

Indigenous Student Success Program 2020 Performance Report

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1. Enrolments (Access)

In 2020, VU committed to various activities and work to externally improve access to the university via sharing information on supports and pathways for prospective Aboriginal students and their families. This included, among other things, the following tasks and activities:

- Attending Toorong Marnong Remote Indigenous Tertiary Information Sessions.
- Collaboration with Future Students VU to engage early with VU Guaranteed Entry Indigenous students.
- Participation in VU'S Open.
- Collaborating with the NRL/Melbourne Storm Aboriginal Schools to Work program and SEDA College to support students from the program who commenced studies at VU in 2020.

Significant work was done to improve our digital footprint for prospective students to ensure appropriate information was made easier to access. This work included:

- Improving presentation, visibility of Indigenous information and resources on VU website
- Creation and updating of content to ensure information was up to date, relevant and appropriate.
- Creation and publishing of student and graduate success stories to share on various platforms

Our EFTSL commenced number increased from 82.5 to 107.3. It is anticipated that strong interest in VU's unique Block Model has been a factor in the growth of EFSTL.

The above activities are featured in our Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy Action Plan and absorbed into various Moondani Balluk staff workloads and funded by the University. Specifically the ISSP funds are used to provide specific financial support to commencing Aboriginal students through direct contact with our Aboriginal Student Support Officer.

Table 1 Scholarships - breakdown of 2020 payments^{1 2 3}

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ^{4 5}	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ⁶								
Undergraduate ⁷	35,984	16	33,228	8	-	-	69,212	24
Post-graduate ⁸								
Other								
Total	35,984	16	33,228	8	-	-	69,212	24

2. Progression (access and outcomes)

The VU Block Model was implemented by the First Year College (FYC) in 2018 and extended the block mode of teaching across all undergraduate and postgraduate courses by the end of 2020. The model is intended to ensure a sense of belonging, learner sophistication and the other known predictors of learning gain. It means that students will be able to focus on a single subject, rather than juggling multiple units with competing demands and deadlines; to immerse themselves in each unit, learning through discussion and group interaction; to form strong peer connections; to get to know and be known by their educators; to receive timely and targeted support; and, crucially, to achieve success early to build confidence and motivation.

Average pass rates of first-year units have increased from 78% in 2017 to 87% from 2018 to 2020, with particular improvement for students from low equity groups. Strong student retention rates (88%) combined with high satisfaction rates (82%) demonstrate students' satisfaction with studying under VU's Block Model. Indigenous specific data was unavailable at time of finishing this report. Our EFTSL data showed that our Indigenous student progression/success rate decreased slightly from 86.01 to 85.1, but still around a 10% increase compared to 2017 before implementation of block. We currently have less completions, but most of these students would have commenced a bachelor degree in 2016 or 2017, so we should expect to see the benefits of block mode delivery translate into greater completions from 2021 onwards.

VU's Aboriginal Student Mentoring program is a collaboration between VU's Learning Hub and Moondani Balluk. This targeted program enables drop in sessions for Aboriginal students facilitated by an Aboriginal student mentor that provides specific, one to one academic support to Aboriginal students involving areas such as academic writing, referencing, study hints and tips. Specific tutoring was only provided to one UG Aboriginal student through ISSP funding.

The Moondani Balluk combined office and student spaces, available across numerous campuses, provide a culturally safe environment for enrolled students to gather and engage. PG students formed an informal postgraduate student group that utilised the Moondani Balluk specific space at our FP Campus on a monthly basis. Continued consolidation of VU's Aboriginal student club, Bundima, provided an extra layer of cultural and other support to enrolled students. During COVID most meetings were held remotely. A Bundima foodbank was accessed multiple times in 2020. The strategies to improve the cultural competency of staff is provided in Section 6.2. The equipment and related infrastructure of our student spaces and the Bundima foodbank are funded by ISSP.

Moondani Balluk provides Indigenous student support. In 2020 it employed 1 staff member to specifically provide direct student support to enrolled Aboriginal students. Assistance was provided to this staff member from 2 other Moondani Balluk staff, 1 VU Polytechnic staff and the P&C Indigenous Engagement officer. The ISSP funded a small portion of the 1 and all of the salary of one other staff member.

Table 2a Tutorial assistance provided in 2020

Level of study	Number of students assisted	Total hours of assistance ⁹	Expenditure ¹⁰ (\$)
Enabling			
Undergraduate	1	98	\$4,461.24
Post graduate			
Other			
Total	1	98	\$4,461.24

Table 2b Indigenous Support Activities provided in 2020¹¹

Activity ^{12 13}	Number of student participants	Expenditure (\$)
Bundima Aboriginal Student Club	10	\$92.30
Aboriginal Student Mentor – Learning Hub funded	20	\$0
Internal Sponsorships	20	\$14,893.69
Student Grants	12	\$15,000.00
Student Education Costs	82	\$13,175.15

3. Completions (outcomes)

Victoria University students continued to succeed during one of the most significant disruptions ever seen in university education. We achieved similar results, and in some cases slightly improved, under VU's Block Model delivered through digital and remote learning. As one of the first universities in Australia to report outcomes for students in the midst of the global pandemic, new VU data shows academic success is similar to the same time in 2019, despite the unprecedented COVID-19 disruption.

In regard to Indigenous students in 2020 there is a slight decrease in completions, from 23 to 19. However most of these students, like the numbers for success/progression, would have commenced studies in 2016 or 2017 before the VU Block Model. It is anticipated that the benefits of block mode delivery will translate into greater completions from 2021 onwards.

The Aboriginal Student Support Officer, with the Aboriginal Employment and Community Liaison Officer, advertises opportunities on internal and external programs and vacancies to relevant cohorts of students. Students are strongly encouraged to work with Moondani Balluk to apply for VU student as staff positions; various graduate positions, roles which provide industry experience, employment which compliments study loads; or continue on to postgraduate study.

In 2020 ISSP funds were used to employ students in Moondani Balluk on a casual or sessional teaching basis dependant on the type of project work or teaching available. Moondani Balluk supports Aboriginal student interest in students as staff roles and casual employment across the University, where possible and appropriate. Moondani Balluk maintain contact with graduates where possible. This may include correspondence regarding employment and networking opportunities and assisting with queries, including return to study.

Specific examples of Indigenous VU students accessing internal and external opportunities include; Aboriginal Nursing Cadetship at Western Health, Paramedicine cadetship at St Vincent's Hospital, Direct Support Worker at Connecting Home Victoria and Connected eLearning Officer in a student as staff role.

4. Regional and remote students

All of the activities provided by Moondani Balluk to enrolled students is provided also to those students from regional or remote locations. Ensuring students from these regions are cognisant of relevant local Aboriginal and mainstream services and organisations may help to give students a sense of belonging and connection. Specifically the Aboriginal Student Support Officer role in Moondani Balluk is to provide the following supports to regional and remote students:

Financial – ISSP specific

- Payment of textbooks, stationery and any other course materials
- Transport (Myki etc.)
- Providing laptops on loan for students
- Student grants (granted on a case by case basis,)
- Scholarships (VU Indigenous Commonwealth scholarships)
- Payment of various administration costs for on campus student accommodation
- Providing emergency funding via grocery gift cards
- Assistance with miscellaneous costs which impacts capacity and ability to study

Table 4 Scholarship data for remote and regional students^{14 15}

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ¹⁶	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2019 Payments			30,008	6			30,008	6
B. 2020 Offers ¹⁷			8,307	3			8,307	3
C. Percentage ¹⁸ (C=B/A*100)								
2019 Payments			30,008	6			30,008	6

5. Working with Vulnerable People Requirement¹⁹

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

6. Eligibility requirements

6.1. Indigenous Education Strategy

The University has its [Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy](#) 2017 – 2020 that meets our requirements under section 13 of the ISSP guidelines. VU does not have a RAP as reconciliation is work that non-Aboriginal people need to do; our Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy is an integrated method for Moondani Balluk to work collegially with VU's Senior Executive to improve the access, participation, and success of Aboriginal students; and to engage respectfully with Aboriginal community. The Strategy is monitored and evaluated through the Vice Chancellor's Indigenous Strategy Leadership Committee. Our 2020 milestones included the release by the Vice Chancellor of the Moondani Balluk [Black Lives Matter Statement](#) and approval during COVID lockdown to enter the Footscray Park Campus for a gathering and Smoking Ceremony.

Moondani Balluk academic staff work closely with academic colleagues in a number of ways to include Indigenous knowledge in curricula and teaching practices. These include, among other things, reaccreditation processes, Program Advisory Groups, and Course Advisory Groups. In 2020 an Indigenous micro-credential was designed and developed for use on VU Online in the Master of Nursing and our AEK Aboriginal units were redesigned for delivery in a digitally remote mode during COVID.

6.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

The University meets its requirements under section 12 of the ISSP Guidelines through the Yannoneit Employment Strategy. The Strategy is the document which sets out the guidelines and aims of VU Aboriginal employment at VU. It was developed in consultation with VU People, Culture, Diversity & Inclusion and the Director of Moondani Balluk, launched in 2019 and is scheduled to be reviewed along with other VU strategies at the end of 2021. <https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/vu-yannoneit-strategy-2019-2020.pdf>

Provisions exist within the Strategy for appropriate support systems tailored for all Aboriginal staff. It also includes a requirement that all Managers who employ Aboriginal staff receive information regarding mentoring and support including for professional and academic staff.

During the COVID lockdowns and work from home directives we continued delivery of cultural awareness training through the following means: Global emails and zoom sessions that circulated to staff important updates such as awareness of Black Lives Matter, NAIDOC week and National Reconciliation Week; provision of online cultural awareness sessions, in conjunction with promoting other Aboriginal community activities amongst staff. In addition to the above, VU continued to develop an online induction course with a specific Aboriginal component.

A temporary hold on recruitment across all of VU was implemented in 2020. While the University understands the request for an Indigenous workforce target of 3% that is included in our Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy, the temporary hold on recruitment across all of VU in 2020 has not enabled us to progress towards this target.

In 2020, the Director Moondani Balluk position was previously shifted into the Senior Leadership Group working alongside PVC and other Director positions as this senior level. As a result of a change in personnel, the Senior Executive Group realigned its structure, and in mid-2020 the DVC and PVC positions were renamed Provost and Associate Provost. The Director Moondani Balluk was renamed to Associate Provost Indigenous.

Overall, under unique and challenging circumstances VU was still able to provide Cultural Awareness Training to non-Aboriginal staff, and impress upon existing Aboriginal staff their employment and wellbeing was important to VU.

Table 6.2 Indigenous workforce data (2020 breakdown)^{20 21 22 23}

Level/position	Permanent		Casual/contract/fixed-term	
	Academic	Non-academic	Academic	Non-academic
Academic A	1			
Sessional Academic Block Rate			4	
Academic B	2		2	
Academic C	1			
Academic E	1			
Teaching Focussed Academics A	1			
Teaching Focussed Academics B	1			
TAFE Sessional Teaching			1	
HEP 3				1
HEP 5		2		
HEP 6				3
HEP 7		2		1
HEP 8				1
SSC		1		
Total	7	5	7	6

6.3. Indigenous Governance Mechanism

The University has its [Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy 2017 – 2020](#). VU does not have a RAP as reconciliation is work that non-Aboriginal people need to do; our Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy is an integrated method for Moondani Balluk to work collegially with VU's Senior Executive to improve the access, participation, and success of Aboriginal students; and to engage respectfully with Aboriginal community. Our Strategy is led by the Vice Chancellor, the associated Action Plan is implemented by Senior Responsible Officers and Moondani Balluk through the Vice Chancellors Indigenous Strategy Leadership Committee (ISLC).

Attachment A provides the detail of membership.

The Vice Chancellor's ISLC was established in 2016 and is responsible for the oversight of the University's Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy. The Committee meets twice a year to review the Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy and its implementation through its associated Action Plan. Alongside these standing agenda items in 2020 the Committee discussed and endorsed the following:

- Victoria University Issues for Protection and Management of Indigenous Knowledge.
- UA Good Practice Principles of Course Accreditation and Review of Indigenous Curriculum
- Campus Locations, Space and new Infrastructure.

The Committee also advises, reviews and monitors the work of Moondani Balluk in regard to its College Plan, student support activities, community engagement, and recruitment for which ISSP resources and funding are utilised.

In regard to the involvement of Aboriginal people in the decisions of the university, the Associate Provost Indigenous and other appropriately qualified employees of Moondani Balluk in 2020 were members of a number of governance bodies and groups, as outlined in **Attachment B**.

6.3.1. Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

The VC's Indigenous Strategy Leadership Committee noted and endorsed the 2019 ISSP performance and acquittal reports and will provide relevant feedback and direction on the 2020 performance and acquittal reports in 2021. Due to the change to Vice Chancellor and COVID related impacts, the Vice Chancellor's Indigenous Strategy Leadership Committee has not yet convened.

Additional information for completing the template

- ¹ 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.
- ² Record the number of students (head count) not EFTSL.
- ³ Include both preserved and new ISSP scholarships.
- ⁴ This figures in this column should be the sum of the relevant row.
- ⁵ The total may not be the sum of the previous columns as some students may receive several scholarships.
- ⁶ Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.
- ⁷ Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.
- ⁸ Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.
- ⁹ Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).
- ¹⁰ Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.
- ¹¹ Add more rows if necessary.
- ¹² Include a brief description of the activity.
- ¹³ Providers can either provide a breakdown of the major activities or a total for all the activities undertaken. Examples of activities may include mentoring, outreach activities, promotion of scholarships, events, elder-in-residence, career guidance etc.
- ¹⁴ 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.
- ¹⁵ Note the data in this table is a subsection of the all student scholarship data provided in Table 1.
- ¹⁶ This figures in this column should be the sum of the relevant row.
- ¹⁷ 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).
- ¹⁸ This data confirms the provider's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.
- ¹⁹ This section confirms that the provider complies with Section 35A of the Guidelines.
- ²⁰ While universities report on the number of Indigenous staff members through mainstream reporting requirements, the additional information provided in this section provides enhanced monitoring of the university's efforts in building its Indigenous workforce.
- ²¹ Record all Indigenous staff employed by the provider, including those not working on ISSP-related activities.
- ²² The numbers recorded here should be a headcount of staff and not the full-time equivalent.
- ²³ There is no longer a requirement to break up these by faculty. Please group together results by level.