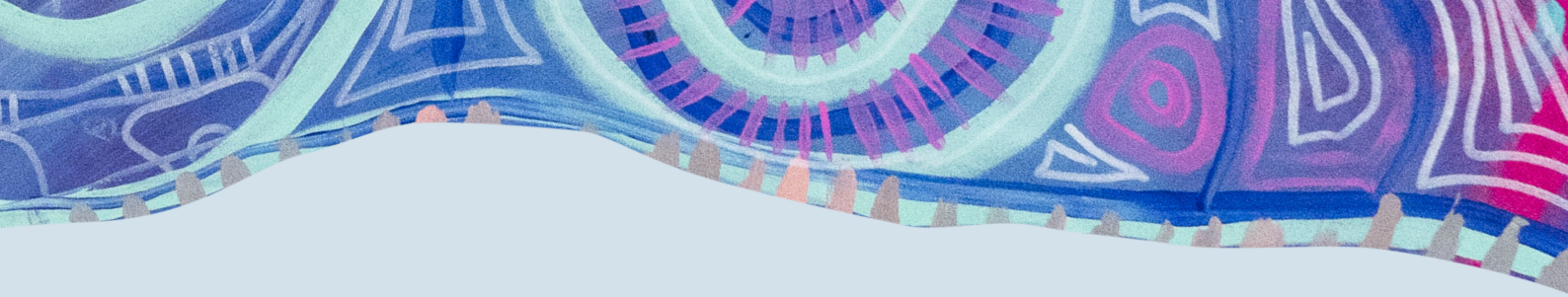
► Click to watch

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Spaces of Knowing & Learning

PROGRESS IN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

Over the past two decades, there has been sustained policy attention directed toward improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in higher education. The pivotal [Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander](#)

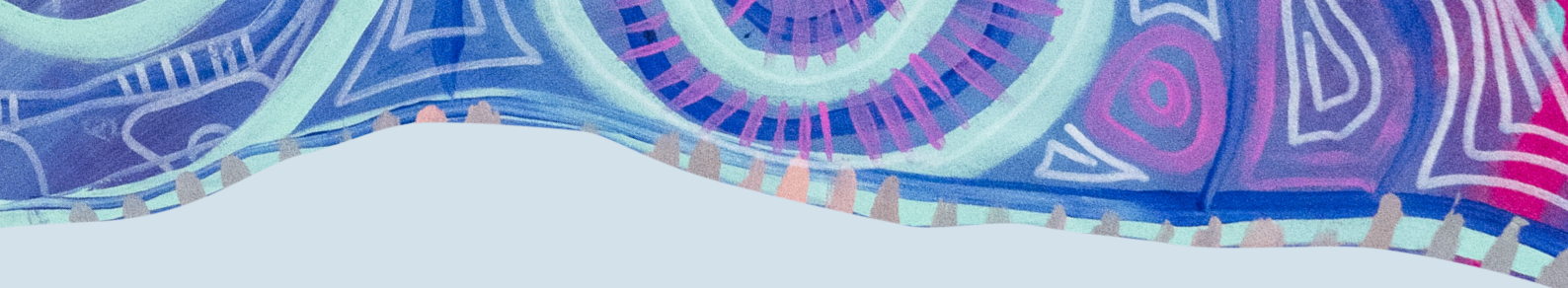
[People](#) report (Behrendt et al., 2012) produced by a panel chaired by Professor Larissa Behrendt, highlighted the role that higher education plays for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in improving their health, education and economic outcomes. Although higher education may not be the preferred pathway for everyone, Behrendt et al. (2012) argue that it is essential that all people have the opportunity to choose it. As part of this review, the panel found that despite many



students speaking about how proud and supportive their parents were of their decision to attend university, a range of personal and community factors, such as limited encouragement from educators and a lack of understanding of higher education, can discourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from accessing university. By addressing barriers and increasing opportunities for access, more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be meaningfully supported to reach a point where university becomes a real and accessible option.

National initiatives such as demand-driven funding, the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP), 'Enabling' (FFUR) and pathway programs, and whole-of-sector commitments articulated through Universities Australia's (2022) Indigenous Strategy 2022–2025, have contributed to growth in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university enrolments. This strategy builds on earlier sector work that helped normalise and embed targeted planning, performance monitoring and reporting on Indigenous student access, retention, success and completion, moving institutions toward accountability rather than isolated initiatives. This holistic approach is important because the number of children 15 years and under who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is increasing, and there will be more people who require the opportunities FFUR pathways provide into the future (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2023).

Pleasingly, research confirms that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are entering higher education in greater numbers than in previous decades (Gore et al., 2017). The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student commencements increased by 6.9% from 2023 to 2024 (Department of Education, 2025). However, while access has expanded, literature shows that increased enrolments have not been matched by comparable improvements in retention, completion, or postgraduate participation. The scoping review by Gore et al. (2017), further reinforced by the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (2025), highlights that policy reforms have been most effective at widening entry to university, but far less effective at shifting the institutional conditions that shape student experience and outcomes. As a result, many of the structural barriers identified in earlier research (Oliver et al., 2013; Oliver et al., 2016) continue to impact Indigenous students once enrolled. Studies focused on student experience point to ongoing challenges associated with financial pressure, competing work and family responsibilities, cultural responsibilities and uneven academic preparation (Benton et al., 2021; Hearn & Kenna, 2021). While government-funded support programs have alleviated some immediate pressures, these studies suggest that they have not fully addressed the broader socio-economic conditions that influence students' capacity to persist and succeed at university.



INCREASING PARTICIPATION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS

The role of FFUR

FFUR courses have been identified as an important means of enabling access and transitioning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students successfully into and through undergraduate study (Pitman et al., 2017; Nakata & Nakata, 2023). In their study, Pitman et al. (2017) demonstrated that compared to other equity groups, Indigenous students were more likely to utilise FFUR pathways than many other under-represented groups, and were “more likely to be retained after the first year of [undergraduate] study if they had a prior enrolment in an enabling [FFUR] pathway” (p. 244). These pathways play an important role in setting students up for sustained success in further study.

Proportionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students engage in FFUR programs at rates higher than Undergraduate level (Pitman et al., 2017; Australian Government Department of Education, 2025). Project consultation demonstrated that in some institutions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make up 8 – 9 % of their FFUR enrolments. Nonetheless, broader University structural and cultural barriers must be addressed to further improve participation, success and retention into undergraduate courses (Frawley, Larkin, & Smith, 2017)

Coombs et al. (2025) identify key barriers that impact all phases of participation

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, from pre-enrolment to FFUR pathways and beyond, including:

- racism and “whiteness” in universities
- lack of cultural responsiveness and inclusion
- administrative complexity
- socioeconomic disadvantage
- family and community relationships

FFUR providers play a central part in addressing these systemic barriers within universities. While centralised Indigenous Education Units are known to be critical enablers to retention and success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Gore et al. (2017b) note that responsibility for Indigenous student success is too often concentrated within Indigenous centres, rather than embedded across teaching, curriculum and institutional governance.

Across institutions, strong relationships between FFUR units and Indigenous Education Units are essential. FFUR leaders and staff must collaborate with Indigenous Education Units to ensure FFUR curriculum, structures and processes, and teaching are culturally responsive to support the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Being guided by Indigenous staff, culturally responsive pedagogies and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledges into FFUR curriculum are key.



LEARNING FROM AND WITH: WAYS OF KNOWING, BEING AND DOING

8 Ways

The [8 Ways of Aboriginal Learning](#) (n.d.; NSW Department of Education and Communities n.d.) is a critical pedagogical framework developed by Aboriginal communities in Western New South Wales, which is important for both engaging and educating all students. The 8 Ways integrate Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in teaching and learning, providing educators with culturally responsive strategies that embed Aboriginal perspectives through Aboriginal processes and protocols, not merely Aboriginal content, so that core curriculum objectives remain central while Indigenous perspectives are authentically integrated. The framework is flexible and adaptable to different contexts and communities, and foregrounds learning that is relational and connected to community, emphasising collective benefit and responsibility (Taylor, 2024).

The approach involves the following learning tools:

1. Story Sharing

Learning through narrative and personal storytelling, which is central to Aboriginal knowledge transmission.

2. Learning Maps

Visual mapping of ideas and processes to support understanding and memory.

3. Non-verbal Learning

Observational and hands-on learning, emphasising “watch first, then do.”

4. Symbols and Images

Use of metaphors, symbols, and visual representations to convey meaning.

5. Land Links

Place-based learning that connects content to Country and the environment.

6. Non-linear Learning

Holistic and cyclical learning that allows for flexible pathways and lateral thinking.

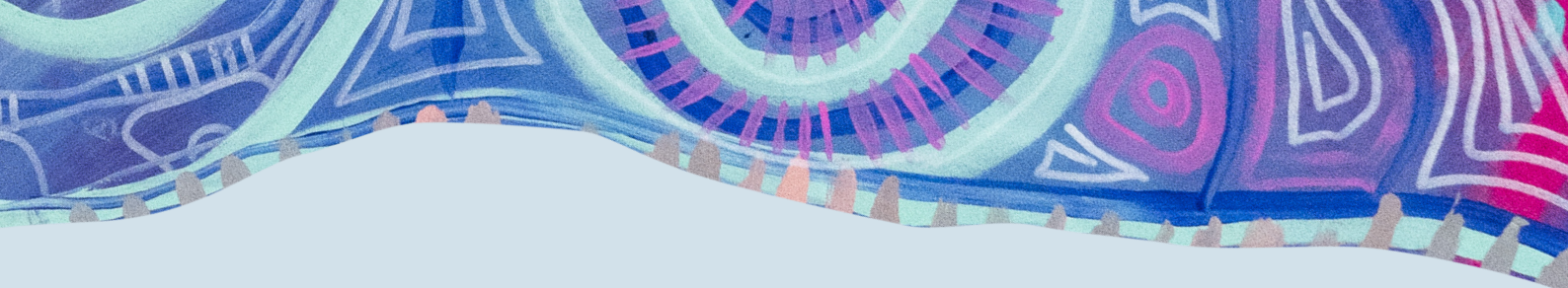
7. Deconstruct/Reconstruct

Learning by breaking down and rebuilding knowledge, often starting with the whole and moving to parts.

8. Community Links

Learning that is relational and connected to community, emphasizing collective benefit and responsibility.

(NSW Department of Education and Communities n.d.)



For best practice examples and resources using 8 Ways of, see [8 Ways - Best Practice](#).

Both-ways and Path+ways

Through Indigenising content and applying both-ways methodologies, the path+ways approach (Fredericks et al., 2015; Cajete, 1994) works to foster belonging, confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth. Students referred to by Fredericks et al. (2015) explain that these affective conditions of learning are instrumental to building engagement and success, even in the presence of structural and situational barriers they continue to deal with, such as rurality, caring responsibilities and prior negative experiences with schooling. Environments that value Indigenous students' experiences, recognise social realities and provide care, mentoring, and accessible staff are important elements of teaching and learning (Fredericks et al., 2015).

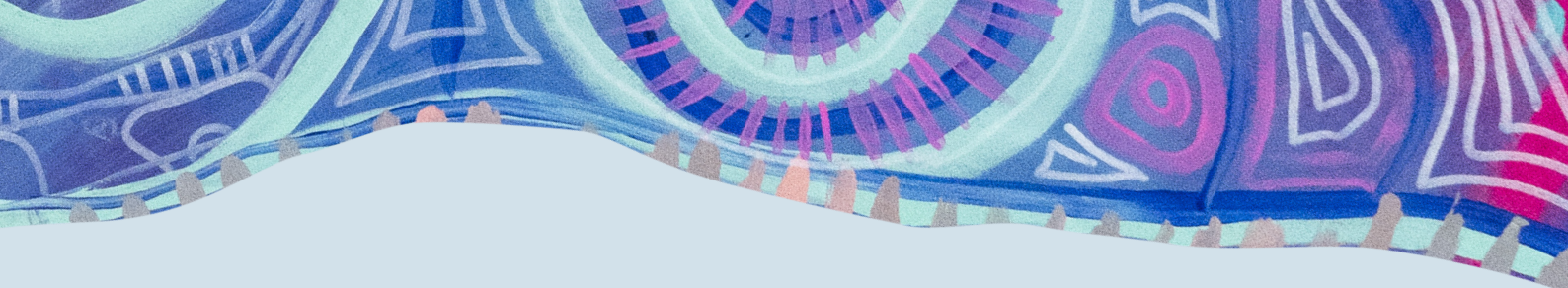
In later work, Fredericks et al. (2025) argue that course content must have strong Indigenised curriculum components so that Indigenous students can see themselves in the curriculum.

“I think it’s really important that university students see themselves in resources at university because it allows them to actually know that they are willing to be incorporated in the content that they’re being taught as well as show that this is where they can actually end up

and really give them an idea of ‘This can be me one day’” (Levi – FFUR Student).

Both-ways treats cultural capital, such as stories, languages, kinship obligations, and ontologies, as an enriching resource for learning. Staff and students referred to in the path+ways work by Fredericks et al. (2015) note that strengths-based approaches build resilience and strategic awareness, while the conceptual pedagogical model of path+ways represents the interlocking of both-ways, strength, identity, and success (see Figure 10 in Fredericks et al., 2015, p. 66). In short, legitimising and highly valuing Indigenous ways of knowing tangibly improves learning dispositions and outcomes for students (Fredericks et al., 2015). Please [see the Teaching in Practice section](#) in this Guide for more about both-ways and path+ways approaches.

Feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Fredericks et al., 2015) indicates that embedding Indigenous knowledge, yarning/ storytelling, and locally grounded examples and experiential learning, provides high-relevance contexts in which students can practise academic literacies. Students frequently describe a transformation of the inner self, including confidence, pride, and leadership aspirations, that occur alongside skill development. Furthermore, staff identify that FFUR graduates perform strongly in subsequent coursework (Fredericks et al., 2015).



“Being taught by Treesa was really powerful and impactful for me because she brought a lot of her Indigenous voice to a lot of the discussions that we had, which was really fascinating from someone who didn’t really understand a lot about the Indigenous cultures of Australia. Hearing her story and how she decided to do her PhD and everything in education was quite impactful and powerful for me.” (Levi – FFUR Student)

Embedding Indigenous perspectives and knowledges into FFUR structures

When embedding Indigenous perspectives into educational settings, there are important principles that should be considered to ensure respect, authenticity, and meaningful engagement and connection with and for students: respectful engagement, cultural awareness and cultural responsiveness, and meaningful collaboration (Shay et al., 2024).

These involve actively listening to and prioritising Indigenous voices, understanding and considering cultural points of view, and collaborating with Indigenous communities to create initiatives that are culturally appropriate and impactful.

Respectful Engagement:

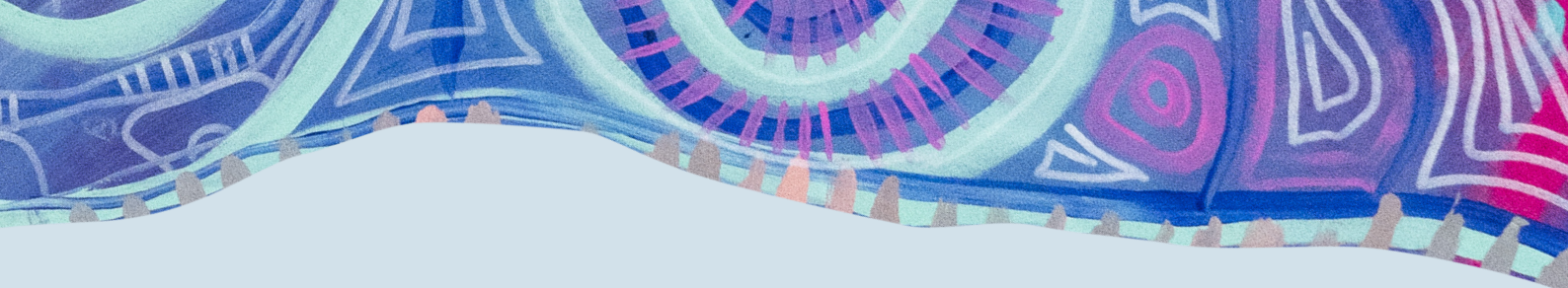
Respectful engagement prioritises Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and voices. It avoids stereotypes, steering away from deficit narratives, and focusing on strengths-based approaches, establishing trust through open communication and genuine relationships.

Cultural Awareness and Cultural Responsiveness:

Cultural awareness involves actively learning about Indigenous cultures, histories, and traditions, including their unique connection to land and language, with particular focus on sharing stories between educator and student. It is important the educators reflect on personal biases and assumptions about Indigenous knowledge and learning styles. FFUR leaders need to ensure cultural competency training opportunities for teachers and support staff in pathway programs to enable the conditions (cultural awareness) for cultural responsiveness.

Towney (2020) emphasises the importance of building the cultural capacity of all staff:

If staff have knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures it allows opportunities for cultural bias to be visible and challenged. It opens educators up to a new way of thinking, being and doing.



To genuinely build the cultural capacity of staff, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be involved. This creates opportunities for staff to learn, form sustainable relationships and where appropriate engage this local knowledge into education. In turn, the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community feel empowered and have opportunities for their knowledge and expertise to be valued, where historically this has not been the case.

An education institution where all staff, students and graduates learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures is possible. When these practices are sustained and valued as much as other knowledge systems, true partnerships will promote respect and improved life outcomes. (Towney, 2020, p.7).

Meaningful Collaboration:

Meaningful collaborations actively involve Indigenous communities in consultation in any decision-making processes. Acknowledging and relating student experience and understanding in educational contexts, allows Indigenous students and communities to not just take part in educational environments, but to ‘be’ part of the educational environment (Stokes, 2021).

When designing curriculum, Indigenous pedagogies, ways of being, knowing, and doing, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices should be embedded across all aspects. Indigenous culture

and knowledges should not be seen as content, but rather as the process (Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011).

In their recent study of Indigenous pathways, Fredericks et al. (2026) highlight findings from earlier research and list additional strategies crucial to strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success:

- Peer-to-peer connections are key for Indigenous students within FFUR programs and are an important factor for their university completion.
- FFUR leaders should ensure there are tutoring and mentoring initiatives in place for Indigenous students.
- Indigenous centres/units are crucial spaces for building connection and community for Indigenous students. FFUR units should work with the centres/units to ensure strong supports are in place for Indigenous students.
- FFUR staff and Indigenous centre/unit staff should continue to develop and strengthen strategies that build a sense of belonging and connection for Indigenous pathway program students to the university (for example, student-led events, creative workshops, or co-design sessions with students).
- Student-staff connections are important within pathway programs. Where possible, recruit Indigenous

pathway program teachers.

- Connect FFUR with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through outreach programs.

(Fredericks et al., 2026)

“While I was studying, I made a connection with Wollotuka ... and I’ve remained being close to all those people that are there and have just built such a good relationship with ‘Wolly’ ... There’s tea, coffee and it’s just so good. If you just feel like a chat with anyone, you can just walk in and be like, “hey”, and then they’ll be like, “hey”, and then yeah, you can just mingle. It’s really nice” (Angela – FFUR Student).

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER – SPECIFIC COURSES

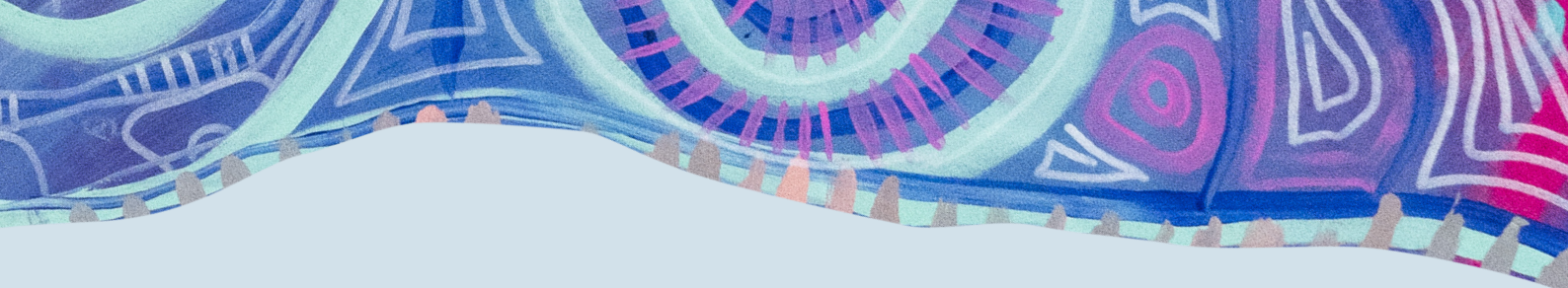
Best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific FFUR courses is grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy, Indigenous knowledges, and learning environments that are positive, self-affirming and reflective of Indigenous realities and aspirations.

These approaches support student confidence, sense of belonging, identity and engagement, while strengthening pathways into higher education (Turnbull 2014; Kinnane et al., 2014). Effective programs recognise that



***WATCH:** What are the benefits of having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific pathway programs?*

Indigenous paradigms encompass distinct ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies, as sources of strength. When embedded within curriculum and delivery, these frameworks enhance



“

“It is important to have Indigenous academics. I could learn even more about my own culture and connect with other Indigenous people around the community as well cultural experiences.”

– Carley, FFUR Student

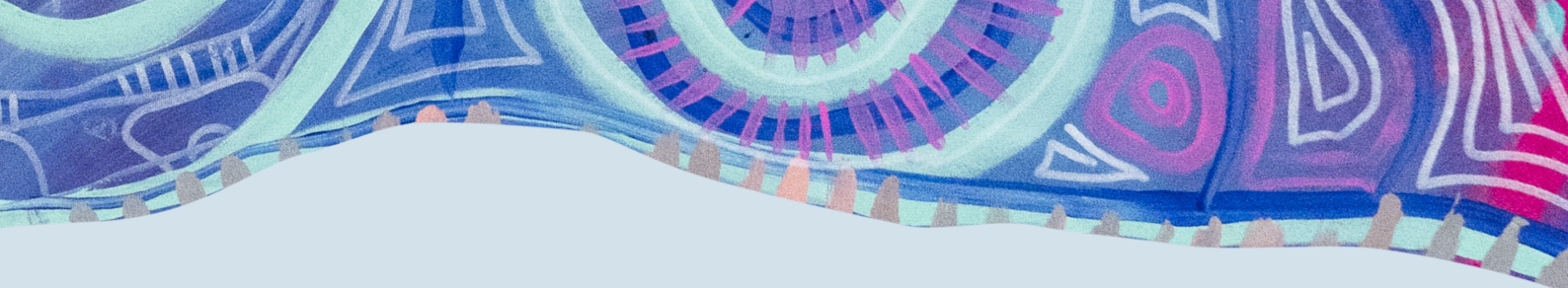
student agency, participation and retention (Fredericks et al., 2017). Best practice courses are tailored, built in consultation with, co-designed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Elders, communities and scholars, ensuring relevance, credibility and cultural integrity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific FFUR courses typically pursue dual objectives: developing academic skills for university success and providing

culturally responsive environments that build confidence and a sense of belonging. Success is understood holistically, encompassing increased participation, strengthened personal identity, and broader community benefits.

As discussed in other sections of this Guide, successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific FFUR courses integrate pedagogy, curriculum, and delivery within an institutional commitment to equity and Indigenous self-determination. Peer-to-peer learning, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander centres/units, strong student–staff relationships and targeted academic supports are critical to fostering belonging, retention, and progression into undergraduate study (Pitman et. al, 2017). Complementary supports, such as the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme, also provide important targeted academic assistance that strengthens progression and completion outcomes.

Culturally grounded FFUR programs provide a powerful platform for improving access, outcomes and aspirations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, contributing meaningfully to institutional equity goals and Closing the Gap priorities. Two examples are outlined below, but there are many Indigenous specific pathway courses across the sector providing targeted learning and support.



case study

ABORIGINAL PATHWAY PROGRAM (APP) UNISA/UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

The Aboriginal Pathway Program (APP) is an 18-month, FFUR program engaging Aboriginal learners from regional, rural, and remote South Australian communities, delivered across Mt Gambier, Ceduna, Whyalla, and Port Lincoln. The program is designed to enable students to study within their own communities, fostering collective learning and strengthening student agency through scaffolded academic and pastoral support.

Recognising the cumulative disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal learners, including low socioeconomic status, geographic isolation, and language barriers, the APP provides a culturally responsive alternative to mainstream foundation studies. Flexible delivery and community-based learning environments improve access, engagement, and preparedness for higher education. The program is underpinned by the 8 Ways of Learning framework, embedding storytelling, yarning, relational learning,

and community-connected knowledge practices. Learning materials are provided in both print and digital formats to address connectivity challenges and support knowledge sharing within families and communities.

APP comprises nine units delivered through a blended model of intensive face-to-face teaching, tutorials, and online learning. Two culturally specific courses, Land Management and Aboriginal Knowledges, and Narratives and Lived Experiences, are co-designed with local Indigenous experts and delivered by Aboriginal staff. Core academic courses develop transferable skills essential for university success, with limited course substitution available to support discipline-specific pathways.

Students receive additional support through the Aboriginal Tutor Program, providing targeted assistance in academic skills and personal development. The APP serves as a key feeder pathway into UniSA undergraduate programs, contributing to increased participation, retention, and transition outcomes for Aboriginal students.

case study



YAPUG, UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

Yapug (meaning *path* in Awabakal) is a FFUR pathway course that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop academic capability and gain a tertiary ranking for entry into undergraduate study at the University of Newcastle and partner universities nationally.

Established in 1999, Yapug was initially designed to support pathways into health

professions and has since expanded to provide access to a wide range of disciplines. The program is delivered collaboratively by the Pathways Centre and the Wollotuka Institute, integrating academic preparation with culturally grounded student engagement and support.

Yapug provides a culturally responsive, strengths-based learning environment that affirms cultural identity, supports self-determination, and builds confidence, academic skills and leadership capability.

Developed in partnership with community, Yapug responds to evolving local needs and embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, pedagogies and knowledges across teaching practice. All teaching staff are Aboriginal, ensuring culturally responsive delivery and strong role modelling for students.

Delivered on campus at the Wollotuka Institute, Yapug operates in accordance with the Wollotuka Cultural Standards, which provide a framework for cultural integrity, accountability and continuous improvement. These standards guide relationships with students, community and the University and recognise the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



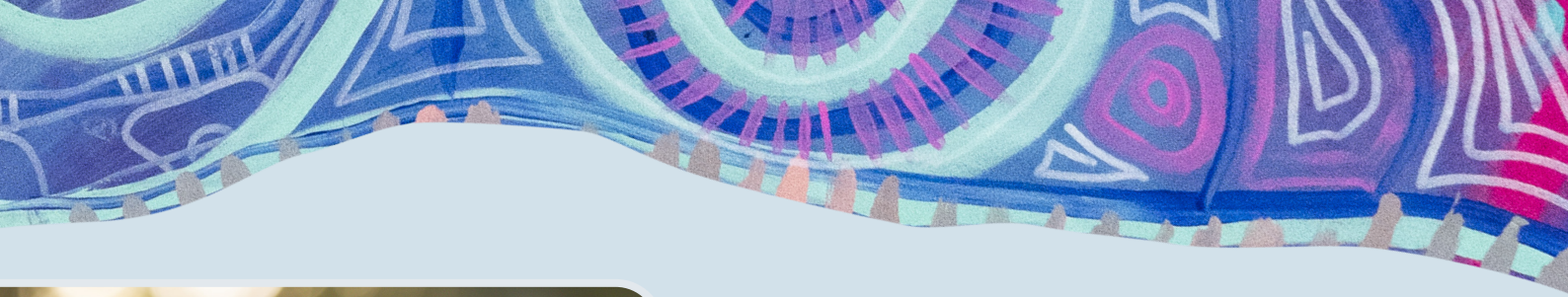
Digital & Future Literacies

MODE CONSIDERATIONS

Many established providers offer their FFUR courses through online and flexible delivery models that ‘blend’ face to face with online learning opportunities. Online and ‘blended’ learning spaces open pathway opportunities for students who would otherwise be unable to access courses to enter undergraduate study. This includes students who live significant distances from campuses, are unable to afford travel and time away from work and caring responsibilities and/or who

live with a disability which could impact participation. Providers of online FFUR offerings embrace practices that are underpinned by the ethos of ‘Enabling’ and transition pedagogies, while also addressing challenges specific to online cohorts.

As FFUR courses adapt to Generative AI (GenAI), online courses face challenges in verifying student identity and using assessments that show learning without requiring campus attendance. Strategies such as varied assessment



“

We're pushing really hard to make sure that AI use is happening within our courses so that when students are moving into their undergrad, they can use AI in a safe way and in a way that will support them when they move into work.”

– Treesa, FFUR Educator

types, process-focused tasks, whole of course-level assessment, interactive online oral exams, and proctored tests can help maintain academic integrity. It is also important to follow core principles: ensure assessments align with learning outcomes, foster teacher presence and connection in online spaces, and teach academic integrity as a skill (Dollinger et al., 2025).

Online and blended courses play an important role in ensuring that FFUR courses are flexible and inclusive. Like all FFUR courses, online and ‘blended’ approaches should:

1. Be underpinned by the types of enabling pedagogies which sit at the core of practice
2. Embed academic literacies within discipline-specific contexts and provide opportunities for both active and dialogical learning
3. Be designed for flexibility
4. Focus on relationality
5. Be flexible in conjunction with clear expectations.
6. Maintain quality standards and feedback/improvement cycles
7. Rethink engagement and success
8. Build staff capability and culture.

1. Be underpinned by the types of enabling pedagogies which sit at the core of practice, including values around inclusion and social justice, and approaches that are fundamentally student-centred and strengths based (Bennett et al., 2018).

Examples of this in online and blended modes include:

- Orientation or 'Week 0' activities that provide the opportunity for students to practice engaging through the LMS in a low-stakes way that can allow early identification of additional needs.
- Providing opportunities for digital community building and sharing from the outset. This could include engaging students in a discussion of class etiquette to co-develop rules of conduct for interacting online. You could also offer an ongoing "casual chat" page where students can choose to share news or appropriate updates from their personal lives
- Incorporating an "introductions" page as part of your online course, where students can 'meet' each other, offer information about their personal or professional history and share what they hope to achieve in studying the course. This page could also link to the AIATSIS Map



so students can acknowledge and share the land they live and work on.

- Inviting students to apply/draw connections between weekly concepts learned and their own lives and experiences. Carefully chosen videos are a useful resource that can offer real life examples to learn about discipline concepts.
- Recognising the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other diverse communities and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives.



2. Embed academic literacies within discipline-specific contexts and provide opportunities for both active and dialogical learning.

Online FFUR courses should be designed so students are not passive recipients of content but engage through doing, discussing and reflecting. Active learning includes scaffolded tasks such as problem-based activities, low-stakes quizzes, collaborative group work, and authentic assessment tasks that allow practice and application. Dialogical learning emphasises reciprocal exchange between students and educators as well as peer-to-peer dialogue and building knowledge collectively rather than transmitting it one-way (Motta & Bennett, 2018).

Examples of this in online and blended modes include:

- 'Just in time' concepts or literacies taught through short 'micro-lessons' relevant to that week. Units can include a weekly, interactive asynchronous page devoted to academic literacies that are expanded upon in synchronous learning opportunities and encourage students to keep a glossary of key terms that is added to throughout the course.
- Synchronous interactive H5P activities embedded into weekly modules, such as drag and drop, quizzes with feedback and interactive scenarios.

3. Be designed for equitable access.

The use of quality assurance standards related to inclusivity and accessibility, and fundamental principles of UDL (multiple means of expression, engagement and representation). UDL at the FFUR level also includes recognising digital equity as a practical challenge for many students, including access to appropriate hardware, software, connectivity, spaces and having the digital literacies required to engage; this is an issue which institutions share responsibility to resolve (Stone, 2017) through initiatives such as laptop loan schemes from the library or reduced prices on laptops through the student union, and 24-hour Wi-fi available on campus in secure study spaces.

Likewise, assessment should consider the contexts in which students are engaging and be suitable for online/flexible approaches, with consideration to authenticity, integrity and enabling principles.

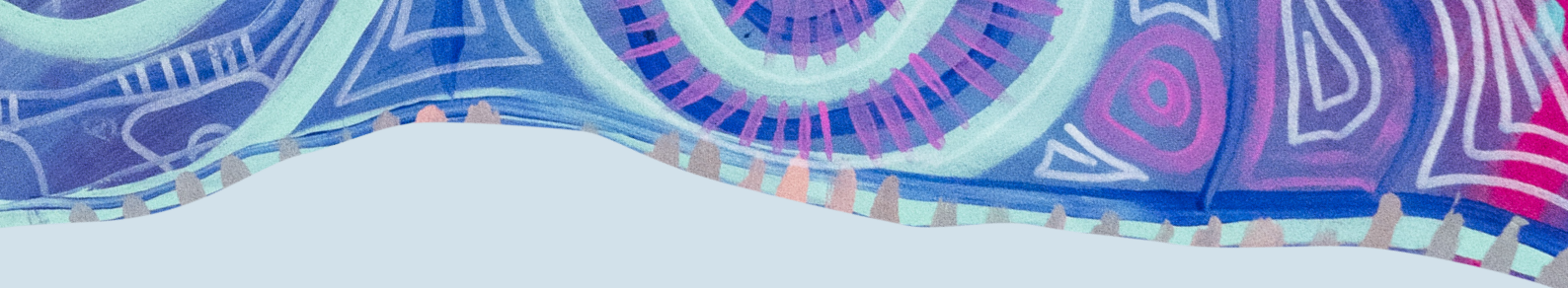
Examples of this in online and blended modes include:

- Using a consistent layout, structure, and navigation across the LMS for all courses, regardless of discipline. This is especially important in FFUR courses, where students may have little prior experience with an online LMS. Consistent design makes the “hidden curriculum” more visible by



WATCH: How one FFUR provider creates a digital laboratory experiment as assessment for online learners

demystifying the online environment and reducing students’ cognitive load. Stone (2017) highlights that clear, consistent structure and intuitive navigation support student retention: when learners can easily find their materials, know how to move through the course, and access support services, they are more likely to complete successfully.



4. Focus on relationality.

Teachers should be actively engaged and visible across all teaching spaces, including online environments. Research demonstrates that teacher-presence is key to building students' sense of belonging, identity and community. FFUR courses conceptualise teacher-presence broadly, extending it to include visibility and connection with institutional support services as well.

A collaborative approach to online learning provision that embeds support services, and the people behind those services, and provides supports 'just in time' are more likely to strengthen students' institutional knowledge and contribute to retention (Stone, 2017). Embedding opportunities for connection to support also helps to cultivate online community and enhance students' sense of belonging (Irwin & Hamilton, 2019).

Examples of this in online and blended modes include:

- Providing a visible and active teacher-presence, for example, by using LMS analytics to provide personalised messages to students who are inactive or who should be congratulated on their efforts.
- Posting weekly or regular announcements or videos that address key issues in the course as they arise and provide important updates and expectations.
- Maintaining a clear presence in discussion forums by responding to posts, weaving concepts together and modelling academic language and conduct.
- Building community by providing opportunities for students to share their own experiences and relate those experiences to content through platforms like an discussion forums or Padlets.
- Using break out rooms to facilitate group work or problem-solving activities that require interactivity and using group messages to acknowledge progress within the course.
- Collaborating with support services by incorporating shared resources or linking to services in context, providing drop ins or in-class time facilitated by support services, and embedding support service details within courses including photographs alongside information.
- Strengthening institutional relationships through consistent branding and layout to emphasise the connection between FFUR courses and undergraduate courses within the institution.

5. Be flexible in conjunction with clear expectations.

High quality asynchronous learning material and engagement opportunities should exist alongside opportunities for synchronous interaction with peers and educators. Accompanying this, there should be clear articulation around how and when students should engage with material to ensure the most ideal student experience.

Examples of this in online and blended modes include:

- Clear communication about expectations in terms of what is required and what is good to do. This could include consideration to communication channels, weekly checklists and indication of participation norms.
- Balancing clear expectations with opportunities for autonomy. For example, making asynchronous learning materials available well in advance of required completion, with guidance as to pacing; structuring catch-up or conceptually less challenging content at peak assessment periods.
- Using the LMS to engage meaningfully with students showing signs of disengagement or challenges including reduced



interaction, reduced attendance, extension applications, or late assessment submissions.

- Building opportunities for flexibility where possible, for example, submission or engagement windows, and recordings of sessions that do have fixed times.

6. Rethink engagement and success.

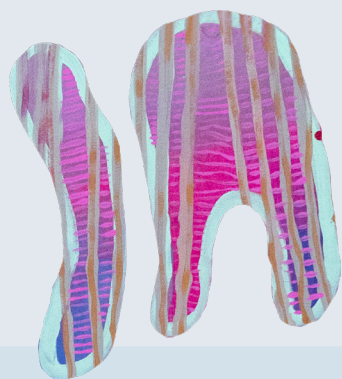
As with on-campus delivery modes, educators must reconsider what student engagement and success look like in online FFUR spaces. Learning analytics can be helpful in identifying when students may benefit from check-ins or additional support. However, analytics alone cannot capture the depth of engagement or whether transformational learning is occurring.

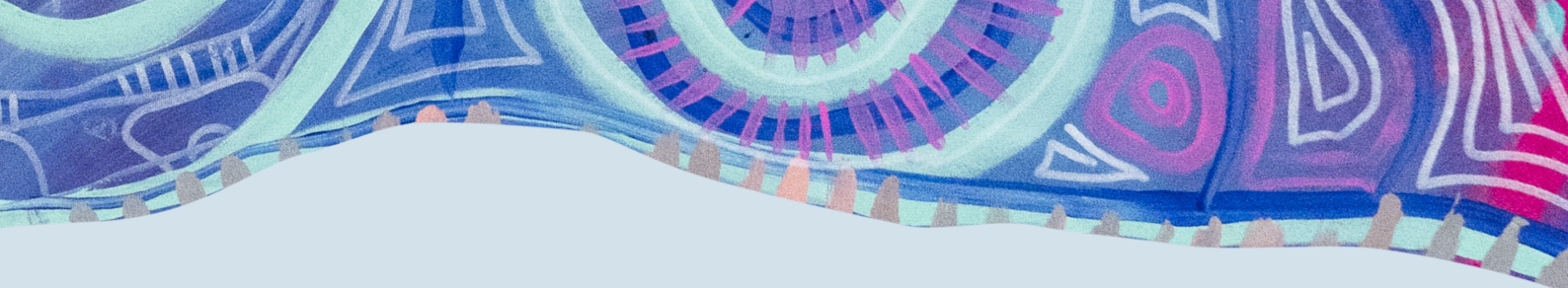
As mentioned earlier, understandings of success in FFUR should shift from metrics-driven ideas of completion and transition into undergraduate courses to more nuanced understandings of success as non-linear. This recognition is especially critical for online learning environments, where attrition rates are typically higher. These metrics are shaped by factors outside the unit or course itself, including the important low-stakes nature of online FFUR education, positive attrition, and the lived experience of compounding disadvantage (Allen, 2025).

Examples of this in the online and blended modes include:

- Tracking multiple forms of engagement and recognising that engagement may be intermittent due to competing life commitments. Educators can use LMS data and short, personalised communications to reach out to students whose engagement patterns suggest they may need support, and to open dialogue about available services or potential 're-entry' points into the unit.
- Incorporating reflection tasks that encourage students to map out their progress, celebrate achievements, and identify areas for further growth helps students redefine what success means for them. In FFUR online contexts, many successes happen off-screen, between modules, or after the unit concludes.
- Using strengths based and inclusive language helps students stay motivated, build confidence, and understand their learning in ways that acknowledge achievements beyond narrow or quantitative measure.

For more advice, guidance or considerations for Online course delivery, please see Resources.





GENERATIVE AI IN EQUITY EDUCATION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds significant potential to enhance equity and inclusion in teaching and learning within higher education, primarily by offering personalised support, increasing accessibility, and democratising access to knowledge. However, its integration must be carefully managed to mitigate substantial risks of reinforcing existing biases and creating new forms of exclusion.

[The Australian Framework for Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education](#)

reinforces this position, noting that AI adoption must place equity at the centre to avoid amplifying existing digital divides and structural inequalities, particularly for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with disabilities, and those from non-English speaking or rural and isolated communities (Lodge et al., 2025).

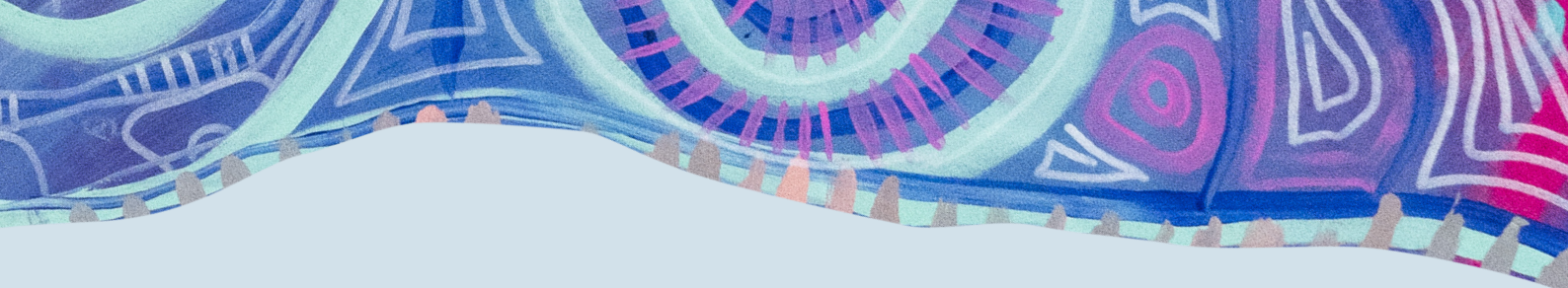
The integration of Generative AI (GenAI) tools into equity education settings, such as FFUR offerings, should:

- Empower both educators and students through the responsible and ethical use of GenAI in teaching and learning.
- Cultivate strong digital and AI literacies that set FFUR students up for success in future study and professional settings.
- Consider and address the unique challenges faced by equity students to bridge educational gaps (James & Andrews, 2024) and where GenAI can support or empower these students.

GenAI in Curriculum Design and Delivery

The rise of GenAI has prompted a rethinking of how academic literacies are delivered in FFUR courses. As GenAI becomes a prevailing feature in educational, professional, and societal spheres, students will need to develop strong critical AI literacy skills. Therefore, educators must now determine how these competencies are integrated and emphasised within their curricula (Pike & Ulpen, 2025).

Integrating GenAI into higher education curriculum design and delivery is a complex but necessary undertaking, moving beyond mere technological adoption to a fundamental reimagining of educational purpose and practice. This shift necessitates a focus on several key principles that ensure GenAI is leveraged responsibly, ethically, and effectively to enhance learning outcomes and prepare students to participate ethically and actively in a society where it is ubiquitous (Lodge et al., 2023).



“I think the strongest thing with Pathways is that we are always innovating. Even this semester, we’re pushing really hard to make sure that AI use is happening within our courses so that when students are moving into their undergrad, they can use AI in a safe way and in a way that will support them when they move into work.” (Treesa, FFUR Educator)

The following principles should be considered when integrating GenAI into FFUR curriculum design and delivery:

1. Ensure regulatory compliance and academic integrity by design.

Higher education institutions are required to demonstrate that student achievement of the unit and course learning outcomes is credibly assessed. The methods of assessment used should be capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment ([Department of Education](#), 2021).

As GenAI tools become more advanced, unsupervised assessments can no longer guarantee attainment of learning outcomes (Liu & Bates, 2025). Curriculum design and approval processes should explicitly address this by incorporating diverse, inclusive, and contextualised assessment strategies, including supervised tasks that verify students’ knowledge and skills.

2. Situate development of GenAI literacy within discipline contexts.

GenAI is increasingly integral to our lives, necessitating proactive education systems to prepare students to be responsible users and co-creators of GenAI (Miao et al., 2024).

Fostering digital, and specifically GenAI, literacy within discipline contexts can support learning that is authentic, assessable, and job-relevant, and provide students with opportunities to grapple with the actual data, tools, methods, ethics, and regulatory settings that govern their field, rather than generic “How to use AI” tutorials.

3. Promote transparency, trust, courageous experimentation, and collaborative learning.

A culture that encourages staff and students to test new ideas, and celebrates both breakthroughs and setbacks, can foster resilience, creativity and continuous improvement.

Through the delivery of curriculum, staff should model the GenAI use behaviours that they expect of their students, including being transparent in how it has been used and open and humble when mistakes are made. By treating every trial as a learning opportunity, institutions can model the innovative mindset needed to lead in a rapidly evolving digital landscape and prepare graduates to do the same in their future studies and professions.

4. Be conscious of the issues and embed opportunities to address them.

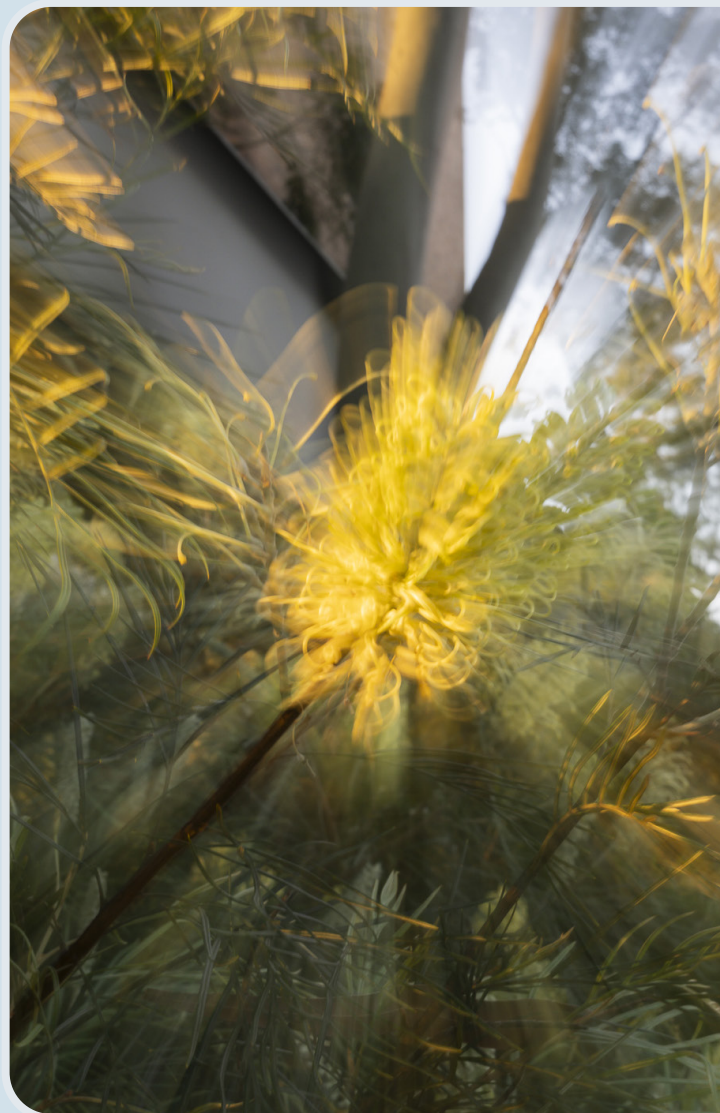
Beyond concerns around academic integrity, GenAI comes with a range of other ethical dilemmas – misinformation and deepfakes, inequitable access, privacy and data use concerns, biases, cognitive offloading, environmental concerns, and impact on critical thinking (Attewell, 2025).

Curriculum design and delivery activities should explicitly consider these issues and incorporate opportunities to address them within the context of the discipline.

Opportunities, Challenges and Ethics

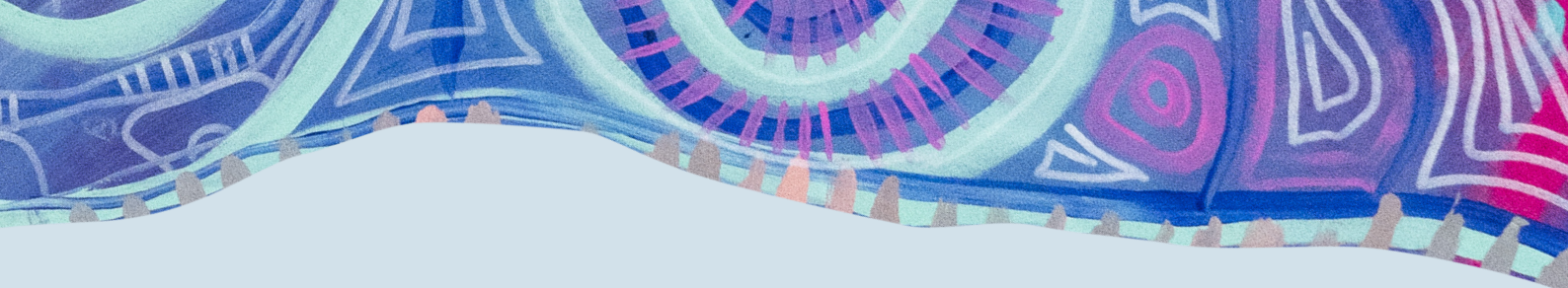
James and Andrews (2024) suggest that incorporating GenAI tools into FFUR courses can help students from underrepresented cohorts close gaps in cultural capital and demonstrate their understanding more effectively in higher education settings. These tools can enhance comprehension, support clear expression of ideas in academic contexts, offer writing feedback, suggest additional resources, and simplify complex content (Crawford et al., 2023), providing students with opportunities to strengthen language proficiency and overall academic performance.

Tishcoff et al. (2024) also outlines how GenAI has the potential to make learning more accessible for students. Potential benefits include:



WATCH: Does AI scare you, excite you or both?

- **Enhanced Accessibility and Accommodations:** AI can serve as a powerful assistive technology for students with diverse needs. This includes helping neurodivergent students organise and reprocess material, supporting students with communication disabilities or those learning in a second language, and



aiding students in various aspects of learning and assessment.

- **Personalised Learning and Support:** AI offers opportunities for personalised student support, including personalised learning paths and content. AI tutoring chatbots, mock interviews with AI avatars, and real-time feedback systems can be accessed at any time, catering to individual learning preferences and schedules.

Despite its potential, GenAI presents significant challenges that could exacerbate existing inequalities if not addressed proactively, including:

- **Widening Digital Divide and Inequitable Access:** GenAI risks widening existing digital divides, particularly for marginalised, low-income communities and countries (Liu, 2024). Equitable access requires deliberate interventions to provide AI tools and infrastructure for all students and staff.
- **Algorithmic Bias and Discrimination:** GenAI is not a neutral tool; it reflects and reproduces the cultural, linguistic and epistemological assumptions embedded in its data. Rather than merely viewing these biases as technical flaws, educators can examine how such tools intersect with the structural inequalities already present in higher education (Grammatica, 2025).

- **Reinforcing Over-reliance and Undermining Critical Thinking:**

There is a risk that GenAI could lead to an over-reliance on technology, potentially causing the atrophy of essential cognitive skills like critical thinking, intellectual development, creativity and originality of expression. Therefore, GenAI tools should be used in an educative mode to extend cognitive abilities and support ethical intellectual habits (James & Andrews, 2024)

It's important to note that some stakeholders have concerns over the ethical implications of using GenAI tools relating to environmental impacts, labour practices, and the appropriation of creative work, all which can influence their willingness to access or use certain tools. Pike and Ulpen (2025) suggest that educators should not overlook the significance of these concerns when students raise them, particularly within the equity education space where an emphasis is placed on shaping critically engaged and ethical student identities.

Artificial Intelligence, Academic Integrity and Secure Assessment

Assessment provides evidence of students' achievement of learning outcomes and supports their ongoing learning. While inappropriate use of GenAI tools can undermine confidence that assessments reflect genuine learning, they also prompt educators to refine assessment and prepare students to engage with GenAI ethically and

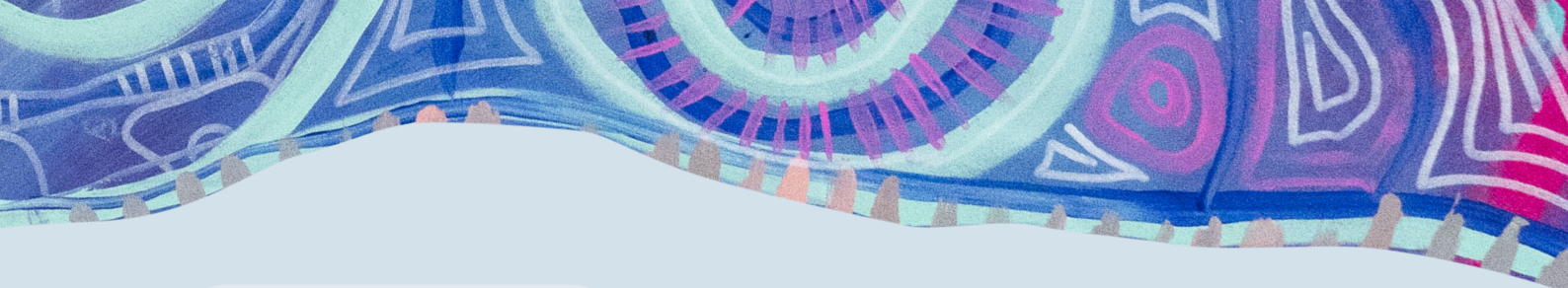


authentically (NAEEA Executives, 2023).

As GenAI becomes increasingly capable of performing well in assessments, there is a growing recognition across the sector that “unsupervised assessments are no longer able to assure attainment of learning outcomes” (Liu & Bates, 2025, p.11). Delivering this assurance will require a focus on assessment “security at meaningful points across a course to inform decisions about progression and completion” (Lodge et al 2023).

TEQSA’s toolkit, [Gen AI strategies for Australian higher education: Emerging practice](#), outlines a number of potential approaches “to ensure the integrity, fairness and validity of academic assessments” (TEQSA, 2024, p.43)

As Pike and Ulpen (2025) highlight, the various tensions that can exist from an equity perspective when incorporating secure assessment into curriculum, FFUR educators face the challenge of ensuring student attainment of learning outcomes without creating new barriers for equity cohorts. To preserve the principles of equity education, approaches should be educative rather than punitive by utilising feedback loops, account for different learning modes, and emphasise critical literacy skills to develop an understanding of how GenAI works and when to apply it responsibly.



case study

Context: Treesa, a FFUR educator in literacy intensive subjects, faced challenges as generative AI use grew among students. Many learners were from equity cohorts, including those with neurodiversity, mental health challenges, and past literacy difficulties. Initially, AI use was prohibited, but this punitive approach disproportionately affected students needing the most support and created barriers to progression.

Problem: Early assessments designed to scaffold academic literacy were showing signs of GenAI influence, yet detection tools only flagged outputs above 350 words. Students unfamiliar with technology often used AI unknowingly through integrated tools, while others relied on it due to low confidence in their writing skills. The strict “no AI” policy led to increased academic integrity concerns, delayed feedback, and higher intervention referrals.

Intervention: Treesa shifted from prohibition to “somewhat permitted AI use”, reframing AI as an educative tool rather than a punitive trigger. Key steps included:

- Week 2–4: Introducing AI guidelines and library resources on ethical use and referencing.
- Week 6: Providing feedback on early assessments, including advice on maintaining integrity when using AI.
- Week 10: Transforming the final assessment question into an AI prompt. Students generated outputs, critically reviewed structure, ideas, and sources, and learned how to acknowledge and reference AI contributions.

The assessment rubric was updated to include explicit criteria for AI use and academic integrity. Marks were adjusted for unacknowledged AI outputs, hallucinated sources, and lack of critical engagement. A feedback comment bank supported consistent, constructive feed-forward across the marking team.

Outcomes: The approach yielded significant improvements:

- Timely feedback restored, reducing delays in learning support.
- No academic integrity referrals and minimal incomplete grades.
- Positive student experience, with feedback from students appreciative for explicit assessment.
- Improved communication quality in submissions, as AI-supported students produced clearer, more structured work.

Key Insight: Embedding AI use within enabling pedagogy—through structured guidance, transparency, and critical literacy—can transform AI from a threat to academic integrity into a tool for equity, confidence-building, and authentic learning.



► *Click to watch*

Increasing Equity and Success

STUDENT SUPPORT

Collaborative and Tailored Support Models

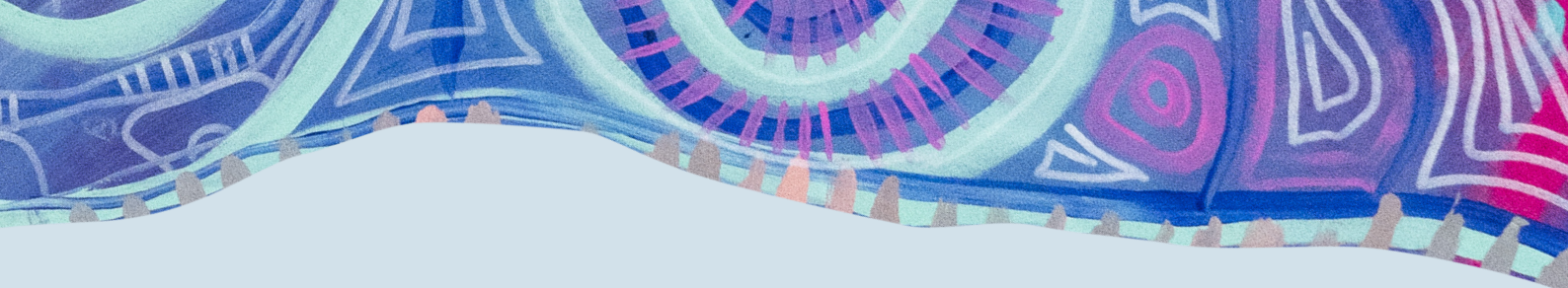
Supporting FFUR students effectively requires coordinated, relational and timely support, from application and enrolment through early study and beyond. Consultation findings show that when academic and professional staff work in close partnership, students can more easily navigate university expectations, access appropriate supports, and build a sense of confidence and connection.

Advocacy for tailored support models

is therefore essential. Evidence (Syme et al., 2021a; McKay et al., 2018) and sector consultation demonstrates that students respond most strongly to close, consistent and individualised guidance, particularly when engaging with university systems for the first time.

“Localised admin–academic collaboration ensures students are supported from application through to enrolment. It’s the connection that keeps them going.” – FFUR Provider

Best practice reflects this need for continuity. Providers highlight the value



of dedicated staff roles that offer familiar and reliable points of contact across the entire pathway, supporting admission, enrolment, orientation and early study with personalised guidance, mentoring and targeted navigation of academic, wellbeing and support services.

“One of the unique characteristics is our Access Coordinator role. We’ve got academics at each of the campuses where [FFUR course] is offered that’s responsible for enrolment but also for pastoral care and support throughout the duration of the course. ... the Access Coordinator will meet with the applicant and they will establish a study plan based on the required units for the course they are aiming for and based on their availability.” – FFUR Provider

Accordingly, FFUR student support structures should be holistic, proactive, culturally responsive, and grounded in students’ lived experiences and community contexts. In addition to university-wide services, effective approaches may include:

- Pastoral care, enrolment planning and proactive triaging
- FFUR-specific academic support and peer mentoring
- Tutoring and cultural mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

students

- Tailored wellbeing support and early-intervention programs
- Structured transition programs guiding students from FFUR into undergraduate study
- Online, 24-hour academic support via third-party services
- Targeted online support through the LMS and professional staff, ensuring equitable access regardless of location

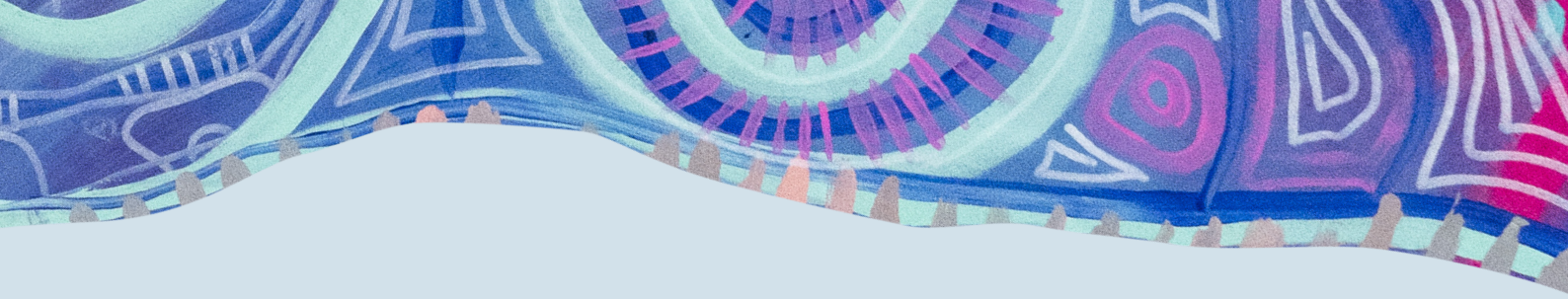
“A Financial Inclusion Plan for students to access financial assistance has been created that sits alongside the FFUR course” – FFUR Provider.

Early identification of academic, wellbeing, financial, and technology-related support needs helps staff to intervene before issues escalate. Support should continue beyond the FFUR course through a supported handover into undergraduate degrees, ensuring students maintain access as they transition into mainstream study.

For more on this, see Admissions and Administration.

COMMUNITY AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION PATHWAYS

Research confirms the impact of FFUR courses: they significantly improve access to university for students from equity groups and lead to better retention and success rates compared to other alternative entry routes (Pitman



et al., 2016). However, to meet ambitious Accord participation and success targets (O’Kane et al., 2024), these pathways must also continue to grow and innovate, particularly in areas with low levels of readiness (e.g. lower levels of literacy).

Student experiences and barriers vary widely across Australia. Broader social issues, such as cost-of-living pressures and housing insecurity, further limit the ability for many to engage in higher education (Azize, 2024; Parliament of Australia, n.d.). This diversity demands flexible, locally responsive policy design that addresses specific forms of disadvantage (Bennett et al., 2015; 2024). Consultation for this project emphasised the need for space for innovation and outcomes-based frameworks.

Importantly, FFUR pathways must be embedded as a feature of community engagement. University outreach projects are vital for enabling a wide range of community engagement, student pathways and student successes: they build trust, raise awareness, build aspiration, belonging and belief, and are effective because they apply co-design solutions with local stakeholders. Outreach ensures courses are culturally relevant and responsive to the lived realities of community groups, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Widening Participation Approaches

While outreach activities are often

funded through the National Outreach Fund, these initiatives should be closely interlinked with and complement FFUR offerings of all types. Widening participation courses should form an integral part of the provider’s pathways strategy, so that all pathways available to students are clearly mapped out for participants to easily navigate their way into. Providers should consider how resources can be leveraged to deliver a range of activities which can target all cohorts, and involve a wide range of community members, including those still at school and those who have left school.

Many outreach activities across Australia target secondary school senior students, catering to students from a range of equity categories and offering information on entry processes, FFUR courses, application help and scholarships. While these approaches are shown to be effective, sustained outreach programs that offer a multi-staged approach are identified as more impactful (Arnup et al., 2025) for engaging students and forging relationships with communities. This includes initiatives that cater for younger learners and extend into secondary school and community settings, helping to shape a love of learning and an ongoing aspiration for higher education. Researched for decades, such early and sustained familiarity with university campuses, staff and learning is demonstrated to strengthen aspiration and a feeling of belonging, which are two core predictors of higher education

enrolment (Gale & Parker, 2015). These outreach characteristics align with the philosophies central to FFUR courses and reinforce the widening participation pipeline.

Programs such as Children’s University (CU), or other early school engagement programs provide young learners, particularly those from underrepresented communities, with opportunities to participate in university-connected learning outside the school curriculum. Importantly, such programs present the idea of going to university as a real possibility for young participants who ordinarily may not consider that future for themselves.

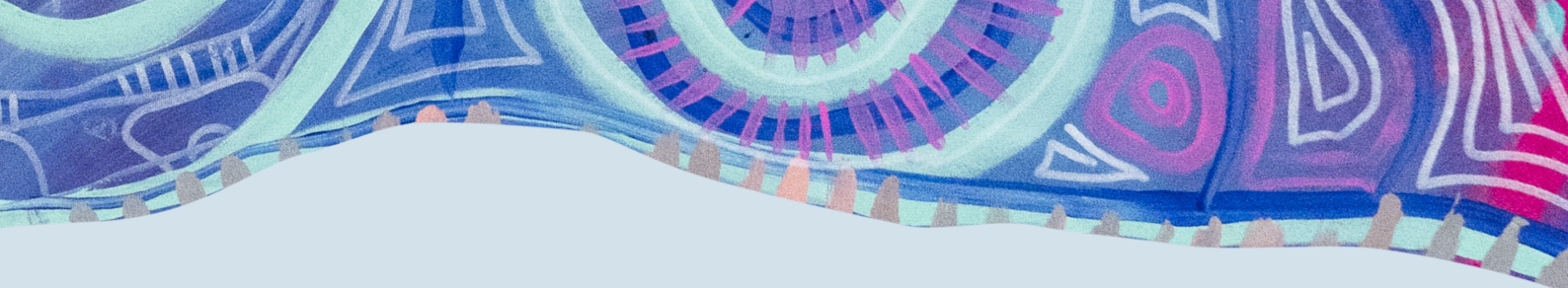
Features of the Children’s University Program

- Designed for children aged 7–14, focusing on early aspiration-building.
- Encourages children to engage in community-based and on-campus learning and social experiences.
- Includes workshops, discovery days, webinars, and hands-on learning events.
- Participants collect learning hours in a “Passport” and attend a formal graduation ceremony on campus once they reach 30 hours.
- The program seeks to both “strengthen the learning opportunities already present within



WATCH: Why should there be greater equity in access to university?

communities along with making accessible the new and different learning opportunities outside of communities” (Bourke et al., 2025, p. 31).



case study

Since 2015, school teachers and principals have told the University of Newcastle about the transformative effects Children's University has had on their students and communities:

"The program has expanded our students' knowledge and awareness of options they have for their futures. It also gives them goals to work towards (moving up certificate levels) and shared learning experiences where they can meet and get to know other students across year levels" (School teacher involved in CU).

"It has engaged students in learning opportunities that may have otherwise been unavailable to them. The students LOVE the on-campus day and many leave with hopes of attending University of Newcastle for various degrees" (School teacher involved in CU).

As further evidence of impact, the earliest cohort of students to participate in CU with the University of Newcastle have now completed their schooling. Some have progressed into university study. Staff at the University of Newcastle are investigating the impact of the program on students 10+ years later.

"Being part of Children's University planted a love of learning early on, making the idea of university feel more exciting than intimidating. It helped me see learning as something that goes beyond the classroom. That mindset has stuck with me and helped shape both my confidence and my career goals." (CU Participant, University of Newcastle Student)

While the value of single outreach activities cannot be underplayed, widening participation programs that build continuous, scaffolded engagement that begins in primary school —and continues into secondary school and adulthood —are shown to be important in addressing long-term educational trajectories (Arnup et al., 2025). Effective higher education outreach also requires targeted activities, not a blanket approach, with strategies that meet the needs and address barriers faced by a diversity of year-levels and

different groups (Gore et al., 2017a). Furthermore, outreach needs to focus on nurturing and developing, rather than simply raising, aspirations (Gore et al., 2017a).

The philosophies and approaches within outreach activities across key stages of school and non-school community members' learning, most often complements the equitable and inclusive approaches that also frame FFUR courses. Offering an interconnected and holistic approach to community



“

People that work in this area have an enabling heart. Recruitment plays a role — staff are selected for alignment with enabling values.

– FFUR Provider

outreach and university access creates stronger pathways, as well as networks of participants, students, institutions and families, all working in collaboration within their own communities.

Community Impact

Widening participation activities, regardless of their target audience, should give consideration to the unique circumstances of each cohort and design activities which appropriately respond to these, as guided by evidence from the literature about impact (see Bennett et al., 2024) and in-depth research about approaches (Burke et al., 2023).

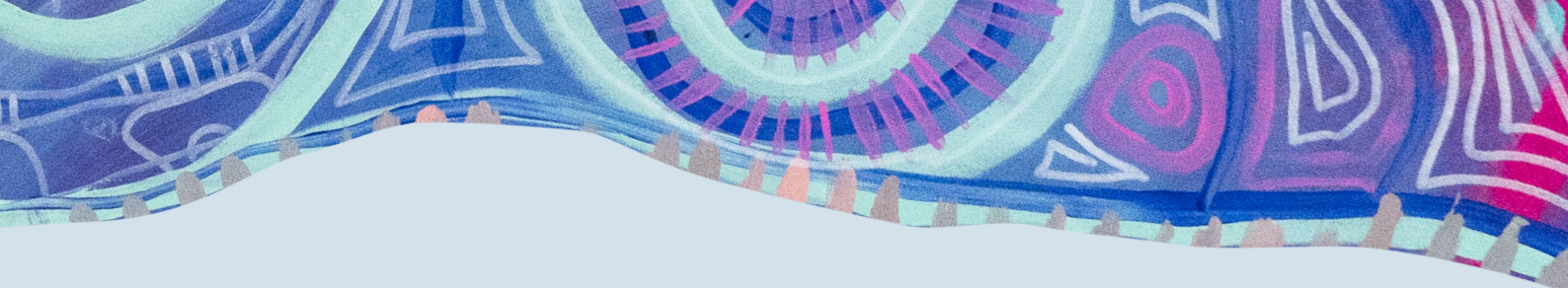
“You can design an enabling program but if you don’t have an outreach team ... who is going to go and promote it? Who is going to do the community co-design?”
FFUR Provider

Universities that are engaging with community members help to build community capacity. For example, students from FFUR pathways often express their goals and aspirations for study in terms of pursuing careers that allow them to give back to their communities (Syme et al., 2021a; O’Shea & Delahunty, 2018). Upon completing their study and providing feedback, people whose lives have been enriched by the FFUR programs have also in turn enriched the community (Bennett, et al, 2018, p.36; Allen, 2025) through their own work and other contributions.

AN ENABLING CULTURE

Creating an ‘Enabling’ culture within FFUR courses requires a deliberate, research informed approach that aligns with the sector’s longstanding commitments to equity, social justice, and widening participation. As the peak body for ‘Enabling’ education, the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA), emphasises that FFUR courses exist to change lives through access to higher education and must be grounded in inclusive, socially just pedagogical values that recognise the diverse life experiences of underrepresented learners (NAEEA, 2023). These values position FFUR courses not merely as preparatory pathways for university, but as transformative educational spaces that address structural barriers and expand opportunity.

A key foundation of this ‘Enabling’



culture is the establishment of a shared understanding of pedagogy across teaching teams. The [Report on Benchmarking of Enabling Programs Across Australia](#) (Davis et al., 2023b) identifies that, despite course diversity, relational, student-centred and inclusive pedagogies remain central to all ‘Enabling’ teaching practices nationally. These commitments foreground student agency, contextualised learning support, and recognition of structural inequalities that shape educational participation. Ensuring that all staff share this pedagogical grounding contributes to a culture in which teaching practices align tightly with FFUR principles.

Staffing and Onboarding

The *Enabling Pedagogies Report* (Bennett et al., 2018) highlights that the most impactful FFUR educators demonstrate compassionate, relational approaches that centre care, belonging, and the emotional, personal and social dimensions of learning. It is therefore crucial that hiring processes provide opportunities for applicants to articulate their teaching philosophies and respond to scenarios reflective of FFUR learner contexts, allowing interviewers to assess alignment with enabling values.

In practice, this might involve the incorporation of a short reflective writing activity or relational-pedagogy scenario discussion during interviews to surface applicants’ dispositions and values.

Onboarding should extend this values-based approach by introducing new

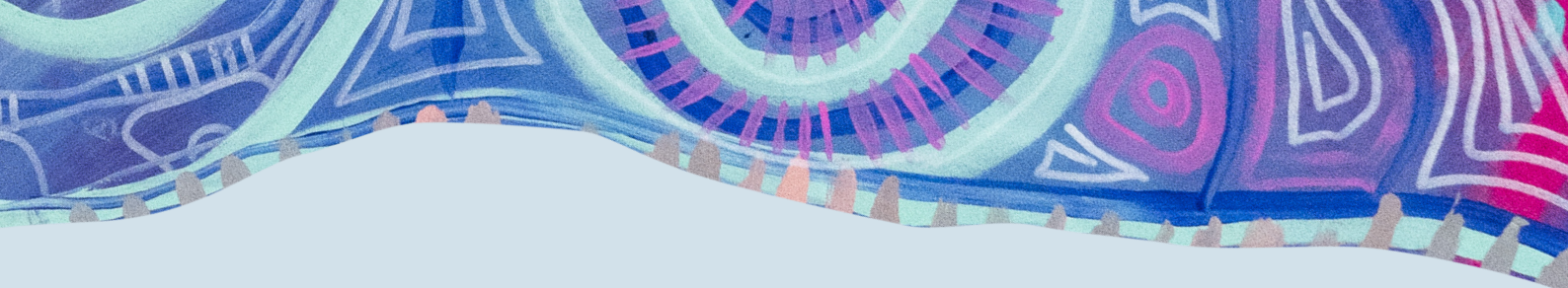
staff to FFUR’s pedagogical foundations, learner demographics and common educational challenges. A thoughtfully designed induction process helps staff recognise the importance of relational pedagogies (NAEEA, 2023) and prepare to build trust, connection and culturally safe learning environments from the outset.

In practice, this might involve a standardised induction guide, paired with a peer-mentor system, that supports consistent orientation and collegial support through an educator’s first term cycle in FFUR.

Ongoing Professional Development

Professional development is an essential and ongoing component of creating an ‘Enabling’ culture. It should move beyond compliance to foster deep, theoretically informed understandings of strategies that support diverse learners, particularly where educational histories have been disrupted and confidence is still forming (Allen, 2025; Syme et al., 2021a; NAEEA, 2023).

- Training within FFUR professional development should therefore focus on, but not be limited to:
- Cultivating compassionate teaching practices (Bennett et al., 2018),
- Designing scaffolded and accessible curricula (Bennett et al., 2018),
- Staff wellbeing and recognition of



“

“Support is embedded in the hidden moments — teachers checking in, explaining things three different ways, or helping students understand language they’ve never encountered before.”

– FFUR Provider

the complex challenges for staff teaching in FFUR courses (Bennett et al., 2018),

- Interrogation of assumptions about students and the impact of deficit discourses on perpetuating inequality (Burke, 2012),
- Employing assessment approaches that recognise growth rather than deficit (Davis et al., 2023a).

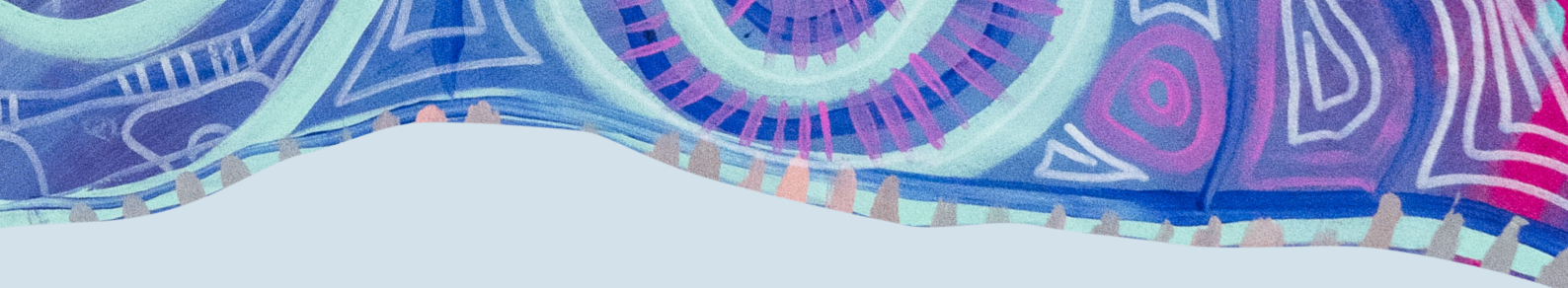
As a best practice, FFUR courses should therefore offer tailored, ongoing professional development to all staff to foster conditions within which FFUR educators and students can genuinely thrive.

Cross-Institutional Collaboration

Sector benchmarking has found that cross institutional collaboration strengthens both the consistency and quality of FFUR courses, helping educators develop shared standards and collective identity (Davis et al., 2023a; Davis et al., 2023b). Engagement in conferences, symposia, and professional learning communities further supports this collective culture, providing opportunities for staff development, research sharing, and sector-wide dialogue (NAEEA, 2023).

“Benchmarking showed our programs are more consistent than we realised... and that once students moved to undergraduate study, they were doing as well or better than their counterparts.” – FFUR Provider

Values aligned recruitment, sustained professional development, cross-institutional engagement, and strong collaboration together form a coherent framework for creating and cultivating an ‘Enabling’ culture in FFUR courses. These interconnected practices ensure that academic and professional staff understand and enact the social justice mission at the heart of FFUR education, creating accessible, empowering and transformative learning pathways for students who have traditionally been underserved by higher education systems.



case study

At the University of South Australia (UniSA), a tailored professional development model was introduced to strengthen the capability of sessional educators working within FFUR courses. Building on the approach described by Hattam et al. (2019), the initiative aimed to better prepare tutors to support the increasingly diverse cohorts entering university through equity focused pathways.

The first component of the model centred on **Inclusive and Enabling Pedagogy Workshops**, which provided tutors with foundational insights into the experiences of students from underrepresented groups. These workshops encouraged educators to adopt inclusive teaching strategies, cultivate supportive learning environments, and engage with the varied circumstances and motivations that shape students' participation and persistence. Emphasis on reflective practice helped tutors identify approaches that foster belonging and academic confidence.

A second component, **Teaching Squares**, offered tutors a structured, collegial opportunity to observe each other's teaching and reflect on different instructional methods. This peer-based

model promoted professional dialogue, reduced the isolation often experienced by sessional staff, and supported the sharing of effective, context specific practices suited to FFUR education.

The third component, **Regional Tutor Development**, focused on supporting educators working within UniSA's Aboriginal Pathway Program. Training sessions were designed with regional contexts in mind, highlighting the importance of cultural awareness, community engagement, and pedagogical adaptability. Tutors deepened their understanding of Aboriginal students' experiences and strengthened their capacity to create culturally responsive learning environments.

Collectively, these initiatives demonstrated the value of professional development that is practical, collaborative, and tailored to the realities of FFUR education. By providing tutors with inclusive pedagogical tools, opportunities for reflective peer learning, and culturally informed training, the program enhanced teaching quality and contributed to more consistent and meaningful support for students transitioning into higher education.



Institutional Policy and Advocacy

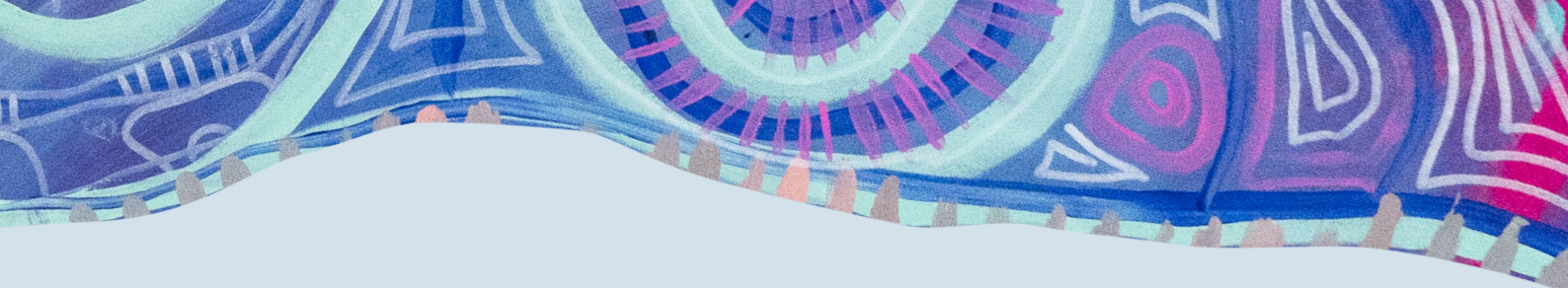
INSTITUTIONAL FLEXIBILITY

While FFUR courses should be embedded into institutions and governed by university policy and procedure, it is important to consider that often these policies and practices are built for Undergraduate and Postgraduate awards and may not be fit for purpose for FFUR courses. Further, strict university policy and procedures may act as a barrier to FFUR students with unique and complex needs. Advocacy to develop flexibility to these policies and practices may be required to mitigate these barriers.

“As a non-award program, setting it up meant it had to go through Academic Senate, but the systems are built for higher education, so if you don’t fit into those boxes you run into a lot of issues. This means there are a number of workarounds that add additional steps...” FFUR Provider

Policy Considerations

Consultation demonstrated that staff working in FFUR courses across Australia are frequently required to act as internal advocates to ensure that institutional



policies recognise the distinctive needs of FFUR courses and students. Many institutions already provide targeted concessions, such as waiving the Student Services and Amenities Fee to reduce financial barriers for this cohort. Others regularly advocate for exemptions or tailored clauses to standard procedures, acknowledging that the unique structure, duration, and purpose of FFUR courses often sit outside of the assumptions underpinning mainstream university policy frameworks.

“We’ve been fortunate in that we have had those DVCs who understand ‘Enabling’. So, whilst we’re included in all the institutional policies there is always the caveat for ‘Enabling’, or the Associate Dean Teaching and Learning can make a ruling” – FFUR Provider.

- Examples of institutional policies that may not fit FFUR courses include: Course and/or unit performance procedures: These policies outline how academic performance is monitored and managed across units and courses, such as progression requirements, hurdle tasks, reassessment rules, and thresholds for academic standing. As these policies are typically designed around conventional undergraduate study patterns, they often do not align with the condensed or intensive nature of FFUR delivery, resulting in requirements that are impractical or inappropriate for this cohort.

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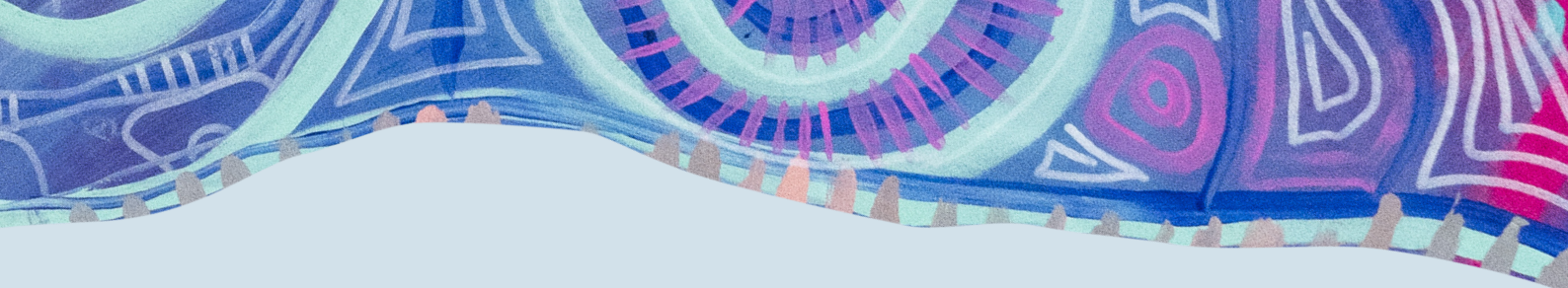
“Policies and processes from the university don’t always fit for our more complex student needs. We have to work around those systems to adapt to what is needed by our students.”

– FFUR Provider

- Student Academic Progress rules: Standard progress statuses (e.g., ‘under review’ or ‘at risk’) presume longer course durations and a volume of learning that allows for cumulative monitoring over time. FFUR students, who often study in shorter blocks and may face complex personal, financial or educational barriers, do not fit these assumptions, making mainstream progress rules a poor measure of engagement, capability, or support needs.

Flexibility for Success

Veletsianos and Houlden (2020, p. 849) argue for “radical flexibility as a way to create life-sustaining education, not just for some, but for all”. This includes



flexible assessment deadlines, flexible classroom management policies, flexible assessment design, and flexible curriculum.

University rules regarding student academic conduct should allow for flexibility for FFUR students. Logistical factors, such as compressed timelines in FFUR courses (when compared with longer undergraduate degree structures) often pose difficulties for allowing lengthier assessment windows and extension periods. Educators may feel pressured to intentionally impose stricter assessment deadlines to promote student self-regulation, reduce procrastination, instil the ‘real-world’ skills of meeting deadlines and adhere to institutional policy. While these goals are well-meaning, it is important to recognise that such inflexible deadlines can be a significant barrier for FFUR students, particularly those navigating complex personal or academic challenges. FFUR educators and staff need to focus on facilitating student success.

Traditional course deadline policies often reinforce the notion of a ‘typical’ student, one who encounters few educational and ‘life’ challenges in meeting deadlines (Hills & Peacock, 2022). However, this assumption overlooks the diverse and unequal barriers that FFUR students may face. Flexible deadline policies and practices recognise these disparities and aim to reduce their impact. Such policies preserve the overall structure of a course while shifting some decision-making power from the educators to the student, promoting autonomy and

allowing responsiveness to individual circumstances.

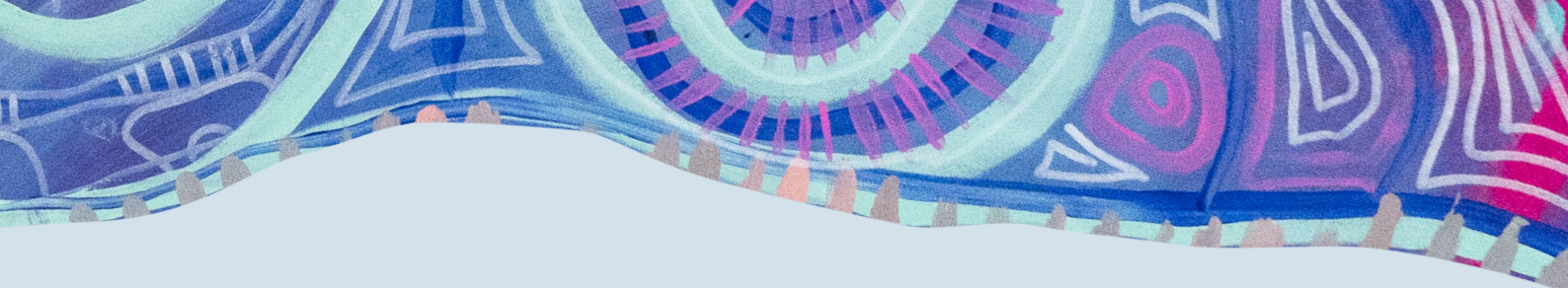
“We get a bit of wiggle room with application of late penalties, because there’s enough grey area in the policy at the unit coordinator’s discretion that we can basically coach people into what the formal process is for when you need an extension.” – FFUR Provider

ADMISSIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

For almost two decades, transition pedagogy (Kift, 2009, 2015; Kift & Nelson, 2005) has informed best practice and approaches to supporting students through their entry into higher education. While transition pedagogy emphasises curriculum-embedded interventions that foster student success, it also assumes that the broader institutional environment, including admissions and administrative processes, works in tandem to provide a coherent and supportive student experience. When these systems are overly complex, fragmented, or designed around assumptions of prior educational experience, they can undermine the very transition support that the curriculum aims to provide.

Institutional Knowledge Gaps

Naylor and Mifsud (2019) found structural barriers such as use of exclusive language in the classroom; LMS and university practices may present barriers to students from equity backgrounds. Complex or burdensome university



application processes can unintentionally exclude students from equity groups by privileging those with prior educational advantage, strong digital literacy, and access to support networks.

For applicants who lack these resources, such processes can be overwhelming and can discourage progression to enrolment. As a result, administrative complexity can compound existing inequities and limit the participation of those students that widening-participation strategies aim to support (Cardak & Ryan, 2009; Cardak et al., 2015).

Additionally, accidental breaches of academic integrity can arise from this unfamiliarity (Fudge et al., 2022). For example, students can experience misunderstanding of referencing conventions, similarity reports, or collusion rules, as well as cultural differences in academic norms where students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds may interpret academic expectations differently.

FFUR students often face competing demands such as work and family responsibilities, alongside challenges adapting to academic discourse. These pressures, combined with limited language or literacy proficiency, can heighten stress and inadvertently lead to plagiarism or collusion.

Bretag and Mahmud (2016) identify five key elements of effective and educative academic integrity policies: **Access, Approach, Responsibility, Support, and**

Detail.

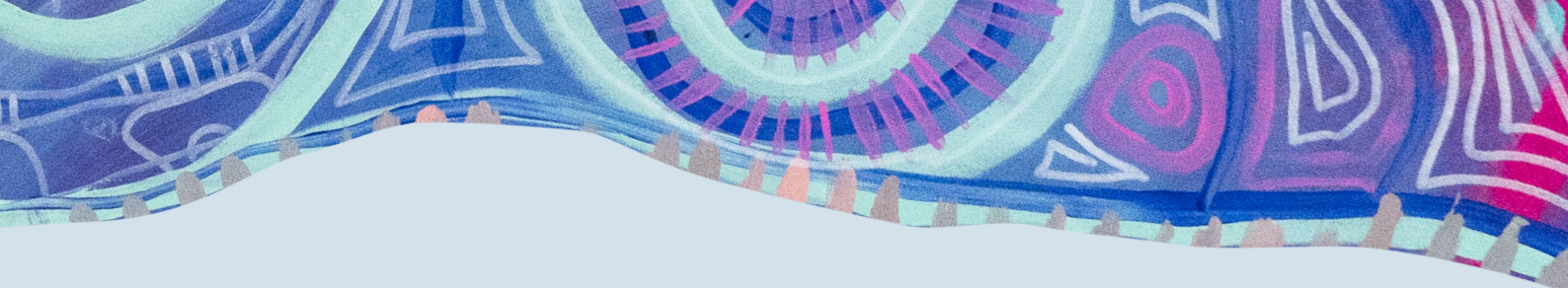
- **Access:** Policies should be easily accessible, clearly written in plain English, and well-structured, with links to relevant support resources.
- **Approach:** Academic integrity should be framed as an educative process, supported by institutional values and a clear statement of purpose.
- **Responsibility:** Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined for all stakeholders, including management, staff and students.
- **Support:** Institutions should provide systems and resources, such as training and professional development for educators and providers, to facilitate understanding and implementation.
- **Detail:** Policies must outline processes and outcomes clearly, classify breaches by severity, and provide guidance on reporting, confidentiality and the opportunity to appeal.

This framework promotes a coherent and educative institutional commitment to academic integrity.

In terms of GenAI, educators must design flexible, scaffolded curricula and rethink assessments to reduce opportunities for misconduct. Embedding transparent and holistic AI practices within teaching and learning is key to creating enduring and positive transformation in higher education (Fudge et al., 2022). For more on this, see Academic Integrity & Artificial Intelligence.

University-wide solutions to support FFUR students

COMMON PROBLEMS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
Complicated enrolment processes	• Provide additional scaffolding and in-person enrolment support for FFUR students. • Establish dedicated enrolment workshops or drop-ins. • Simplify language and reduce administrative load where possible.
Difficulties accessing or navigating the LMS	• Develop introductory 'Learning at University' modules and/or units. • Provide short, accessible 'How-To' videos and printable guides for LMS basics. • Ensure early in-class LMS orientation so that digital skill building is embedded in the unit rather than assumed.
Inaccessible language included in mandatory introductory modules	• Offer in-class support for mandatory modules so staff can interpret, clarify and contextualise key concepts in real time. • Embed Academic Integrity teaching within FFUR units that allows students to practice referencing, paraphrasing, and understanding similarity reports.
Student Academic Conduct Officers (SACO) practices	• Promote an educative approach to Academic Integrity for FFUR students, recognising that many breaches arise from unfamiliarity rather than intent. • Develop FFUR-specific guidelines for SACOs that acknowledge the cohort's unique learning context and emphasise support rather than punitive measures.
Difficulty meeting assessment deadlines	• Implement flexible due dates and assessment windows to accommodate the diverse responsibilities and barriers faced by FFUR students. • Allow redemptions, resubmissions, or progressive assessment models that enable students to demonstrate learning over time. • Encourage teaching teams to build proactive check-ins and early assessment scaffolding into the course, reducing the risk of disengagement.



“... it is not really fair ... to treat a first semester ‘Enabling’ student the same way you would treat a fourth year engineering student who has so much more experience with the uni behind them and can navigate all the policies and processes of university. For ‘Enabling’ students, the first semester should be treated like an introductory stage where students are gradually introduced to policies and processes with support” – FFUR Provider

This alignment between pedagogy and institutional practice is particularly important for FFUR courses. FFUR cohorts typically face greater barriers to accessing higher education, including limited digital literacy, unfamiliarity with university systems, financial constraints, and reduced access to educational support networks. Given these challenges, a considered and tailored approach to admissions and administration is essential. Processes should be designed to minimise administrative burden, reduce points of friction, and actively support students. Streamlined, student-centred admissions systems not only uphold the principles of transition pedagogy but are also fundamental to widening participation efforts and improving access, retention, and success for FFUR learners.

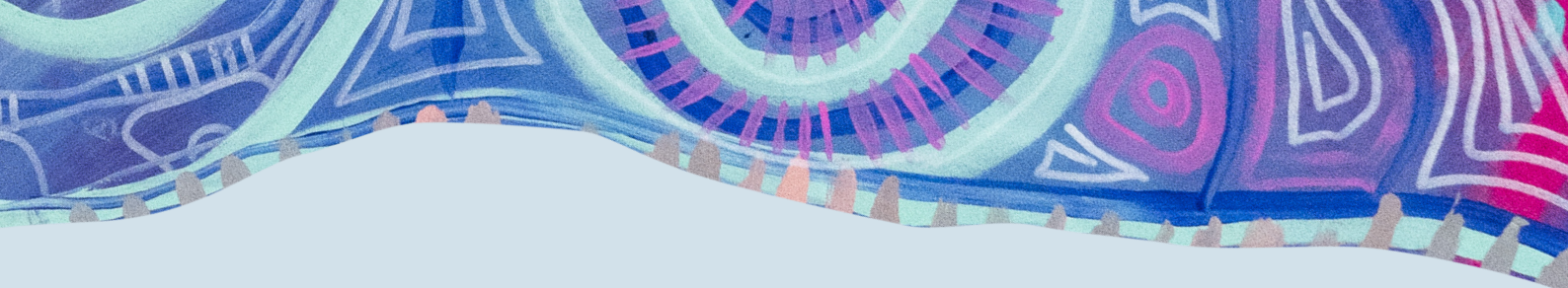
Admissions, Orientation, and Transition for FFUR Students

The following principles outline the key elements of an inclusive and effective approach to ensuring that FFUR students enter university study with confidence, clarity and a sense of belonging.

1. Highly Supported Admissions Processes

Admissions into FFUR courses should be **highly supported** to ensure accessibility and equity. Application systems must minimise administrative, technological, and financial barriers for prospective students, particularly those from underrepresented or vulnerable backgrounds. Where possible, admission processes should be tailored to FFUR courses and separate from broader institution admission processes for undergraduate courses.

- Do not assume pre-existing knowledge of university language, jargon, digital literacy or navigational capacity.
- Provide clear, step-by-step guidance throughout the admissions process. This includes early and specific information for applicants. Where possible, host information sessions, help sessions or Q&As to support applicants.
- Offer proactive communication and early outreach to assist applicants



“

“Early engagement with university governance and system teams is critical. FFUR courses may require bespoke administrative and technical solutions, including admissions pathways, LMS structures, progression rules, data capture, and reporting configurations”

– FFUR Provider

in understanding eligibility, documentation, and timelines. Where possible, provide information in multiple modes, formats and languages.

- Integrate pastoral and academic support contacts early, so students know where to seek help from the start.

2. Localised Admissions for Enhanced Support

Where possible, **localised admissions processes** (rather than entirely centralised systems) can deliver a more personalised and supportive experience for applicants.

- Local admissions enable staff to build relationships with prospective students, understand individual needs, and respond flexibly to unique circumstances.
- Embedding local support for the admissions process promotes trust and confidence, particularly for students from rural, remote, or disadvantaged communities, and fosters belonging from the first touchpoint.

3. Transition Pathways into Undergraduate Degrees

The **transition from FFUR to undergraduate study** must be intentionally designed and supported.

- An institution-wide approach should be taken in developing undergraduate admission schemes, based on successful completion of FFUR courses.
- Admission manuals must clearly outline what undergraduate courses students are eligible for, based on number of units of completed FFUR. Many established FFUR providers offer guaranteed admission into



a range of degrees. Guaranteed admission schedules must be developed in consultation with Faculties and Governance groups and embedded in policy.

- Universities should establish clear, streamlined mechanisms for FFUR graduates to apply for and transition into undergraduate degrees, and where possible avoid burdensome, lengthy application processes or ones which may attract a fee. Initiatives like '[Your Next Move](#)' at The University of Newcastle exemplify good practice—helping students navigate application requirements, credit transfer, and course selection with confidence and with support from staff they have trusted during

their FFUR study.

- Regular communication, academic advising, and early engagement with future faculties can ease anxiety and strengthen retention.

4. Continuous Improvement and Collaboration

FFUR practitioners are encouraged to regularly collaborate with colleagues in undergraduate teaching to ensure their curriculum aligns and share transition practice to provide consistent, high-quality support for FFUR students.

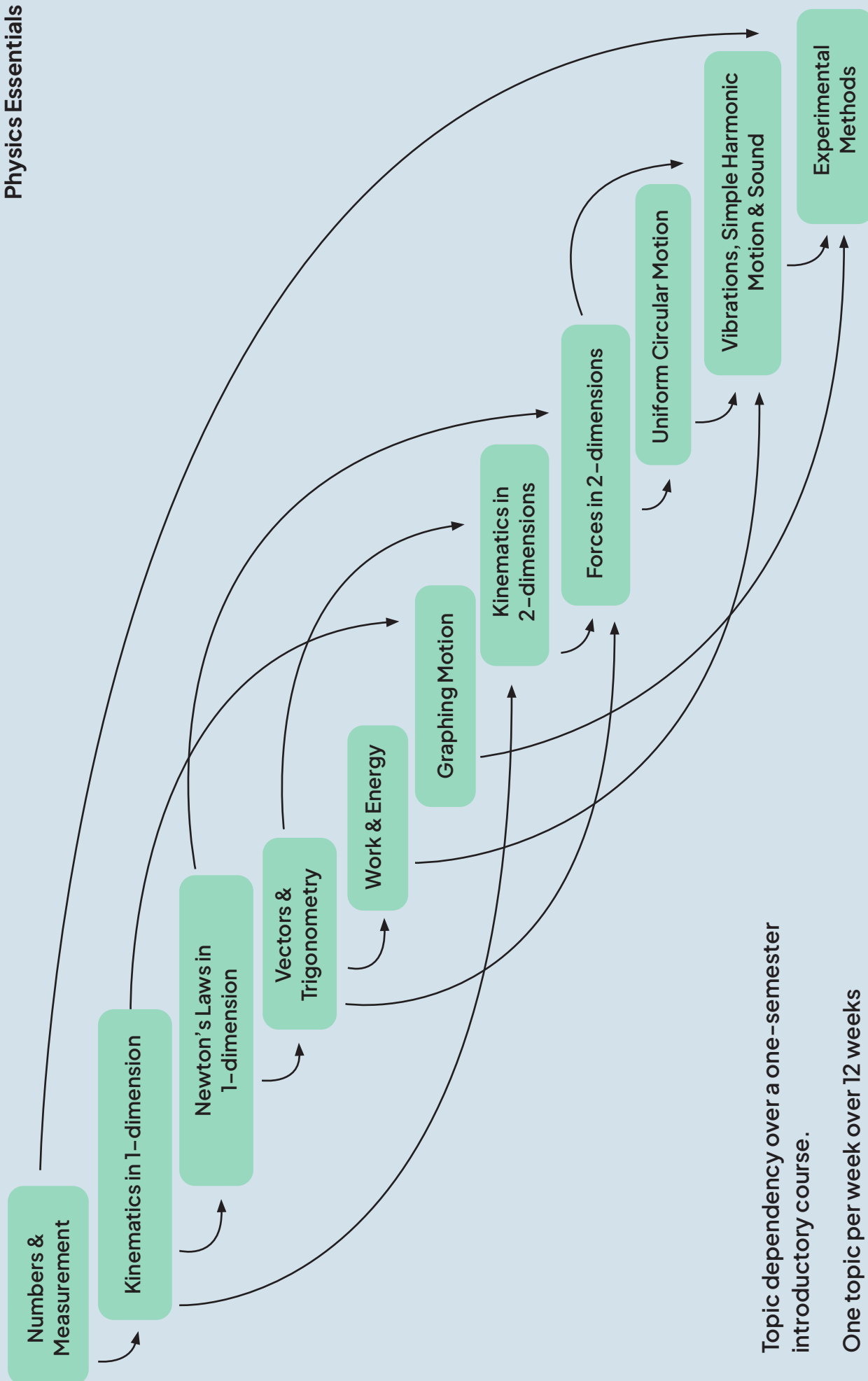
- Ongoing collaboration with university staff to ensure FFUR unit knowledge, expectations and skills align with and progress seamlessly to undergraduate unit content
- Institutional data should allow for tracking the progression and success of students who have moved from FFUR into undergraduate courses.

When universities and higher education institutions provide flexible, inclusive, high-quality, and community-aligned FFUR courses, not only are they offering improved academic outcomes for underrepresented students – they are also enriching and diversifying their student populations and consequently meeting the changing needs of the higher education landscape. FFUR is smart educational and socioeconomic policy in action. It is continuously improving communities across the country.

Build physics concepts progressively from foundational to complex.

resource

Physics Essentials



Topic dependency over a one-semester introductory course.

One topic per week over 12 weeks



Offering a choice of topics for a maths essay

In Maths, allow students to write about a choice of topic- related to maths. This gives students ownership of learning and builds confidence and curiosity. This also allows staff to get to know students and their interests, as well as allowing students to develop transferable academic skills rather than overwhelming students with content.

- As part of your assessment, worth 10%, you need to choose a topic of interest to you which has some connection with mathematics and write about it.
- Write approximately 500 words, which is about a page.
- Not technical! At this stage I don't expect you to know much hard maths. The goal is just to see that you can write

resource

something which is coherent.

- Most importantly of all, they should be your own words. Please remember the academic integrity principles we have discussed in class. Your work must be your own, and all sources must be appropriately paraphrased and referenced.
- Your response should demonstrate that you have engaged with relevant sources and conducted appropriate research on the topic.
- The topic can be almost anything. The more unexpected the better! However the key thing is the link to mathematics.
- If you are struggling for a topic, here are some suggestions...
 - ⇒ famous mathematicians, their life and works
 - ⇒ famous maths problems and their history
 - ⇒ maths in an ancient civilisation ... ancient Egypt, China, South American, Babylon etc etc
 - ⇒ a recent development in mathematics, or a recent application of mathematics
 - ⇒ famous numbers ... zero, pi, "e" etc

The “Practice makes perfect” rule

The inclusion of low-stakes, formative assessments is important for keeping students engaged in maths and computing units without the pressure of high-stakes grading. An example of this in fundamental mathematics units is the ‘Practice Makes Perfect’ method using weekly formative quizzes.

Mathematics is best learned through active practice. To reinforce this, students are required to demonstrate regular engagement with problem solving activities throughout the course. Accordingly, for each assignment, students submit their own attempts at selected practice exercises. These submissions are intended as evidence of sustained effort rather than as assessable work.

The submitted exercises are not formally marked, as complete solutions are already provided. Instead, they allow the educator to verify that students are actively engaging with the material and developing their skills through practice.

Key expectations are as follows:

- Exercises do not need to be correct. Making mistakes is an essential part of learning mathematics, and errors are expected during the practice process.
- Students are not required to complete every exercise. A representative selection is sufficient, provided it covers all major topics addressed in the lectures.
- Submissions must reflect the student’s own working. Simply copying provided solutions and presenting them as original work is unacceptable and undermines the learning purpose of the task.

In practice, this requirement is enforced most closely during the first six weeks of the course. By that point, most students have established consistent study habits and recognise the value of regular practice. Once this habit is formed, students typically continue engaging with exercises independently for the remainder of the semester.

Conducting proactive student interviews

The inclusion of a mid-term, scheduled, one-on-one interview with every student in the class allows teachers to provide individualised support.

These interviews provide an opportunity for tutors to find out generally how students are coping and recognise any who are particularly struggling with the workload, or difficult circumstances, proactively.

The interviews, typically 3 – 4 minutes long, provide a valuable opportunity for establishing rapport with the students and the chance to get to know them better. The students are usually grateful for the interest you show in them as individuals.

Try to do **some** of the following:

- Ask the student how they are 'finding' their FFUR experience and how they settling in to study and university life in general
- Let them know that you are available for individual consultations
- Remind them about the availability of help from the academic and wellbeing support services. In cases where students have been allocated to an Academic Adviser / Liaison Officer / encourage the student

to connect with their advisor for general assistance and specific help with assignments and writing skills.

- Encourage them in their studies, to persist to achieve the goals they have for themselves at uni
- Also note any students who come from 'afar' or travel long distances to uni
- Encourage any LBOTE students who have difficulty with English to regularly liaise with the English language supports
- Encourage attendance at drop-in sessions

Important: make an unobtrusive note of those who are especially experiencing difficulties

If appropriate, let them know that there are free helping 'agencies' on campus, including: counsellors, career counselling, disability support services, chaplains, student social groups, Learning Development, etc

If a student is obviously struggling, offer to talk with them at length at another time, refer them to Academic Advisors or, if their problem is affecting their progress, the Program Head.

Feedback on Feedback Assessment

Assessment Type	Feedback on Feedback
Description	Reflect upon feedback from a previous written assignment and provide a response
Length	500 words

Application

There are many careers that have reflective practices embedded in the workplace. As such, many degrees will have Reflective Tasks within their courses. The main purpose of reflection is for you to pause after completing a task. You will then think of what you did for that task—what worked well and what didn't. Also, you will think of what you might do differently in the future for a similar task. Being able to identify what you did to make something work well or what you did that made something work not as well is a valuable skill, not only in the workforce, but in life. The reflective tasks takes that skill one step further as you transfer that thought to the written word.

Some reflections may ask you to engage with research on a particular topic, then ask you to think about how you demonstrated that research in practice, or how that research explains your response to a specific task.

If you are not used to writing reflections, you may feel vulnerable the first time you do so. This task aims to introduce you to a reflective practice in a safe and supportive environment.

Essential information

For this assessment task you will be required to re-read the task you have submitted in a pervious assessment and write a reflection in response to the feedback that you received. Using feedback from your marker you will select TWO things that you can improve for your next assessment task. You will then explain HOW you will improve/implement this feedback for your next assessment.

NOTE: The general feedback for this task will be given in your tutorial. Individual feedback is not given for this task.

Assessment instructions

- Select TWO pieces of feedback from your marker to explain how you aregoing to implement these for your next assessment.
- ⇒ There are three different places for markers to provide feedback for you (1) comments written on your paper; (2) comments inside speech bubbles on your paper; (3) inside the rubric attached to your paper. You will find your marked paper in the LMS. You do not need to identify where the feedback came from, but you will need to

identify the feedback.

- To complete this assessment task you need to complete TWO paragraphs using the structure below. You may wish to use subheadings.
 - ⇒ Feedback: Identify one feedback comment and explain. (For example: My marker suggested I write using more academic language. Rereading my paragraph I can now see that I used contractions like 'can't' and 'shouldn't'. Contractions are not generally considered to be formal academic language.)
 - ⇒ Reflection: Identify the reasons why this comment was made (For example: contractions are not academic language)
 - ⇒ Implementation: Explain how you will incorporate this feedback into your next assessment.

Additional information

Marking guidelines

In this assessment we want to see that you were able to identify specific qualities of your work, identify steps you can take to sustain or improve specific aspects of your work and, in doing so, are able to develop the capacity to evaluate your own learning. While we will not be providing a rubric for this assessment task, there are two main qualities that we are looking for in your work:

1. **A constructive reflection of feedback received.** Whether you choose to focus your reflections on perceived positive or negative comments made on your work, we want to see that you are able to set out ways in which you can improve your work. We want to see that you have thought critically about your work and can see new ways of learning. We want to see that you understand why the comment was made.
2. **A meaningful explanation of the implementation.** We want to see that the implementation that you have suggested is targeted to your work, is linked to the assessment criteria for written assignment 2 and can be of benefit to work beyond your enabling studies. It could include:
 - ⇒ information of how you plan to adapt or adjust your current writing practices and techniques
 - ⇒ details of how you will continue to be self-reflexive within subsequent assessment tasks so that you can look more critically upon your own work
 - ⇒ a description of how, as a result of this implementation, you will improve further work.

The implementation should also be achievable, we want to see that you can manage this implementation.

Examples of creative writing activities for boosting creativity and discussion in the classroom.

- Write your life story in five sentences
 - Write a postcard to a friend from a place you have never visited
 - Write the opening of a story incorporating several random words
 - Watch a video of a two people arguing with no sound and add in the dialogue
 - Write a six-word short story
 - Write a story in the form of a Post-It note.
 - Look through a magazine or catalogue and choose two 'characters.' One of these people is going to propose to the other.
- How would your character ask this question? Would they stutter? Would they use slang? Would they be formal, cool, calm?
- ⇒ If you are going to use the traditional "Will you marry me?" make sure that you add it in some way to demonstrate the different ways people speak.
- ⇒ How will the other character respond? They don't have to say yes, although perhaps they say yes but mean no. How would you get this message across to your reader? Use descriptions of gestures and facial expressions here also.

Pre-commencement Survey (Survey 1).- Self-Efficacy

A Seven-point Likert scale will be used: 1 = not confident to 7 completely confident.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel confident in my ability that I can:							
1. Ask questions in lectures							
2. Respond to questions asked in lectures							
3. Draw up a study plan							
4. Ask for help from my lecturers							
5. Approach my lecturers to receive feedback							
6. Make a good attempt at tutorial questions in advance							
7. Respond to questions asked in tutorials							
8. Apply my knowledge to previously unseen questions							
9. Ask questions in tutorials							
10. Judge the standard to get good marks in my exams							
11. Plan my time to revise effectively for exams							
12. Engage in academic discussions with classmates							
13. Follow and make sense of material covered in lectures							
14. Make sense of feedback on my assignments							
15. Study effectively on my own							
16. Source and write up additional notes							
17. Explain material to a friend							
18. Pass a course at the first attempt							
19. Meet the deadlines for my assignments							
20. Ask for help from my classmates							
21. Can achieve my goal.							
22. Have the capacity to achieve and successful entry on the FFUR program.							
23. Will make friends easily							
24. Will feel like I belong in my classes.							
25. Belong at university							
What does belonging mean to you? Do you feel that you belong within the FFUR program and the University?							

Students' self-efficacy questionnaire based on Byrne, Flood and Griffin's (2014) survey instrument.

Strategies for Inclusive Practice in FFUR Classrooms

Signals	There are a range of ways to create a sense of belonging and inclusivity and signal that your classroom will be as inclusive and safe as you can make it. These ‘signals’ are not only flagging to students who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education that they belong here, but also that you are a safe staff member who students could disclose to or ask for assistance. These ‘signals’ also flag to the rest of the students that you will be maintaining a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment. See the below for practical suggestions to establish and support a class climate that fosters belonging for all students.
Acknowledgement of Country	An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity to show respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land we work, live and learn on and upholds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols. Anyone can Acknowledge and respect Country at meetings, gatherings, and events.
Explicit acknowledgement	Many professional development trainings provide some sort of signal that you can use, like the ALLY email signature icon. When you introduce yourself to your students feel free to include these in your communications.
Share explicit class expectations	During the first week of your course you might share some basic ‘housekeeping’ rules you might have for your course, or in other words your expectations for students. As part of this you can also share explicit expectations around behaviour, speaking with and to other and ensuring that all interactions are covered under codes of conduct.



Calendar

Throughout the year there are days that recognise, celebrate, commemorate, raise awareness or gives solidarity to events, groups of people or particular social issues. These days range from diversity and inclusion days of celebration to religious and culturally significant events. The FFUR student population is diverse and recognising what events are happening is a great way to build belonging in your classroom. Acknowledging these days not only show your diverse students that 'I see you, you belong here' but also help you to understand what events may be occurring for your students in class such as Ramadan or Lent.

Pronouns

When introducing yourself you could normalise sharing pronouns by including yours alongside your name and ask students to do so if they feel comfortable. When students share pronouns with you, practice and remember. If you do misgender someone, apologise and move on. Ensure that you make a concerted effort to use the correct pronouns.

Names

Names, like pronouns, are significant foundations of student's identity. Learning to pronounce names correctly (and remembering them) are tricky but key when building relationships with your students.

- Ask students for their preferred name.
- Create a Padlet that is embedded in Canvas that allows students to introduce themselves along with the pronunciation through voice notes

Source: Improving Inclusivity in the Classroom – UoN

Term 1 Slide to explicitly discuss accessibility, safety and inclusion

Accessibility, safety and inclusion in this course.

Everyone has the right to be able to participate, contribute and belong.

- Zero tolerance of discrimination, denigration, stigmatisation or shaming. Report concerns to me or to Campus Care.
- This course has been designed to be accessible, but I want to hear about anything that is not working.
- If you have a reasonable adjustment plan please know that I will do all that is required to honour your reasonable adjustments. Please feel free to come and chat to me any time about it.

RESOURCES FOR AI-ENHANCED TEACHING PRACTICES:

Special Interest Groups

[National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia GenAI Special Interest Group](#)

[CAST's UDL and AI Learning Community](#)

[The Australasian Artificial Intelligence in Engineering Education Centre](#)

[ASCILITE Transforming Assessment Special Interest Group](#)

[Australasian Academic Integrity Network](#)

Professional Associations and related organisations

[Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education \(ASCILITE\)](#)

[Joint Information Systems Committee \(JISC\)](#)

[AdvanceHE](#)

[Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia](#)

[Council of Australasian University Leaders of Learning and Teaching](#)

[Educause](#)



Free and Low-Cost Introductory Courses

[Microsoft AI for Educators](#)

[Google Generative AI for Educators](#)

[Anthropic AI Fluency for Educators](#)

[Leon Furze This Course is AI Generated](#)

[University of Colorado AI for Course Design](#)

[The Wharton School AI in Education: Leveraging ChatGPT for Teaching](#)

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