

Indigenous Student Success Program

2024 Performance Report

Organisation

Victoria University

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1. Declaration

In providing this Performance Report, it is acknowledged that it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

2. Enrolments (Access)

Victoria University (VU) and Moondani Balluk – Indigenous Academic Unit committed to various activities to improve access and enrolments. This outreach and recruitment work primarily centred on sharing relevant information on financial, academic and pastoral supports available via Moondani Balluk for prospective Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, their families and relevant stakeholders, programs and organisations who engage with said students. A core component of Victoria University's newly launched [First Nations Action Plan 2025-2028](#) is to grow the amount of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the University.

Through an internal collaboration with the VU Future Students department, 13 out of 48 eligible Aboriginal year 12 students accepted a VU course offer via [VU's Early Entry](#) program. Each year the Future Students department share the list of Aboriginal students who have applied for the program alongside their VTAC preferences. Moondani Balluk then contact those students, to provide information on Moondani Balluk supports, VU pathways and to present VU as a viable option to commence studies in 2025.

Moondani Balluk also attended various Aboriginal career expos and school visits to further engage with potential students externally. This included visits to local schools such as Sunshine College, Staughton College, The Grange P-12, Gisbourne Secondary College, Wyndham Secondary College and Maribyrnong College, where 15+ students and career teachers were engaged with. Career expos attended included:

- Melbourne Storm Schools to Work program expo
- Bendigo and Ballarat Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group expo
- Western Bulldogs Nallei Jerring Indigenous Leadership Program aspiration days in Ballarat and Footscray
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.'s Toorong Marnong Koorie Big Day Out in Thornbury and Shepparton.

In addition, Victoria University hosted over 30 local Aboriginal students for two 'Deadly Tech Days' hosted by the [Wyndham Tech School](#) located at our Werribee campus, which is a science, technology, engineering and maths facility.

It is important to note that some applicants of the aforementioned VU Early Entry program may have engaged with Moondani Balluk before via the above activities, helping to further strengthen connections, knowledge sharing by the time these students approach the end of their secondary school studies.

Moondani Balluk provides timely advice and support to potential students and applicants who contact us directly on an ongoing basis. Examples of this work include, responding to general enquiries, tracking and assisting with course applications. Including engaging with VU Aboriginal Alumni who are considering returning to study and students who may pathway from Vocational Education to Higher Education and Higher Education to Postgraduate studies. The hiring of one full time, casual Aboriginal Student Support Officer in late 2024 via ISSP funding has bolstered this work.

Certification

Table 1 **ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2024 payments¹**

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ²	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ³	\$5,616	3	-	-	\$171	2	\$5787	5
Undergraduate ⁴	-	-	\$8,651.39	3	0	0	\$8,651.39	3
Undergraduate student grants	\$112,000	55	-	-	\$2,000	18	\$114,000	73
Post-graduate ⁵	\$59,725	21	-	-	-	-	\$59,725	21
Other(course materials, incidentals, etc)	\$7,919.74	40	-	-	-	-	\$7,919.74	40
Misc. (student activities, digital grocery/fuel gift cards, student sponsorship for fee help)	\$4,483.51	45	-	-	-	-	\$4,483.51	45
Total	\$189,774.25	159	\$8651.39	3	\$2,171	20	\$200,566.64	182

3. Progression (outcomes)

Our Indigenous scholarships, delivered via our Moondani Balluk student grants process, provide financial assistance in the way of bursaries via a lump sum. These grants can be accessed multiple times by a student per year. Moondani Balluk have full ownership and oversight of the distribution of these grants, which aim to reduce and/or remove financial barriers and improve access to university. Students access these grants to pay for rent and for general living costs. In addition to this, Moondani Balluk financially supports students to cover course materials, such as textbooks, Myki card travel aid, equipment, supplies, uniforms and specific registrations such as police check, teacher, nursing and paramedic registration costs. Digital gift cards purchased from Procurement at VU are also available to enrolled students to access that assist with grocery and fuel costs. We also provide rewards and gifts purchased from Aboriginal businesses to further support and encourage high achieving and graduating students.

An additional source of financial support available to enrolled students, which is separate to ISSP funding, is the [Victoria University First Nations Fund](#). The VU First Nations Fund was established in 2022 and supports enrolled students with particular costs related to their studies that may either be a one off, unique or usually falls outside the remit of ISSP funding. These costs go towards items that contribute positively to the student's university experience and may include sporting competitions for elite student athletes, additional funding for research, on campus accommodation and attending conferences. Also, as an added incentive for the previously mentioned VU Early Entry program, Year 12 applicants that successfully enrol in a VU Course are eligible for a bonus scholarship.

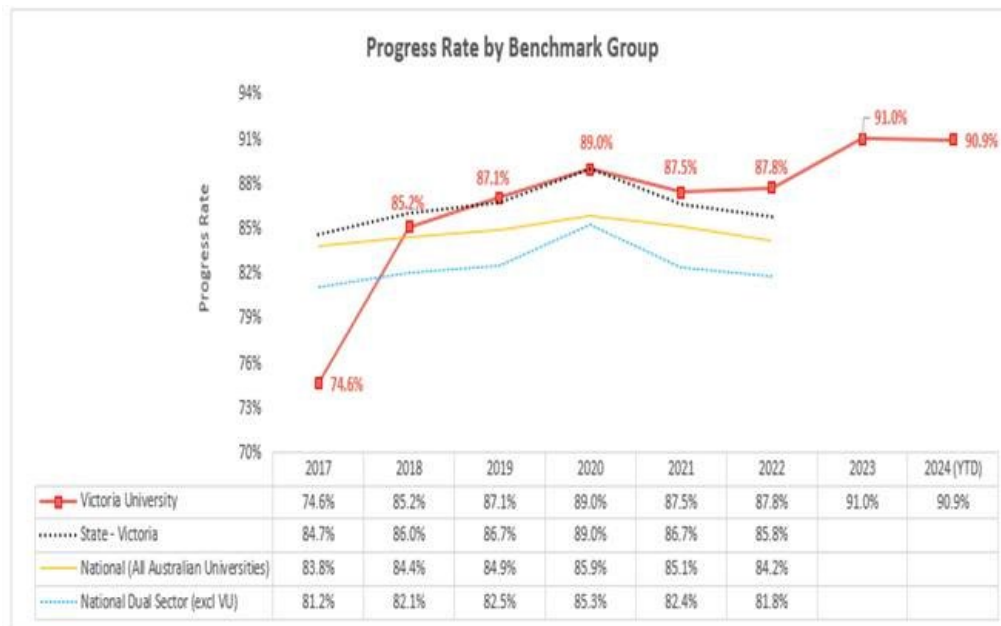
Moondani Balluk also offer individual, one to one tutoring to enrolled students. We match students with suitable tutors employed by Moondani Balluk, who specialise in areas such as law, psychology and health, however these tutors can also assist with other types of general academic support. In recent years we have doubled the amount of tutors employed by Moondani Balluk. The arrangement between the student and tutor promotes flexibility to work within the students' schedule. Victoria University's Learning Hub is the mainstream academic support service that is available to assist enrolled students with course progression. This includes, but is not limited to, drop in services and workshops that support with academic writing, referencing, theory and study hints and tips. VU has the highest success rate nationally for Aboriginal students out of any university at 86%. The success is shaped by the VU Block Model and the support of Moondani Balluk. The previously linked VU First Nations Action Plan includes targets and actions to build on this strength.

In regards to progression, taken from the internal Strategic Review of the Block Model report student feedback suggested that:

- the ability to repeat a Block without waiting one year and delaying their course progression is advantageous;
- the Block Model allows them to dive deeply into and focus on one unit at a time, rather than juggling several at once. Students felt they were able to achieve high marks from the single unit focus; and,
- students emphasised that the sense of success after completing a unit every four weeks is a significant motivator to complete the rest of their course, with a sharper focus on understanding the concepts and learning through assessments.

Following the introduction of the Block Model, VU's performance improved for progress rates from 2018 to 2020 (refer to the chart in the next column). However, progress rates for VU and the sector deteriorated during 2021, the year most affected by the pandemic. Results show progress rates improved in 2022 as students returned to in-person teaching and these results have continued to increase at VU (noting the sector data for 2023 and 2024 YTD is not included).

4. Progression (outcomes) (cont.)



Notes:

1. Progress rate is defined as: SUM (Passed EFTSL) / SUM (Assessed EFTSL).
2. This chart compares the progress rate for domestic commencing bachelor students between Victoria University and Benchmark groups, including Dual Sector Universities, Victorian State universities and All Australian Universities.
3. 2017-2020 figures are from the Universities Australia HE National Aggregate Load datasets.
4. 2021 figures are from Australian Department of Education reporting. The 2021 national dual sector figure is the (unweighted) mean of individual dual sector provider progress rates and should be treated as indicative only.
5. The 2021 national and state figures include some non-UA providers and may differ slightly from the UA member-based figures used in prior years.
6. The 2022, 2023 and 2024 (YTD) figures for VU are from internal data and may not match the Official rates but are indicative. Internal data was accessed on 21-June-2024.

Table 2 Tutorial assistance provided in 2024

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted ⁶	Total number of tutorial sessions attended ⁷	Total hours of assistance ⁸	Expenditure ⁹ (\$)
Enabling	-	-	-	-
Undergraduate	7	213	426	\$16,814.485
Post-graduate	1	16	32	\$1,612.160
Other	-	-	-	-
Total	8	229	458	\$18,426.645

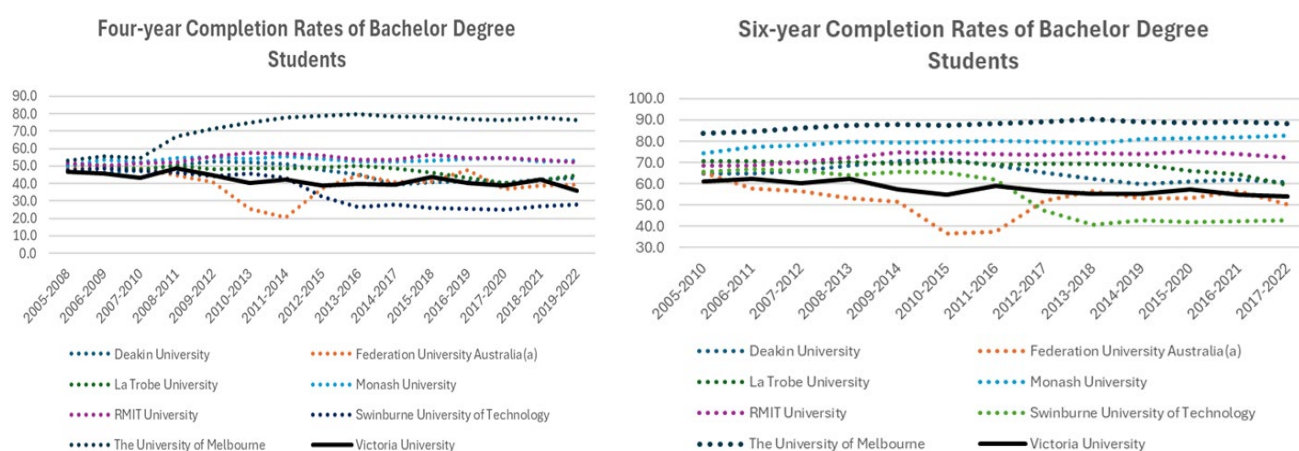
5. Completions (outcomes)

Our dedicated student support team are available to support enrolled students in various ways. As a dual sector institution with registered pathways between Higher Education Diplomas and Higher Education, we assist students across HE and Postgraduate studies. Our Higher Education Diplomas offer an alternative pathway into Bachelor-level courses for students who may not have met the requirements for Bachelor degrees and are as such enabling by nature. Eg. [Diploma of Education Studies](#) > Bachelor of Education. Along with our Bachelor degrees, Higher Education Diplomas are also taught under the exclusive VU Block Model.

The VU Block Model is built on a strong foundation of evidence-based and research-informed strategies and isn't just a new way to structure study – it's been a game-changer for student success, engagement, and graduate outcomes. Rather than juggling four subjects at once, students focus on one subject at a time, over a four-week block. That means deeper learning, greater focus, and better results. Students learn in small, workshop-style classes – where real-time feedback and meaningful interactions help them build confidence and master skills.

Over a third of VU students are from equity backgrounds, such as low socio-economic status, Indigenous, regional and remote, and those with accessibility requirements due to disability. Almost half are first in their family to go to university. While most students find the transition to tertiary education challenging, equity-bearing students often find it particularly so. VU's Block Model and dedicated First Year College offer a more supportive and structured learning environment, especially for students who are not as academically prepared or ready to make a successful transition to HE. Additionally, VU's course architecture is designed to provide support for students moving to a different course after first year. This movement is monitored through attrition/retention data. However, a significant proportion of students still experience a variety of academic, administrative and life-load challenges, for example with: enrolment systems; fees and course rules; course and unit choice; study skills; finances; and, caring responsibilities.

The assistance Moondani Balluk provides to enrolled students plays a substantial role in student progression and completing their courses. Our scholarships mentioned in Section 3 assist with course materials, incidentals and living costs to reduce and remove financial barriers, to enable students to commit to studies. Our tutoring program provides students with one to one specialist academic support to receive tailored assistance. This also includes pastoral care across our campuses and navigating the general university system and processes. The charts below outline VU's completion rates against other Victorian universities.^[6] Completion rates are calculated by tracking cohorts of commencing student outcomes over time – i.e., after 4 or 6 years, how many commencing students have completed their studies, how many are still studying, and how many have not completed an award course.



Overall, it is evident that retention rates have improved for commencing UG students but attrition and completion rates for VU's UG cohorts require attention. In addition to the implementation of the VU Block Model and the FYC, a number of further initiatives and strategies have been put in place to monitor and reduce student attrition, including:

- data campaigns to identify students at risk and provide tailored interventions;
- introduction of the Non-Engaged Students Plan, which removes certain-to-fail non-engaged students from their units/courses before census dates; alongside support from Library, Learning Design and Innovation, Learning Hubs and Student Advisors; and
- the draft Retention and Success Plan 2025-2028, which is nearing completion and due to proceed through the governance committees from August 2024 for feedback and final approval. The Plan aims to achieve further improvements in student outcomes, leveraging the success and learnings of the past eight years. This plan is a critical plank in VU's ongoing quality assurance and enhancement strategy. The implementation of and success metrics for the new VU Retention and Success Plan should be closely and actively monitored via the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee and via the Annual Course Monitoring process, to iteratively determine if further actions and investigations are required based on the latest data insights and course review processes.

6. Regional and remote students

What support was offered through ISSP to regional and remote students, how were these students prioritised?

- *What strategies were implemented to improve access to university study?*
- *What activities were provided?*
- *What has been the impact of these strategies and activities*

The assistance provided to enrolled students via Moondani Balluk is universal, students from regional, rural and remote locations are also able to access our services. These [supports](#) include financial, academic and pastoral supports.

Students from said locations tend to access our scholarships, which are ISSP specific, to aid with moving costs and initial bond and rent payments to get settled. These same students may also require additional support with accessing our transport system to travel to and from campus, as such we provide aid with “topping up” Myki cards. This also includes obtaining a student concession card to access discounted student fares, also known as concession rates.

These targeted supports ensure that students are not under financial duress immediately and thus can initially focus on their entry into University, successfully navigating their first few months of transition, with assistance from Moondani Balluk. This early period is crucial to make sure that students feel comfortable, that they belong and will not be disadvantaged so that they commence the course on an equal footing with all other students.

Our student support staff ensure that students know about Aboriginal services, programs and organisations in the area, should they wish to access these to provide further assistance and care.

The VU First Nations Fund provides dedicated support to students who have accepted a place at the [UniLodge](#) student accommodation at Footscray Park, which is directly across the road from our Footscray Park campus and a main residential option for all students who are based nearby.

The Fund is available to directly cover the various startup costs, which includes the bond payment, security and cleaning fees, plus the first few weeks rent. Note that this Fund is not ISSP specific and is utilised in addition to our ISSP funded supports.

Table 4 ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students¹⁰

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2023 Payments	\$4,152	2	\$5,538	1	0	0	\$9,690	3
B. 2024 Offers ¹¹	\$15,000	4	\$2,603.44	2	\$80	1	\$17,683.44	7
C. Percentage ¹² (C=B/A*100)							-	
2024 Payments	\$19,152	6	\$8,141.44	3	\$80	1	\$9,690	10

7. Eligibility criteria

7.1. Indigenous Education Strategy

In 2024 the University began work consulting with staff and students on a First Nations Action Plan. This work was framed in context of the [VU Strategic Plan 2022 – 2028](#) six pillars of Doing Dual Differently, Partnering with Principle, Maximising Research with Impact, Protecting Country, and a Thriving Place to Study and Work. In November 2024, University Council approved the First Nations Action Plan 2025 – 2028 and work will commence on an Operational Plan that will engage university-wide departments and Colleges for implementation. Note also that the [VU Research with Impact Strategy](#) includes First Nations Knowledges as one of its six priority themes.

The Operational Plan Growing objective is to create a culturally safe environment for First nations people to connect, belong and thrive; and work to eliminate institutionalised racism. Actions included are to increase participation and success of First Nations students and staff; and ensure students and staff are culturally safe. The Truth-Telling objective is to deliver the truth of First Nations history, colonisation, dispossession, racism – and the ongoing impact – to all VU students and staff. Actions included are to educate First Nations truth and justice through learning and teaching.

Across 2024, under our VU thrive* staff program we delivered a series of Acknowledgement of Country workshops. Like the Protecting Country extra transcripts for students, these workshops introduced Aboriginal landscape and ceremony, discussion on Country, Traditional Owners, and the diversity of Aboriginal people in Victoria. Our VU Yulendj Wurrung online cultural awareness training remains mandatory for all staff to complete.

7.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

The response to 7.1 covers our Workforce Strategy.

7.3. Indigenous Governance Mechanism

In 2024 our current governance mechanism remained in place. The Leadership Team within Moondani Balluk meets monthly and consists of the Executive Director, Director of Teaching and Learning, the Associate Director Teaching and Learning and the Director of Research. Three of the four team members are Aboriginal. The Leadership Team do not have a charter but are aware of their roles and responsibilities within the VU enterprise and governance structures, and Finance budget requirements of all grants received in Moondani Balluk, including the ISSP. They work alongside the Aboriginal Student Support Coordinator and the professional staff Aboriginal support team to advise, recommend, and monitor the use of ISSP funding. The Executive Director has authority and responsibility within the university financial delegations for ISSP funds. The approved First Nations Action Plan 2025 – 2028 Business Case asks the university to establish a leadership and governance mechanism.

Regarding other activities involving Aboriginal people in the decisions of the university the following applies:

- The Executive Director of Moondani Balluk reports directly to the Vice Chancellor and is a part of the VC Group.
- Academic Board has the Director of Teaching and learning.
- Learning Teaching and Quality Committee has the Director of Teaching and Learning as a member.
- Research and Research Training Committee has the Director of Research as a member.

7.3.1. Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Moondani Balluk is more than our Indigenous academic unit - they are the experts and authority in growing, sharing, and connecting Aboriginal perspectives and standpoints at VU. Moondani Balluk delivers Aboriginal units and courses, including Aboriginal politics, traditions and policy, and health and education – using de-colonial approaches to learning and teaching. They also conduct research and provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In 2024, in-depth consultations occurred to design and get approval for a VU First Nations Action Plan. The VC and the Executive Director of Moondani Balluk led these consultations.

With reference to the authority and expertise of Moondani Balluk, the Executive Director notes the content of this performance report while also involved in working with Aboriginal staff to finalise it and works closely with our Finance Department to finalise the financial acquittal. The university is committed to progressing the work of Moondani Balluk through its Strategic Plan and through the First Nations Action Plan in collaboration and good relations of Aboriginal staff and relevant university departments, Colleges and Research Institutes.

Additional information for completing the template

¹ This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2024. The figures for students should include the actual number (head count, not the EFTSL). Scholarship figures (head count and costs) should include the university award scholarships from the flexible finding pool as well as any preserved scholarships. Only payments made during 2024 should 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 This figures provide for the total number of students receiving scholarships and expenditure for those scholarships. For the student count, in cases where a student receives more than one scholarship, the student would only be counted once in the total (consequently the total figure may not be the sum of the preceding columns). For the expenditure, the total should be the total of the preceding expenditure columns.

³ Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

⁴ Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁵ Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁶ Total number of unique students supported by tutorial assistance (if students have attended multiple tutorial sessions, still count them as 1 student).

⁷ Record total number of tutorial sessions attended by students (each class a student attends counts as 1, the same student may attend multiple tutorial sessions throughout the year).

⁸ Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).

⁹ Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.

¹⁰ Only record amounts which required payment during the 2024 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. Note the data in this table is a subset of the scholarship data provided in Table 1.

¹¹ Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2024 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2024 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2023 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships).

¹² This data confirms the university's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.