



Indigenous Student Success Program

2020 Performance Report

Organisation: University of Southern Queensland (USQ)

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1. Enrolments (Access)

Strategies to improve access to university for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) is committed to proactively providing accessible and equitable higher education opportunities to the diverse University student constituency including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Specific initiatives for supporting and improving access to educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Initiatives supporting access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

Initiative and Outline of Activity	Funding Source
<p>Indigenous Higher Education Pathway Program (IHEPP)</p> <p>The IHEPP program is offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students seeking entry to University through the College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER). The standard duration of the program, which is available in mixed modes, face-to face and online, is one semester (or up to three semesters if undertaken part-time), with two intakes per year. This culturally relevant pathway program aims to strengthen Indigenous identity and is designed to develop the academic skills needed for successful entry into university study. Courses have an Indigenous focus through the development of writing, general study, and computer skills. Whilst undertaking the program, students are provided with academic, cultural, and social support from CISER staff and fellow students. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can nominate their proposed future degree at the point of enrolment into IHEPP and are simultaneously enrolled in pre-requisite courses, if required for future enrolment into a degree, in the University's Tertiary Preparation Program. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the delivery of IHEPP was reshaped to provide an on-campus two-week Residential School at the start of Semester 1, with the remainder of the program delivered online during the remainder of Semester 1 and 2 2020.</p>	<p>Away from Base (AFB), Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) and Operational Funds</p>
<p>Cultural Connections Online Orientation Program</p> <p>The Cultural Connections Online Orientation Program was designed to target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander first year, first semester online students across the University. Identified students are invited to attend a two-day orientation program during the University orientation week, providing students with the tools required to succeed whilst studying online. The students engage with their Lecturers, Student Relationship Officers, Indigenous Support Staff, CISER staff and their peers. COVID-19 impacted the on-campus delivery of Cultural Connections however CISER customised the program to enable the students to engage with the program online during 2020.</p>	<p>AFB, ISSP and Operational Funds</p>
<p>USQ College Tertiary Preparatory Program</p> <p>USQ College offers the Tertiary Preparatory Program, supporting the enrolment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into preparatory courses that enable direct entry into undergraduate degrees. USQ College and CISER work closely to support, retain and graduate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from their respective programs, allowing flexibility across the courses to ensure students have the requisite skills needed for degree program entry. Both colleges also offer courses in offline mode for incarcerated students, inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in facilities throughout Australia.</p>	<p>Operational Funds</p>
<p>Scholarships</p> <p>All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are eligible and supported to apply for a wide range of scholarships at USQ and externally based on relevant criteria pertaining to their current study. USQ Indigenous specific scholarships are made available through ISSP and preserved funding targeting Regional and Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In 2020, a total of \$300,401 was allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in scholarships.</p>	<p>ISSP and Preserved Funding</p>

Deadly Ways Program

The Deadly Ways Program is delivered through the Outreach and Engagement team at USQ, with the program specifically targeting Indigenous high school students from years 7 to 12 in regional communities. The Deadly Ways events are designed to provide Indigenous students with a real-life university experience both on-campus and remotely, including an Indigenous Connections Day for years 7 and 8, Deadly Careers Camp for years 9 and 10 and a Residential Program for years 11 and 12.

Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) and Operational Funds

Scholarships, bridging/enabling support, and outreach activities

Outreach activities in 2020 included mass communications (emails and announcements on course StudyDesks), direct emails, phone calls and online workshops in partnership with CISER.

The USQ Scholarship Office identifies key opportunities within University Orientation Weeks where CISER staff plan and deliver Cultural Connection activities and events to familiarise newly enrolled students with university life experiences, processes, tutoring and scholarships. Through a collaborative approach, CISER Indigenous support staff assist students with enrolment processes, accessing tutoring and sourcing relevant documentation relevant to their chosen degree.

Due to COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions limiting face-to-face interactions, students were supported with opportunities to interact online.

An overview of scholarship payments made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2020 is provided at Table 2 below.

Table 2. Scholarships - breakdown of 2020 payments^{i ii iii}

Student Category	Education Costs		Accommodation Costs		Reward		Total ^{iv v}	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ^{vi}	\$26,000.00	12	\$0	0	0	0	\$26,000.00	12
Undergraduate ^{vii}	\$247,378.00	87	\$9,756.00	4	0	0	\$257,134.00	91
Postgraduate ^{viii}	\$11,755.00	5	\$5,512.00	1	0	0	\$17,267.00	6
Other	\$0	0	\$0	0	0	0	\$0	0
Total	\$285,133.00	104	\$15,268.00	5	\$	0	\$300,401.00	109

The rise and fall of Indigenous Equivalent Full-Time student loads (EFTSL)

A summary of Equivalent Full-time Student Load (EFTSL) and student Headcount from 2015 to 2020 for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as for students from regional and remote areas, is provided in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student EFTSL by All, Remote and Regional and year

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	363.4	357.5	369.8	378.5	407.8	449.9
Remote and Regional	222.2	219.7	221.4	216.5	226.9	229.7

The Headcount of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from 2015 to 2018 demonstrates steady growth in numbers (Table 4 refers), with a significant increase of 156 students between 2018 to 2020. Headcount for remote and regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students increased slightly between 2015 to 2019 and was maintained at the same level in 2019 and 2020.

Table 4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Headcount by All, Regional, Remote and year

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	662	691	706	730	808	886
Remote and Regional	409	415	425	412	448	448

Strategies and funding sources for enrolment (access)

A range of strategies fully or partially funded by ISSP funds and/or funded by other University resources for identified activities/events required to support enrolment processes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were undertaken in 2020. The strategies are outlined below in Table 5.

Table 5. Funding source for enrolment (access) strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Strategy	Funding Source
Indigenous Higher Education Pathway Program (IHEPP)	AFB, ISSP and Operational Funds
Cultural Connections	AFB, ISSP and Operational Funds
USQ College - Tertiary Preparatory Program (TPP)	Operational Funds
Scholarships	ISSP and Preserved Scholarships
Deadly Ways Program	HEPPP and Operational Funds

2. Progression (access and outcomes)

Strategies to improve success rates and retention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

The guiding principles outlined in the [USQ Student Success and Retention Strategy](#) and the [USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Education Strategy](#) are at the heart of our University community, reflecting the University's commitment to student success being everyone's business, a sense of belonging being essential for all of us, and that the University can and should be a leading university for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. Specific initiatives and strategies designed to address and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student recruitment, retention and success rates are outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Activities to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student recruitment, retention and success rates.

Initiatives and Strategies	Funding Source
<p>College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER)</p> <p>CISER supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by providing culturally safe spaces across all campuses through appropriate resources, computer laboratories, kitchenettes, and common areas. CISER facilitates the linkage between students and other resources (on-campus and online) through academic support mechanisms such as the Scholarships Office, library services, learning advisors and study planning.</p> <p>CISER established the Indigenous Student Support and Success team in 2018 to facilitate connections with and provide dedicated support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The support team reviews and monitors data captured through University systems, student enquiries, and the culturally designed after hours academic support mechanism known as 'Ask Aunty'. The 'Ask Aunty' online student support portal is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and provides access to a range of resources and support services available across the University as well as personalised student and academic support from CISER. The portal also allows students to chat with the CISER team (Academic staff and/or Indigenous Student Support and Success Officers), enabling students to receive immediate assistance for matters relating to their study. Students are supported by the Indigenous Student Success and Support Officers with student related matters from enrolment processes through to continued study.</p>	ISSP and Operational Funds

The Indigenous Student Support and Success team communicates regularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students both face to-face and online through a variety of platforms including CISER's 'Ask Aunty', 'Message Stick' and 'Yarning Circles' initiatives. The 'Ask Aunty' website and CISER's Facebook page promote the use of the Student Relationship Officer (SRO) avatar 'SRO Rosie' in addition to face-to-face, phone and email communication. The Indigenous Student Support and Success team is instrumental in driving the development and delivery of key initiatives and strategies identified through the 'Graduating Indigenous Leaders Commitment' (GILC), further details of which are provided below.

Indigenous Student Performance Taskforce

The Indigenous Student Performance Taskforce (ISPT) was established in January 2018 to better understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student performance, with a focus on the analysis of success rates and retention. A sub-group of the Taskforce, referred to as 'The Graduating Indigenous Leaders Commitment' (GILC) was formed specifically to target and provide additional assistance to the success and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. GILC is described below.

The Graduating Indigenous Leaders Commitment Project (GILC), which is based on the establishment of relationship building within a culturally inclusive environment, has been operating over the last three years. Several new initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success are being piloted to promote a strengths-based approach towards engagement and empowerment for educational progression. The 'Commitment' incorporates:

1. **USQ Indigenous Education Strategy** – The USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Education Strategy aligns the University with sector commitment and standards; assuring accountable and transparent key performance indicators to support successful educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the correlation between this overarching strategy (with a student and learning focus) and University governance and human resource instruments.
2. **Organisational connection** – this encompasses three levels of referral networks internal and external to the structure as well as online resources as follows:

Level 1 – Relationship Management

- Identification and outreach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in need of additional assistance
- Communication strategy for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Focus - first year, first semester

Level 2 –Support to Success Program (within targeted Schools)

- Focus – students-at-risk and/or with lower Grade Point Averages (GPAs)
- Whole of University approach
- Models the highly successful School of Nursing and Midwifery 'Helping Hands; program (detailed below) to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students towards academic success in all Schools.

Level 3 – Online Support

- Focussed academic assistance to online students (either online or outreach to physical locations)

'Ask Aunty' website - Moodle-based with informational resources such as adapted referencing guides from the library and other culturally appropriate guidance; online Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community; first stop for culturally appropriate resources, linkages to mainstream services.

Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS)

The ITAS scheme provides targeted tutorial assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students of up to two hours per course per week. Where students have indicated that urgent support is required, the Head of CISER can approve additional hours be added to their ITAS agreement. As a result of COVID-19, face-to-face interactions between tutors and students were limited with online delivery recommended.

ISSP and HEPPP

ISSP Funds

<p>Helping Hands Support to Success Program</p> <p>This initiative is an Indigenised student support model aimed at recruiting, retaining and graduating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students. The model was developed by Aboriginal nursing academics to provide the necessary cultural and academic support to successfully navigate the university environment. The program is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in nursing at the Geraldton Universities Centre, Western Australia where the USQ Bachelor of Nursing is delivered in partnership with USQ. USQ's Helping Hands is a national leading initiative, graduating the most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses in the country. Pivotal to this success is a dedicated team of Aboriginal nurse academics within the School of Nursing and Midwifery, who advise, design and teach curriculum across the nursing program including a mandatory course titled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.</p>	Operational Funds
<p>Indigenous Studies Courses</p> <p>CISER offers 10 Introduction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Australia (ISE) courses in Indigenous Studies which are available to all students (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students) as Major/Minor studies within the Bachelor level programs in Arts, Education and Human Services. These courses are critical to retention, allowing students to learn through curriculum that reflects Indigenous identity and engages in culturally appropriate knowledges and learning strategies.</p> <p>Graduate attributes support students to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-informed individuals with discipline-specific expertise and industry knowledge relevant to their profession or area of study. • Critical, creative, thinkers who can integrate and apply knowledge and relevant skills, including research and digital literacy skills, to analyse and evaluate ideas, concepts, theories, and problems, and offer insights, innovative approaches, and solutions. • Effective communicators and collaborators who actively and respectfully lead, listen, reflect, discuss, and negotiate to work productively with a range of individuals and groups, including professional teams. • Ethical, engaged professionals and citizens who engage in, non-discriminatory, safe practices and consider the local, global, social, economic, legal, and environmental influences on, and impact of, their attitudes and actions. • Employable, enterprising professionals who are confident, self-directed, know how they learn, and are resourceful, resilient, and adaptable to change. • Culturally capable individuals who are self-aware and sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives, equitable and respectful of diversity and multiculturalism, and can apply these capabilities in their professional practice. 	Operational Funds
<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Association</p> <p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Association is comprised of undergraduate and postgraduate student members across all campuses. During 2020, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Association was inactive due to COVID-19.</p>	Self-Funded and Operational Funds
<p>Murri Meet-Up</p> <p>Murri Meet-up is a peer mentoring program aimed at assisting first year students to become familiar with the University environment. Mentoring is undertaken by academically proficient third year and fourth year students who are trained to be student peer leaders.</p>	Operational Funds

The rise and fall of success and progression rates

The retention rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2019 have increased by 6.36% compared to 2017 where there was a decline in the retention rates from 2016. An overview of retention rates from 2013 to 2019 are outlined in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student retention rate

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Retention Rate	68.12%	69.65%	64.44%	65.50%	54.93%	60.09%	61.29%

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success rates have been steadily increasing from 2017 (58.46%) to 2020 (63.11%). The strategies highlighted above have assisted in the improvement of student success rates outlined below in Table 8.

Table 8. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success rate

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Success Rate	57.47%	58.60%	58.46%	60.03%	62.75%	63.11%

Tutorial assistance provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (2020 breakdown)

As indicated in Table 9 below, 272 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were assisted with tutorial support in 2020 at a total cost of \$588,714.60. There were 68 additional students receiving tutoring support compared to 204 students in 2019.

Table 9. Tutorial Assistance Provided in 2020

Level of study	Number of students assisted.	Total hours of assistance	Expenditure (\$)
Enabling	35	1,454	\$79,998.05
Undergraduate	227	6,672	\$466,999.05
Postgraduate	9	662	\$36,437.50
Other	1	96	\$5,280.00
Total	272	8,884	\$588,714.60

Indigenous Support Unit and other activities

The University's Indigenous Support Unit, CISER (College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research), is located across all three campuses. In addition to providing support for Indigenous students, CISER aims to:

- promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and assist communities to develop their economic and cultural independence
- act as an advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students when meeting educational, social, economic and cultural difficulties in a tertiary institution
- undertake research and consultancy projects that will address education and other issues that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels.

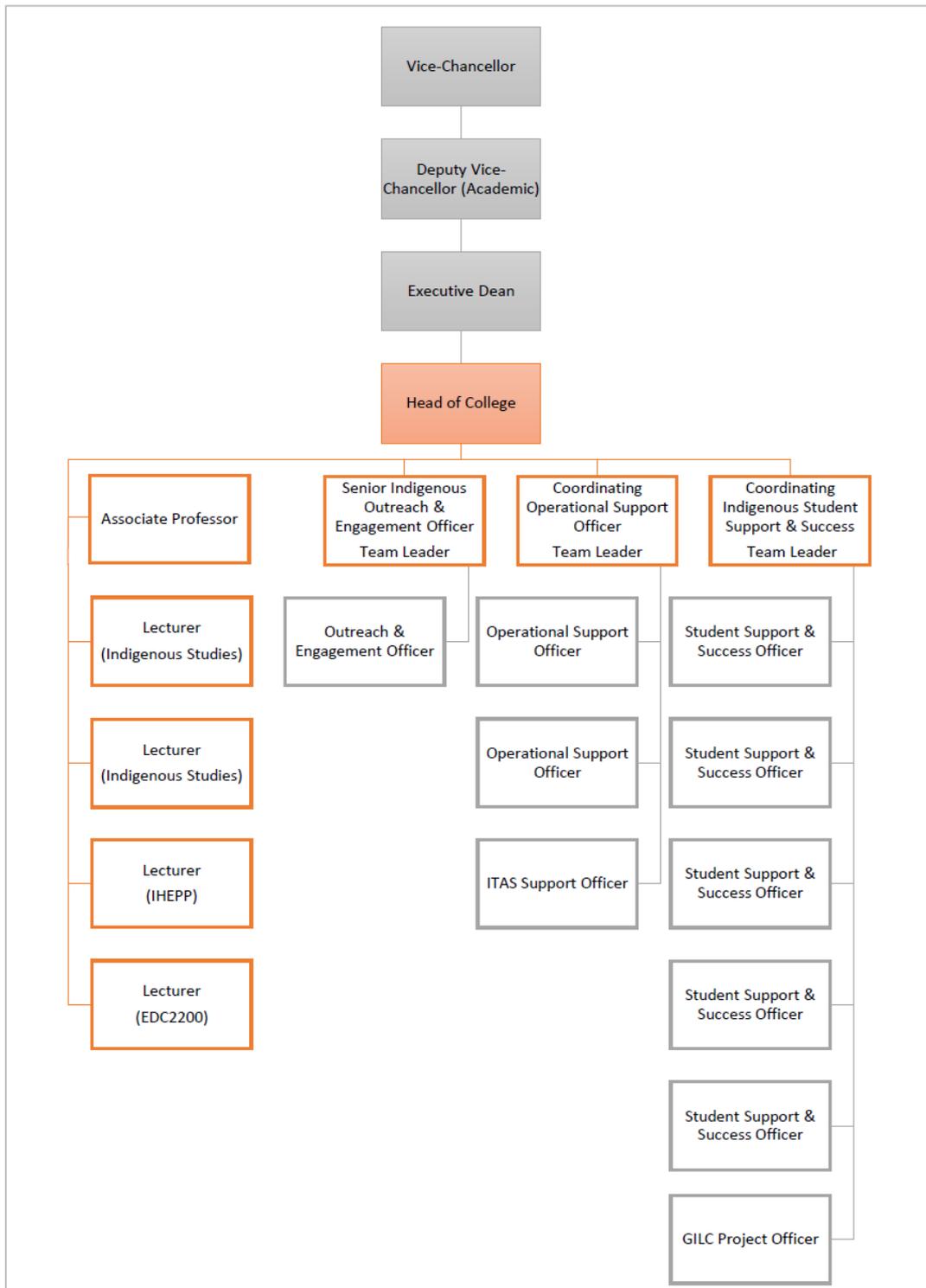
The Head of CISER is a senior academic appointment that has line-management responsibility for academic staff within CISER and takes a leading role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategic development within the University. For example, the Head (or nominee) is an ex-officio member of the University's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and the Indigenous Research Strategy Committee and is a member of the ISSP Committee.

Key responsibilities of the Head of CISER include:

- the provision of leadership and management to the College through strategic and organisational planning;
- ensuring performance and resource management, and facilitating the identification, approval and deployment of initiatives both consistent with and contributing to the achievement of University objectives and priorities;
- ensuring the quality assurance and enhancement of processes for the Indigenous content of academic courses and the teaching for which CISER is responsible;
- leading CISER's contribution to the quality of the programs associated with Indigenous learning and teaching;
- supporting activities and programs aimed at improving Indigenous student attraction, student retention rates and graduate outcomes; and,
- performance in consultancy on Indigenous matters and curriculum development, teaching, research, professional service and community engagement.

An overview of CISER’s organisational structure is provided at Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Overview of CISER’s Organisational Structure



In addition to acquiring a more prominent and larger space at the Toowoomba campus in 2020, new spaces were secured at the Ipswich and Springfield campuses which allows the College to provide improved services and supportive culturally safe spaces for study, consultation and community engagement. These have been very well received by students.

In response to COVID-19, CISER created and posted care packs to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Semesters 1 and 2, 2020.

Cultural competency strategies

The University is committed to increasing the cultural competency of its workforce through the provision of face-to-face and online training modules. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of USQ's face-to-face 'Cultural Awareness: Hidden Histories' training, facilitated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees as skilled internal educators. In 2020, 19 employees from a broad cross-section of the University completed online cultural competency training offered by the Centre for Cultural Competence Australia. In support of USQ developing their own cultural competency training, in accordance with procurement procedures, the University put out a tender for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop a 'USQ Cultural Capability Program', with the successful agency, MurriMatters, engaged to provide a proposed structure and outline for the USQ Cultural Capability Program between September and December 2020. The University also purchased a training package mid 2020 from SBS Australia with a focus on inclusion upskilling across key diversity areas. The Indigenous module within this package potentially informed part of the future 'USQ Building Cultural Capability Program'.

Strategies and funding sources for progression (access and outcomes)

As outlined in Table 10 below, a range of strategies to support the progression (access and outcomes) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were undertaken. These strategies are fully and partially funded by ISSP and by other university resources.

Table 10. Funding source for Progression (access and outcomes) strategies

Strategy	Funding Source
College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER)	ISSP and Operational Funds
Indigenous Student Support and Success Team	ISSP and Operational Funds
Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students	ISSP Funds
Helping Hands Support and Success Program	Operational Funds
Indigenous Studies courses	Operational Funds
Murri Meet-Up	Operational Funds
Indigenous Student Performance Taskforce	ISSP and HEPPP
Graduating Indigenous Leaders Commitment Project (GILC)	ISSP and HEPPP
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Association	Self-funded and Operational Funds

3. Completions (Outcomes)

Strategies to improve award course completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

- The establishment of the Graduate Indigenous Leaders Commitment (GILC) instigated the 'Data Insights Project' in consultation with the Indigenous Student Success team. CISER provided a critical foundation for data analysis, ensuing pedagogical strategies and review any reporting of outcomes. This foundational strategy commenced in 2018 with funding from HEPPP and ISSP through to 2021. University data highlighted an increase in success rates since the inception of GILC in 2018 demonstrating an increase in completions by 28.06%. This has proved a vital strategy, providing insights regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments, retention and graduations to support the University wide and future predictive models of support.
- The University captures in the student record on enrolment, students who self-identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This information is available and visible to support services in their interaction with students and for reporting purposes and enables targeted outreach and support to this cohort of students.
- Successful completions occur with academic, cultural and emotional support offered by the various services within the University. These include support at point of enrolment and formulation of study plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students so that: expectations are clear and transparent; links are established for disability support services if required; students are informed and supported preparing scholarship applications; and individual academic assistance is provided through engaging tutors and aligning with students to assist with assignments and assessments.

The rise or fall of completions

The completion rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate students have been steadily increasing from 2017 with a total of 61 completions in 2020. There was a slight decline of postgraduate completions in 2020, as shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program completions by year

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Undergraduate Students	28	52	44	46	53	61
Postgraduate Students	19	24	7	5	18	12

The graduating cohort of 54 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from Semester 2 2020 was the largest number of graduations in one semester since 2017. Certificates and Indigenous stoles were awarded to all students.

Strategies connecting graduates with employment (both within and outside of the institution)

As outlined in Table 12 below, the University has implemented a range of strategies that specifically link Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates with employment opportunities both within and external to the University.

Table 12. Activities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with employment.

Activity	Outline of activity	Funding Source
USQ Student Ambassador Program	USQ Student Ambassadors are a team of passionate students who aim to inspire future students to consider tertiary study. The program enhances graduate employability by gaining critical thinking, presentations and leadership skills and allows students to expand their professional networks with fellow university students, industry professionals and communities.	Operational Funds
Careers and Employability Services	Student transition at each stage of the student learning journey is supported through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career counselling • Career education • Industry partnerships • Employability Services • Work experience, industry mentoring, and internships/cadetships. 	Operational Funds and HEPPP
Career Trackers	In 2020, USQ continued the partnership with Career Trackers, a national non-profit organisation that creates internship opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students. In 2020, there were seven students registered with Career Trackers comprising two new students, three continuing students and two graduating students. USQ has eight recorded Alumni who have previously engaged with the Career Trackers Program. The students were enrolled in a range of programs: Aviation, Business & Commerce, Engineering, Spatial Science, IT and Communications & Media.	Private Enterprise

Strategies and funding sources for completions (outcomes)

A range of strategies fully and partially funded by ISSP funds and/or funded by other University resources for activities/events to support completions (outcomes) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were undertaken as outlined below in Table 13.

Table 13. Strategies and funding sources supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander completions

Strategy	Funding Source
Scholarships	ISSP and Preserved Scholarships
Indigenous Higher Education Pathway Program (IHEPP)	AFB, ISSP and Operational Funds
Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students	ISSP Funds
Helping Hands Support and Success Program	Operational Funds
Indigenous Student Support and Success Team	ISSP Funds
Murri Meet-Up	Operational Funds
USQ Student Ambassador Program	Operational Funds
Career and Employability Services (University Wide)	Operational Funds and HEPPP
Career Trackers	Private Enterprise

Strategies to assist graduates and monitor student outcomes after graduation

The University is committed to graduating Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students who can become leaders in our communities and enabling all students to participate as culturally competent individuals in modern society.

The Graduate Attributes Policy includes a cultural graduate attribute where there is explicit reference and commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and cultural competencies, namely, “Culturally capable individuals, who are self-aware and sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives, equitable and respectful of diversity and multi-culturalism, and can apply these capabilities in their professional practice.”

The USQ Careers and Employability team is responsive to the diverse needs of individuals and empowers them to make informed career choices that optimise their life opportunities, through the provision of current, relevant and professional career and employment services. The team has a strong focus on connecting students with industry and host the Industry Experience Program. The program enables students to engage in work experience in their discipline and develop their professional networks. An online mentoring platform has been specifically designed to connect students with industry, irrespective of geographical location and a suite of self-access resources designed to help students develop resumes, prepare for interviews, establish LinkedIn accounts, understand options for gaining work experience, and develop their professional networks is also available. Each resource includes the ability for students to receive one-to-one feedback and support from USQ Careers and Employability staff.

The planned establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student alumni group was temporarily halted due to COVID-19. Discussions regarding the formation of this group will recommence in 2021.

4. Regional and Remote Students

Strategies and activities to support and improve access to university study

Table 14 below demonstrates the implemented strategies and activities that supported regional and remote students with access to university study.

Table 14. Strategies to improve access to university for regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Strategy	Funding Source
Scholarships	ISSP and Preserved Scholarships
Indigenous Higher Education Pathway Program (IHEPP)	AFB, ISSP and Operational Funds
Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students	ISSP Funds
Deadly Ways Program	HEPPP Funds

Helping Hands Support and Success Program	Operational Funds
Indigenous Student Support and Success Team	ISSP Funds
Murri Meet-Up	Operational Funds
USQ Student Ambassador Program	Operational Funds
Career and Employability Services (University Wide)	Operational Funds and HEPPP
Career Trackers	Private Enterprise

Table 15. Scholarships – Breakdown of regional and remote payments^{ix x}

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ^{xi}	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2019 Payments	\$173,452.50	63	\$51,280.00	15	\$2,750	5	\$227,482.50	68
B. 2020 Offers ^{xii}	\$181,133.00	68	\$15,268.00	5	\$0		\$254,733.00	73
C. Percentage ^{xiii} (C=B/A*100)							136%	107%
2020 Payments	\$172,133.00	63	\$15,268.00	5	\$0		\$187,401.00	68

Remote and regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EFTSL

A summary of EFTSL and student Headcount from 2015 to 2019 for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as for students from regional and remote areas, was provided in Tables 3 and 4 above. Table 16 below details the percentage that the EFTSL of remote and regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students comprises of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student EFTSL.

Table 16. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remote and regional EFTSL

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	363.4	357.5	369.8	378.5	407.8	449.9
Remote and Regional	222.2	219.7	221.4	216.5	226.9	229.7
% Remote and Regional EFTSL of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EFTSL	61%	61%	60%	57%	56%	51%

5. Working with Vulnerable People Requirement

The University has completed and submitted the working with vulnerable people assessment as per the ISSP guidelines. All staff involved in ISSP activities have undertaken the appropriate training and follows the USQ compliance process when working with vulnerable people (Table 17 below refers).

Table 17. Working with vulnerable people requirement

Requirement	Yes/No
Has the provider completed a risk assessment?	Yes
Have staff involved in ISSP activity received training?	Yes
Does the provider have a compliance process in place?	Yes

6. Working Eligibility Requirements

Indigenous Education Strategy

The University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Education Strategy frames and aligns existing University strategies and policies that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in the following key areas:

- Cultural Competence
- Teaching and Learning
- Research and Innovation
- Leadership
- People and Relationships

The USQ Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) Committee has responsibility for decision making and monitoring in the implementation of this strategy – as a requirement of the Federal Government's Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP). It is comprised of qualified individuals inclusive of Indigenous peoples, University leadership and other appropriate representatives who act as stewards for this strategy and is led and informed by contributions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

CISER supports the education of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community. The CISER website (<https://www.usq.edu.au/ciser>) contains further information on the supports available for Indigenous students. The outcomes on the IES deliverables will be provided in the 2021 ISSP Report.

Reconciliation Action Plan

USQ's [Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan](#) ('RAP') was formally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia in January 2020. The RAP contains 16 actions related to the areas of: Relationships; Respect; Opportunities; and Governance. The new RAP builds on USQ's first RAP: 'Walking Together: USQ Reconciliation Action Plan 2015-2017' and continues to be coordinated by a USQ RAP Working Group with representation from across the organisation. Progress on the RAP in 2020 was significantly affected by COVID-19 with the pandemic impacting the ability to meet some deliverables within the timelines set out in the RAP. This has resulted from restrictions to arrest the spread of COVID-19 and from work effort focused on the University's response to the pandemic and subsequent changes in learning and teaching models, as well as service delivery. Reconciliation Australia reached out to all RAP organisations, recognising the challenges in the current environment, and has given flexibility to timelines and deliverables in existing RAPs. The RAP Working Group continues to work through the implications. Regardless of all the challenges experienced in 2020, there have been various achievements at USQ in support of its reconciliation vision.

An overview of key achievements towards deliverables in the RAP throughout 2020:

- Formal endorsement of USQ's RAP in January 2020 by Reconciliation Australia.
- The RAP Working Group wrote to the Vice-Chancellor advocating for an identified Indigenous leadership position at USQ.
- The University recognised key dates of significance in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar through virtual activities.
- Peaked interest in cultural competency training, particularly within the University's two faculties
- Dedicated Indigenous career programs for employees.
- Ongoing relationship building activities with key external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.
- The University fulfilled its reporting obligation to Reconciliation Australia by completing the annual RAP Impact Questionnaire.

Indigenous Workforce Strategy

The [USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy](#) is USQ's commitment to developing a workforce which is representative and inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture and is designed to grow and retain a talented and sustainable cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic, research, professional and senior employees through a multi-faceted and coordinated approach. Through implementation of the Strategy, the University aims to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to 3% of its total

workforce. To achieve that overarching representation target, the University has set ambitious individual growth targets for key employee cohorts reflective of USQ's overall workforce profile in terms of employment classification group, mode, level, discipline and location. Within this broader aim, the University has prioritised academic employment and the professional and career advancement of academic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and the continuing employment of this cohort. To achieve this, the University will continue to invest in resources and strategies to attract, retain, promote, support and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent. The University will also focus on engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, both internally and externally.

Implementation and Evaluation of the Indigenous Workforce Strategy

The USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy outlines five key goals. Broadly, these goals can be aligned under key talent management framework elements of the USQ Workforce and Talent Management Plan as outlined below.

ATTRACT and RETAIN

- Goal 1: Enrich USQ's employer of choice status to attract top Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent across all career streams.
- Goal 2: Develop, expand and enhance employment and career pathway opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that embrace a contemporary 'grow your own' approach.

ENGAGE and SUPPORT

- Goal 3: Enhance and elevate cultural sensitivity, safety and inclusion to enable genuine engagement and contribute to effective cross-cultural working relationships, wellbeing and positive behaviours in the University community.

DEVELOP and ADVANCE

- Goal 4: Leverage the USQ People Capability Framework as a platform for implementing innovative professional development and contemporary career development strategies and activities for and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

PLAN and ALIGN

- Goal 5: Build institutional accountability, transparency and commitment to ensure action, reporting and monitoring of progress, outcomes and recognition of achievements in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and career development.

Progress against targets and milestones outlines in the strategy

Each goal has a set of performance and accountability measures, which are necessary to support the progression towards the overall key performance indicator of a workforce which is represented by 3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. These performance and accountability measures include:

Goals 1 and 2

- Expanded pools of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates for both identified and non-identified positions.
- Increased promotion of employment opportunities to USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, employees and communities.
- Increased number of continuing academic and professional appointments held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Retention of employees in continuing positions, including initiatives for conversion of fixed term and/or casual roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Employment of at least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person in a senior executive role.
- Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed at USQ, equivalent to 3% of the total workforce progressively over the life of the Strategy.

Goal 3

- All current and new executives and all new senior employees complete appropriate cultural sensitivity, safety and inclusion training programs.
- Cultural sensitivity, safety and inclusion and learning and development programs are available to all employees, with an emphasis on those employees who interact professionally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, students and communities.

- Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to engage in culturally significant activities, events and networks.
- Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to contribute policy and practice, with university policies and procedures appropriately recognising additional workload required in contributing to such matters.
- High levels of positive employee engagement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Goal 4

- Increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in leadership, learning and development and career advancement programs and initiatives.
- Expanded pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to experience career progression, including increased success in promotion and/or other advancement opportunities.
- Increased recognition and promotion of excellence and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Goal 5

- Appropriate resources and funding are provided to ensure the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy is implemented and reviewed on a regular basis.
- Targets identified in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy are met.
- University Key Performance Indicators and targets developed, monitored and regularly reported to University Council, the Vice-Chancellor, Management Committees and Divisional Heads.
- Progress against Strategy goals, objectives and actions reported regularly to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy Committee.

The composition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy Committee includes representatives from University senior management, academic and professional employees from across the University, the Head of CISER, Unions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Support Network Representative/s, and Human Resources.

Accountability for implementation of the Strategy is spread across the Institution. However, a core driver of the implementation of the Strategy is the People Strategy team within the People Portfolio previously known as the Diversity and Inclusion team within Human Resources. Within this team, there is an Identified position with a specific focus on strategy implementation and reporting through the allocated governance structure.

The emergence of COVID-19 and the challenges that presented in terms of a rapid shift to remote working and other associated health and safety risks, meant several deliverables and programs did not proceed in 2020 (such as Traineeship Programs etc). Work pivoted instead to creating a culturally safe and inclusive environment, through the beginnings of the USQ Cultural Capability Development Program, and the acquisition of the highly acclaimed SBS Inclusion modules (including a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness module) as part of the USQ Inclusion Upskilling suite.

Employment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person in a Senior Executive Position

The intention of USQ's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy is to grow and retain a talented and sustainable cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic, research, professional and senior employees through a multi-faceted and coordinated approach. One of the performance measures under the Strategy's Attract and Retain Goals is the Employment of at least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person in a senior executive role, which aligns with section 12 b(iii) of the ISSP Guidelines.

Currently, the University has a distributed model of Indigenous leadership with responsibility dispersed via the:

- Head of CISER:** A senior academic appointment, details of which are outlined above under section 2. This position has been filled in an acting capacity for an interim period Sep 2020, with acting arrangements currently in place until June 2021.
- Indigenous Governance Mechanism:** The ISSP Committee, described in more detail under 6.3 below, focuses specifically on matters related the internal management of the ISSP grant program.
- Elders and Valued Persons Advisory Board:** Provides high-level strategic advice to the Vice-Chancellor to assist the Vice-Chancellor in positioning the University to pursue Reconciliation and the improvement of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the activities of the University.

- d. **Elder in Residence:** Provides specialist cultural support and high-level advice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, promoting and fostering connections between the University and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community. The incumbent is a key advisor to the Vice-Chancellor, University Executive, elders, students, staff and key stakeholders in the community, on matters concerning First Peoples at each of USQ's campuses and provides an important conduit between University management and the Elders and Valued Persons Advisory Board.

During the latter part of 2020, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), in collaboration with the Chief People Officer (People Portfolio), undertook extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees regarding the recruitment of a senior Indigenous leader at USQ and to seek advice about the desired attributes of this position, appointee and a culturally appropriate recruitment process. An external search firm has been engaged to lead the search for the appointment of a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement), with the search commencing late April 2021. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement) will have responsibility for University-wide leadership in Australian Indigenous strategy, policy, leadership, community, culture, education and engagement and will provide strategic advice and policy and planning leadership on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters to the University community. The incumbent will report to the Vice-Chancellor on University wide matters and to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on education and academic matters.

Plans to progress towards an Indigenous workforce target of 3%

The USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy was in its third year of implementation in 2020. As of October 2020, the full-time equivalent (FTE) percentage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was sitting at 2.21%. This has decreased slightly since the 2019 reported figure. An overview of the Indigenous workforce data for 2020 by level/position, appointment and contract type, is provided in Table 18 below.

Table 18. Indigenous workforce data (2020 breakdown)

Level/position	Permanent		Casual and contract	
	Academic	Non-academic	Academic	Non-academic
Executive				
Level E	2			
Level D	1			
Level C				
Level B	4		1	
Level A	2			
Level 10				1
Level 07		5		
Level 06		2		
Level 05		8		4
Level 04		5		
Level 03				1
Casual			22	12

Indigenous Governance Mechanism

The University has an appropriately constituted Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) Committee. The ISSP Committee focuses specifically on matters related the internal management of the ISSP grant program. This complements the high-level strategic consultancy on Indigenous matters supplied by the Elders and Valued Persons Advisory Board (Chaired by the Elder in Residence) to the Vice-Chancellor. The ISSP Committee membership is constituted by a majority

of Indigenous persons and includes several University senior executives and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee and student representatives.

The ISSP Committee membership comprises:

- Dr Raelene Ward, Associate Professor, College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research, ISSP Committee Chair
- Professor Josh Pienaar, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)
- Professor Shirley O'Neill, Interim Head, College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research
- Dr Christie White, Executive Director (Student Success and Wellbeing), Student Success and Wellbeing
- Mrs Trudi Davidson, Director (People and Workforce Strategy), Human Resources
- Ms Tonia Chalk, Lecturer (Education), School of Education
- Mrs Vicki Horner, Lecturer (Indigenous Support), School of Nursing and Midwifery
- Mrs Anne-Marie Oosthuizen, Manager (Financial Reports and Budgets), Financial Services
- Miss Rebecca Klein, Coordinating Operational Support Officer, College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research, ISSP Committee Officer
- President, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Association. Position vacant.

USQ continues to implement strategies ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to be involved in decision-making at all levels, through active representation on University committees and working groups. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation is encompassed in the following Boards and Committees:

- Elders and Valued Persons Advisory Board
- Academic Board and its sub-committees:
 - Academic Program Committee
 - Education Quality Committee
 - Research Committee
 - Academic Appeals Committee
- Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts (BELA) Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Faculty of Health Engineering and Sciences (HES) Diversity and Inclusion Academic Committee
- Academic Division Teaching and Learning Committee
- Academic Division Research Committee
- Indigenous Research Strategy Committee
- Social Justice Strategy Board
- Reconciliation Action Plan Committee
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy Committee
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network (Rotational Chair)
- Graduating Indigenous Leaders Commitment (GILC) Committee
- Indigenous Student Success Committee (ISSP)

The University is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are involved in decision-making at all levels, through active representation on University committees and working groups.

Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

The ISSP Committee Chair and other members of the ISSP Committee have contributed to, and had shared oversight, of this report.

ⁱ Only payments made during 2020 can be included in this table. For multi-year scholarship agreements, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded in the performance reporting for the relevant future grant year.

ⁱⁱ Record the number of students (head count) not EFTSL.

ⁱⁱⁱ Include both preserved and new ISSP scholarships.

^{iv} This figures in this column should be the sum of the relevant row.

^v The total may not be the sum of the previous columns as some students may receive several scholarships.

^{vi} Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

^{vii} Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

^{viii} Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

^{ix} Only record amounts which would/did require payment during the 2020 calendar year. For multi-year scholarship offers, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded against the reporting for the relevant future grant year.

^x Note the data in this table is a subsection of the all student scholarship data provided in Table 1.

^{xi} This figures in this column should be the sum of the relevant row.

^{xii} Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2020 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2020 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2020 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships and preserved scholarships).

^{xiii} This data confirms the provider's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.