Embedding Indigenous perspectives and enhancing Indigenous Cultural Competence at USQ

"Learning and Teaching Services would like to acknowledge and honour the Giabal and Jarowair peoples of Toowoomba; the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul peoples of Springfield and Ipswich; the Butchulla people of Fraser Coast and Maryborough; and the Kambuwal people of Stanthorpe as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways where the University of Southern Queensland is located"

Embedding Indigenous perspectives into curriculum and pedagogy is part of a larger strategy at USQ to improve outcomes for Indigenous students and for Indigenous people in Australia more broadly. We see this broad aim being achieved partly through our graduates who become the professionals of the future. At USQ, we include these aims under the umbrella of Indigenous Cultural Competency; to learn more about this go the USQ Indigenous Cultural Competency Framework.

**Indigenous Cultural Competence @ USQ**

In brief, the USQ Indigenous Cultural Competency Framework has been developed using the following definition of Indigenous Cultural Competency

**Definition for the individual:** Indigenous Australian cultural competence in this domain includes student and staff knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures, histories and contemporary realities and awareness of Indigenous protocols, combined with the proficiency to engage and work effectively in Indigenous contexts congruent to the expectations of Indigenous Australian peoples. Cultural competence includes the ability to critically reflect on one’s own culture and professional paradigms in order to understand its cultural limitations and effect positive change.
Developmental Model of Cultural Competence

We are using the elements of the Framework to identify how we embed Indigenous content and perspectives into the USQ curricula. Our starting point has been to overlay this definition on to a developmental process that can be applied to curriculum development. For this we have drawn on the model proposed by Charles Sturt University and the University of South Australia (Charles Sturt University, 2010; McConnochie, Egege, & McDermott, 2008; Ranzijn, McConnochie, & Nolan, 2010)

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(Adapted from Nolan and McConnochie, 2008)

This developmental process can be applied across programs so our students are experiencing curriculum that supports them to develop Indigenous Cultural Competence by the time they graduate.

To support staff in these processes of embedding Indigenous perspectives into the USQ curriculum we strongly encourage you to get involved in professional development activities and events that will provide ideas on how to do this. This may include activities to enhance your own cultural competency.

Aims of embedding Indigenous Perspectives and pedagogy into USQ Curriculum materials:

In line with this model, the specific aims are to:

- **Raise awareness** of the cultural, historical and contemporary frameworks which have shaped and continue to shape the lives of Indigenous Australians.
- Create opportunities for students to examine cultural values and assumptions; this should include the presentation of historical facts which lead students to examine their own values and assumptions and deconstruct the basis for these understandings
- **Actively involve students** in opportunities to critically explore the major paradigms of their discipline and how these paradigms influence thinking and understanding and impact on Indigenous people.
- Examine culturally appropriate way of working (dependant on the where the course is situated within the program – more advanced levels)
• Provide opportunities for students to engage with discipline specific topics or issues occurring at the interface between the discipline and Indigenous perspectives and/or knowledges (dependant on the where the course is situated within the program – more advanced levels)

**How to ...**

Embedding knowledge of Indigenous content and perspectives may mean:

- Weaving reference to Indigenous perspectives throughout a course or program. For example, when looking at stakeholder perspectives in a planning course provide examples from an Indigenous case study or context
- Ensuring that discipline-specific Indigenous perspectives and examples are included in the curriculum. For example, in considering the social determinants of health, Indigenous examples or case studies may be used
- Developing and/or drawing on institutional ‘foundational’ units looking at Indigenous histories and experiences and including them in programs
- Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into learning objectives and assessments
- Planning across a range of learning objectives to engage students with cognitive (knowledge), affective (feelings) and behavioural (practice) learning outcomes associated with Indigenous perspectives
- Incorporating Indigenous content and evidence form research into Indigenous issues, in to course material
- Teaching Indigenous and all students in inclusive ways
- Engaging students with the Indigenous dimension of discipline-specific studies
- Developing critical thinking exercises to enhance awareness of multiple perspectives on Indigenous issues
- Establishing working relationships with the USQ Centre for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER) and other relevant USQ stakeholders engaged in the Indigenous education domain.

**Comments from staff who have included Indigenous perspectives in their courses**

"The embedding of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into education courses and programs is an essential component of equipping our future teachers to be culturally sensitive to the diverse needs of students”

"Within education courses we have actively embedded Indigenous Histories and Cultures and advanced understanding of Indigenous perspectives and Knowledges. These inclusions have assisted in shaping students understanding of Indigenous ways of working and culturally inclusive methods for classroom practice. As part of this, we actively engage students in research based pedagogical frameworks which can be overlayed on their current planning practices to ensure consideration of Indigenous knowledges and practice. Further, students who engage are provided opportunity to examine their own paradigm of thinking which informs their professional practice”

"The teaching of respect and appreciation for the beliefs, values and rituals of others, especially of our first Australians, encourages our pre-service teachers to question personal assumptions and become critically aware of cultural bias that they might inadvertently be taking into classroom contexts”

**For more information...**

Visit the Indigenous Curriculum site

Here you can find more resources and links to databases of academic articles and film lists. The site also links you to the broader Indigenous strategies at USQ and to work being done at other institutions.