

A PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO INDIGENISATION OF THE CURRICULUM

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SUBTHEME: Indigenous ways of knowing and learning

BACKGROUND The University of Newcastle (UoN) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research Framework (2020) places cultural knowledge and understanding at the centre of its approach. Indigenisation of curricula is a key component of the framework that supports development of knowledge, skills and values of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous graduates enabling them to affect positive changes in their professional practice. An institutional focus on moving staff from cultural awareness towards cultural responsiveness through education and training has motivated academic staff to act however knowledge and confidence continue to be barriers. An Indigenous Student Engagement Committee was formed in the School of Biomedical Science and Pharmacy (SBSP) to drive activities related to Indigenisation of the curricula offered in the School in a holistic and integrated manner. This paper outlines our approach and progress to date.

ACTION

Our initial focus for Indigenisation of the curriculum is the three undergraduate programs offered in SBSP: Bachelor of Biomedical Science, Bachelor of Pharmacy (Hons), Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science. There is some commonality in the early stages of these programs and therefore potential to share Indigenous resources addressing broad cultural knowledge and understanding, and Indigenous perspectives in the health and medical research context. Actions to date have included:

Current Indigenous Students: Increased support and engagement opportunities including paid Indigenous Research Fellowships (8 to date), welcome lunches each semester, meaningful Acknowledgement of Country in all course introductions.

Program Level Audit: An online survey completed by course coordinators to identify where Indigenous knowledge, perspectives or pedagogies are already included.

Thurru Health Unit: Facilitation of conversations with program convenors to reduce burden on Thurru staff and identify areas of commonality for shared resources.

Student and Community Consultations: Seed funding obtained for paid consultations with Indigenous students, staff and community including Aboriginal Health Services.

Learnings from Aotearoa: Reciprocal workshops with academic staff from the University of Waikato on Indigenous student participation and retention and Indigenisation of the curriculum.

Future Students: Engagement with future Indigenous students through Wollotuka programs.

REFLECTION

Indigenisation of curricula is an ongoing process; changes will be implemented over time in collaboration with Indigenous community and scholars and will require continuing evaluation and revision to be inclusive of First Nation peoples, perspectives and place. A major learning to date is that implementing even small changes can improve the experience of Indigenous students.

REFERENCES

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